Hometown organisations in Turkey: an overview

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Abstract. Hometown (*hemşehri*) organisations are associations and foundations regrouping people from the same place or *memleket* (village, town, county). The current thematic issue also deals with organisations regrouping migrants (*göçmen*) from the 'Turkish World', mainly the Balkans and the Caucasus. In Turkey, hometown organisations have appeared in the 1940s and grown incessantly since then, even more so since the 1990's; therefore this phenomenon cannot be treated as a mere transitional consequence of the urbanisation process. The authors not only deal with *hemşehrilik* as a - often 'naturalized' - social link, but especially with the organisations asserting it: their importance in the Turkish political – and not only social – landscape informs us about the ways of politisation, patterns of discourse and political action in contemporary Turkey.

This work on hometown associations *(hemşehri dernekleri)* is the product of a collective study[1] and is inspired by their astonishing number and importance in Turkish socio-political life[2]. In France, this type of association flourished until the 1970s, as demonstrated by the various concentrations of the local inhabitants of Auvergne in Paris (Girard 1997). Closely linked with periods of industrial development and rural to urban migration, this phenomenon diminished with the occurrence of the progressive integration both of the peripheral regions into the national economy, and of provincial migrants into an urban setting. Yet in the Turkish model, the scope of hometown associations has grown incessantly since the 1990s[3], which suggests that a phenomenon is at work, which cannot be treated as a simple transitional consequence resulting from the process of urbanisation. How can this specificity be explained? What does it tell us about contemporary Turkey?

[2] Before going into more detail, it is necessary to make some introductory remarks on the subject of 'hometown associations'. They unite immigrants from the same territory in their place of immigration. Literally, the term *hemşehri* denotes somebody who is from the 'same town' ; in everyday language it refers, broadly speaking, to roots of origin in the same region, county or village (Güneş-Ayata 1990: 97; Erder 1996: 109; Tekşen 2003: 64). Substantivised, the adjective becomes *hemşehrilik*, meaning an informal link involving mutual assistance, but the term has the principal function of providing a means of identification to others in everyday dealings ([Fliche in this volume](#)). The *hemşehri* association comes about through the realisation of a possible link which arises from a common geographical origin. Because the organisational principles are similar, we have regarded hometown associations as those which regroup the *göçmen* – the indigenous people from the former Ottoman provinces, which are considered to form the 'Turkish world', i.e., mainly the Balkans and the Caucasus.

[3] The object of our study is not the concept of a link arising from the same place of origin, but the organisations, which claim to be representative of this. In fact, we consider that the forging of identities occurs chiefly in the place of settlement, even if the region of origin does partly determine

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[1] We publish here the conclusions of the symposium held the 29th and 30th of March 2004 at the IFEA (Institut Français d'Etudes Anatoliennes).

[2] This text has been translated by Sarah Cannici, Nick Davies and Chandni Maroke.

[3] In a case study about the city of Bursa, the following figures came to light: from 1963 to 1983, the hometown associations represented 2.2% of the town's total associations, then 34% for the period 1984-1990 and 61.1% for 1991-1999 (Narı 1999).

the scope and extent of this. The hometown association is not so much a meeting place publicising a pre-existing community solidarity, rather it is the point at which political and social networks fuse giving rise to a means of communication with the political-institutional system.

[4] As Jean-Claude Chamboredon points out in his critique of Agulhon and Bodiguel's work, *Les associations au village,* an analysis focused on social characteristics misses the richness of the object of study: 'It appears that the study of associations gives better results when they are viewed as dedicated go-betweens for the purpose of dissemination or in mechanisms of mobilisation (the political and economical function of these formal levels of sociability)' (1984: 58). In other words, country-based solidarity as a measure of mobilisation, can only be understood in the light of the political and institutional system into which it integrates; in this way, it forms a key to understanding the links between State and society (Woods 1994), as every state-centred power system needs established bodies to act as intermediaries[4].

[5] Henceforth, we draw away from a rather popular interpretation of the phenomenon. The importance of an environment in which associations flourish has often been held to be the manifestation of a free, modern and developed society (Toksöz 1983); the *hemşehri* associations have been described, and also often present themselves as the 'natural' and democratic expression of local and regional identities as opposed to the State (e.g., Önen 1997). In other words, the hometown associations are the incarnation of 'real' Turkey inside the cities. Here we encounter the myth of authenticity – a typical theme of the 1990s, and the myth of the emergence of a 'civil society' in Turkey – fundamental to the analysis of social movements (Göle 1994). This approach has been criticised elsewhere (Dorronsoro 2005) as it must be borne in mind that by sometimes arriving at a wide interpretation of the notion 'civil society', this lessens its educative value. Jenny White, for example, integrates both personal relations and of proximity into the notion: 'Civil society, in this broader rendering, incorporates personal, kin, and ethnic relations on the one hand, and civic and political institutions on the other, linking them in practice, rather than artificially separating out cultural, civic and political domains' (2002: 179).

[6] Hamit Bozarslan (2004: 86) details the polysemy and the misfortune of the notion of 'civil society' in the Turkish context. 'Victim of its popularity, [it] almost gave birth to an ideology- 'civil-

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[4] This is also the position of other authors who studied hometown associations in Nigeria (Barkan *et al.* 1994) and the Ivory Coast (Woods 1994).

societism' (*sivil toplumculuk*). It perfectly suited a part of the middle classes […]', the ones which considered the army as 'the only modern institution capable of defending the 'Westerness' of Turkey against its own population' (2004: 86): the Islamic movement and its electorate, made up solely from this migrant population integrated poorly in the urban areas. Thus, the vulgate of 'civil society'; maintained by various international NGOs occupies with the protection of Human rights, and always ready to finance projects to promote the 'development of civil society'; and therefore the omnipresent interpretation in political discourse, is in fact only the adaptation of the actors to the State's structures, and not the expression of a dialectic relationship (Navaro-Yashin 1998).

[7] Moreover, those active in associations use the idiom in a desire to legitimate themselves. From the associations of Turks of Western Thrace (Hersant) to the Islamic foundations studied by White (2002), those involved deny all kind of links to local authorities or political parties by sheltering behind the label 'civil society', which implies independence from the State. However, in both cases, these links are established because they are intrinsic to the functioning of these organisations and necessary to the fulfilment of their objectives. In this way, the relationship of hometown associations to politics – even if it appears illegitimate, particularly since the 1980s – does in fact constitute their connection to public life.

[8] This collective study will focus on three main progressions. First, it aims to present circumstances in which hometown associations came about in Turkey (migratory influxes, the legal background and political context) (Toumarkine, Pérouse). We start by concentrating upon the factors which influenced this emergence: the economic and social integration of the different waves of migrants into the urban setting, upon the existing legal constraints, and upon connecting these to the political background – especially following the coup d'Etat of 12th September 1980.

[9] The second progression aims to define the conditions for the consolidation and the exponential growth of hometown associations. We strive to connect their horizontal and vertical structure[5] with the ways in which they integration in the national or local political market. The aim is to isolate the evolution of this structure over time, and to suggest a typology. We will include an analysis

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[5] By 'vertical structure' we mean the subordinating links between the mother-association *(merkez)* and sections *(şube).* The law governing associations (1983) forbidding the establishment of more than one section per county (with the exception of Istanbul) reinforces this vertical logic. 'Horizontal' logic refers to the control by the associations of urban (and even metropolitan) areas, where the *hemşehri* are present and concentrated.

of the specific dynamics of the associative phenomenon to be taken as a 'register of action' - from which it will be seen this is self-perpetuating whilst gaining in intensity in the metropolises like Istanbul and Ankara. At the same time, in considering that the associations are a place for the reproduction of social models and where regional identities are recomposed/reinvented in different moulds, we will focus on the social advancement and practices of those who create and shape the associative project; who we shall call 'social entrepreneurs'.

[10] The object of the last progression is the role of representation and mobilisation of hometown associations. Their relationship with politics and institutions is broached in this work through two questions: the negotiations aimed at obtaining privileges (including positions on electoral roles)[6] or material advantages for the members of the *hemşehri* group; and, the political mobilisation in its own right (the structuring and framework of a movement asserting claims demands from within the association).

[11] Lastly, Kurtoğlu's paper is a theoretical work. She is a lecturer at the University of Bilkent in Ankara, who is the author of a doctoral thesis published in 2003 on the connection between *hemşehrilik* and local politics in Turkey. In her contribution, she explores a series of tools useful for the analysis of *hemşehrilik*, especially the concepts of space and identity.

I. The development of hometown associations

[12] What is the link between the rise of hometown associations and urbanisation? In what ways did the political and legal background influence the choice of this particular type of association?

Going beyond the developmentalist analysis

[13] Since the 1970s, studies in Turkey have investigated the link arising from the same place of origin, in a context where internal migration was regulated with a view to obtaining both urbanisation and the corresponding economic development (Tekşen 2003). According to this analysis, the link arising from the same place of origin facilitated an economic solidarity; and in the

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[6] This aspect ressembles vote-catching, but is particularly apparent during local ballots (Hersant).

larger context of the *gecekondu*[7]*,* was a resource used by migrants who had fallen upon hard times whilst adapting to urban life. The *hemşehrilik* numbered amongst various other solidarity networks, which over the course of three decades enabled, with varying degrees of success, the economic integration of a growing urban population. Since the works of Kıray (1982), the expression 'buffer mechanism' became to be repeated in studies on hometown associations, and restricted to the transition period in the migratory process and urban development (Anse 2003).

[14] As such, the development of this type of association does not in reality have the *gecekondu* as a major inspiration, but the urban landscape at large, which is neither underprivileged nor marginal. It is therefore necessary to go beyond this old and long-lasting connection between *gecekondu* and *hemşehrilik.* Furthermore, the increase in the number of hometown associations during the last decade proves that this phenomenon has nothing transient (Anse 2003), and that it constitutes far more than a means of integration into the urban environment.

The migratory current and the consolidation of the settlement

[15] The emergence of hometown associations is linked with the migratory influxes created by rural to urban migration, and since the 1960s, immigration from the 'Turkish world'. In cities on the scale of Istanbul, it has been possible to see the different levels of migration and the migrants' contribution to the urban area (see Pérouse's contribution and accompanying maps). This visual evidence has made it possible to isolate the associations and the groups of migrants in an urban area according to their geographical origin. In this way, Pérouse highlights a relationship between the consolidation of the settlement - meaning the consolidation of a group of migrants; and also the appearance of the associations. Thus, in the *varoş* of Istanbul, the capital necessary for associative activity had not yet accumulated by the time of the migratory influx of the 1990s, resulting in no consequential associative activity. Pérouse then juxtaposes the area of Gazi, where the migratory wave of the 1970s and 1980s led to the creation of numerous associations.

[16] It also appears that the division of labour in any given association has a spatial relationship with the place where the association has its main offices and its branches. Indeed, the

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[7] The *gecekondu* are clandestine dwellings built during the night: if the roof is completed before the rising of the sun, in theory they cannot be destroyed. For more on the subject, see the first thematic issue of the EJTS.

main offices of relatively well-structured associations are located near the administrative and economic centres, whereas only its branches (*şube*) are situated in the residential areas of the groups they represent. A presence in the town's centre or close to the areas of economic activity enables the hypothesis to be advanced that a sophisticated, complex association (see *infra*) is a structure which is in contact with the political and economic authorities. As for the smaller structures, most of the time they are relegated to the suburbs, and have no direct contact with the institutional and economic centres.

[17] In addition, Pérouse suggests a theory according to which it is the background to immigration which is most important: it is the fact of being present in Istanbul rather than Trabzon which provokes the creation of a Trabzonlu organisation. It is necessary to see the result of opportunities offered specifically by the urban areas, but also a copycat effect: the competition between groups for the access to the 'public sphere' – often including attempts made by these groups to monopolise the projection of a group image to the outside world takes place through the medium of the association – already proved as the measure of action in urban areas, especially in Istanbul. Conversely, the local situation dictates whether this type of organisation was open or not to the public (and so, very few associations exist in the South-East of Turkey due to the emergency state in the 80s and 90s).

The political context

[18] The political background of the 1980s and 1990s – in particular the restrictions on civil liberties can offer one explanation for the development of hometown associations. Narı (1999) points out that the number of hometown associations grew considerably after 1983, and advances the hypothesis that prior to the *coup d'Etat* of 12th September 1980, the migrants by and large were present in political parties and trade unions. After this date, the very strong control and restrictions imposed upon political and trade union life would have paved the way for the creation of hometown associations. This attractive explanation brings us to the complex question of the actual or presumed de-politicisation of Turkish society, which was assumed, in any case, to be the objective of the 12th September 1980 coup (Dorronsoro 2001), and which affected the civil and political organisation of contemporary Turkey.

[19] The authoritarian and nationalistic character of the Turkish State can be emphasised for a better understanding of the *hemşehri* associative phenomenon. Here, the issue is raised of the role of regional and local identities, and also the role of the 'Turkish world' in Turkish nationalism – a question tackled in Hersant's contribution. Narı (1999) notes that the *göçmen* organisations, thanks to their status of being of public utility, received state subsidies enabling them to carry out their activities in and outside the country. On the contrary, it must be remembered that regionalism (*bölgecilik)* is treated with suspicion by the Turkish authorities for two reasons: regionalism is perceived as promoting a process of decentralisation in a centralised state; and, secondly it is also considered as an attempt to destroy national unity, and therefore seen as separatist *(bölücü)*.

[20] This view is still entertained by the Party of Justice and Development (AKP), who are currently in power. The Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan, in a speech given in Balıkesir on 28th June 2003, labelled the regionalism as one of the three 'red lines' restraining his government's actions[8]. Those active in the associations also adopt the same rhetoric. At the congress of the association Bal-Göç (which brings together migrants from Bulgarian origins) in 2003, its president made the following statement: 'We want to confirm that our policy is that we are against regionalism and *hemşehrilik*, which can be qualified as micro-nationalism'[9]*.*

II. A typology of the organisations

[21] A consideration of the political context does not in itself make it possible to grasp the internal working procedures of the organisations. The configuration of the associations and how this changed; the hierarchy and the creation of the social relationships inside them, all allow hypotheses to be made about the adaptation of the organisations to the restraints/resources of their environment.

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[8] According to Yalazan (2003), the other two red lines are *dincilik* (religious fundamentalism) and *ırkçılık* (racism).

[9] 'Bal-Göç Genel Başkanı Doç. Dr. Emin BALKAN'in kongrede yaptığı konuşma', www.bal-goc.com.tr. This did not prevent the association, in the local elections which were held some months later publicly supporting the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Party for Justice and Development) mayorat in the municipality on which the association depends in Bursa (see *infra*).

The legal classification

[22] The legal constraints are a key element in understanding the development of *hemşehri* organisations. The hometown organisations can take two forms: that of an association (*dernek)* or a foundation (*vakıf* or property held on trust). The choice of form generally depends upon the resources of its founders: 'Whereas the committee of an association is elected and can be dismissed by its members, the executive body of a foundation can comprise one or more founding life-members, without the requirement of a general meeting. A foundation has greater advantages than as association as regards financial matters and its general scope of action[10]. Moreover, a foundation is more easily controlled by its founders than an association, and is more directly in touch with its members. However, the choice of the legal form is determined by the founder's resources: the creation of a foundation requires the freezing of a very large amount of capital, which acts as a determining factor'[11].

[23] As a consequence, there are far less foundations than associations. Though both types of structure can have the same kind of activities, the underlying reasons behind them are not fundamentally different. This difference in legal form, and above all – of available resources, suggests a positive correlation with members of the upper-middle classes: graduates, the liberal professions, and hardly an inconsequential female presence. The appearance of this relationship is not confined largely or solely to associations and foundations, but can also be seen between district associations and ones operating on a much larger scale. The funding of the associations mainly arises through donations. Only those recognised as being of public utility (*kamuya yararlı dernekler)* can receive state subsidies; the others negotiate financial support – often a residual nature, with town councils.

[24] In order to fully understand the use of one or the other type of structure, it is also necessary to place the associative phenomenon in Turkey's historical, political and legal context. Although the first law under the Republic regulating associations (*Cemiyetler Kânunu*) was adopted

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[10] Supervised by the General Direction of the *vakıf* and possibly by the ministry of Finances (and not by the Ministry of Interior like the associations), foundations have both financial and organisational freedom (Bilici 1992). They are allowed to profit and make a return on the resources used to constitute them.

[11] In some cases, it is possible to accumulate capital by mobilising money in the group of *hemşehri.* In the case of the Turks of Western Thrace (Hersant), an amount of 75,000 euros was collected to finance the necessary initial capital to create the foundation for the construction of a mosque.

under the provisions of the 1924 Constitution[12], the growth in the number of associations of all types is a relatively recent occurrence. In the 1950s, the introduction of the multiparty system was accompanied by a significant growth the number of associations in Turkey which reached a total of 2000. The process later accelerated; when in 1972 a law modified their constitution, they already numbered 45,000 (Toksöz 1983: 377).

[25] Following the coup of 12th September 1980, the associations of *hemşehri,* like many others, had to cease their activities[13], with the exception of those linked with the 'national cause' (*millî dava*)[14], which were not forbidden. From then on, under the emergency state, the creation of associations was subjugated to approval by military authorities. This very tight regulation of the associations should be seen as the catalyst for their participation in the violent confrontations which divided extreme left and right wing movements in the 1960s and 70s (White 2002). This quasi civil war constituted a 'meta–event' which conditioned the political interpretations and the way in which opposition has been managed ever since. The legal classification of associations is particularly restrictive, as it was a product of the post-coup period in preparation for the end of the prohibitions affecting a large number among them (law of 7th October 1983, known as *Dernekler Kanunu*)[15].

[26] Though slowed down following the coup d'Etat, the associative movement which began in the 1970s took a completely new direction in the 1990s. By 2004, there would be one association for every 829 inhabitants, most of these being *cami yaptırma dernekleri* (associations for mosque building). This category of association grew considerably during the second half of the 1980s, a phenomenon for which no satisfactory explanation has been given. Nonetheless, since the 1980s there has been a noticeable transition of political parties and trade unions into hometown associations (Narı 1999); and from within hometown associations still suspected of regionalism (*supra*) – towards associations for mosque building.

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[12] The associative phenomenon is however older and dates back to the last Ottoman decades.

[13] Often hometown associations had not been forbidden or closed in the strict sense, but were suspended. However, this suspension, which could only possibly be ended by getting a permit, in fact became a prohibition.

[14] The term *millî dava* implies here a struggle for Turkish minorities situated outside the boundaries drawn by the National Pact during the Turkish Independence War. It refers to a broad conception of the Turkish nation, upon which a consensus exists within the Turkish political class.

[15] Changes to the status of associations and foundations were made in the context of making the Turkish Civil Code conform to European standards: www.belgenet.com/yasa/medenikanun/47-117.html

[27] The foundations – whose constitution is defined by articles 73 to 81 of the Turkish Civil code, *Medeni Kanunu*, of 4th October 1926 – were, especially after the 12th September 1980 coup, a legal means of bypassing the restrictions on the freedom of association. In this way, between 1982 and 1985, actors wanting to unite behind social projects or projects related to the freedom of expression (*düşünsel amaçlar)*, turned to the creation of foundations rather than of associations (Zevkliler 1995). This loophole was closed by law number 4121 of 23rd July 1995, and by the modifications made in the same year to article 33 of the 1982 Constitution, which made the prohibitions applying to associations, equally applicable to foundations - notably relating to the cessation of activities (Zevkliler 1995).

[28] Just like associations, foundations came up against the prohibition of involvement in any kind of political activities (Zevkliler 1995), yet enforcement was less rigorous. The long Ottoman tradition of the *vakıf* and the 'low profile' they adopted during the whole republican period, gave them an air of respectability and saved them from the prying eyes of the State. As a consequence, foundations played an important role in Turkish Islamic mobilisation, even if the number of associations connected to this movement grew at a sustained rate (White 2002). The role of 'hometown foundations' will be dealt with in the articles by Massicard and Hersant, even if they are not, in themselves the focus of study for the present edition.

'Simple' and 'complex' associations

[29] The organisations are arranged on a noticeable scale corresponding to: village, district, city, county and region[16]. This is seen at an internal level, notably in task-sharing between the main office and branches (*şube)* of the associations. These levels correspond to activities; to different roles, which allow us to propose two key models of hometown associations. The first type is the village association or district branch of a more important organisation, whose members originate from a defined geographical area, and live in the vicinity of their association. The activities of the association are limited to social activities (picnics, cafés, *gece* etc.) and to mutual aid/assistance.

[30] The second type is the regional association, which mobilises small business-men, politicians, and people of high social standing (*notables*). Pérouse underlines this when he brings to

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[16] The territorial level equivalent to the French 'region' does not exist in Turkey (*infra).*

light the presence of the middle classes in the conception of county associations (*ilçe)*, while the 'regional associations located in the centre of Istanbul which appeared more later on, involved businessmen and *notables*. It is these associations and those involved in them, that are the ones which establish an identifying ethos, guide state investment into their region of origin, expound and represent the group's interests at the national level, and eventually oversee its political representation (associations of *göçmen).*

[31] In reality, the associations examined often combine these different structures; even if there are very few associations, for instance the Turks of Western Thrace, which have a central structure with branches in several districts of Istanbul and in a dozen of Turkish cities. If we introduce a distinction between the main office and branches in terms of task-sharing, we begin to understand that the complex associations were able to recruit both among 'notables' and 'ordinary migrants', despite the fact these classes of people did not meet in the same places, outside specific events such as the *gece* or the general assemblies.

[32] In parallel to this classification, we would like to bring to light the idea that the associations are different according to their ability to act or not on several territories. This means understanding their activity in relation to their grade of investment (and of creation) of a local 'here' (location of settlement) and 'there' (place of origin). That way, we can refute the idea that the associations – particularly the ones in villages – are exclusively concerned with the 'here', and identify the mechanisms of transfer/reconversion of the resources between these two materializations of the local [which are the 'here' and the 'there'] (Le Ray).

[33] It must be taken into consideration that associations of *göçmen* call for specific perspectives of analysis, in that the factor of the State also acts as an impetus. Yet if on the local level the *göçmen* and their associations constitute a social fabric, various strategies of investment in urban areas and of group perpetuation similar to those of 'classic' *hemşehri*; then they participate in the 'national cause' *(millî dava)* in the context of Turkish nationalism, or at least act as intermediaries for the State outside of its borders.

[34] We will see how the mastery of this strategy can be an additional resource for controlling a local political area. Furthermore, it is not insignificant that it was the *göçmen* in particular who were recognised as being of public utility. So, in the city of Bursa, only two associations profited

from this: the local branch of the Solidarity Association of the Turks of Western Thrace (Batı Trakya Türkleri Dayanışma Derneği), and the Cultural and Solidarity Association of native Balkan migrants (Balkan Göçmenleri Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği, said Bal-Göç) (Narı 1999). Though, as seen in other structures, it is more the social calibre of their leaders, than the status of 'servant' *(hizmetkâr)* of the national cause, which opens up possibilities of political careers, and gives them local influence (Hersant).

[35] The contributions by Çaymaz, Massicard, and Fliche also focus on the profile of the 'social entrepreneurs' and analyse the part that participation in *hemşehri* organisations could have as an eventual springboard for a political career; as well as a means of converting economic and social resources for use as political capital. Interest in the associative leaders continues as the theme of several contributions; in an analysis of the way of looking after the social activity networks (Çaymaz, Fliche); or political networks – notably in terms of strategy of the 'notability' (Hersant, Massicard).

[36] The latter sometimes determine the association's type of activity in that they transform themselves through the practices of redistribution (sponsorship of poor families or students), which are accompanied by a particular way of thinking about progress and social justice (promotion of instruction and public health, etc.) (Hersant). In a connected way, the associations have an ambition of captivating the youth, notably through sporting activities; in particular football. This activity has the advantage to being profitable and assuring the visibility of the group; furthermore in some associations, presidency of the football club has kick-started the social rise of the *notables* (Hersant).

The transformation of the organisations and of social relationships

[37] The analysis of the division of the associations outlined above has to be expanded to include a temporal dimension. The structure of the association can evolve over time with the integration of the migrants in their new environment, and their interaction with a changing social array. Several authors (Çaymaz, Fliche, Yücel) have included in their analyses the change in social

and hierarchical relationships through the intermediary of the association, which do not simply reproduce the original ones.

[38] In fact, it is not rare that the association connects people who did not have any previous contact, or did not even know each other in their region of origin. Here the generational question

steps in, in the sense of the 'community of experience' – different waves of migrants, and their offspring born in the place of settlement, often frequent the same association. This suggests different experiences and relations in the place of origin territory, and so consequently in the association to which they will contribute in various ways.

[39] The reorganisation of social roles and relationships occurs through interaction with the place of origin, and despite: the comings and goings of the city dwellers to their *memleket* (this term designates the geographical birthplace of the family, denoted by the paternal bloodline), the processes of rising or different social class which occurs during migration; the transposition of norms imported from the 'there' to the metropolis; and the adaptation of these norms to the ones of the surrounding urban society (Fliche, Yücel). A phenomenon of the simplification of networks arises in tandem with the differentiation of the development: the proximity networks and solidarities give way to new, reconstituted ones – which because they are less split up, became more controllable.

III. Mobilisation and representation

[40] Here we are concerned with two aspects. Firstly, we will study the intellectual and normative production of the associations, suggesting a collective representation of the place of origin, the behaviours and values that individuals from this region should adopt- for example endogamy. The respected social norms become specific to the group from which they are the 'natural' attributes. Secondly, through the strategies of mobilisation of the organisations, we shall focus on their political representation.

The invention of the place of origin

[41] The hometown associations appear as the expression of a 'natural' community of people linked by their common origin. However the reality is more complex: they are constructions which come about through the creation and expression of a collective identity – a group memory. It is all about transposing elements of local folklore into the urban context (Fliche), and borrowing references from the common regional memory (Le Ray), to create an interaction between a number of different orders so as to establish a set of references and values easily, which are accessible by everybody, and to ensure the reproduction of the group. Generally, a core of intellectuals or 'social

entrepreneurs' can be found at the source of the creation of the identity, as Fliche demonstrates in his article discussing the process of creation of an association originating from an entirely reconstructed *hemşehri* network, at the initiative of a single individual.

[42] Moreover, the associative enterprise has to pay tribute to the practices, codes and representations of the group if it wishes to widen its base. On the one hand, the associative activities concerning familial relations: classes in folklore allowing the involvement of both mothers and daughters in the association, sporting activities which discourage young people 'hanging out in the streets', picnics and *gece* (family dancing evenings). On the other hand, the codes of good conduct have to be respected within the association: here rumours play their part, as well as malicious gossip being used as a means of social control, relations between young men and women etc.

Reconsideration of political vote-catching

[43] The hometown association can be perceived as the occupation of an urban space by a social group, competing with others to 'mark its territory'. Thanks to the relations developed between the organisation and the local powers (town councillors and prefect), members of a group can obtain material advantages (Hersant). The definition of collective interests has led some authors to depict, in contradiction with the principles of republican citizenship (Güneş-Ayata 1984; Demirbağ 1997), the *hemşehrilik* as political and social archaism, which support communautarism. Political vote-catching is a major current in the research of *hemşehri* associations, as shown in particular by the work of Kurtoğlu (1998) and Bayraktar (2001). Anse (2003), on the other hand, uses the specific case of the associations of migrants originating from Rize (Black Sea) to question the theory that it would be possible to influence the votes of a whole group through the intermediary of hometown associations.

[44] This type of analysis creates a confusion in the term 'vote-catching' and an over-simplified vision of the relationship developed by associative actors with politics. These studies in fact are rather a question of patronage: to obtain favour from the boss, the client has to meet his demands i.e. give him his vote. According to the case studies featured on the subject of *hemşehri* organisations, two distinctions must be drawn; on one hand, even if it is true that associations and *kahvehane* (a place of masculine social activity and for the consumption of tea and coffee) used by

hemşehri are valued locations for candidates running an electoral campaign[17], this custom must be seen in an original light: as much as this provides a substitute to fill the paucity of methods of voter communication, it is also the expression of the social role of politicians; just like a local political personality has to attend numerous marriage and circumcision ceremonies.

[45] On the other hand, this type of approach ignores the complexity of relations linking the hometown associations with the local or national representatives in power, and the strategies that underlie these relationships. As Fliche and Hersant demonstrate, both solidity and efficiency of the established links between the different actors involved also play a role quite separate from any electoral stake.

[46] Lastly, it is important not to err by concentrating on the *hemşehri*'s electoral involvement. Allow us to explain: this means of interpretation is very developed, as demonstrated in an article published in the newspaper *Zaman* (17/01/04) a few months before the municipal elections reporting on the race between hometown associations to ensure that one of their members would be a candidate. The article's author comments that the political parties, which especially during local elections are supposed to be less 'political', prefer candidates originating from regions strongly represented amongst non-indigenous city inhabitants (those migrants native from Sivas are the most common in Istanbul, those from Çorum in Ankara and ones from the Balkans in Bursa). It appears to us that these theories speak more of the exploitation of regional identities by public powers (Sauner 1995) and political entrepreneurs than real vote-catching. The idea of a supposed depoliticisation – part of the process of the legitimisation of associative actors, especially in the period after 12th September 1980 – has to be qualified.

The institutional interface and the mobilisation

[47] Moving away from an analysis based on vote-catching, we can firstly propose a hypothesis according to which *hemşehri* organisations prospered and gained political weight simply

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[17] 'Kahvehanede iktidarı şikayet eden Baykal 'tabanı dinleyin' uyarısı aldı', *Zaman,* 29/01/04. As to the role of these *kahvehane hemşehri* during local electoral campaigns, see Kurtoğlu (1998). The *kahvehane* is a place where the *hemşehri* link is publicised, but not carried into effect as is the case with certain associations. As for the branches in different town areas, in the context of complex associations, there is often almost nothing which distinguishes them from a *kahvehane* (Hersant).

because they carried out a function unforeseen by the administrative and institutional division. In Turkey there is, in fact, no 'regional level' of political representation, whereas at a national level there are intermediary bodies between the town level and the central level. Geographical regions are not represented by structures such as regional councils and regional heads as is the case in France.

[48] The reason for this is simple: administrative regions do not exist. In addition, the terms *bölge* (region) or *yöre* (land, region) are vague and are used to describe various bodies (for example in the case of the 'Black Sea'), and do not correspond to any legal definition (Toumarkine). Finally, in line with this reasoning, we can also assume that as an interface between local and central powers, hometown associations allow the integration of people into an area of national and central character (Ankara, Istanbul), where the participants assume the role of local representatives (of their region of origin).

[49] Secondly, we wish to make it clear that vote-catching and electioneering are not the only aspects of the politicisation of the associations, as this is unsuitable for taking into account the ways in which the institutions, political parties and associations interact. This begs the question of how do the hometown association integrate themselves into the local political scenery; furthermore to what extent can they act as a conduit through which the groups pursue larger political goals (Massicard, Le Ray). In fact, despite the legal prohibition and the reluctance, as Fliche demonstrates is particularly visible for some groups stemming from the memories of the political struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, politicisation is often real - especially within big associative structures.

[50] In addition, in a country where on the one hand the creation of associations with a political character is forbidden, and where, one the other hand, the promotion of identities differing from the prevailing national identity results in stigmatisation (Massicard 2001a), even if hometown associations base themselves on a poorly perceived local link or on the expression of illegitimate identities (Alevi or Kurdish), they form a relatively neutral means of mobilisation and alter, *a priori* suspect links into simple geographical solidarities. This is what Massicard suggests in her description of the relations between associations of migrants native to Sivas and the alevi organisations.

[51] In the same way, Hersant's area of study shows that on all levels (district, town, hamlet) the associative leaders are sought - as spokespeople or allies - by political parties, and that any possible denial destroys the ability to negotiate within local party politics, even if this is not dictated on

partisan grounds. But these same investigations, like those of Çaymaz, make it appear that there is a forbidden zone surrounding the various political ideologies, which, whatever they might be, are supposed not to be discussed in the association, whereas they are often in existence and *de facto* legitimate (for example the case of public support for the Bal-Göç association at the AKP)[18].

[52] It is therefore important to make a distinction between vote-catching and electoral patronage: where a *notable* gains votes due to his social status, his economic resources, thus his objective superiority; and his negotiation at the local level with power holders (municipality, police prefecture). This type of relationship occurs in the strategy of the adoption of an area by the group, which can find itself competing with other associations representing other groups - possibly from the same geographical origin. It is of course not denied that such a strategy finally results in an electoral project, the electoral mandate being after all the product of dedication to social achievement, and the means of directly accessing the resources necessary for the group's local entrenchment, without the need for a go-between.

[53] Finally, the process of mobilisation can sometimes be observed in the hometown associations for specific causes - like the protection of the environment in the region of origin which, has the advantage of having no direct political character. These are nonetheless forms of political action, which are outside the traditional methods of representation, and we will study the way in which they function. Le Ray examines the *hemşehrilik* as a vehicle for political mobilisation in the context of the protest movement against the construction of dams in the region of Tunceli. Massicard investigates the link between associations and political parties, especially through the question of: what is the interest of village associations as the new means of mobilisation?

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[18] 'Bal-Göç'ten Şen'e açık destek', *Olay*, 14/03/2004.

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