

Turkey and Europe: Locating Homeland Ties and Re-scaling Migration Scholarship

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This article aims to open a theoretical space to address the variation of migrant settlement and transnationalism in time and space beyond the national scale and ethnic lens. On the basis of the emergent homeland ties and Hometown Associations of Syriac migrants from Mardin (Turkey) in Europe it approaches migrant dynamics through the lens of the repositioning struggles Mardin has undergone within the context of neo-liberal development agendas.

The majority of today's 'Turkish' population in Europe (approximately 9 million) is the result of labour migration from Turkey starting in the early 1960s, following the bi-lateral agreements signed between Turkey and several European countries.¹ Although these migrants from Turkey were recruited basically as temporary unskilled labourers, they became differentiated economically, socially and culturally in time so that today Turkish immigrants are represented in all strata of the their host societies in Europe. The economic, social, political and cultural changes the migrants from Turkey underwent over time, as well as the variation of their settlement processes in different European countries, have been topics of research for more than four decades. In studying the dynamics of migrants from Turkey in Europe, migration scholars have re-framed their enquiries: rather than taking Turkey and Europe as two entities and looking at their relationships, they increasingly highlight the distinct national policies and the resulting differences in opportunity structures in the countries of settlement and address variations at a national scale.^{2–4} In addition to the national parameters, variations in 'Turkish' migrants' settlement processes and transnational networks, as well as identities and agencies in Europe have also been studied on the bases of ethnic and/or religious parameters – such as the Kurds,⁵ Zaza,⁶ Alevis,^{7–9} Yezidis.¹⁰

As in migration scholarship on different parts of the world, a national and/or an ethnic lens has dominated the analysis of the processes and dynamics of settlement and transnational ties of migrants from Turkey in Europe. In this chapter, I use a different entry point to explore the encounters occurring between migrants, state and non-state

actors that are based in Turkey and Europe and their variations in time and space. Although locality could by no means be reduced to the urban level, cities, as units of governance with powers of taxation and local development, and also due to their prominent roles in neoliberal agendas, do afford a suitable entry point to develop a framework for the analysis of the variation of migrant settlement and trans-nationalism in time and space.¹¹ Thus, in theorizing the socio-spatial dimension of migrants' experiences, I take cities as entry points. This entry point requires a framework to position migrants' transnational and homeland ties in time and space within the context of uneven spatiality of globalization beyond national and ethnic parameters.^{12,13} The questions of where in Turkey and in Europe and when these different pathways of migrant settlement processes unfolded are the leading questions of such a perspective.

We have argued elsewhere¹¹ that any analysis grounded on a national scale falls short of capturing the variations in migrant pathways of incorporation, trans-nationalism and homeland ties in the context of uneven spatialization of capital restructuring where socio-spatial units of governance cannot be confined to the national scale^{14,15} and where cities become strategic nodes of capital flows and the practice of state power.

The following vignette might elucidate the questions concerning about migrant emplacement in time and space in a more concrete way.

Vignette

Mardin, a southeast province in Turkey, has been home to different religious and ethnic communities for centuries. Syriac Christians have lived with Kurds, Arabs, Armenians, Yezidis, and Turks under different regimes of power with complex intercommunity relations. Starting from the 1940s and becoming massive with the increasing military conflict and repression in the region after the 1980s, the Syriac population of Mardin emigrated to different parts of Europe, USA, Brazil, and Australia. Today, the Syriac diaspora is estimated to be of 3.5 million. The Syriac population in Europe, which fled discrimination in Turkey, hardly kept any ties to their homeland for more than two decades. In contrast to their homeland ties, they cherished transnational ties with the other Syrians and migrant groups from Turkey in Europe, USA and Australia.

Since 2002, migrants from Mardin in Europe who did not establish homeland ties for several decades have started either doing so or returning to their once evacuated villages in Mardin. They started establishing Home Town Associations (HTAs), such as the Mutual Aid Association of Karfo – established in 2002 in Switzerland – which was influential in mediating the migrants' return. The establishment of hometown associations several decades after their emigration to Europe poses a puzzle. Neither the 'ethnic and religious identity' or the 'loyal attachment' of Syrians to their homeland nor the opportunity structures of the national/regional policies available in Turkey or in their host countries could explain the emergence of these hometown associations at that particular time and place. Moreover, not all Syriac diaspora from Turkey was part of this development.

The ethnic and national units of analysis, i.e. the prominent categories of migration scholarship, fall short of providing satisfactory answers to the changes in the transnational and homeland ties of Syrians from Mardin in Europe.

Migration Scholarship, Homeland ties and Global forces

The rich literature on Home Town Associations in migration scholarship explains the recent surge of interest in the increasing role they play in the mediation of (economic and social) remittances and of development. However, within this framework, the question of the selective emergence of HTAs from particular places and at particular times and their uneven success remain veiled.^{16,17} Even if we refer to the opportunity structures available in migrants' places of departure and settlement as explanatory factors, usually the temporality and the scale of these opportunity structures are not addressed. The question of why such opportunity structures become available at a particular place gets lost within the dominance of the national scale deployed in the analysis. The national scale restricts the migration scholars' understanding of the local institutional and historical structure and context. There is a lack of differentiation beyond the national policies and if there is (especially at the city level), then there is a noticeable absence of a global perspective that could help us to connect the forces active on the migrants' places of departure, settlement and of transnational ties to current global forces.¹⁸ Thus, there is a very limited theoretical space to address the questions of spatiality and temporality in the dynamics of migrant incorporation including their homeland ties.

There is a large corpus of research on (transnational) migrant communities and their histories in certain cities, but still the concept of locality remains theoretically disconnected from broader forces that are currently active on this domain of scholarship. While migration scholars explore globalization by concentrating on several forms of flows in their analysis (or by focusing on the resistance of the local), they very successfully bracket the global context, which is crucial in understanding the structures, agents and dynamics of creating territorial inequalities within and across the state borders.

Transnational migration scholars very often address globalization without incorporating into their analysis the ways whereby the different forms of capital re-structuring transform the accumulation of wealth and power, state territoriality, units of governance, and social relations.¹⁹ In most cases, there is no theoretical framework to capture the relationship between the urban integration of migrants and the dynamic restructuring of capital that shapes the competition between cities in the neoliberal context.

Given the rich literature on the uneven spatiality of neo-liberalism that has revealed the varying (uneven) impacts of global processes on different localities (beyond the national scale), this limited engagement with globalization in migration scholarship is striking. Cities of migrant settlement have not been differentiated in terms of their relative positions within the processes that are closely linked to global hierarchies of power and wealth. The relative position of a city has an impact on the way in which migrants are differentially positioned in, and contribute to, the restructuring and repositioning of cities.

Methodological Nationalism, Ethnic Lens and the Enduring Hold of Gateway Cities on Migration Scholarship

In addition to the limited engagement of (transnational) migration scholarship with (neo-liberal) globalization, methodological nationalism is another reason behind the under-theorization of spatiality and temporality in migration studies. Most of the literature about

migrants' local incorporation and transnational ties has been shaped by methodological nationalism, which takes the nation-state as the unit of analysis.^{20–22} This perspective on culture and membership operates with particular assumptions about identity, subjectivity, shared culture, values and national origin. The most significant social and cultural divides within the population of a particular nation-state are traced back to national ancestry.

One of the main manifestations of methodological nationalism in research on migrations is the persistent use of the ethnic group as the unit of analysis. Deployment of an ethnic lens is one of the major impediments to the elucidation of variations in the dynamics of migrant settlement and homeland ties to broader global forces. This ethnic lens prioritizes one form of identification, subjectivity, frame of action, and source of social capital, over all others. The heterogeneity of urban society is easily equated with ethnic heterogeneity. Furthermore, the networks of migrants that actually link people in specific and multiple localities are transformed through an ethnic lens into a bounded transnational community that stretches between a homeland and a new land.²³ As a result, much transnational migration research focusing on the dynamics of this community (or the 'diaspora') disregards migrants' 'non-ethnic ties' as well as the broader restructuring processes that are grounded unevenly in territory.^{24,25}

Another major impediment to the development of research frameworks that could capture the variation of migrant settlement processes, transnationalism and homeland ties in time and space is the use of gateway cities as paradigmatic examples of migrant settlement and transnational connection. The dynamics of migrant settlement, in particular gateway cities (such as London, Paris, Berlin, New York or Los Angeles) are often generalized to settlement processes and social ties of migrants in the entire states. Disregarding the fact that gateway cities are exceptional localities because of a specific combination of factors, the relationship between such cities and the nation-state has been conceptualized as if the city were the nation-state in a nutshell. In the context of neo-liberal globalization, where the homogeneity of state territoriality (and the opportunity structures for that matter) is increasingly fractured, this conceptualization creates a major barrier to the study of the variation of migrant incorporation and transnationalism in space.²⁶ Thus, migration scholarship shows a lack of concern for territorial inequalities within the national territory, as well as for the unevenness of state policies and the – subsequently varied opportunity structures. Consequently, the sending and the receiving states have both been approached as if there were internal spatial homogeneity within a national territory. Similarly, the sending state's activities towards migrants have rarely been researched in terms of the varying socio-spatial characteristics of localities of departure.

Confining the discussion of the neo-liberal restructuring and repositioning struggle only to global cities poses another barrier to the theorization of locality in migration scholarship. Researchers on global cities have correctly underlined the discontinuity of spaces within the nation-state and have analysed the growing disjuncture between geographical and social spaces and the changing landscape of social, economic, and cultural proximities as the outcomes of the uneven spatial impacts of globalization. However, they confined their analysis to a small set of cities that they regarded as networked more to each other than they were to the other localities of the nation-states in which they are located. On the basis of this understanding of globalization as an uneven

process they analysed ways in which the global production of economic disparity was experienced locally and revealed shared similarities in the experiences of global cities.^{27–29} Unfortunately, global cities scholars treated these cities as exceptions and did not extend the differentially altered relationships between the cities and their respective states to other urban contexts.^{15,30,31} Many cities, even the marginalized ones, are forced to compete for capital investment on an uneven playing field. Thus, despite the valuable entry that the global cities perspective provided to theorizing the differential effects of globalization (also on the migrants), it failed to establish a basis for a theorization of variations among migrant emplacements in time and space in migration studies.^{25,32}

Scalar Perspective to Urban Dynamics and Migrants

While migration scholars failed to incorporate capital restructuring processes of globalization into their analysis, others who have addressed the reinvention of cities in relation to the restructuring of capital have failed to analyse migrants as full participants within the social, political, cultural, economic forces in urban processes that reflect and contribute in varying ways to ongoing global transformation and the restructuring of social relations and power hierarchies.

Geographers and critical urban scholars have addressed the mutual constitution of the local and the global. They explore uneven *spatialization* of globalization and its effects, particularly the impact of urban restructuring on new forms of urban governance and politics.^{15,33–38} They argue that all cities, even those that experience marginalization, are global in the sense that they have become part of the same ongoing re-construction processes that shape the cities which are acknowledged as global.^{31,39} This perspective underlines the ways in which all cities now market themselves in an effort to attract flows of investment. Geographers have long since explored ways in which urban spaces has been redeveloped, marketed and branded and how all urban resources acquire a new value and become assets in this process of competition between cities. All cities try to reposition themselves within hierarchies of power and wealth by trying to alter the parameters of their connectedness and their location vis-à-vis state and global actors.

The neo-liberal context is crucial for this perspective in understanding the role of the state in creating structural disparities of wealth and power. Neo-liberal globalization alters not only the relationship between localities but also relationships between localities and states. In the context of emergent neo-liberal market-oriented restructuring projects, state intervention and activity are institutionally and geographically differentiated, disrupting the homogeneous state space of intervention. Thus, states themselves contribute to the development of territorial inequalities within the national territory by re-concentrating their socio-economic activity to increase the competitiveness of certain cities and zones.

The concept of scale, which refers to the ordering of socio-spatial units within multiple hierarchies of power, is crucial to this perspective. Cities or zones compete in the re-ordering of these relationships.¹¹ The differential positioning of a city reflects not only flows of political, cultural, and economic capital within regions and state-based and globe-spanning institutions, but also the shaping of these flows and institutional forces by local histories and capacities.²⁵ Another crucial aspect of this perspective is that we can

no longer understand urban, regional, national, and global scales as a nested set of institutional relationships.¹⁵ Instead, for example, cities now have to negotiate directly with the regional or globally connected financial institutions and regulatory regimes without the mediation of the national authorities. A scalar perspective allows us to approach cities within the interaction of power hierarchies.

Drawing from this literature on urban re-scaling, we might better differentiate and understand the varying processes of migrant settlement and transnationalism in different cities if we relate them to the repositioning processes of cities. Most importantly, this approach to city scale allows us to examine the intersections of hierarchies of different forms of power and migrants as social actors. In this way migrants can be conceptualized as actors whose agencies are both shaped by and shaping contributors in these fields of power. They can be seen as scale makers who, in their multiple insertions into urban life, contribute actively to facilitating, legitimizing, and contesting neoliberal restructuring and its local constitution of global processes.¹¹ Urban rescaling literature provides us with analytical tools to analyse the state territory as an uneven entity vis-à-vis state policies. Consequently, state activity towards migrants abroad and activities in their hometowns in the country of origin could be differentiated on the basis of socio-spatial characteristics of the particular localities.

Urban Regeneration, Migrants from Mardin and Supranational Institutions

Returning to the migrants from Mardin in Europe, could some of the original questions raised at the beginning about the temporal dimension of migrants' homeland ties be explained with the help of a perspective focusing on scaling processes? What would such an approach reveal about the variation in migrant dynamics in these places? Variations that would have remained veiled if we were to remain within the ethnic and national lens of migrant scholarship?⁴⁰

In order to contextualize the variation of the transnational networks and ties these migrants from Mardin forge and their HTAs, it might be useful to underline the socio-spatial factors of Mardin, including its Free (Trade) zone (FTZ) status since 1995. This status was part of the efforts to attract spatially mobile capital to the region and to Mardin. However, Mardin failed to attract the expected investments and alter its position vis-à-vis power networks within the region despite the favourable business climate (profitable tax, investment and trade regulations) that came along with the FTZ status.

Once the Free Trade Zone status failed to re-populate and revive economic life in Mardin, the government initiated a project of return and rehabilitation in 1998, which involved incentives for investment (in cash and in kind) to the returnees in this region.^{41,42} This initiative also failed to attract Mardin's emigrant Christian population in Europe back to Mardin. In June 2001, Turkish Prime Minister issued another call particularly addressed to the Christian population from the region to return, with a promise that their religious and property rights would be secured.⁴³ Soon after, the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Monuments nominated Mardin in 2001 to be considered as a World Heritage Site. Right after these two developments, the first Kafro HTA was founded in Switzerland in 2002.

In Mardin's case, cultural and religious diversity and the strategies of place marketing, which are envisaged as motors of urban regeneration, are intimately entwined. However, although most of today's cities refer to their ethnic and religious minorities as their cultural capital for urban rebranding, not all places succeed to change the parameters of their regional/global connectedness and to reposition themselves through these strategies.

The crucial parameters of success in repositioning themselves within the circuits of capital flow and power hierarchies are closely related to the ability of cities to draw on supra-national actors, which are crucial for creating and maintaining territorial inequalities nationally, regionally and globally. In its re-scaling efforts, Mardin was able to draw in such actors by means of two strategies, for both of which the Christian Syriac minority from Mardin in Europe and in Mardin were crucial.

Both UNESCO and the EU loom very large in these developments. The 2001 World Heritage Site application to UNESCO flagged a city image where Mardin was depicted as a cosmopolitan, Babylon-like city in which multi-religious and multi-ethnic, multi-lingual communities coexisted peacefully.⁴⁴ The cultural and religious minorities and particularly the Christian Syriac population were the building stones for promoting the 'cosmopolitan' character and cultural heritage of the city (2007). On the other hand, the World Heritage application opened up new trajectories and dynamics for intra-communal relations in the city and created a 'a new negotiation ground' for those identified as Syriacs within the state^{45,46} Moreover, this image and the policies and funds that came along established new grounds for the social and spatial transformations of the city. Restoration and the preservation work of the (religious) cultural and architectural heritage enabled by state and non-state funds became the motor for urban renewal and reconstruction as well as for the heritage tourism industry. It was clear that the city of Mardin was re-positioning itself within and across state borders on the basis of an image identified with cosmopolitanism and tolerance, for which Syriacs in and from Mardin became an asset. They now situated themselves as the builders of this heritage vis-à-vis the Turkish state and international institutions and acquired a new negotiation power. Although Mardin's application for World Heritage Site failed, the efforts to promote the city's cultural heritage that were crystallized in urban renewal projects that aimed to boost cultural industries in the city, continued.

Syriacs in and from Mardin in Europe became an asset for the city boosters, local government and Turkish state for another reason. The Christian minority population from Mardin not only claimed ownership of the cultural heritage (which was important for the UNESCO application), but their presence and well being (and most importantly their religious freedom) also became an acid test of the Turkish state's minority politics and capacities of governance of religious and cultural difference. Syriacs in and from Mardin in Europe acquired a different bargaining/negotiation power vis-à-vis the Turkish state in the new institutional context created by Turkey's EU candidacy. As the protection of minority rights and the governance of religious differences are crucial conditions to be fulfilled in EU membership candidacy, the Syriacs in and from Mardin in Europe became increasingly aware of their new position.⁴⁷ This is visible in their repeatedly expressed expectations from the EU to secure rights for Christians.^{48,49}

Turkey's EU candidacy and the EU's regime of supervision opened spaces where the Syriac migrants in Europe and the Syriacs in Mardin (however few they were) became

valuable assets in this city's re-scaling efforts. As the public enactment of cultural/religious diversity became crucial for the re-branding efforts of Mardin, the Syriacs in and from Mardin in Europe became scale makers in Mardin's efforts to reposition itself within and across state borders. The emergence of several Syriac HTAs in Europe at the beginning of the 2000s and the Syriac migrants' emergent homeland ties are closely related with these repositioning strategies and the urban struggle of Mardin. Ironically, the strengthening of their hometown ties simultaneously incorporated the Syriac migrants from Mardin further into the European institutions in their places of settlement (for example in Vienna, Zurich or in Stockholm). They increasingly became active in Christian organizations in Europe.⁵⁰

Mardin's case shows how the agency of migrants from Mardin in Europe was closely related to the processes of capital restructuring; how the emigrants were revalued within the context of Mardin's efforts to change its parameters within global, regional and national connectedness.⁵¹

Concluding Remarks

The Mardin case suggests that structural changes taking place in the cities of migrants' departure in Turkey and of settlement in Europe have an impact on the way immigrants and emigrants relate to their respective cities as well as on their trajectories of incorporation, including their transnational ties. These dynamics would have escaped analysis if they were addressed solely through an ethnic and/or national lens. The positioning of a city in relation to global power hierarchies and capital flows is crucial for the effectiveness of economic, social and political qualities within that city. Unless the dynamics of local politics and trajectories are related to the spatial dynamics of globalization, one cannot systematically address the questions of temporality and spatiality of migrant transnationalism and homeland ties.

In migration research, despite the recognition of the temporal dimension, the spatial aspect of statehood and the socio-spatial parameters of migrants' incorporation remain neglected. And in the context of neoliberal globalization this becomes a major deficiency. The relationship between states and their (im)migrant and emigrant populations not only change in time, but also vary in relation to the positioning of migrants' places of departure and settlement within state spatiality, which in turn are closely related to the global restructuring of capital. The Mardin case also indicates that migrants forge homeland ties not necessarily to secure a future back home due to their national ancestry; to cope with the precariousness of their lives or counter the discriminations they might be facing in their places of settlement.³² Migrants from Mardin started forging homeland ties when they were able to reconfigure the power relations in Mardin by succeeding to pull in supranational institutions that inserted themselves as actors vis-à-vis an array of institutional actors in Europe.

Adopting a global perspective on the variation of migrant emplacement in space and time raises new questions about migrant's agency beyond ethnic subjects and about their varying, negotiated and contested location in the urban/regional dynamics. To theorize locality we need to ask questions about the variation of migrant settlement

and trans-nationalism in space and time. It is important to realize that historicized reading of the location of migrants also requires a spatialized reading of their settlement processes and trans-national networks. Migrants from Turkey in Europe and their ties to places of departure in Turkey and to their places of settlement in Europe are no exception to these processes.

Acknowledgement

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45. Z.Ö. Biner (2007) Retrieving the dignity of a cosmopolitan city: contested perspectives on rights, culture and ethnicity in Mardin. *New Perspectives on Turkey*, **37**, p. 31.
46. Z.Ö. Biner (2011) Multiple imaginations of the state: understanding a mobile conflict on justice and accountability from the perspective of Assyrian-Syriac communities. *Citizenship Studies*, **15**(3,4), pp. 367–379.
47. The Archbishop's words are clear expression of this awareness. He said: 'We should like to see Turkey in the EU to live better and practise our culture better. We, as Christian minorities have a great task in establishing ties with Turkey and the European Union' – see H. Culpan (2004) Turkey's ancient Christians seek to resettle villages. *The Daily Star*, June 2.
48. J. Cowan (2009) Selective scrutiny: supranational engagement with minority protection and rights in Europe. In: F. Benda-Beckmann, K. Benda-Beckmann and A. Griffiths (eds) *The Power of Law in a Transnational World: Anthropological Enquiries* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books).
49. A. Caglar (2007) Rescaling cities, cultural diversity and transnationalism: migrants of Mardin and Essen. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, **30**(6), 1070–1095.
50. Through their Kafro hometown association and homeland oriented activities, the migrants from Mardin in Switzerland increasingly became involved in some church organizations there. The outcome of this new set of ties in Switzerland was a five-year project that aims to secure the return of Christian migrants from Mardin Province to Tur Abdin and involved several institutions based in Europe.
51. Such efforts to change the parameters of a place's connectedness is referred as 'jumping scale'. See E. Swyngedouw (1997) Neither global nor local: 'glocalization' and the politics of scale. In: K. Cox (ed.) *Spaces of Globalisation. Reasserting the Power of the Local* (New York, London), pp. 137–166.

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