

The Effect of Fellow Countrymen Associations on Migrants' Adaptation to the City: The Istanbul Association of the People of Konya

Mustafa Kaya¹

Abstract: After 1950, the principles of democracy, human rights, and welfare state came to the fore in Turkey as in the whole world, and significant changes occurred in the country's political situation. With the fragmentation of land, agricultural mechanization, and increasing population in rural areas, the people experiencing employment problems turned toward cities for finding work. One of the most significant problems migrants to the city experienced on this point was adapting to the city. The clash of cultural values carried from the countryside with urban values and lifestyles surfaced as a fundamental problem. Migrants benefitted in this process from the support of their fellow citizens in solving the housing, employment, and adaptation issues. By the 1970s, migrant networks had gained an institutional quality through fellow countrymen associations. In this regard, our study aims to research the effect İstanbul Konyalılar Derneęi [The Istanbul Association of the People of Konya] had on the process of adapting to the city for migrants who had migrated to Istanbul from Konya. The fact that Istanbul incorporates immigration factors (e.g., work opportunities, social opportunities) was influential in choosing it as the sample. The findings in the research are examined under four themes. The relationships members have with the association were questioned under the theme of the association-migrant relationship, and a conclusion was reached about the members' relationships with the association weakening as a result. The research arrived at the result that the profiles (e.g., education level, reason for migrating) of those migrating from Konya had changed. Information was reached where the changing relationship with members of the Association of the People of Konya had had been furnished with activities aimed now at reminding them of the nostalgic and cultural essence. The last theme of the research is processed under the title of transformation in the activities of the Association of the People of Konya. A broad explanation has been provided under this title about the activity areas the association conducts these days compared to the activities it conducted in its establishment phase. As a result of increased migrant mobility, whose research has increased, and differentiating reasons (e.g., social and economic), the interpretations can be brought about particularly in the context of the Association of the People of Konya that associations of fellow countrymen are within a change and transformation visually, that the migrant/association relationship has changed, and that the goals forming the content of the association's activity areas have changed.

Keywords: fellow countrymen associations • Istanbul Association of the People of Konya • Internal migration • adapting to the city • cultural activities

1 Mustafa Kaya (Master's Student), Department of Sociology, Institute of Social Sciences, Selçuk University, Konya Turkey. Email: mustafa.s.kaya42@gmail.com

To cite this article: Kaya, M. (2020). The effect of fellow countrymen associations on migrants' adaptation to the city: The Istanbul Association of the People of Konya. *Toplumsal Deęişim*, 2, 265–288.

Internal Migration and Adapting to the City

In migration mobility from small cities to large metropolises, adapting to the city varies with respect to the area being migrated from. In fact, migration from a small living space in terms of population and acreage to a bigger city compared to the place coming from in terms of population and acreage can lead to a transformation in the practices that provides one's earnings.

Thus compared to cities like Konya, Istanbul is one of the major cities showing improved living standards and having more job opportunities. When looking at the migration figures that the province of Konya receives from and gives to other provinces, the received migrations are seen to more likely happen from eastern regions to western regions (Koyuncu, 2015, p. 87). The city in demand among the migrants Konya provides to the west is Istanbul. When looked at generally, intercity migration is seen to have increased after the 1980s. Although the migrations from Konya to Istanbul are not high in number, it may be mentioned as something not to be underestimated.

Thus, people who migrate from Konya to Istanbul remain faced with another world of social environments and practices by breaking away from the social environment and practices they had been accustomed to in Konya. Even though the issue is migrating from one city to another, this migration mobility brings with it the process of adapting to the city. Fellow countrymen associations are what should basically be mentioned in the process of adapting to the city. Fellow countrymen associations are at the fore of the organizations that enable people to adapt to their new urban life.

Fellow Countrymen Associations

Fellow countrymen associations are seen as effective institutions in terms of exhibiting and keeping cultural practices alive. In fact, one of the environments where people who migrated with the same cultural memory come together and provide collective ideas and actions are the fellow countryman associations. At the same time, these associations are institutions that provide solidarity among people, allow easy communication with fellow countrymen, and offer assistance.

Fellow countryman associations became widespread after the 1990s. In fact, migration movements from cities that hadn't improved employment or life standards showed a direct increase toward cities that had developed employment opportunities. Therefore, fellow countrymen associations helped on basic issues like employment and housing in the first years they were established. After the 2000s, fellow countrymen associations realized these functions by organizing events toward cultural activities and helping students.

The Istanbul Association of the People of Konya

Fellow countrymen associations come across as civil society organizations established for the purpose of giving its members a sense of belonging (Özbay, 2014, p. 98). The Association of the People of Konya, established in Istanbul in 1994, is a fellow countrymen association formed basically for the purposes of gaining a sense of belonging and providing assistance and solidarity. A total of 824 member are registered in this association. However, the majority of those registered are registered as one person in the family being registered. The reason for the low number is explained in this way.

The Istanbul Association of the People of Konya was founded in 1994 under the chairmanship of Rüstü Özal. The association, which was chaired by Özal until 2000, continued under the chairmanship of Oktay Özaydın from 2000 to 2007. Kudret Fikirli has chaired the Istanbul Association of the People of Konya since 2013 (Eskil, 2014, p. 30).

Method

The research uses the semi-structured interview technique, a qualitative research method. The association managers were interviewed face-to-face using the semi-structured interview form. The qualitative research method has been chosen in the study due to its focus on experiences with constructing social structure and social understandings (Coşkun, 2015, p. 65).

Study Group

Individuals from the Istanbul Association of the People of Konya's management team have been chosen as the sample. The aim of explaining the state of the communications migrants from Konya have with association officials is the main reason for choosing the management team as the sample. In the data procurement stage, data was obtained through face-to-face interviews and talks by appointment lasting an average of 1 hr 15 min in places the participants deemed appropriate in Istanbul. Additionally, findings on the role fellow countrymen associations have for migrants were reached when scanning the related literature. However, no study is encountered on the changing vision of fellow countrymen associations or the relationship between national associations and immigrants. Thus the research is considered to be a study that fills the gap in the related literature.

Findings

The Migrant-Association Relationship

The relationship migrants from Konya to Istanbul have with fellow countrymen associations is different from the relationships people in other regions have with fellow

countrymen associations. In fact, the interest and connections people from Konya have toward these associations is not very intense. This is because individuals coming from Konya primarily communicate through personal efforts and acquaintances. The effects of geographical location, one's historical past on that person, and personal reasons are observed regarding why people from Konya have so few relations with the association.

The Association of the People of Konya conducts activities in an effort to establish bonds, solidarity, and communication among migrants from Konya. Fellow countrymen associations make efforts to establish a central network and organize various activities on this topic. A direct relationship exists between the association and migrants from Konya on the topics of establishing communication among the people of Konya, supporting one another, and helping one another.

The Transformation in the Association of the People of Konya's Activities

By 2000 and after, the interest in fellow countrymen associations and the position interesting these associations turned to the field of education and university students. In this period, the Association of the People of Konya was effective on the issues of providing scholarships for the livelihood of individuals who'd migrated for receiving education, of activities on sociocultural development, and of finding and being references for after education. Alongside this, cultural activities continued toward the nostalgic and cultural essence.

Additionally, the sanctioning power fellow countrymen associations had in the political arena was effective as a means of pressure after 2000. However, the Association of the People of Konya was not positioned as such on this point because they were seen to have no influence in the political sphere when comparing their member numbers with those of other provinces.

The Change in Fellow Countrymen Associations in the Context of the Changing Profile of Migration

Differences exist in the aim, profile, and expectations of those migrating to Istanbul from Konya in the first period to those who've recently migrated from Konya to Istanbul. Migrants from the first period, aside from acting with the expectation of finding work, came to Istanbul for the purpose of showing development economically. Therefore, the association had an important position for the first period of migrants. Recent migrants have migrated compulsorily (e.g., education, appointed assignment) in addition to optionally (e.g., investing, expanding job opportunities). Associations on this point had formed one of the alternative assistance tools for first period migrants. The meaning the associations express for recent migrants is "unity and

solidarity with fellow countrymen.” For this reason, fellow countrymen associations conduct their activities in recent times toward students. Alongside this, activities are also organized where people from Konya come together. The migrant mobility that periodically changes can be said to have caused the vision of fellow countrymen associations to change.

Activities Turned to the Nostalgic and Cultural Essence

The elements of local culture are highlighted in the social activities associations organize. All of these are also important because those who enter a new social structure by breaking away from one’s region and coming to the city and who begin to resolve meet the aspirations of the hometown. As a result, rather than keeping culture alive through the cultural events the fellow countrymen associations organize, they attempt to nostalgically remember the culture of the hometown. Activities are organized and fellow countrymen come together both for recalling Konya’s culture and for keeping up with the urban culture of Istanbul.

Results

As a result, visible transformations are seen to have occurred in parallel with social changes in the vision, mission, and member profile in the structure of fellow countrymen associations. Changes in economic developments, the aims of migration, and the reasons can be counted among the causes mainly seen. Later technological developments and migrant profile changes and the reasons such as wants that changed in this context can be shown among the causes for fellow countrymen associations’ loss of impact on migrants. In fact, widespread Internet use and the emergence and spread of smartphones together with social media tools have facilitated communication between people. This situation has weakened the function of fellow countrymen associations. While these associations had a central location for the first period of migrants from Konya to Istanbul, migrants from Konya to Istanbul in later years both now had kith-and-kin relatives in Istanbul as well as different reasons for migrating; their personal situations being better than the first migrants had reduced the interest in fellow countrymen associations. In the light of developing cyclical conditions, this situation brought about the fellow countrymen association’s change in vision, turning its attention to university students who are from Konya. Ultimately, the Association of the People of Konya’s interest in and connection to education remains important.

In this regard, change can be made on the topic of purpose and vision for fellow countrymen associations at this scale through the Association of the People of Konya which was chosen as the sample. Applications can be performed such as using social media, presenting advertisements for the association through various channels, providing easy access to its web site, and doing more advertising. Additionally,

improving the scholarship criteria, scholarship amounts, and socio-cultural activities developed toward students can be provided for activities conducted on the topic of education pertaining to associations of this scale in recent times, particularly the Association of the People of Konya. Alongside conferences, cultural events, and dinner meetings, an environment (e.g., study hall) where university students who are from Konya can study can be arranged.

Acknowledgements: This is an extended abstract of the article entitled “Göçmenlerin Kente Uyumunda Hemşeri Derneklerinin Etkisi: İstanbul Konyalılar Derneği” published in *Toplumsal Değişim*.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Grant Support: The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Kaynakça/References

- Akpınar, R. (2013). *İzmir’de faaliyet gösteren hemşehri derneklerinin şehir kimliğine etkileri. Balıkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 16(29), 261–275.
- Aktay, Y. (2005). *Küresel kentleşme Konya örneği*. Damla Ofset.
- Coşkun, R., Altunışık, R. ve Yıdırım, E. (2015). *Sosyal bilimlerde araştırma yöntemleri*. Sakarya Yayıncılık.
- Çağlayan, S. (2006). Göç kuramları, göç ve göçmen ilişkisi. *Muğla Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi (İLKE)*, 17, 67–91.
- Dünya’nın Verisi. (2018). *Hemşehri derneklerinin illere göre dağılımı haritası (2018 Şubat Ayı)*. <https://twitter.com/DrDataStats/status/982161591138369538>
- Eskil, H. (2014). *Konyalılar Derneği 1944’ten bugüne*. Ozan Yayıncılık.
- İnat, Ş. (2006). *Sivil toplum kuruluşu olarak hemşehri dernekleri ve kentleşme süreci (Antalya örneği)* (Yüksek lisans tezi, Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, Isparta). <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/>
- Koyuncu, A. (2011). *1980’den sonra kente göç edenlerin tutunma yolları: Konya örneği* (Doktora tezi, Selçuk Üniversitesi, Konya). <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/>
- Koyuncu, A. (2015). *Kentleşme ve göç*. Hikmetevi Yayınları.
- Özbay, F. (2014). *Şehirleşme süreçlerinde sosyal bir ilişki ağı olarak hemşehri derneklerinin işlevleri: Kütahya örneği* [Kütahya Özel Sayısı]. *Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 2014, 97–110.
- Özgür, Ö. ve Uluocak, G. P. (2011). Kentleşme-kentleşme sürecinde sivil toplum örgütlerinin rolü: Ankara’da bir semt derneği ve gecekondü mahallesi örneğinde bir değerlendirme. *Uluslararası İnsan Bilimleri Dergisi*, 8(1), 231–247.

- Özkiraz, A. ve Acungil, Y. (2012). Hemşehri derneklerinin kentlileşme sürecindeki rolü (Tokat örneęi). *Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 29(1), 247–272.
- Terzi, E. ve Koçak, Y. (2014). Hemşehri dernekleri, hemşehrilik bilinci ve kentlileşme ilişkisi üzerine bir araştırma: İstanbul/Sultangazi’deki Karşlı hemşehri dernekleri örneęi. *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 32, 137–150.
- Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu. (2017). *Adrese dayalı nüfus kayıt sistemi sonuçları*. <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/HbGetirHTML.do?id=27587>
- Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu. (2018). *Adrese dayalı nüfus kayıt sistemi sonuçları*. <https://biruni.tuik.gov.tr/medas/?kn=95&locale=tr>