Hometown associations, the rescaling of state spatiality and migrant grassroots transnationalism

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Abstract  Migration scholars have noted the recent growth of hometown associations (HTAs) in different parts of the world and have approached the topic within the nexus of migration, the increased flow of remittances and development. However, the question of the differential growth, spread and success of HTAs (even in the same national territory) is not addressed and/or remains under-theorized in migration scholarship. In this article I concentrate on how different genealogies, discourses and policies of migration in Europe and the USA gave rise to different trajectories of transnational migration scholarship, including the research on HTAs. Focusing on the blind spots created by these different paths of transnational migration research, I frame migrant HTAs in the context of the changing state–space relations of neo-liberal globalization. In this article I attempt to break the spatial indifference to state territory in migration research and to relate the dynamics of migrant formations to uneven spatial development, rescaling processes, the changing geographical organization of state intervention and the transformations welfare states go through in times of neo-liberal agendas. Finally, on the basis of a case study of a Turkish hometown association in Germany, I raise some questions about the narratives of power in transnational migration research.

The first issue of the journal Bozlular Kultur ve Yardımlasma Dernegi – ARPAD – (The Culture and Mutual Aid Organization of those from Bozlu) appeared in spring 2001 in Berlin. It is published by migrants in Berlin in Turkish and distributed both there and in ‘Bozlu’ (not the real name of the place). It includes information about Bozlu, as well as ARPAD’s members and activities, such as their annual dinner held in Berlin (Bozlular Gecesi). Its 34 pages contain 13 advertisements, of which two are from companies based in Bozlu. The rest are advertisements of companies based in Berlin but owned by people from Bozlu. The two Turkey-based companies have either a representative in Berlin or are owned by businessmen who also have a business there. The two opening articles are written separately by the governor and mayor of Bozlu, both addressing migrants from the area in Europe.

ARPAD, which aims to contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of Bozlu and to connect the people from Bozlu ‘at home’ and abroad, is a typical hometown association (HTA). A HTA is an organization of migrants from the same town or parish in a host country who congregate primarily for social and
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mutual-aid purposes (Levitt 2001; Orozco 2000b; Ortiz 2000; Sørensen 2004). Although there are several different kinds of HTAs, their main defining characteristics are their informal and voluntary structure and their sporadic relationship with their hometowns (particularly with local governments and municipalities and their small economic base, see Orozco 2000b). Their relations with their hometowns are geared to improve their economic and social situation.

Like many of the other HTAs described in the transnational migration literature, ARPAD organizes charitable events and festivals, contributes to human development and tries to improve the economic and social position of the home community in Bozlu. Other than giving scholarships to 46 secondary and university students in Bozlu, ARPAD finances the circumcision ceremonies of children from poor families in the area and organizes donations of ambulances, medical instruments and the like. ARPAD sponsors Bozlu’s soccer team (Bozluspor) in both Bozlu and Berlin and organizes language classes, computer courses and cultural activities (like drama) for immigrants in Berlin. From this perspective, ARPAD and its journal are not unique. On the contrary, all its activities fall within the range of typical HTA behaviour in different parts of the world. However, what makes this case noteworthy is that, although Turkish migration to Europe and Germany started four decades ago and officially stopped at the beginning of the 1970s, ARPAD was only established very recently, in October 1999. Today it has 2000 members in Europe, a representative in Bozlu and it collaborates with a Bozlu hometown association in Istanbul. Furthermore, Turkish migrants from different parts of the country are establishing associations like ARPAD across Germany and Europe. How can we explain the recent revival of HTAs in general and the foundation of a new hometown association like ARPAD?

If the main goal and function of hometown associations is to cater to the domestic needs of their members, then the need for such organizations is more pressing in the early phases of migration when the multifaceted migrant networks in the country of settlement are not yet in place. However, several studies have stressed that homeland and transnational ties are not characteristic of a transition period in migration, and that it is the more established migrants rather than the most recent newcomers who forge transnational ties, including transnational entrepreneurship networks (Portes et al. 2002). Studies on the hometown associations of migrants from Central America also draw attention to the growth of Latino HTAs in the USA over the past decade (Orozco 2000a). In this sense, the recent resurgence of Turkish migrant HTAs in Germany after 40 years of migration is not an anomaly. On the contrary, it follows the general pattern of HTA development elsewhere. What makes the ARPAD case or the general growth of Turkish HTAs in Germany and Europe more striking is that, contrary to Latino migration to the USA, for example, there has been little increase in Turkish migration to either Berlin or Germany. The recent growth in Germany’s Turkish migrant population is more the consequence of limited refugee and illegal migration flows, family reunification (which is no longer significant) and natural growth by birth. From this perspective, it might be useful to explore the dynamics and complexities behind the recent growth of such associations as a general phenomenon.
Most studies of HTAs, especially those on the recent expansion of their activities and functions, approach them from within a conceptual framework of migration, remittances and development. The literature emphasizes the transformative impact of the increasing volume of remittances (particularly of collective remittances), on the nature of actors involved in the field of transnational migrant organizations (Orozco 2000a, 2000b; Sørensen 2004; Vertovec 2000). Departing from this nexus, I propose a framework for exploring the differential growth and success of HTAs in the context of the changing relations between the state and space under the conditions of neoliberalism. In the first part of the article I look at the differences between research on HTAs based in the USA and Europe in the context of the different trajectories of research on migrant transnationalism characteristic of the two regions. In the second part I deal with the commonalities of research on transnational migrant organizations and explore the emergent markets and new actors constructed around the flow of remittances and HTAs. In the third section I emphasize the weaknesses of these studies for understanding the place-specific factors and call for integrating socio-spatial considerations, particularly around scale, into transnational migration research. The changing state–space relations in this section are framed in close relation to neoliberal globalization. A case study of businesses and entrepreneurs acting between Bozlu and Berlin substantiates these points. In the conclusion I suggest we revisit the division between ‘transnationalism from above’ and ‘transnationalism from below’ and, following on from there, the encounter between states and transnational migrants in general.

**Different trajectories of research on HTAs in the USA and Europe**

Examples of different types of hometown associations and the different kinds of support they provide to their communities abound in the literature on transnational migration. Although HTAs are a worldwide phenomenon, research concentrates only on specific migrant groups in particular countries of settlement. Most of the literature focuses on HTAs in the USA established by Latino migrants from Central and Latin America. The HTAs of El Salvadorian, Mexican, Nigerian, Dominican, Guyanese and Chinese migrants in the USA, and the cross-border networks they sustain through these associations, are well-documented (Guarnizo 1998; Landolt et al. 1999; Okafor and Honey 1998; Orozco 2000a, 2002; Ortiz 2000; Smith 1998). However, there are hardly any studies on the associations of Turkish migrants in Germany or in Europe in general. There are not even surveys of the number of HTAs in Europe and Germany. For example, if we simply concentrate on Turkish migration to Europe and largely to Germany, we quickly notice that there were migrant HTAs from the mid-1970s onwards. These were mutual-aid associations concentrating mainly on cultural activities. However, despite their presence in the lives of migrants, these organizations never became a topic of research in migration studies in Germany.

The differences between research based in the USA and in Europe might be explained by two main factors. First, HTAs are more on the agenda of migrants in the USA and there has been a rapid increase in their numbers in the last two decades
Second, migration research in the two regions followed different trajectories with different emphases and blind spots partly resulting from the different genealogies, discourses and policies of migration in these places. Research on migrant HTAs is one of these blind spots. It is true that, given the greater volume and longer history of migration to the USA, HTAs occupy a more central role in the lives of migrants there than in Europe. Orozco traces the first Latino HTAs back to the 1950s. However, the number of associations alone cannot explain the uneven importance given to them in migration research on both sides of the Atlantic. As the example of ARPAD shows, new Turkish migrant HTAs in Germany emerged after the mid-1990s. These associations are still called culture and mutual-aid associations, but their activities are not restricted to cultural and mutual-aid activities. They seek a presence in migrants’ political and economic lives. They strive to become political and economic players in their countries of origin and settlement. A recent event organized and hosted by the HTA of Trabzon in Duisburg (in July 2004) illustrates the scope of their activities. Members of Trabzon’s HTA, as well as the mayor and governor of Duisburg, met representatives of different Turkish migrant HTAs (mainly from the Black Sea region and eastern and southeastern parts of Turkey) to discuss their activities, plans for collaboration, concerns, problems and, most importantly, their vote in the German elections (Alcapinar 2004).

Despite the changing presence of HTAs in migrants’ social, political and economic lives, the topic remains unexplored both in the past and present research into postwar migration Europe. The discrepancy between HTA research on both sides of the Atlantic could be considered to be paradigmatic of the different trajectories of transnational migration research and the different emphases put on them in the USA and Europe in general. These distinct trajectories are closely related to the ideologies and policies surrounding migration to the two regions. I argue that different designs of comparative studies in the field of transnational migration in the USA and Europe are the indicators of these different trajectories. They create different blind spots about the institutions of country of origin and/or settlement. Some of these differences originate from the distinct nature of migration to these places. In the US case, migrants from different countries of origin settled in one country while in Europe, migrants from different countries settled in different European countries. Sometimes, as in the case of postwar Turkish migration to Europe, migrants from a single sending country will settle in a number of European countries and establish networks stretching among these countries as well as to Turkey. Consequently, while the receiving state and society are not variables in the research on migration to the USA, both sending and receiving states and societies are variables in research on migration to Europe. In the US-based migration research, comparative studies of migrant groups (most often formulated as ‘ethnic groups’) from different countries of origin to the USA abound. In European-based migration scholarship, the comparative design takes the form of comparing the incorporation or integration of one migrant group in several host countries or of different migrant groups (again mostly conceptualized as ethnic and/or national groups) in one host country. Furthermore, the differences in the
discourses and policies of migration on both sides of the Atlantic also play a role in the nature of the questions addressed in migration research.

The either/or logic of the linear models of migrant incorporation and the reactions to these shaped the paths of the US- and Europe-based research in different ways with different emphases and effects. Against the hegemony of the assimilationist model of conventional migration research and ideology, it was important for those scholars of transnational migration in the USA who wished to criticize the linearity of incorporation patterns of integration/assimilation models to emphasize homeland ties. In fact, exploration of homeland ties was crucial in the formulation of transnational migration as an alternative perspective on migrant incorporation to the assimilationist paradigm in the USA (Basch et al. 1994; Glick Schiller et al. 1992, 1995; Goldring 1998; Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Levitt 2001; Portes 1999; Portes et al. 1999; Vertovec 1999). As a consequence, in US transnational migration research, migrants’ homeland ties and the sending state’s policies come to the fore as the main indices and factors responsible for the persistence and/or reconstitution of their transnationalism. Transnational migration research is dominated by the bipolarity between the country of origin and settlement in the USA. Transnational migration research beyond the bipolar model is relatively underdeveloped in US scholarship.

In Europe, on the other hand, postwar labour migration was generally regarded as temporary (resulting from the ‘guest worker’ schemes). Initially, migrant workers were not expected to be incorporated into receiving societies, but were seen as a temporary labour force. From this perspective, any migrant organization oriented towards the homeland was not an anomaly. Any such association was not conceived as a threat to the discourses and expectations constructed around migration in the 1960s and 1970s. For the migration scholars and the community leaders who were critical of the dominant migration policy and the discourse of migrants’ temporariness, it was then important to underline the incorporation of migrants into the receiving society at social, economic, political and cultural levels. This was an important part of these scholars’ critique of the existing scholarship, discourses and policies of migration. For this reason, it was important for the proponents of an alternative perspective to show that Germany was becoming a country of immigration (Heckmann 1981) and the extent to which the migrants, willingly or unwillingly, had already became part of receiving societies and polities (Castles et al. 1984).

Although the discourses and policies about the temporary nature of migration were replaced by the frame of integration in the mid-1980s, within the either/or logic of the dominant discourse on immigrant incorporation, this time migrants’ homeland oriented activities and politics were taken as indicators of their failure to sever their homeland ties and to integrate into the country of settlement. As a result, homeland ties were again downplayed by migration scholars and community leaders. Due to this trajectory, in the European landscape of migration research and politics, ‘no matter whether the countries of settlement had inclusive or exclusive policies towards migrants, homeland ties and politics of migrants have always been identified as an intrusion’ (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001b) and as signs of imperfect incorporation. Thus, neither scholars nor community leaders highlighted the role of sending country
policies in the mobilization of migrant transnational politics and practices. Instead, the institutional structures of the country of settlement occupied a central place in the Europe research on migration and transnationalism.

As a result of the different emphases put on the sending and receiving countries and their institutions, as well as the different composition of migrants to the USA and Europe (migrants from one country in one or from several countries to several countries of destination), comparative studies of migration follow a different pattern. In the comparison of migrant groups from different countries of origin to the USA, the institutional structures of the receiving society became quasi-invisible. Each individual empirical case shaped the conceptualization of transnational migration. As a consequence, sending-state policies and migrant organizations, which play a role in mediating homeland ties and politics – like HTAs – came to the forefront in these studies. In Europe, the main emphasis in comparative research has been on the institutional frames of receiving societies that shape migrants’ patterns of organization and strategies of participation. By providing different resources and principles of organization different societies in Europe are thought to provide different opportunity structures. Within this perspective, comparative research design takes the form of comparing the collective patterns of organization, and claims-making processes of a migrant group from the same country of origin in different European countries (Amiraux 2001; Kastoryano 2004; Massicard 2002; Soysal 1994). Thus, most of the time the focus is put on the receiving societies at the expense of an analysis of sending-state policies. Within this context, HTAs that serve as platforms for claims-making for migrant homeland politics have become a neglected topic.

These different trajectories of research in Europe and the USA are not confined to the domain of HTA research; they are also found in studies of remittances and the closely related issue of development. It is no coincidence that most research on remittances of Turkish migrants in Europe was conducted in the early phases of migration. Despite the flow of a large volume of remittances from Europe to Turkey, remittances and their channels of transfer remain underdeveloped areas of research. In fact, some scholars or research institutions have argued that Turkish migrants have been integrating into Germany by showing that they have been spending increasingly higher portions of their income there (Sen and Goldberg 1996; Zentrum für Türkeistudien 1992). Such a trend in consumption and savings was interpreted not only as a sign of their desire to integrate, but also as a sign that they were severing their homeland ties. The dominant discourse on foreigners’ homeland ties based on an either/or logic was effective in the research designs of (research) institutes (see for example Senatsverwaltung für soziales 1994; Zentrum für Türkeistudien 1992) and in the discourses of community leaders. The debates on German Turks’ consumption patterns and their investments in Germany were all taken as indicators of their incorporation into German society at the expense of their homeland ties (for a critical assessment of this view see Caglar 1996).

Within this framework, and despite the increasing amount of remittances sent by Turkish migrants from Europe, the emphasis on remittances lost its strength in the public debates and scholarship. The amount in remittances sent to Turkey rose from
US$ 273 million in 1970 to US$ 5326 million in 1998. In 1998 they were equivalent to 37.7 per cent of the country’s trade deficit and 17.2 per cent of exports (Central Bank of Turkey 2001; State Institute of Statistics 2001). Though there was a slight drop in 2000, the amount remitted to Turkey still reached US$ 4560 million, putting it in third place in worldwide rankings for developing countries receiving remittances (Vertovec 2001). This trend of increasing remittances to Turkey is congruent with the world pattern of a marked increase in remittance flows to developing countries in the last two decades (IMF 2005; IOM 2005; Sørensen 2004). Despite all this, it is striking that Turkish migrants’ remittances and channels of transfer did not become hot topics either for scholars working on Turkish immigration and emigration or for the financial institutions in Europe and Turkey in the 1990s and early 2000s. When exploring the hot topics and blind spots of migration scholarship, it is important to underline once more how research agendas and scholars’ conceptual repertoires are confined and shaped by current political agendas and dominant discourses.

Although the Turkish population abroad constitutes around 5 per cent of Turkey’s resident population and, according to a recent study, around 150,000 people are estimated to leave Turkey annually for Western European countries (Eurostat 2000), few works concentrated on remittances in the 1990s and 2000s. Remittances were of interest in the literature on international labour migration from Turkey in the 1970s and early 1980s (Abadan-Unat 1976; Eraydin 1981; Gitmez 1984; Gökdere 1994; Keyder and Aksu-Koc 1987; Paine 1974), but not in the 1990s and 2000s, when (ironically) their figures drastically increased. In the 1970s and 1980s, there were some state initiatives to use workers’ remittances for development purposes by means of government-supported programmes like DESIYAB (the State Industrial and Workers Investment Bank), or through joint stock companies combining state, private capital and workers’ remittances, or by means of village cooperatives. None of these programmes were successful in translating remittances into coordinated investment schemes until the introduction of a series of incentives to attract Turkish migrants’ capital to the Turkish Central Bank by means of ‘super’ interest rate (Super Doviz Hesabi) in 1998 (see Merkez Bankası 1998). Interestingly, compared with their North American counterparts, financial institutions in Europe (including Germany from where most of these flows originate) also showed little interest in monitoring these money transfers and tapping into this service sector. Not only were companies and institutions in Germany latecomers to ‘ethno-marketing’, but banks and state institutions were also responsible for a general indifference and failure to explore this sector.

In short, because of the negative image the migrants’ persistent homeland ties carried within the general political agendas of European immigration countries, the question of homeland ties in general and remittances of Turkish migrants in particular disappeared slowly from the literature. Interest in and research on Turkish migrants’ homeland ties and networks – beyond any kind of either/or logic of integration/assimilation versus ghettoisation/enclavement discussions started only with the rise of a transnational framework at the beginning of the 2000s (see Caglar 2001; Faist 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Hillmann 2000; Kaya 1998; Massicard 2002; Østergaard-
Nielsen 2000, 2001a, 2001b; van Bruinessen 2000). Even within this framework, the emphasis was on the institutions and policies of the ‘receiving societies’.

**Transfigurations of hometown associations**

There is an agreement in the literature that the recent growth of HTAs is closely related to the surge of remittances (Orozco 2000a, 2000b; Sørensen 2004). Their volume increased so drastically that remittances were reassessed in development thinking. The Global Development Finance 2003 annual report estimates that $US 72.3 billion of remittances went to developing countries. Remittances going to Latin America and the Caribbean were more than double the level of official development aid (Sørensen 2004: 8) while remittances to India increased from $US 5.5 to $US 9.1 billion in 2000 (IMF balance of Payment Statistics Yearbook 2001 quoted in Sørensen 2004: 11). HTAs, which are among the main mediating organizations for the flow of remittances, acquire a new meaning in this context. However, it would be erroneous to interpret the increasing importance of remittances as the sole factor responsible for the growth of associations (see Orozco 2000a). The relationship between remittances and HTAs is not directly functional, but it is rather complex. It is not simply the increase in the volume of worldwide flow of remittances, but their relative importance as a steady flow of capital to developing countries that gives remittances their transformative capacities. They are transformative not only because the market surrounding this form of capital flow has expanded but also because this enlarged market started to draw in new actors that were valorized as grounding the neo-liberal agenda in recipient countries.

As a consequence of this increased volume and relative steady flow remittances, particularly to developing countries, acquire a new importance in the agendas of both international development agencies and the financial service industries involved in money transfers. Supranational development agencies, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, all started to show a renewed interest in migrants’ remittances for their development potential (IMF 2005; Kuznetsov 2002). HTAs, which function as media for collective remittances, come to the forefront. However, within the wide array of new actors and practices involved in the enlarged market for remittances, HTAs acquire a new function and enter into new relations with the international actors. In the context of remittances becoming the new development mantra, HTAs increasingly function as local development agencies not only for governments, but also for multinational and/or supranational agencies. In this emergent market the relationship between HTAs and government agencies is redefined and becomes entangled. In particular, the more intense relations with municipalities take a new turn within these entanglements among HTAs, state institutions and supranational agencies. State institutions introduce series of new instruments to attract and ease the flow of remittances – like government and private sector remittance bonds and migrant foreign currency accounts. However, although most of these initiatives come from the state, they encourage cooperation between HTAs and the local governments not necessarily nested in the national level. In this
context, the nature of HTAs and their collaborations, as well as the partners of these collaborations change. Hometown associations are transfigured.

All the students of migration who work on HTAs emphasize that government outreach programmes that match HTA money with government funding are crucial for their spread. However, although these programmes and the expanding market around remittances could explain the general growth of HTAs, they remain insufficient to exploring their **differential** growth and spread. Although it has been acknowledged that HTAs will not be uniformly successful (Orozco 2000a: 9), analysis of the dynamics behind the differential success of HTAs, even within the borders of the same nation, remains unexplored and under theorized. Orozco addresses this question in his report prepared for the Inter-American Dialogue and the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute. He urges more research anchored in both theory and hard data to explore and explain the growth and differential success of HTAs (Orozco 2000a: 1). I argue in the next section that instead of searching for explanations in the specific characteristics and the composition of the migrant population active in HTAs, the changing landscape of state regulatory activity might be a better entry point for an analysis of their differential growth and success.

**HTAs and the spatiality of state power**

The **differential** increase and **spread** of HTAs can be explained at two levels. The first is the policies of different sending states, while the second concentrates on the specific qualities of the migrant communities, such as their ‘exit’ conditions or background characteristics. With the increasing presence of government agencies in migrant associations abroad, the sending state policies towards communities abroad become more central in the analysis of HTAs. There is an increasing interest in exploring sending-state policies towards communities abroad from different parts of the world (Levitt and de la Dehesa 2003; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). However, in these studies, no matter what factors are selected to explain the convergences and divergences of state policies, the analysis remains at a level in which state territory is treated as a homogenous entity vis-à-vis state policies. Consequently, state activity towards communities abroad and towards the activities in the hometowns in the country of origin are rarely differentiated by their sociospatial characteristics. Although variations in the relationship between sending states and different HTAs from the same sending state are noted, these variations are usually explained on the basis of ethnicity. ‘Ethnic’ or religious groups (particularly those that are in conflict with the state) like Zacatecans in Mexico (Smith 1998), or Kurds and Alevis in Turkey (Massicard 2002; Østergaard-Nielsen 2001a) are rare examples of cases in which state policies towards the communities abroad from the same country of origin are differentiated in research.

In the literature of transnational migration, sending state policies, which are designed to channel and reorient the activities of migrant associations towards hometowns, are approached at the national level, namely without any spatial differentiation within the nation-state. The firm grip of ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer and
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Glick Schiller 2002) is striking in creating a spatial indifference within the state territory in migration research. Another kind of explanation for the lack of uniformity in the growth and intensification of homeland ties, and consequently for the uneven spread of HTAs, is grounded in the rural/urban origin, occupational level of the immigrants, their networks and their conditions of exit. Surprisingly, the place-specific factors of these networks and relationships beyond the national scale have also been largely neglected in these analyses.

In general, both the sending and the receiving states are considered to operate on the principles of the equality and homogeneity of national territory. These principles are assumed to establish the ground for state policies and redistribution schemes regarding migrants and HTAs. Although HTA research highlights the importance of localities, like the local-to-local ties and grass-roots mobilization foci of the USA-based research on transnational migration, the localities in these perspectives are generally conceptualized in terms of the nested hierarchies of national and regional levels. They are not approached in terms of their structural or spatial positioning with regard to circuits of capital within the uneven global order.

The concept of scale, developed by a group of geographers and political economists (like Brenner 1998a, 1998b, 2004; Brenner and Theodore 2002; Brenner et al. 2003; Smith 1992, 1995; Swyngedouw 1992), is useful for introducing the missing socio-spatial parameters to the analysis of ‘locality’ in migration scholarship. Scale has not been part of the conceptual toolkit of migration scholars (for an exception, see Glick Schiller and Caglar 2005). However, it is a perspective that allows us to take locality into consideration within the interaction of power hierarchies. It is a term geographers, urban planners and political economists deploy to analyse the uneven character of globalization. It refers to the processual embedding of urban formations and structures in a range of political and economic hierarchies. The scalar positioning of a city refers to the placement of it or an urban zone within the circuits that structure the accumulation of capital. According to scale theorists, the hierarchies and structural positioning of cities and localities (urban zones) in general are no longer simply nested in interstate or national-regional hierarchies. These are located differently depending on their positioning vis-à-vis global, national and regional circuits of capital flow. These scholars argue for a spatialized approach to statehood because they underline that, within the context of globalization, not only the relationship between localities, but also that between localities and states, is altered. Thus, the homogeneity and equality principles of national social welfare policies and redistribution schemes are disrupted (Brenner et al. 2003). For this reason, it is not possible to assume a spatially equal distribution of administrative and political power within state territory. Disruption of the equality of spaces within a national territory means that states relate to the cities within the territory of the nation-state in a differentiated way – depending on their location relative to the circuits of capital accumulation. Within the context of emergent neo-liberal market-oriented restructuring projects, state activity is rescaled, namely state intervention and activity are institutionally and geographically differentiated, disrupting the homogenous state space of intervention. I argue that the analysis of all migrant formations (transnational or not) need to take the
political economy of ‘space’ and the rescaling processes of neo-liberal globalization into account. Otherwise, the concepts of space and ‘locality’, which are central to the phenomenon of migration, remain under-theorized.

According to theorists advocating a scalar approach to state policies (Brenner et al. 2003; Jessop 1999), states continue to be the important players in the globalization process. States not only fail to become marginalized in this process but they also contribute to the development of uneven geographies of urbanization and territorial inequalities within the national territory. They shape this restructuring process through their spatially selective interventions. Growth-oriented and competition-driven state spatial strategies are crucial for the creation of advantages for selected localities within the state territory in the global economy. Thus, states play an important role in establishing new patterns of uneven spatial development by re-concentrating their socio-economic activity, like state subsidies, the provision of key infrastructural facilities and public services, in particular zones to enhance the competitiveness of these zones. In this context, the competition among the cities to attract global capital is entangled with their competition to attract state subsidies.

State spatial strategies involve attempts to influence the geographies of socio-economic activities such as industrial agglomeration, infrastructure investment and demographic movements within a state territory (Brenner et al. 2003). These result in new entrepreneurial approaches to local economic development (public/private partnerships), horizontally articulated linkages among state and non-state institutions (state/civil society alliances) and diverse programmes of institutional restructuring to enhance territorial competitiveness and place-specific locational assets. In this way, by becoming part of a ‘politics of scale’, urban and regional governance acquire a new significance. Scalar analysis orients us towards the institutional dynamics of various cities within wider flows of resources and poses new questions about governance. With the ‘destabilization’ of the nationally-scaled form of state regulation, new patterns of partnerships with new forms and levels of governance come to the forefront. There is a move from the nationally coordinated bureaucratic hierarchies to situational ties of governance and forms of political and economic activity. Thus, within the emergent spaces of regionalism, regions and zones become important sites for a variety of neo-liberal regulatory experiments, including different modes of public and private partnerships, to rejuvenate capitalist growth (Brenner et al. 2003: 17). The changing public discourse about the representation of particular cities and the resources available to the residents of the city are all shaped within the context of scalar politics. All these resources, including human resources, are evaluated anew in the context of rescaling processes.

Drawing from this literature, I argue that the differential growth and transformations that HTAs go through, as well as the migrant incorporation and homeland oriented activities of migrants in general, can be approached from the perspective of the rescaling of political and economic space within the context of the neo-liberalization of regulatory systems. Changes in the activities of HTAs and in their partnerships and alliances with new actors, as well as their entanglements with the state, whether these are with municipalities or local governments, might be
approached from the context of sub-national forms of political activity, which are no longer nested in the hierarchies from global-national-regional-local.

Within the context of the scalar organization of state space and the consequent multiscalar networks and sub-national forms of governance and political activity, all the changes underlined in the literature of HTAs in terms of the nature of their activities, alliances and partnerships, as well as their new function as development agents acquire a different meaning. In relation to the changing activities and alliances of HTAs, migration scholars stress that there is a shift in their undertakings from charitable activities to infrastructural development; they increasingly enter into partnerships and alliances with state and local governments in generating investment ventures; they have an increasing involvement in hybrid forms of investment and community support programmes for locally focused economic development projects and last, but not the least, HTAs often function as important platforms for matching fund schemes. I argue that all these changes could be interpreted as effects of the rescaling process taking place in the context of neo-liberalism. The policies of sending states and their outreach programmes (with the matching funds, initiatives and incentives to attract and translate the migrants’ remittances into development strategies) could also be interpreted from this perspective. The literature on HTAs and transnational migration illustrates that the schemes and financial instruments that have been employed to channel the collective remittances of migrants via HTAs involve reduced tariffs given to migrants on the importation of machinery; special duty and tax breaks on equipment and investments in particular zones (underdeveloped or export processing zones); preferential access to capital goods as well as hybrid forms of governance and migrant organizations’ joint ventures (Orozco 2000a, 2000b). I argue that all these innovative strategies fit into programmes designed to decentre nationally-scaled forms of state activity. Such schemes and financial instruments are also part of the emergent strategies of a state’s selective regulation of space.

This call to relate migrant formations to rescaling processes is, ironically, a plea to bring socio-spatial considerations into the analysis of a process that is itself primarily about spatial mobility, namely migration. Recent research on sending states warns us against treating sending states as unitary entities and urges us to open up the ‘black box’ analysis of sending countries. This stream of research correctly approaches the states as a complex set of actors with divergent perceptions of and policies towards nationals abroad (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003), which not only involve ambiguities but also vary over time. However, despite recognizing the importance of the temporal dimension in migration research, the spatial aspect of statehood remains neglected. A spatialized approach to the sending state’s policies as well as to the context of migrant incorporation is long overdue. Although the absence of a reflexive approach to state spatiality and place-specific factors relative to state regulatory activity in migration research is most striking in research on HTAs and sending state policies, it is not limited to this domain.

Transnational migration research that focuses on the institutional structures and resources available to migrants as key factors in explaining migrant strategies of organization and participation also disregards the rescaling processes in state
regulatory activity. It remains within the cosmology of the national state’s space as if all spaces within the national territory were even and homogenous in terms of the opportunity structures they provide to the migrants. Unless we link the opportunity structures available to migrants to the scalar positioning of their locality, we fail to approach migrant practices, collective patterns of organization and strategies of participation in conjunction with the transformations of the contemporary welfare state. The opportunity structure model still operates on the basis of a welfare state model that assumes the equality of space within the nation-state.

**Industrial districts, Salkim Birlik and ARPAD**

The increasing neo-liberalization of national regulatory systems and the consequent institutional and geographical reorganization of state intervention establish a new context for viewing the resurgence of hometown associations. The increasing involvement of local authorities in migrants’ transnational practices directed towards their hometowns and even the increasing traffic of mayors and governors from Turkey to Germany and to migrant HTAs acquire a new meaning and significance within the framework of new forms of state and civil society alliances formed to increase the territorial competitiveness of some locations and regions. The selective strategies of states open up new entrepreneurial opportunities to businessmen in, and migrants from, these locations. Transnational entrepreneurs also become part of the scalar arrangements geared to rejuvenate capital growth in selected spaces. In this section I concentrate on the hometown of ‘Bozlu’ and its association, ARPAD, from this point of view.

As indicated above, in the first pages of ARPAD’s journal, Bozlular, the governor and mayor of Bozlu each, in separate articles, address migrants from Bozlu living in Europe. While the mayor asks for their financial and emotional support for their soccer team ‘Bozluspor’ (Bozlular 2001: 6), the governor deals with the questions of internal migration and its consequent problems in his region. He urges people from Bozlu in Europe to help solve their region’s health, education and infrastructural problems. Most importantly, in underlining the importance of investment in the region, he informs the readers about the 300,000 square metre plot of land in the ‘Second Organized Industrial Zone’ that is being offered to investors. As he states: ‘Other than 1 US$ charged annually for each square metre for infrastructure, nothing is charged on the land. In Bozlu, as a city ranked with the highest priority in development, there are several state incentives, subsidies and aid programs for the investors’ (Bozlular 2001: 5). It is clear from the governor’s words that, together with ARPAD’s support, the local authorities are seeking to channel the remittances and the investments of migrants from Bozlu in Europe to Bozlu in Turkey.

The reference to an ‘industrial zone’ in the governor’s address is significant. He underlines the differential location of Bozlu within the universe of state subsidiaries in Turkey. Bozlu falls into one of Turkey’s ‘industrial districts’. To increase the competitiveness of certain areas and to attract foreign investment, the Turkish state has introduced a system of economic incentives, credit facilities and tax exemptions
for the investment in, and purchase of, land in ‘industrial districts’. The government has signed bilateral agreements to encourage joint ventures in these areas. These districts and/or free zones are spaces of differential state intervention. Since the beginning of the 1980s the Turkish economy has been going through a period of liberalization, with the state playing a diminishing role in economic life. Trends towards scaling down, cutting back and decentralizing firms and the increasing significance of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are accompanied by pressures to open up the economy to the world market. In this context of neo-liberalization, we witness ‘the advent of “industrial districts”, which are formed by regionally located small and medium enterprises with relations of both competition and collaboration among them, and supported by local institutions’ (Bugra 1999: 12).

Chambers of Industry and Trade in these districts are the crucial local institutions that mediate the support given to SMEs in these industrial districts. Again, it is no coincidence that the president of the Chamber of Industry and Trade in Bozlu also writes in ARPAD’s journal and informs readers about the Chamber’s projects to secure Bozlu’s development and competitiveness (Bozlular 2002: 11). He does not forget to add that the state has now given up its role as the ‘father’ (protector) of citizens and that ‘the downsizing of the state apparatus is an expression of regional development’. It is noteworthy that he addresses the question of the Turkish state’s withdrawal from the economy in general and its renewed presence in the political economy of this place as different facets of the same phenomenon.

The increasing traffic of mayors and governors of different cities in Turkey to Germany (particularly to Berlin) could also be framed within this changing landscape of state spatial politics. There was no such movement before the 1990s. These officials take part in migrants’ business openings and participate in events bringing together the migrants from a particular region. The most noteworthy of such events and the heaviest traffic between Turkey and Berlin is from Bozlu. There is an apparent attempt to involve the representatives of German Chambers of Industry and Trade (IHK) in these events. The governor and mayor of Bozlu, together with some Bozlu deputies in the National Assembly, became regular guests at these openings and events. Here it must be noted that people from Bozlu are neither overly represented within the immigrant population in Germany from Turkey nor have their numbers increased in recent years.

One of the major reasons behind the frequent invitations from Turkish organizations and HTAs extended to mayors and governors of certain towns in Turkey and their visits to Germany is the migrant businessmen’s desire to seek status in their communities of origin. However, we still need to explain why only the local authorities from particular regions are invited, for example to Berlin, when there is no particular concentration of migrant population and Turkish businessmen in Berlin from these regions. Of course Bozlu is not unique from the perspective of the increasing flow of officials between Turkey and Germany, but most of the governors, mayors and local representatives of the Chamber of Industry and Trade from Turkey who visit Germany are from industrial districts. I argue that this recent increase in
It is important to note that although the governors cannot directly channel the support of local institutions to the small- and medium-sized enterprises in industrial districts they have an indirect influence on this matter. Chambers of Industry and Trade, which play a crucial role in mediating this support, are under the supervision of the governors (because they are considered to be civil society organizations). For this reason, the governor of Bozlu, after informing the businessmen about the investment subsidies in his region when visiting Berlin in 2001, did not hesitate to assure the migrants that everything was under his control. He was ‘ready to help the migrant businessmen for the subsidies by all means, including the bureaucratic formalities’ (interview 25 May 2001).

The close cooperation between ARPAD and the bureaucrats, mayor and the governor of Bozlu is striking. In fact, ARPAD’s logo is almost the same as the logo of Bozlu municipality. These ties extended to state officials and agencies differentiate ARPAD from the hometown associations of the earlier phase of migration in which the activities did not go beyond charity or cultural activities and HTAs developed outside state power. The entanglements between ARPAD and the local state authorities also differentiate ARPAD from other Turkish migrant hometown associations that do not have such ties. It is important to stress that ARPAD’s active members are mostly businessmen and some of these entrepreneurs have businesses in both Bozlu and Germany. In fact, ARPAD is a good illustration of the entanglements that exist between HTAs and transnational migrant entrepreneurs.

One interesting case of a businessman associated with ARPAD is the European representative of the state-owned enterprise Salkim Birlik (an agricultural cooperative that sells figs). Salkim Birlik is one of the state economic enterprises founded to protect the producers of export agricultural products like hazelnuts, apricots, figs and olives. The enterprises guarantee to buy the products from the producers at a fixed price, determined every year from above. At this point it has to be noted that state economic enterprises are being restructured and privatized to comply with Turkey’s neo-liberalization agenda. This public enterprise has a European representative in Berlin, Mehmet Kumlu. However, this is not Mehmet Kumlu’s main business. He also has a successful business in a completely different sector in Berlin. Nevertheless, Mehmet Kumlu participates in fairs in Europe and Germany as Salkim Birlik’s representative and sells its figs. Bozlu’s status as part of an industrial district allows it to apply for state subsidies to participate in international fairs. Kumlu sells figs through the two companies – one in Bozlu and one in Berlin – he established for this purpose on becoming the enterprise’s European representative. In Bozlu he has a partner, whom he refers to as ‘an old family friend’ (aile dostu), who takes care of the company. In Berlin, his partner is the president of ARPAD. The orders from Europe come to him (he finds customers at the fairs in which he participates as the representative of Salkim Birlik) and he forwards them to Salkim Birlik in Bozlu. Then Kumlu’s Bozlu company buys the dried figs from Salkim Birlik and sends them to his German company from where they are distributed to retailers in Europe. In this
transaction, the public enterprise – Salkim Birlik – takes responsibility for crucial export and customs formalities. The exporting company (namely Kumlu’s company in Bozlu) is entitled to export subsidies, which include a tax rebate. In this complicated transaction, Kumlu’s partner in Berlin, ARPAD’s president, and his ties to the local authorities in Bozlu through ARPAD, play a crucial role in overcoming bureaucratic difficulties to get the tax rebate and realizing transactions successfully.

Conclusion: grassroots transnational networks and narratives of power

Both ARPAD and migrant transnational businesses are tied up with state institutions and these entanglements reveal the difficulties involved in delineating the shifting boundary between state and non-state institutions in transnational migrant formations. In the context of new entrepreneurial approaches to local development in times of neo-liberal globalization, the emergent public–private partnerships and state–civil society alliances blur any kind of clear demarcation between public/private and state/non-state institutions. Such oppositions fail to capture the transfigurations states go through in the context of globalization as well as the complexity of the entanglements between migrant transnational formations (including HTAs) and the state institutions. With the blurred boundary between state and civil society, it is not possible to identify the state as an ally or as a force in opposition to migrant formations like HTAs. To attract domestic and foreign capital, regional and/or local governments enter into different entrepreneurial experiments to create an attractive environment in which to increase local competitiveness. Not only are states becoming partly privatized but migrant formations (like HTAs) developed outside state power are also becoming more and more part of the new geographies of state intervention and rescaling processes are taking place in the context of neo-liberal agendas.

Despite recognizing the importance of the temporal dimension in migration scholarship, spatial factors, especially the spatial aspects of statehood, remain neglected. In this article I have tried to draw attention to this indifference to space in migration research. Through a case study of a Turkish hometown association, I have approached the question of the recent revival of HTAs from the perspective of changing state–space relations. I argue for an analysis not only of the dynamics of HTAs, but also of the migrant incorporation and homeland oriented activities of migrants in general from the perspective of the rescaling processes within the neo-liberal context of regulation. Except in the case of global cities, migration scholars have to a large extent remained indifferent to the spatial structural qualities of migrant formations beyond the nested hierarchies at national and regional levels. There is a failure to relate the dynamics of migrant formations to those state practices designed to establish new patterns of uneven spatial development within state territory and a failure to note how regions, zones and cities become important sites for a variety of neo-liberal experiments (including public–private partnerships). These failures detach the scholarship on migrant practices, collective patterns of organization, and strategies
of participation from the analysis of the political economy of contemporary states and cities. This exclusion increasingly encapsulates (transnational) migration scholarship into methodological nationalism and into the straightjacket of an ethnic lens. Once we approach the renewed dynamism of HTAs from within a broader context of political economy of neoliberalization, then we can raise critical questions about HTAs’ location in the narratives of power, instead of celebrating them as ‘the human face of globalization’ (IOM 2005: 119–24).

With the growing number of detailed studies on how transnational networks interact with local power structures (especially with class, gender and racial hierarchies), the celebratory tone of the earlier studies (for example Kearney 1991) emphasizing the counter-hegemonic character of transnational migrant networks has been counterbalanced. However, despite the increasing number of studies questioning the validity of the division between ‘transnationalism from above’ and ‘transnationalism from below’ (for example Mahler 1998), the latter is still the terrain of non-state, non-elite and the disenfranchised in the transnationalism literature. However, within the context of aforementioned rescaling processes and the restructuring of state spatiality, the boundary between ‘transnationalism from above’ and ‘transnationalism from below’ also becomes porous.

The transformations that HTAs and migrant transnational formations in general are going through in the context of neo-liberal globalization underline the need to conceptualize state power and the relationship between the state and civil society beyond the dominant conceptual couplet of ‘state–civil society’ (Jessop 2000). Those who refuse to take this binary opposition for granted in their analyses, approach the state as a ‘structural effect’ of detailed processes including its discursive construction (Gupta 1995; Mitchell 1991, 1999; Navaro-Yashin 1998). Instead, they focus on how a boundary is drawn between the two ‘entities’ and its effects. Failure to do this results in making these oppositions the basis of new ideologies of power (Navaro-Yashin 1998). An analysis of transnational grassroots networks requires an approach that will go beyond this binary opposition and explore how the presence of various state representatives and organs in these fields are made invisible in the discourses of the community activists as well as in transnational migration scholarship and to what effects. In the encounter between transnational migrant formations and state institutions within the context of rescaling processes, not only migrant formations or organizations become entangled with state structures. In this encounter, state power also becomes fractured and transfigured in such a way that any kind of opposition between state and non-state institutions or transnationalism ‘from above’ and ‘from below’ simply misses the complexity of this process. The rescaling processes that disrupt and transform the equality principle of national territory introduce new forms of state–civil society relationships, which challenge the manner in which ‘the statehood and its reach are imagined’ (Gupta 1995). However, failure to recognize the reconfigurations states are going through in the context of neo-liberal agendas and the interpretation of this process as their retreat in the age of globalization makes state power in migrant transnational fields invisible. Moreover, representations of ‘statehood’ based on the opposition between state and civil society have the effect of
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maintaining a particular image of migrant HTAs and transnational entrepreneurs as forces outside the terrain of the state, thus contributing to the legitimization of their power as grassroots transnationals.

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Notes

1. 'Bozlu' is a city in eastern Turkey. All the names of persons and places have been changed.
2. In Chicago alone the number of Mexican HTAs increased from 20 to 100 between 1994 and 1998 (Orozco 2000b).
3. For exceptions to these models, see Levitt and de la Dehesa (2003) and Østergaard-Nielsen (2003), among others, on sending state policies.
4. No European organization’s activities regarding remittances are comparable with those of the Inter-American Development Bank in North, Central and Latin America. The EU has only very recently started to gather information on the transfer channels of migrant remittances from Europe and the very first policy papers from the European Commission only appeared in 2003.
5. There are exceptions, for example Koc and Onan (2001) and Kurtulus et al. (2001). Other studies in the 1990s like Barisik et al. (1990), Gökdere (1994), and Icduygu (1998), dealt with the continuing emigration from Turkey to European Union countries, or the impact of remittances on the Turkish economy and on the remittances receiving households. However, the multiple facets of remittances to Turkey are not explored in these works.
6. This failure becomes more striking in comparison with the initiatives taken by financial institutions in the USA. They consider the money transfer market as a high-growth market with a relatively low risk. According to the chairman and chief executive officer of the National Financial Corporation and the chairman of the Nonprofit Council on Financial Access in the New Economy ‘Institutions that fail to reach these high-growth markets risk being left behind’ (Handlin et al. 2002). Interestingly, an America-based company started mapping out this market in regard to Turkish immigrants in Europe for the first time in 2001.
8. See Goldring (1998) on migrants’ attempts to gain status through involvement in homeland oriented activities and HTAs.
9. Party politics are involved in the determination of these basic prices.
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