

A STUDY ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND NATIONALISM: THE CASE STUDY OF  
HOMETOWN ASSOCIATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

### A STUDY ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND NATIONALISM: THE CASE STUDY OF HOMETOWN ASSOCIATIONS.

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This thesis aims to understand how the regional identity around *hemşehrilik* (regional bond) relations is imagined within hometown associations (HTAs) as part of civil society in Turkey. This research claims that there is an unexcavated relationship between civil society and nationalism in Turkey. In order to understand such relationality, three HTAs of Şebinkarahisar/Giresun have been chosen. HTAs were overlooked over the years in civil society literature because of their primordial characteristics, which arguably do not fulfil the premises expected from well-functioning civil society. Therefore, to understand position of HTAs in civil society in Turkey, firstly, the reasons for the emergence of HTAs in Turkey are presented. Secondly, it is argued that HTAs create a distinct form of regional identity from their rural counterparts while altering what *hemşehrilik* relations entail through reimagining the identity. Thirdly, the current functions of HTAs as CSOs are presented. Fourthly, it has been attempted to understand how research participants

perceive HTAs as part of civil society. Fifthly, fluid and contextual identification processes for defining *hemşehris* under the roof of HTAs are demonstrated. Lastly, it is argued that even though HTAs essentially attract attention to their reproduction and reimagination of *hemşehrilik* relations, those processes have been profoundly influenced by nationalism. Conceptualization of *hemşehrilik* is not independent from nationalist discourses which can be produced in civil society.

**Keywords:** nationalism, civil society, regional identity, *hemşehrilik* relations, hometown associations.

## ÖZ

### SİVİL TOPLUM VE ULUSALCILIK ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA: HEMŞEHİRİ DERNEKLERİ ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu tez, Türkiye'de hemşehrilik ve bölgesel kimliğin, sivil toplumun bir parçası olarak hemşehri dernekleri çatısı altında nasıl tasavvur edildiğini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu araştırma, Türkiye'de sivil toplum ile milliyetçilik arasında üzerine yeterince değinilmemiş bir ilişki olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Bu nedenle hemşehrilik, sivil toplum ve milliyetçilik arasındaki kompleks ilişkiyi anlamak için Şebinkarahisarlı hemşehri dernekleri örneklem olarak seçilmiştir. Hemşehri dernekleri altında hemşehrilik ilişkileri ilkel veya modern olmayan bir ilişki biçimi olarak görüldüğünden, hemşehri dernekleri için iyi işleyen bir sivil toplum kuruluşlarından beklenen karşılamaadığı düşünülmüş ve sivil toplum literatüründe yıllar boyunca göz ardı edildi. Bu nedenle, bu tezde hemşehri derneklerinin Türkiye'deki sivil toplum içindeki konumunu anlamak için öncelikle ortaya çıkış sebepleri sunulmaktadır. İkinci olarak, hemşehri derneklerinin kimliği yeniden tasavvur ederek hemşehrilik ilişkilerinin içeriğini değiştirirken, kırsaldaki



hemşehrilerinden farklı bir bölgesel kimlik biçimi yarattığı iddia edilmektedir. Üçüncüsü, hemşehri derneklerinin sivil toplum kuruluşu (STK) olarak mevcut işlevleri sunulmaktadır. Dördüncü olarak, araştırma katılımcılarının hemşehri derneklerini sivil toplumun bir parçası olarak nasıl algıladıkları anlaşılmaya çalışılmıştır. Beşinci olarak, hemşehri dernekleri çatısı altında hemşehrileri tanımlamaya yönelik akışkan ve bağlamsal tanımlama süreçleri sunulmuştur. Son olarak, hemşehri dernekleri hemşehrilik ilişkilerinin yeniden üretimi ve bölgesel kimliği yeniden tasavvuruna dikkat çekerken bu süreçlerin milliyetçilikten derinden etkilendiği ileri sürülmektedir. Hemşehrilik kavramsallaştırması, sivil toplumda üretilebilecek milliyetçi söylemlerden bağımsız değildir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** milliyetçilik, sivil toplum, bölgesel kimlik, hemşehrilik, hemşehri dernekleri.

*To all the people I love...*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HTA	: Hometown Association
CSO	: Civil Society Organization
ÇYDD	: Association for Supporting Contemporary Life (Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği)
ADD	: Atatürkist Thought Association (Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği)





## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“We tended to ignore the nationalism that was embedded in our entire view of the world- organizing citizenship and passports, the way we look at history, the way we divide up literatures and cinemas, the way we compete in the Olympic games” (Calhoun, 1997, p.1).

When I was around seven years old, I attended a dinner in a hotel in Ankara with my family, which was held by Şebinkarahisar and Its Environment Development Solidarity and Culture Foundation (Şebinkarahisar ve Çevresi Kalkınma Dayanışma ve Kültür Vakfı or be referred to as Ankara Foundation). The surroundings resembled a wedding; some people were dancing *horon* while others were wandering around tables to talk with their friends. However, there was no bride or groom to be seen. I remember talking to Raĥan Ecevit<sup>1</sup> with my grandmother and did not understand why they and we were there. I knew that my father was from Şebinkarahisar. He had a giant poster of the castle of Şebinkarahisar at his workplace, and I always told people that I am from Şebinkarahisar, not Giresun, because I have learned to say as so.

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<sup>1</sup> Raĥan Ecevit (1923-2020) was political figure, author, and painter. She was born in Bursa, but her parents were from Şebinkarahisar which they migrated Şebinkarahisar from Thessaloniki in 1920. She was also First Lady of Turkey as being wife of Bülent Ecevit who was Prime Minister of Turkey four times (11 January 1999 – 18 November 2002, 5 January 1978 – 12 November 1979, 21 June 1977 – 21 July 1977, 26 January 1974 – 17 November 1974).

My father migrated to Ankara from Şebinkarahisar when he was three years old, and I had only been to Şebinkarahisar for two weeks when I was eight years old. I initially chose this topic because of my personal interest and the stories I have been told. More specifically, my father mentioned the Tamzara neighbourhood in Şebinkarahisar, with a rich history. Recently, there was a fashion show that famous fashion designers and models attended in the Tamzara neighbourhood in Şebinkarahisar because of a unique fabric historically produced specifically in Tamzara. I was curious about the neighbourhood's history and researched, and found out that mainly Armenians and Rums were residing there before 1915 and 1924. However, my father had never mentioned their existence in his stories. It seemed as though the people intentionally forgot them because even though their existence was known, they have not mentioned in the stories. Then, I asked about their presence, and he told me about the dreaded events within the castle of Şebinkarahisar when the Temporary Law of Deportation (Tehcir Law) was introduced in 1915.

When deciding what to study for my master's thesis, I thought I could focus on the relationship between *hemşehrilik* or “regional bond” (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002) and nationalism because I thought the national identity comes to the forefront even when talking about regional identity. I was puzzled about it and thought, ‘who is a *hemşehri*, then? Only the people who are Turk and Muslim?’.

Moreover, I have realized that civil society and nationalism literature rarely collided, especially in Turkey. Thus, this thesis aims to understand the peculiar relationality between civil society and nationalism by examining HTAs in Turkey. *Hemşehrilik* relations and regional identity are institutionalized under the HTAs, so civil society can be ground for solidifying identification processes. Also, HTAs, as civil society organizations (CSOs), are subtly incorporating nationalist discourses into their conceptualization of regional identity and constructing their *hemşehrilik* relations accordingly. Hence, I tried to compare and contrast the approaches and activities of chosen HTAs in terms of their perspective of *hemşehri* relations, their engagement with politics, their understanding of nationalism and how they locate themselves within competing nationalist discourses in Turkey, their internal power dynamics, their relationship with other associations and Şebinkarahisar.

In order to unwrap such intricately complex relationships, I chose three HTAs of Şebinkarahisar, which were Şebinkarahisarlılar Yardımlaşma Derneği (Mutual Aid Association of Şebinkarahisar) and Şebinkarahisar Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği (Şebinkarahisar Culture and Solidarity Association or ŞEBDER), which both are based in İstanbul, and Şebinkarahisar ve Çevresi Kalkınma Dayanışma ve Kültür Vakfı (Şebinkarahisar and Its Environment Development Solidarity and Culture Foundation or the Ankara Foundation) in Ankara, as the unit of analysis for this research. Another reason why I chose HTAs of Şebinkarahisar is that I thought members of these associations would be more transparent with me due to my background. However, choosing the HTAs of Şebinkarahisar meant that I needed to be meticulous and not biased about interpreting the data provided in the thesis because of my personal background. On the other hand, my background provided me with opportunities to reach members of the chosen HTAs.

This study aims to contribute to nationalism, civil society and HTA literature in Turkey. This thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter introduces the research methods used, the history of Şebinkarahisar, the fieldwork experience, and the selected HTAs.

The second chapter consists of a critical literature review on identity, nationalism, civil society and HTAs, where the theoretical approach of this study will be presented.

In the third chapter, findings are discussed around six questions. Firstly, the reasons for the emergence of selected HTAs will be presented. Secondly, it is argued that HTAs are essentially part of urban life in Turkey. Thirdly, the current functions of HTAs are examined. Thereafter, research participants' perceptions of the location of HTAs within civil society will be presented. Also, the idealistic definitions wrapped around the concept of civil society will be tried to be overcome. Fifthly, the fluidity of *hemşehrilik* relations and regional identity will be discussed. It is argued that regional identity is not a concept that can be taken for granted and have crystal clear boundaries. Identities, in general, come into being with other identities and power relations. What relations entail can translate into different meanings and boundaries of identity. Regional identity or *hemşehrilik* relations existed prior to the modern

nation-state, but, together with the discourse on nationalism, they translated into new meanings. Therefore, the boundaries of identities are fuzzy and subject to power relations. Lastly, how HTAs contribute to nationalist discourses in Turkey will be discussed. Nationalism poses itself as omnipresent and natural by creating hegemony. The power of nationalist discourse also alters other social relations. This research tries to understand how nationalism can enter into civil society and transform the *hemşehrilik* relations according to the discourse it produces.

### **1.1. Methods**

Qualitative research methods are suitable for this research because I initially try to locate the regional identity in the relationship between nationalism and civil society. I have used semi-structured in-depth interviews because I try to grasp the perspective of research participants on nationalism, civil society and *hemşehri* relations and their collision. The semi-structured in-depth interviews aim to understand their thinking without restricting them to readily available answers. According to Mack et al.:

The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides information about the ‘human’ side of an issue – that is, the often-contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. (2005, p.1)

Also, “In-depth interviews are optimal for collecting data on individuals’ personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored.” (Mack et al., 2005, p.2) Semi-structured interviews provided a free space for the research participants to express themselves on their terms and through their own meanings.

I have used semi-structured in-depth interviews with the members of these three associations. I have conducted 12 interviews in total; six face-to-face interviews with members of Ankara Foundation, three face-to-face interviews with board members of ŞEBDER; three virtual interviews with board members of Mutual Aid Association.

Reaching the research participants were easy because their contact information was visible online.

I have also had a chance to participate in some activities of the HTAs. I have attended a meeting of Synergy of Civil Society Organizations of Giresun (Giresun Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları Birlikteliği) with Ankara Foundation, an iftar dinner/board meeting in the centre of Ankara Foundation and a friendly meeting of people from Şebinkarahisar at a pub in İstanbul, after the interview with one of the research participants.

The interviews lasted an hour on average. Three virtual interviews with the Mutual Aid Association board members lasted an hour. The interview with a board member of Ankara Foundation and the chairperson of ŞEBDER lasted longer than 2,5 hours. The shortest interview lasted 40 minutes with the youngest research participant, who recently became a member of the Ankara Foundation.

Virtual interviews can pose a problem in terms of building trust between the researcher and the research participant compared to face-to-face interviews (Salmons, 2015). However, according to O’Sullivan (2004, p.473, as cited in Salmons, 2015, p.208), “mediated immediacy in online communication points to similarity, informality, and self-disclosure as important “approachability cues” that signal to others that “you can approach me”. Furthermore, according to Olaniran (2009, as cited in Salmons, 2015, p.214), virtual interviews can have a “human feeling” because people can see each other, talk with each other, and can develop “sense of immediacy”. Also, “some nonverbal immediacy behaviors such as physical gestures, body posture, facial expressions, and vocal expressiveness can be conveyed” (Salmons, 2015, p.214). In the case of my fieldwork experience, the only problem I have faced is that sometimes the Internet connection was not stable; however, it did not disrupt the interview flow. According to Salmons (2015), researchers can create a welcoming environment for the research participants by adopting the online culture and its mannerisms. Creating a warm environment for research participants is crucial because it will comfort them during the interview to feel confident enough to talk. Another possible reason I have not faced problems creating trust between research participants is that I am also from Şebinkarahisar, and

people wanted to help their *hemşehri*. Therefore, they were willing to speak and give me information about the other people with whom I could arrange interviews. They have also stated that since they are the board members of the Mutual Aid Association, they have approximately ten calls from their *hemşehris* daily for various reasons. Thus, they were not surprised by my request for the interview.

I was hesitant about whether I could participate in associations' activities because of the COVID-19 pandemic. I have learned that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the rhythm of their activities, but as the spring of 2022 came, the selected HTAs started to meet more.

The questions that were asked were categorized based on research participants' connection to Şebinkarahisar, their migration stories, their engagement with the respective association, the information provided about the association and its activities, how associations work, their expectations from it, and relations with other HTAs; their perception of who are their *hemşehris*, how they perceive their regional identity, differences between people who still live in Şebinkarahisar, and people migrated to big cities, their everyday life practices that are different from people who are not from Şebinkarahisar; views on civil society and how HTAs must function as CSOs and how they locate HTAs within their own definition of civil society; their view on nationalism and patriotism.

### **1.1. History of Şebinkarahisar**

Şebinkarahisar is a district of Giresun located in the Kelkit Valley and was established on the southern skirts of the Giresun Mountains. It is 1390 meters above sea level and 118 km away from Giresun. There are 62 villages within Şebinkarahisar whose livelihood is mainly based on agriculture and animal husbandry (Çalık, 2018).

Before the arrival of Mustafa Kemal to the city in 1924, the city was known as Şark-1 Karahisar (Karahisar at the east). However, he proposed that the Şebinkarahisar name be re-given to the city, which the name was initially given by Mehmed the

Conqueror in 1473 when he visited the city after the Battle of Otlukbeli. “Şebin” is given in reference to the alum mine near Şebinkarahisar (Çalık, 2018).

The city’s history is argued that dates back to the Early Bronze Age. According to Aydın (2018), there was a Hittite settlement in İsula, and Hittites called the kingdom near Şebinkarahisar “Azzi-Hayaşa” and the name of the city in Şebinkarahisar was argued to be called “Dukkamma”.

Until 63 BC Şebinkarahisar was known as Nikopolis, meaning “the city where the war was won”. The name “Nikopolis” was given by Pompeius, who defeated the Pontos King Mithridates Eupator and started Roman domination in the region. Pompeius also repaired the Şebinkarahisar Castle and used it as a garrison. Besides Nikopolis, the region was also known as Koloneia/Kögonya. Şebinkarahisar gained its fundamental importance during the Byzantine period after it became a bishopric centre during the reign of Justinianus (Danık, 2004).

After the Battle of Manzikert, Danishmends and Mengujekids fought over Şebinkarahisar. As a result of internal disorder, Theodora Gavras, the king of the Empire of Trebizond, reclaimed the city. The city was taken back by the Mengujekids from the son of Gavras, king Gregory Toronites (Danık, 2004).

After the 1243 Battle of Köse Dağ, the city falls back to the rule of the Empire of Trebizond for a short period before Ilkhanate’s rule over Şebinkarahisar (Danık, 2004).

Ottoman Empire annexed Şebinkarahisar during the reign of Bayezid I in 1398. Although it came under the control of Timur after the 1402 Battle of Ankara, Şebinkarahisar joined the Ottoman lands after the Battle of Otlukbeli in 1473. From this period until the end of the 18th century, it was a sanjak of Erzurum province. In 1864, it was connected to Sivas Province as Karahisar-ı Şarki Sanjak. Şebinkarahisar, whose municipal organization was established as sanjak in 1870, was made a province in 1923 but was made a district in 1933 and connected to Giresun (Çalık, 2018).

### **1.3. General Overview of the Fieldwork**

First, I have chosen the Ankara Foundation because I live in Ankara, and it is the only HTA in Ankara for the people from Şebinkarahisar. I have conducted six interviews with the members of the Ankara Foundation.

I first reached the chairperson of the Ankara Foundation through Facebook. Then, he recommended whom to meet within the foundation and gave me the phone numbers of other members. He also provided me with the phone numbers of the chairpersons of ŞEBDER and the Mutual Aid Association. The interview with the chairperson was held in his office. Other two interviews were held in the foundation's centre, and three of them were also held in research participants' workplaces/offices.

I attended a meeting of Giresun Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları Birlikteliği (Synergy of Civil Society Organizations of Giresun) at the foundation centre of Giresun Sağlık, Eğitim ve Sosyal Dayanışma Vakfı (Giresun Health, Education and Social Solidarity Foundation or GİRSEV) with Ankara Foundation and an iftar dinner/board meeting held in the Ankara Foundation's centre.

After starting my fieldwork in Ankara, I learned from a foundation's board members that there are more than 100 HTAs in İstanbul. Almost every neighbourhood and village of Şebinkarahisar had an association in İstanbul. However, it was not feasible for me to reach out to each of them. So, I have decided to carry on the fieldwork with overarching HTAs of Şebinkarahisar. Afterwards, I was informed about the Mutual Aid Association (Şebinkarahisarlılar Yardımlaşma Derneği), which is the largest association in İstanbul, where they have over 2000 members.

I was searching for other HTAs in İstanbul and came up with the website of Şebinkarahisar Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği or as known as ŞEBDER. I have realized that the association's chairperson was a woman, which is uncommon for HTAs to have a woman chairperson. Moreover, more than 50% of the board members of ŞEBDER were women. Their website also included an article about the history and cultural inventory of Şebinkarahisar. I was inquisitive about the article's author and the association in general.



I went to İstanbul to conduct interviews with board members ŞEBDER. First, I interviewed the chairperson of the ŞEBDER in her office. Then she directed me to two other board members. The second interview occurred in the board members' workplace, and the third was in a pub where the owner of the pub was also from Şebinkarahisar. Then I learned that ŞEBDER did not have an association centre, and they were holding their meetings at the pub, offices of other members or the İstanbul Foundation's (İstanbul Şebinkarahisar Vakfı) centre. However, they specifically said that they prefer not to meet at the İstanbul Foundation's centre.

However, I could not reach members of the Mutual Aid Association when I was in İstanbul because most of the board members were in Şebinkarahisar for a school opening ceremony.

Upon my return to Ankara, I reached the chairperson of the Mutual Aid Association and conducted an interview with him via WhatsApp video call. Then, I conducted two more interviews with board members via Zoom where they were at their workplaces.

#### **1.4. Demographic Characteristics of the Research Participants**

I have conducted 12 interviews in total. 6 of the total interviews were with the active members of Ankara Foundation (Research Participants #1-6); 3 interviews with board members of ŞEBDER (Research Participants #7-9), and 3 interviews with board members of the Mutual Aid Association (Research Participants #10-12). Out of 6 research participants from Ankara Foundation, only one of them was a woman (Research Participant #3). The Ankara Foundation does not have a woman board member. However, the female research participant was the head of the women's branch of the Ankara Foundation, which was decided to be established a short while ago by the board members. The women's branch of Ankara Foundation is still in its early days and has not engaged in any activities. In the case of ŞEBDER, the chairperson (Research Participant #7) and most of their board members are women. 2 out of 3 research participants were women. On the other hand, the Mutual Aid Association has the most considerable number of board members, with 28 board members in total (substitute board members are also active as the board members),

but only one of them was a woman who is also the head of the women's branch. I interviewed only three male board members, one of whom was the chairperson (Research Participant #10).

According to Toumarkine (2001), HTAs are male-dominated spaces. However, it does not mean that women are banned from the associations. Women generally engage with the activities of association open to all *hemşehris* because of the male family members who are active in the association. Therefore, they often attend dinners, nights, and picnics, which are activities of the association for the wider community. In the case of three HTAs of Şebinkarahisar, the argument of Toumarkine is both applicable and not, because the chairperson of ŞEBDER is a woman (Research Participant #7) and her father is not from Şebinkarahisar, and he was not a member of any association of Şebinkarahisar. She identified herself as from Şebinkarahisar because of her mother, and by the time her parents were born, Şebinkarahisar was the province, not the district of Giresun. Also, initially, she was a member of the Mutual Aid Association. However, the founders of ŞEBDER decided to break up with the Mutual Aid Associations to establish ŞEBDER in 2005. Then, she was elected as a board member in ŞEBDER. All members of ŞEBDER that were interviewed stated that they are firm believers of gender equality and did not want to be a "male-association" like the other associations, namely the Mutual Aid Association, which was one of the reasons why they broke up.

On the other hand, the other woman board member of ŞEBDER (Research Participant #9) is a member of the Mutual Aid Association, Şebin-Siad (Şebinkarahisar Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association) and ŞEBDER. She stated that she did not take the initiative to be a member of the Mutual Aid Association and Şebin-Siad, but she was approached by the board members because she is a businessperson who can financially support the Mutual Aid Association for the scholarship. Şebin-Siad also reached her because she is a woman, and they lacked woman representation in the association. She is the first woman board member of Şebin-Siad.

On the other hand, the head of the women's branch of Ankara Foundation (Research Participant #3), who is not an official board member yet, participated in the activities

of the foundation because of her family ties, that her uncles and brother was founding members of the Ankara Foundation. Thus, she was always aware of the activities of the Ankara Foundation. She had recently become active in CSOs because she decided to return to Tamzara/Şebinkarahisar for the summers to establish the women's cooperation (Tamzara Kadın Girişimi Üretim ve İşletme Kooperatifi/Tamzara Women's Initiative Production and Business Cooperative) and she wanted to promote the cooperation in Ankara.

In terms of occupation, half of the research participants are lawyers. 3 out of 6 research participants members of Ankara Foundation are lawyers (Research Participant #1, #5, #6), including the chairperson (Research Participant #1). In the case of ŞEBDER, the chairperson (Research Participant #7) is also a lawyer, along with a member of the Mutual Aid Association (Research Participant #12).

The remaining three research participants of the Ankara foundation were a retired banker (Research Participant #2), a retired social worker (Research Participant #3), and a civil servant at the Ministry of Justice (Research Participant #4). Research participants of ŞEBDER, besides the chairperson, consisted of a tour guide (Research Participant #8) and a businessperson (Research Participant #9). The chairperson of the Mutual Aid Association (Research Participant #10) is a businessperson, and the other board member (Research Participant #11) is an assistant manager in administrative and financial affairs at a hospital.

Out of 12 research participants, only three people were high-school graduates (Research Participants #4, #9, #10). The rest of the research participants are graduates of a university. The level of education is effective in terms of participating in HTAs. In the literature on HTAs, it is argued that people with low income and low level of education, who tries to find a job, need HTAs more compared to people who have a high level of education and have a good job (Çaymaz, 2005; Terzi & Koçak, 2014, as cited in Şentürk, 2021). Furthermore, Tekşen (2003, as cited in Şentürk, 2021, p.46) claims that a higher level of education is one of the factors that reduce the solidarity among *hemşehris*. However, it was not the case in the selected HTAs of Şebinkarahisar. Since HTAs are transforming over time, their functions are also changing, and the type of solidarity they also provide changes. Furthermore, in the

case of HTAs of Şebinkarahisar, the founders of all three associations were university graduates.

Regarding the age dimension, only three research participants were born after 1990 (Research Participants #5, #6, #12). It is argued in the literature that the second and third generations of individuals who migrated from their hometowns to the cities have less longing for their hometown than those of the first generation. Hence, the degree of sense of belonging decreases in the younger generations, and consequently, the interest in HTAs is not as deep as the first generation, and the youth's level of participation in associations is lower (Terzi&Koçak, 2014; Yavuzer, 2016, as cited in Şentürk, 2021, p.45). In the case of relatively young research participants, the father of Research Participant #5 is from Diyarbakır, and his mother is from Şebinkarahisar, who found a job when she first migrated to Ankara with the reference of a board member of Ankara Foundation. Research Participant #5 also completed his internship to become a lawyer in the law office of Research Participant #1. After that, he started to be active in the Ankara Foundation. Therefore, the reasons for him to be active in the Ankara Foundation are more about instrumental reasons than it is emotional ones.

In the case of Research Participant #6, he was born in Ankara, and he is the third generation in Ankara. He felt as both from Şebinkarahisar and Ankara. He was also encouraged to be active in the Ankara Foundation by Research Participant #1. He initially wanted to be active due to networking activities of the foundation with politicians. He is now head of the youth branch of the Ankara Foundation.

On the other hand, Research Participant #12 was born in Şebinkarahisar and migrated to İstanbul to study at the University of İstanbul. He was also awarded a scholarship by the Mutual Aid Association. He was convinced by a board member of the Mutual Aid Association to be on the board in 2015 but could not be elected. Then, in 2017, he was elected to be a board member.

Eight of the research participants were born in Şebinkarahisar (Research Participants #1, #2, #3, #8, #9, #10, #11, #12), and half of them migrated to Ankara/İstanbul to study at university (Research Participants #1, #2, #11, #12). Two research

participants came to İstanbul before they had started primary school (Research Participants #8, #10); one of them migrated because she got married and moved to İstanbul right after graduating from high school (Research Participant #9). Three of the members of the Ankara Foundation (#4, #5, #6) were born in Ankara.

### **1.5. Fieldwork in Ankara**

According to the members of the Ankara Foundation, the attempts for founding a CSO for people from Şebinkarahisar in Ankara have been started in the late 1950s. First, in Ankara, there was an association (*dernek*), not a foundation, until 1980. Although the majority of the civic life in Turkey had been disrupted after the 1980 Turkish coup d'état, people from Şebinkarahisar were meeting without an association until 1993. It is when the foundation was established. The foundation was established in 1993 by mainly lawyers and bureaucrats in Ankara. Some of the founding members of the foundation were also the founders of the early association in the late 1950s. Some current board members were also active during those early years as part of the foundation's youth club. The Ankara Foundation members stated that most of their members are state bureaucrats.

I have asked whether there is a neighbourhood in Ankara where mainly the people from Şebinkarahisar were settled; they said no because people migrated to Ankara because of education reasons, and therefore, there was no mass migration. Also, people migrated in different periods and did not use their *hemşehri* relations to cope with urban life, which is a different pattern than the literature on HTAs in Turkey focuses.

The foundation's first centre was at Maltepe, Özveren Street in Ankara, which a committee bought that the early foundation members made up. Then, they bought their current foundation centre at Mithatpaşa Avenue.

#### ***Activities of the Ankara Foundation***

The members of the Ankara Foundation have stated that as they are a foundation, not an association, the main focus is economic solidarity. The Ankara Foundation provides scholarships to 50 university students who are from Şebinkarahisar and

studying in Ankara for eight months. The amount ranges between 200-250 TRY for a month. In order to raise money for the scholarship, they are collecting donations from their *hemşehris* in Ankara for scholarships, in addition to the yearly fees for being a member of the Ankara Foundation. They also try to help students who have a hard time finding accommodation by finding dormitories.

The Ankara Foundation also try to help their *hemşehris* with their health problems by finding doctors and hospitals. They have provided dental care for children. The dentist who agreed to give kids a check-up was also a foundation member.

They make announcements concerning Şebinkarahisar to the *hemşehris* residing in Ankara.

The Ankara Foundation organizes brunches for the students who are awarded the scholarship. So that they can maintain the identity of being from Şebinkarahisar, they also encourage the students to be part of the foundation. Recently, they established women's and youth branches within the foundation.

They have assembled a Turkish Folk Music Choir, practising weekly in the foundation centre and giving concerts annually in Ankara to their *hemşehris*. Due to COVID-19 Pandemic, they have suspended choir practices, but as of 2022, they have started again.

They organize trips to historical sites around Turkey. Recently, they visited the Battle of Sakarya National Historic Park. They also organize annual picnics for their *hemşehris* to get to one another and maintain good relations to create solidarity.

In addition, the Ankara Foundation hold board meetings every two weeks, which are open to all *hemşehris*, including the students. The board meetings are in the form of dinner, which before starting the dinner, they evaluate the current situation, and every participant gives their opinion according to the agenda. After the meeting ends, people are free to open up their bottles to drink alcohol, and there is a place in the foundation centre that serves as a stage with a microphone and large speakers so that they can play and sing songs. They also invite state bureaucrats, deputies, political party members, and members of other HTAs of Şebinkarahisar to provide solidarity

and for people to meet with each other. The Ankara Foundation have also started to establish relations with other CSOs such as Synergy of Civil Society Organizations of Giresun (Giresun Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları Birlikteliği), Industry and Business Association of Şebinkarahisar/ŞebinSiad (Şebinkarahisarlı Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği), ŞEBDER, the İstanbul Foundation, Mutual Aid Association (Şebinkarahisarlılar Yardımlaşma Derneği), Association of the people from Alucra (Alucralılar Derneği). Enlarging their social networks has served them to be recognized more easily and helped them to raise their voices. The research participants stated that being organized around large groups and cooperating with other associations have benefited them in being taken more seriously so far. It is crucial because they are concerned about the social, cultural, and economic problems faced by the Şebinkarahisar, such as transportation, energy issues (natural gas is not available in the region that they are trying to convince the authorities to have a pipeline that passes through Şebinkarahisar. The cooperation with other provinces' associations is vital to raise collective voices to draw attention to common problems), ecology, agriculture, tourism, and restoration of the historical sites of Şebinkarahisar (they fund the construction and restoration of some of the buildings in Şebinkarahisar. The most important of them is that they have funded the construction of the building of Vocational School in Şebinkarahisar), culture (they attempt to collect the folk songs of Şebinkarahisar to be officially recognized by TRT) on multiple platforms. In order to discuss such problems and raise awareness, the members of the Ankara Foundation arrange meetings with state bureaucrats and political party members to solve those problems and act as a pressure group. They have stated that these meetings are essential to inspire young people. More importantly, these meetings also provide social networks. The research participants stated that these social networks are crucial when finding jobs.

## **1.6. Virtual Fieldwork**

The Mutual Aid Association was established in 1964, but they have mentioned that there was another earlier association founded during the 1950s. Back then, it was an association for people from both Şebinkarahisar and Alucra. When the founders established the association, they were students at İstanbul University, studying law

and felt the need for HTAs. Shortly after the association was established, the founders bought land in Fatih-Laleli/İstanbul by collecting donations from their *hemşehris* to build a dormitory for the students who came to İstanbul to study at university. When the dormitory was built, there was political turmoil in Turkey, and people wanted their kids not to engage in political conflict at that time. Therefore, the dormitory for people from Şebinkarahisar sounded safe. However, after the coup d'état, the private dormitories were also closed. After that, the Mutual Aid Association rented the dormitory building to a hotel and a restaurant. They have a significant rental income from there.

The Mutual Aid Association is the oldest association for people from Şebinkarahisar. They consider themselves the “big brother” to other associations. 72 village/neighbourhood associations are affiliated with the Mutual Aid Association. They have approximately 3500-4000 members, and they stated that there are 100 thousand people from Şebinkarahisar reside in İstanbul which the Mutual Aid Association act as representative of them.

They moved to their current association centre in Okmeydanı/Şişli in 2012. However, because of the urban renewal project carried out now, they do not have a centre. They meet at İstanbul Foundation's centre. However, they will have a more spacious centre after the urban renewal project is finished, and they will turn the building into Culture-Convention Centre.

Until the COVID-19 Pandemic, they held board meetings on every Wednesday, and 28 board members attended those meetings regularly. In the summer, they meet once every month because people are going on vacation. During COVID-19 Pandemic, they had meetings via Zoom every week.

They have different committees for various issues, such as collecting donations for the scholarship, distribution of scholarships, a committee for issues concerning law, health, real estate, neighbourhoods, youth, and visits to political parties and state bureaucrats. They also have joint committees with other HTAs, for example, a committee for research and development with ŞebinSiad and committees with



neighbouring districts. Some of the members of the Mutual Aid Association are also founding members of the Giresun Federation in İstanbul.

They also have close relations with the Municipality of Şebinkarahisar and are generally more connected with the locals there compared to other associations. They have stated that they visit Şebinkarahisar with the association at least 3 or 4 times a year. Furthermore, according to the municipality's demand, they provide financial support. They have bought jeeps, heavy construction equipment, dialysers for the hospital, and minibuses for ill people to be taken to the dialysis centre in Şebinkarahisar.

### ***Activities of Mutual Aid Association***

The Mutual Aid Association is the oldest and has the largest number of members; they grant scholarships to 500 students in İstanbul who are from Şebinkarahisar and 100 students who choose to study at Şebinkarahisar's Vocational School and not from Şebinkarahisar. They also aid students who were awarded scholarships when they graduated from university to find jobs for them. In order to be able to award scholarships, they visit businesspeople or politicians so that they can collect donations from them. While doing so, they are in close contact with Şebinsiad (Industry and Business Association of Şebinkarahisar/ Şebinkarahisarlı Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği). They also organize meetings with successful businesspeople, state bureaucrats and politicians to inspire the students to become successful as they are. The research participants believe that successful people whom the Mutual Aid Association supported will return the old favour to them and be active in the association with the motivation to improve the conditions of Şebinkarahisar. Furthermore, they believe that the scholarship is crucial for maintaining the identity of being from Şebinkarahisar. Also, they organize trips to Şebinkarahisar and its villages on May 19th for the students, which they pay for their daily subsistence for 4-5 days, to create a sense of belongingness for them.

They also organize large council meetings with businesspeople every month so that people can be acquainted with making business deals later. Therefore, it serves to provide economic solidarity as well. Another reason for those meetings is to discuss

the problems of Şebinkarahisar such as transportation, energy issues (bringing natural gas to Şebinkarahisar), ecology, agriculture, tourism, restoration of the historical sites (They visited the Ministry of Culture for restoration of the historical sites in Şebinkarahisar).

In terms of providing political solidarity, during election periods, they try to mobilize the votes of the people from Şebinkarahisar residing in İstanbul to the politicians from Şebinkarahisar without considering the political party.

The Mutual Aid Association organize larger events than the other two associations that have organized big events for approximately 40 thousand people in Akatlar Sports Centre and Abdi İpekçi Hall in İstanbul. They also took the initiative to organize large picnics in cooperation with the village associations of Şebinkarahisar, in which they act as the “elder brother” of all the HTAs of Şebinkarahisar in İstanbul.

One of the joint activities of the Mutual Aid Association is in cooperation with the Giresun Federation, and they are part of the Giresun Days organized by the federation to promote Şebinkarahisar there.

Besides, the activities mainly focused on the *hemşehris* in İstanbul. They try to maintain good relations with Şebinkarahisar and the state institutions there. For example, according to the demand of the National Education Directorate in Şebinkarahisar, they bought and printed high school and university exam preparation books; they tried to allocate resources to improve the physical conditions of schools in Şebinkarahisar; they provided financial aid for the Şebinkarahisar Municipality Football Club and bought a van to use when playing away; they provide financial assistance to the Şebinkarahisar Municipality; they planned to visit Şebinkarahisar Hospital with two cardiologists and a radiologist from İstanbul so that people can have check-ups or operations if needed in Şebinkarahisar; they are part of the organization of a 3-day summer festival in Şebinkarahisar with Şebinkarahisar Municipality.

## **1.7. Fieldwork in İstanbul**

ŞEBDER was founded in 2005 in İstanbul by a lawyer who was previously a member of the Mutual Aid Association. The reason for founding ŞEBDER stemmed from the clash of ideas and political differences within the Mutual Aid Association. The current chairperson of ŞEBDER was also a member of the Mutual Aid Association. The reasons for the breakup of members of ŞEBDER with the Mutual Aid Association are the political stances and the change in the profile of the people within the association.

They do not have many members compared to the Mutual Aid Association, which has over 3500 members. On the other hand, ŞEBDER has around 200 members. The research participants have stated that they do not want to include everyone in the association. Their priority of acceptance to membership is whether people are Kemalist or not. They also stated that they promote gender equality and try not to become an “association of and for men”. That is why they try to balance the number of women and men on the association’s board.

Moreover, they do not own an association centre and generally meet at a pub owned by a *hemşehri* or centre of the İstanbul Foundation. Before the pandemic, they were arranging monthly board meetings. However, after the pandemic, they organized meetings via Zoom, Instagram, and Facebook, but they said that it was ineffective in creating a sense of belonging compared to face-to-face meetings. Now, they are not meeting regularly because of the busy working schedule of the members. Also, the traffic jam and the distances within İstanbul constrain their monthly meetings.

### ***Activities of ŞEBDER***

As they are founded mainly to focus on cultural aspects of Şebinkarahisar to create solidarity and a sense of belonging while keeping the culture alive in İstanbul among *hemşehris*, they have started learning folk dances under the name “Garaysar Horon” (Garaysar is how to pronounce Karahisar in a Şebinkarahisar accent). They also assembled a Turkish Folk Music choir under the name “Garaysar Koro” (currently not continuing because of the disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic). They

have also created a website with detailed information about Şebinkarahisar's cultural inventory. They make announcements about the news about Şebinkarahisar through social media. During the pandemic, they organized live broadcasts about pandemics via Facebook and Instagram.

One of the most noteworthy events of ŞEBDER was the Symposium of Şebinkarahisar at Sarıyer Municipality Yaşar Kemal Culture Center in 2017, where members of ŞEBDER were the executive organizers. However, it was a collaborative organization with the İstanbul Foundation, the Mutual Aid Association, ŞebinSiad, the Municipality of Sarıyer and the Şebinkarahisar Municipality. They also organized panels about the culture, accent, and traditions of Şebinkarahisar; also organized panels to raise awareness about earthquakes and earthquake protection methods in the halls of the Municipality of Beşiktaş, which the Deputy Mayor of the Municipality is from Şebinkarahisar because both Şebinkarahisar and İstanbul are under the risk of destructive earthquakes.

They are also establishing relations with the Giresun Associations Federation for the upcoming Culture and Art Festival of Giresun to have a separate tent for Şebinkarahisar to promote the culture of Şebinkarahisar.

Another notable activity of ŞEBDER is their Kavala-Thessaloniki and North Macedonia trip in 2017 to meet with their *hemşehris* there, who were subjected to forced migration introduced by the Lausanne Treaty. They have also organized trips to historical sites, mainly in İstanbul and around Turkey. They also create tourism projects to be funded by the EU in cooperation with the Historical Cities Association and Giresun Tourism Infrastructure Association.

They have also stated that they are supporting Tamzara Kadın Girişimi Üretim ve İşletme Kooperatifi (Tamzara Women's Initiative Production and Business Cooperative) and Animal Welfare Association in Şebinkarahisar.

During the interviews, they mentioned the potential projects that are in their mind. They have assembled a committee to reach out to painters and artists from Şebinkarahisar to create an exhibition, cooperating with Giresun Associations

Federation. They planned to give seminars about earthquakes to children and establish a voluntary network in Şebinkarahisar; however, they stated that people in Şebinkarahisar were indifferent to their efforts and did not participate in the voluntary network for the earthquake. They attempted to create a base of AFAD in Şebinkarahisar (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) because they would have provided the necessary aid in the case of emergency; however, it was decided that the base should be in Giresun despite the efforts of ŞEBDER. Also, they have embarked on a project to collect folk songs of Şebinkarahisar. They also plan to play one of Aziz Nesin's<sup>2</sup> plays. They are also planning to organize "Cumhuriyet Balosu" annually in the future.

They also started a project on the cuisine of Şebinkarahisar, but it was cancelled because of the unwillingness of the people in Şebinkarahisar who would cook the meals and give the recipes.

Another project which could not be realized was establishing an academy called Ara Güler<sup>3</sup> Academy in Tamzara with the help of Sarıyer Municipality; however, due to a lack of interest and cooperation from Şebinkarahisar Municipality, the project was cancelled.

In order to promote weaving Tamzara cloth, they purchased equipment and hired a tutor, but there was no continuity in the project.

Also, they planned to organize a Festival for Children in Şebinkarahisar; however, it got cancelled due to COVID-19 Pandemic.

### **1.8. Differences Among Associations**

There are differences and similarities among HTAs. Firstly, from a legal point of view, there are differences between associations and foundations. Foundations are asset-based, and associations are member-based, meaning that foundations are

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<sup>2</sup> Aziz Nesin was a author, playwright whose father was from Şebinkarahisar

<sup>3</sup> Ara Güler was a famous Armenian-Turkish photojournalist whose father, Decat Güler, is from Şebinkarahisar/ Yaycı Village

assembled to raise money. Since foundations are asset-based, they engage in activities according to the income coming from those assets. Associations are more related to what individuals are engaging with others.

The second difference between these three associations is the location. Ankara Foundation is the only HTA in Ankara where people from Şebinkarahisar can gather. The centre of Ankara Foundation is relatively more accessible to people because it is located within the city centre. However, the locations of the association centres in İstanbul have more impact on people to engage with HTAs. Centre of the Mutual Aid Association located in Şişli, European side of İstanbul. ŞEBDER, on the other hand, held meetings generally on the Anatolian side, Kadıköy. However, where the members reside is crucial for them to attend regular board meetings. One board member of ŞEBDER said that she could not attend the meetings because she lives far away. It can disrupt the rhythm of the activities of HTAs. Out of those three associations, the Mutual Aid Association is the one that holds meetings more frequently and regularly than the other two. Ankara Foundation also regularly holds meetings, which are less frequent than the Mutual Aid Association. ŞEBDER, on the other hand, does not have a detailed schedule, and some of its board members cannot attend regularly.

Furthermore, the members of both ŞEBDER and Ankara Foundation are relatively smaller than the Mutual Aid Association. Also, the Mutual Aid Association has more division of labour and is more structured; they have various committees for specific issues. On the other hand, both Ankara Foundation and ŞEBDER have individuals who are interested in specific topics, vocalize their interest, and carry out projects according to their own rhythm.

The profile of members relatively different from one another. Ankara Foundation comprises state bureaucrats and lawyers; all board members are men. The board members of the Mutual Aid Association are more mixed in terms of occupation; some are tradespersons, some are bureaucrats, and some are lawyers. There is only one woman on the board, and she is the head of the women's branch in the association. On the other hand, ŞEBDER, the chairperson and most of the board members are woman; they stated that they try not to be a "male association" because

they were uncomfortable being the only woman in the meetings and events of other HTAs. The distribution of occupation of board members is similar to the Mutual Aid Association.

Since the members are mostly state bureaucrats, the members of the Ankara Foundation stated that they are not economically capable as İstanbul's HTAs because, in İstanbul, there are more businesspeople, and they make more money than them. Also, the Mutual Aid Association has a significant rental income that makes them more capable of carrying out their projects and makes them more well-known among *hemşehris*.

Another difference among associations is that the connection with Şebinkarahisar is more robust in the Mutual Aid Association compared to ŞEBDER and Ankara Foundation. The members of the Mutual Aid Association visit Şebinkarahisar 3-4 times a year with the association. On the other hand, the members of ŞEBDER and Ankara Foundation visit Şebinkarahisar less frequently, and their visits are generally personal. Since the Mutual Aid Association visits Şebinkarahisar with the association, they have better relations with the locals and local government than the other two HTAs.

The Mutual Aid Association can mobilize more people and have larger events. They have more members, and they award scholarships to more students. Furthermore, since they have a relatively better relationship with the municipality of Şebinkarahisar, their projects are more admissible, and they face fewer problems.

### **1.9. Relations Among Associations**

The members of the Mutual Aid Association perceive themselves as the “big brother” to other associations; however, both ŞEBDER and Ankara Foundation are not happy with their attitude. Especially, members of ŞEBDER do not like the attitude because they broke up with them in 2005. However, they all invite each other to their events and organize joint events. Ankara Foundation invited board members of ŞEBDER to their meeting in February when there was an election for the board members. Another example is that the chairperson of Ankara Foundation

was selected as the head of the council meeting of ŞebinSiad in İstanbul when there was an election, and members of ŞEBDER and the Mutual Aid Association also attended the council meeting/dinner. In 2017, the Symposium of Şebinkarahisar was organized with the collective efforts of the associations. When there is a meeting in Ankara, both members of the Mutual Aid Association and ŞEBDER visit Ankara Foundation.



## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I try to provide a framework to grasp the triangulation between nationalism, civil society and *hemşehrilik* relations around HTAs. This chapter will provide a methodological standpoint of this thesis. It will start with conceptualizing identity. Secondly, a critical literature review on nationalism will be given. Thereafter, the theoretical approach of this thesis on nationalism is presented under the “theoretical framework on nationalism” section. Following that, citizenship and civil society concepts will be introduced and discussed. Then, the relationship between nationalism and civil society will be examined. Lastly, a critical literature review on HTAs in Turkey will be presented.

#### 2.1. What is Identity?

Today, the term identity means too much and too little simultaneously, and the concept is reified, even in social science research. Identities are fluid but then how can we understand them? Identity as a concept should not be taken for granted to be qualified as a category of analysis. Concepts that are used in social sciences are at the same time both “categories of social and political practice and categories of social and political analysis” that categories of practice are related to the everyday social experiences, “developed and deployed by ordinary social actors” (Brubaker, 2004, p.31). It is not related to the “experience-distant categories used by social analysts”

(Brubaker, 2004, p.31). Brubaker (2004) employs categories of practice rather than experience distant categories in his work. It means that the concepts should have been critically and methodologically redefined whilst considering everyday experiences and should not be taken for granted.

Using identity concept while attributing more meanings than what it is capable of reduces our analysis to undifferentiated vocabulary. It veils the “conceptualizing all affinities and affiliations, all forms of belonging, all experiences of commonality, connectedness, and cohesion, all self-understanding and self-identifications” (Brubaker, 2004, p.29). Therefore, taking identities or groups as a fixed unit of analysis for the research without contextualizing leads to reifying these concepts. Such as considering national or regional identities as bounded groups in research.

In order to understand what identity means, first of all, we should not conceptualize it as a taken-for-granted concept—identities in everyday life in the constant process of recreation. Identity, as a category of practice, can be used by social actors in everyday life to understand and locate themselves and make meaning out of their activities. The political entrepreneurs can also use the identity concept to manipulate the meanings attached to the term for their political interests. Therefore, the term can be a powerful means for political entrepreneurs to justify the collective action, creation of ‘us’ and ‘them’, and organize the identity.

The inclusion of everyday life into empirical work is crucial to grasp the ‘workings’ of identity. According to Brubaker (2004, p.2), the literature tends to “take bounded groups as fundamental unit of analysis and basic constituents of the social world”, which he conceptualizes as ‘groupism’. Groupism causes the reification of groupings and “common sense primordialism” in social sciences, when the groups are taken for granted as natural entities.

On the other hand, the term group is not easily avoided; moreover, it is not a completely unnecessary concept. However, in understanding how identity works, groups or groupness only indicates a variable. Groups should not be categorized as given entities. Otherwise, it leads to a commonsensical understanding of identities. Groups are framed or created through activities or performances of identities. They

do not exist just by themselves without the human agency. However, common sense is still crucial for researchers as a guide for social analysis. This common-sense understanding of identity can be the perspective of the research participants, pointing out Bourdieu's concept of "performative character" (as cited in Brubaker, 2004, p.10). In order to avoid groupism, Brubaker suggests using "groupness" as a variable in social science research to underline that they are not transcendental entities that exist outside of social relations. The main aim of thinking of groupness as a variable, not a constant, is to avoid reification of the identity. However, reification is not inherently a bad thing. It only should be avoided by the researcher and the researchers should be aware of the reification processes carried out in everyday life. In everyday life, what HTAs engage with a reification of performativity or practice and identity. They draw a line to define the constituents of the group they try to present. However, from a scientific point of view, researchers should be aware of the reification processes to avoid falling into the trap of common-sense groupism, which can be carried out in everyday life.

In the case of HTAs, they are gathered together to form relations based on *hemşehrilik* relations. However, the answer to who is a *hemşehri* is not crystal clear and affected by the positions that people take in their everyday life. That is why, throughout this thesis, the location of the associations to one another and the identities surrounding the *hemşehrilik* relations are tried to be understood. There has been an active process of identity-making within the HTAs. Among HTAs, there have been power relations over the definition of identity, and they try to institutionalize the fluid identity and present it in their own ways while being part of civil society. Therefore, it is argued that civil society is also a space for the reproduction of identities and people within civil society are agents of political life.

## **2.2. Nationalism**

How nations emerged is a question that occupies most of the nationalism literature. Briefly, it can be said that "nationalism itself, as an ideology and a social and political movement, has been very much evidence since at least the end of the eighteenth century" (Özkırımlı, 2010, p.9). However, there are different interpretations of nationalism, its roots and how it is experienced today. Approaches

in the literature on nationalism will be presented for discussion to determine which approaches are best suited to this research.

### ***Primordialism***

The first of the interpretations is primordialism. The definition of ‘primordial’ according to the Oxford English Dictionary is “of, relating to, or existing from the very beginning of time; earliest in time; primeval, primitive; (more generally) ancient, distant in time” (2008, as cited in Özkırmı, 2010, p.49). Primordialism describes nations as the natural identity of human beings which have existed since the dawn of time.

The term “primordial”, first used in the sociological analysis by Edward Shils who claims that society is more than soulless horde of people in form of *Gesellschaft* but within society there are primordial attachments. Shils (1957) claims that solidity of attachments can stem from blood ties, therefore, from objective markers. In this context, fluid character of identities and their identification processes are not taken into account and are approached groups as essential units.

For Geertz, nations “stem from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of language, and following particular social practices” (Geertz, 1993, as cited in Özkırmı, 2010, p.49). Geertz, who is a primordialist, does not take primordial attachment as given; instead, people tend to think of them as given, but it is actually assumed. It only seems natural to people. Primordial ties are not qualitatively the same in every society. There are different attributed meanings to ties over time and place.

Primordialist arguments tend to think of nations as having a constant presence in human history in one way or another. This presence shows itself in character, passed down to generations as if it is something static. The primordialist approach considers nations as given.

According to Özkırmı, the primordialist approach does not acknowledge the social constructedness of ethnicities and nations. They disregard “the role of individual choices, tactical decisions, political opportunity structures and various contingencies

in their construction” (Özkırmılı, 2010, p.61). Those identities do not have strict and fixed boundaries, and their definitions are constantly changing. Even though *hemşehrilik* relations are claimed to be based on primordial attachments around regional identity, they are reproduced through discursive frameworks in everyday life and civil society. Regional identity is reimagined within HTAs and the boundaries of who can be a *hemşehri* is constantly shifting. Therefore, primordialism cannot be the approach adopted by this thesis.

### ***Modernism***

For Smith (1998), modernization theories argue that modernization brought nations and nationalism, as opposed to primordialism. According to Shils (1995), nations brought nationalism into being. On the other hand, majority of modernist approaches claim that nationalism shape the nations that we know today through capitalist economic developments, with “industrialization, urbanization, secularism, and the emergence of the modern bureaucratic state” (Özkırmılı, 2010, p.72).

Modernists do not claim that nations and nationalism were unique to the modern era. However, these concepts did not fulfil the function in premodern societies as they do in the modern ones. Even though modernists agree that nations belong to modern societies, there are different approaches within modernist theory. Most of the cases, modernist theories do not reduce emergence of nationalism to a single factor.

For theories of modernism, nationalism is not about “ideas, class interest, economic modernization, psychological needs or culture” but about obtaining political power. Power, on the other hand, “in the modern world, is principally about control of the state. Our task, therefore, is to relate nationalism to the objectives of obtaining and using state power” (Breuilly, 1993, p. 2, as cited in Özkırmılı, 2010, pp.84-85). According to the modernist approach, political power can be more evident than understanding sentiments or ideas within nationalism discussions; it can present itself in the form of support of the political-national movements. However, this thesis argues that obtaining political power is not the only factor that can unveil the nationalism question. There are emotional attachments and subtly internalized discourse on nationalism that cannot be understood with instrumental thinking.

On the other hand, one of the most influential modernist thinkers in the nationalism literature is Eric Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983) discuss “invented traditions” which are produced through “social engineering”. Invented traditions are to implement certain accepted cultural practices, rituals, and symbols as fixed norms. It would allow them to be seen as continuous in history to be used as legitimacy-mechanisms in the development of both nationalism and nations. Nationalism is the most ubiquitous form of invented traditions. Nationalism came up in rapid industrialization and, therefore, in rapid social change to provide cohesion for society. People who were erstwhile not presented in politics had started to be integrated into it. This situation created a set of problems that rulers did not face before. It was the period of 1870-1914 for Hobsbawm when the invented traditions reached their climax because previously, people who were outsiders were now included in mass politics. Furthermore, they were included in politics with a new title as citizens. “The invention of tradition was the main strategy adopted by ruling elites to counter the threat posed by mass democracy” (Özkırmılı, 2010, p.94).

According to Hobsbawm, nations are not given entities that “belong to a particular, historically recent, period. It does not make sense to speak of nations before the rise of the modern territorial state...Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round” (Hobsbawm, 1990, p.10, as cited in Özkırmılı, 2010, p.96).

Smith (1991, as cited in Özkırmılı, 2010, p.127) criticizes Hobsbawm on invented traditions because, for Smith, it is more related to the rediscovery of the traditions which implies the historicity of the past, not the inventedness. Those traditions mark a distinctiveness from other communities; therefore, the history that became the source is not any unrelated past for the emergence of nationalism. It is not related to the fictiveness of the traditions but how people put meaning to them. However, the critique of Smith for modernism falls for the trap of common-sense groupism (Brubaker, 2004) and “retrospective nationalism” (Özkırmılı & Sofos, 2008) because he considers evolving of traditions following a linear line. However, the traditions can be actively selected from history and can be made up entirely. Moreover, some traditions can belong to more than one grouping, not necessarily be the property of certain “ethnies”.

Benedict Anderson (2006), whose approach can be considered as modernist, starts dealing with nationalism by focusing on the “cultural artefacts”. Mainly he tried to understand “how they have come into being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time and why they command such profound emotional legitimacy” (Özkırıklı, 2010, p.106). For Anderson (2006), nationalism emerged at the end of the 18th century due to crossing unrelated historical occurrences. Once it is created, it acquires the characteristic of being able to be copied in different times and geographies. While it can be copied, nationalism can also adopt political ideologies that can even oppose itself.

The definition of nations creates confusion because it is treated merely as a political ideology. However, it can be treated categorically as a religion or kinship. Anderson’s definition of a nation is an “imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 1991, pp.6-7, as cited in Özkırıklı, 2010, p.106). A nation is an imagined community because without depending on face-to-face relations, people act as if they have that relationality along with other identities that are beyond face-to-face relations. They treat the members of the nation as members of their communion. Nations are both limited and sovereign because they are imagined that way. Nations are limited because there are borders with other nations, which are also imagined. Nations are sovereign because nationalism is a product of Enlightenment and revolutions. After the Enlightenment, the hierarchical order started to change from monarchy towards democracy, where nations imagined themselves as free. Nations are imagined because “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship”, which is also underlined as “fraternity” in French Revolution (Anderson, 1991, pp.6-7, as cited in Özkırıklı, 2010, p.106).

However, for Anderson (2006), existence of nations does not imply falsity. Even though nations are not thing-in-themselves, it does not mean that they do not exist. Nevertheless, all of them are imagined. It is not only the nations; every community or society, beyond face-to-face relations among its members, is imagined. Anderson (2006) is interested in how they engage with the imagining processes.

The cultural roots of nationalism can be understood through the cultural structures that came before nationalism. Nationalism is not simply a political ideology that created itself. Nationalism emerged from cultural systems that came before it, even though it contested earlier forms of political communities.

Nationalism created a belief in the existence of the members of the nation without actually seeing or knowing them. The newspapers help the possibility for imagining nations through “calendrical coincidence”, and newspapers started to be consumed by the masses like a morning ritual “performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull” (Anderson, 2006, p.35). It helped the belief of the nation’s members’ existence to deepen because the newspapers showed that nations exist in everyday life. There are parallels to Billig’s arguments on banal nationalism (1995) that routinized everyday activities can produce nationalism. For Anderson, “print-languages laid the bases for national consciousness in three ways”: First, print-languages created a base for exchange and communication. Secondly, publishing books paved the way for the standardization of languages, which could be characterized by their antiquity. Thirdly, “print-capitalism created languages-of-power of a kind different from the earlier administrative vernaculars” (Özkırmı, 2010, p.110).

### ***Ethnosymbolism***

Ethnosymbolism emerged as a critique of modernism. Different from modernism, ethnosymbolism considers the importance of “myths, symbols, memories, values and traditions in the formation, persistence and change of ethnicity and nationalism” (Smith, 2001, as cited in Özkırmı, 2010, p. 143). For Smith, “an ethnosymbolic approach stresses the need for an analysis of collective identities over la longue durée...; the importance of continuity, recurrence and appropriation as different modes of connecting the national past, present and future...” (Smith, 2002, as cited in Özkırmı, 2010, p.143). Furthermore, ethnosymbolism also stresses the persistence of “ethnies” as an essential component of the modern nation formation process; the significance of myths, heroes, discourse on “golden age”, “the attachment to a homeland in the formation and persistence of national identities”; the role of ethnies or ethnic groups in the nationalism as a modern ideology and how those ethnic groups can be a means for the dissemination of that ideology (Smith,



2002, as cited in Özkırmı, 2010, p.143). They argue that “the rise of nations needs to be contextualized within the larger phenomenon of ethnicity which shaped them” (Hutchinson, 1994, as cited in Özkırmı, 2010, p.143). Furthermore, they differentiate modern nations and other prior cultural units in terms of their degree. It means that they do not consider that modern nations are different kinds of collective cultural units than the prior forms. Therefore, it can be said that ethnosymbolists take nations as an entity that is the continuation of premodern ethnies but with different degrees of collectivity.

Ethnosymbolism claims that myths help ethnies to become nations, whereas Breuilly, who is a modernist scholar, (1996, as cited in Özkırmı, 2010) claims that nationalists who can be politicians or intellectuals use those symbols and myths to create popularity and legitimacy for the national identity. “In many cases nationalists simply invent myths or they ignore those which cut across their purposes – hence for every national myth that has been used, there are many others that have been dumped in the dustbin of history” (Özkırmı, 2010, p.161). For Calhoun (1997), the continuity of those myths and traditions of ethnic communities is open to discussion because they can be reproduced rather than directly inherited. Most of the cases ethnosymbolist take groups as bounded unit that are constant in history where they have ability to have continuing myths. This is what Brubaker (2004) calls common-sense groupism and it should be avoided by the researcher. On the level of everyday life, people reify the identities that they have and present it as ever-changing entities, however, they are simultaneously on the making on discursive level.

### ***Other Approaches in the Literature on Nationalism***

#### ***Rogers Brubaker***

Brubaker (2004), in his book *Ethnicity without Groups*, discusses that there have been unresolved ambiguity of nationalism:

on the one side, nationalism has been associated with militarism, war, irrationalism, chauvinism, intolerance, homogenization, forced assimilation, authoritarianism, parochialism, xenophobia, ethnocentrism, ethnic cleansing, even genocide...On the other hand, nationhood and nationalism have been linked to democracy, self-determination, political legitimacy, social

integration, civil religion, solidarity, dignity, identity, cultural survival, citizenship, patriotism, and liberation from alien rule. (p.132)

The literature on nationalism tries to overcome this ambiguity with two conceptualizations of nationalism which are ‘civic and ethnic nationalism’. For Brubaker, “civic nationalism, characterized as liberal, voluntarist, universalist, and inclusive” (2004, p.133) where the commonality is citizenship, whereas “ethnic nationalism, glossed as illiberal, ascriptive, particularist, and exclusive” (Brubaker, 2004, p.133) where the commonality is putative cultural link.

The dichotomy between civic and ethnic nationalism is also linked to the dichotomy between the West and the ‘rest’. Kohn (1994, as cited in Brubaker, 2004, p.133) distinguished between “Western and Eastern forms of nationalism”. As Kohn does, dividing the world with civic and ethnic nationalisms concerning the distinction between the East and the West creates neo-orientalist attitudes for Brubaker (2004, p.133) where there are presented oppositions, but in fact, they are doubtfully linked with one another. Civic and ethnic nationalism distinction with the distinction of the east and the west presenting the world with the binary oppositions and parts of those oppositions can also be questionable from the beginning. Discussions over civic nationalism are not genuinely related to analytical discussions but political ones. It is more related to legitimacy or respectability than its empirical characteristics. Civic and ethnic nationalism distinction presented as a binary opposition, but both can be present simultaneously. Civic and ethnic nationalisms can co-exist in some cases if one still adopts such distinction. However, for Brubaker (2004), it is not easy to differentiate and understand each case with civic and ethnic nationalism in an analytical sense.

### ***Craig Calhoun***

According to Calhoun (1997), nationalism is ingrained in our everyday life, shapes our categorization, and helps us make sense of the world. Nationalism is “basic to collective identity in the modern era, and to the specific form of state which has predominated for the last 200 years. Indeed, nationalism is not only a matter of politics, but of culture and personal identity” (Calhoun, 1997, pp.1-2). Nationalism has power that affects people on an emotional level as well and influences

categorizing who we are which marks Calhoun distinct from modernist school of thought.

According to Calhoun, Foucault discusses “discursive formations”, which includes nationalism as a form of discursive formation that is a “way of speaking that shapes our consciousness, but also is problematic enough that it keeps generating more issues and questions, keeps propelling us into further talk, keeps producing debates over how to think about it” (1969; 1977, as cited in Calhoun, 1997, p.3). Nationalism as discursive formation refers to having rhetoric connected to other events and history enabling or disabling to act, speak, or think in specific ways familiar to others, and these actions, speeches and thoughts have peculiar political and social implications.

Besides discussing nationalism as a discursive framework, Calhoun (2007b) discusses the relationship between democracy and the nation-state. Nations are not readily awaiting sources for political legitimacy. According to the liberal perspective, nations cannot easily co-exist with democracies, which is a dubious argument because nationalism creates inclusion and exclusion relations based on a putative categorization of people. Therefore, it is directly linked to the citizenship discussions of the democratic political theory. Nationalism paves the way for democracy to work even though this relationship has been dismissed by the literature (Calhoun, 2007b). Calhoun criticizes liberal theories of democracy because they are disregarding of including nationalism in the discussion on democracy even though “nationalism help mobilize collective commitment to public institutions, projects, and debates” (Calhoun, 2007b, p.153). Nationalism leads the way for the formation of a discourse of “we” as the political community. Within this framework, considering close ties between civil society and democracy, civil society can also be one of the institution that produces nationalist discourses.

On the other hand, the source of a political community may not always be nationalism. However, “the idea of democracy requires some structure of integration, some cultural capacity for internal communication, some social solidarity of the people” which nationalism can provide (Calhoun, 2007b, pp.153-154).

Furthermore, prior to modernism and nationalism, social and political organization depended on one's social location in society which depended on "ascribed statuses based on descent, kinship, age, gender, and the like" (Calhoun, 2007a, p.70). Therefore, with the emergence of the modern nation-state, individuals are no longer mere objects of rule but turned into individuals who are the source of political legitimacy, namely they become citizens who have ability to participate in civil society. Democracy and nationalism have a bond that is hard to challenge, but "if democracy is to flourish, nationalism must not become the enemy of difference" (Calhoun, 2007a, p.99). This relationality also helps us to discuss the relationship between civil society and nationalism.

### *Thomas Hylland Eriksen*

According to Eriksen (1993), nationalism is a dual phenomenon that lies between the relations of a state as the formal institution and civil society. Eriksen introduces an analytical distinction of nationalism: formal and informal nationalisms which cannot be "reducible to each other; both are equally 'authentic', but they can be contradictory" (1993, p.1). Formal nationalism is linked with the modern nation-state, "including bureaucratic organization and meritocratic ideology, cultural uniformity and political consensus among the inhabitants" (Eriksen, 1993, p.1). Informal nationalism, on the other hand, can be linked with the collective events that occur within civil society. In this context, citizens engaging within civil society can contribute to providing a legitimate ground for nationalism. Therefore, the emergence and rise of modern nation-states not only require implementing bureaucratic and rational dimensions but also the creation of a sense of belonging to the national identity, acknowledging the national identity from below. The dualism of nationalism is about, on the one hand, nationalism presenting itself as an omnipresent, authentic, and natural entity; and, on the other, the nation-building process also requires sparking new emotions that cannot be found in the past to consolidate itself and find a legitimate ground thanks to civil society.

### **2.3. Theoretical Framework on Nationalism**

When people think of nationalism, generally, the first things that come to mind are war, states and ethnic conflicts. Nationalism cannot be reduced to international politics for Özkırımlı because “it also structures our daily lives and the way we perceive and interpret reality that surrounds us” (2010, p.2). Nationalism is a concept that there are no definitions that captures all of the “experiencings” of everyday life (Hall, 1977, p.322, as cited in Özkırımlı, 2005, p.29).

“Human groups have an ‘innate’ propensity to distinguish between insiders and outsiders, to delineate social boundaries, and to develop stereotypes about ‘the other’ in order to sustain and justify those boundaries” (Eriksen, 1999, p.46). Ethnicity has been conceptualized within these terms and acted upon as a given character of human societies. However, ethnicity, like national or regional identity, is not an independent entity floating around the realm of being. It is subject to the “process of collective identification”, a process that requires imagining and re-imagining any identification (Anderson, 2006).

According to the Modernist school of thought, even though the ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy existed well before the Enlightenment; however, the modern self is different from the earlier forms of the self because “nation-state places peculiar demands on its citizens, as well as abstract solidarity” (Eriksen, 1999, p.47). For Anderson (2006), the novelty of the modern national identity is that imagining communities have move to an unprecedented scale where people, who have never met, can develop sense of belonging, solidarity and rituals.

Furthermore, the creation of ‘us’ and ‘them’ feeling helps the emergence of stereotypes. The feeling of ‘us’ is constantly reproduced and consumed by the people mainly through the “routinely, familiar habits of language” to remind people the nationhood (Billig, 1995, p.93).

Billig pointed out that nationalism is not a temporary attitude towards crises; it is reproduced in the daily context. The supposed nations are not nations because of their essence, “daily, they are reproduced as nations and their citizenry as nationals”

(Billig, 1995, p. 6). However, reproduction at first glance is not apparent or visible because it is not something people come across once in a while. In everyday life, reproduction happens in front of the eye, but the eye gets used to it; it is not registered as a manifestation of nationalism.

Similarly, Calhoun (1997) does not discuss nationalism as merely a political doctrine; he includes everyday life in the analysis by drawing attention to the constructedness of nationalism, claiming that nationalism shapes the social reality. However, simply claiming that nations are social constructions should not keep one away from analysing nationalism because it still bears consequences. Nationalism is not only depending on the mere successful self-representation of nations (Calhoun, 2007a). For Calhoun, it is useless to approach nationalism with a “master variable” because “they do not explain the form of nation or nationalist discourse itself. This is so because they address heterogeneous objects of analysis” (Calhoun, 2007a, p.21). There are factors that can explain the processes of nationalism and its content but nationalist discourse by itself is not something to be directly explained.

The attempt to understand the workings of nationalism is crucial because, as it is argued earlier, it shapes our perception of the world and our location in it and “transform the very units of social solidarity, identity, and legal recognition within it, and organize deadly conflicts” (Calhoun, 2007a, p.29). Nationalism transforms and shapes the cognitive schemas and one’s location in the social world through “discursive formations”, as Foucault conceptualizes (1969; 1977, as cited in Calhoun, 1997, p.3). However, discursive formations do not point out finished and bounded groups. It underlines a space open for debates, questioning and producing further debates. Nationalism as a discursive formation does not indicate a formation where people can use only certain terms. Nationalist discourse cannot be denied but there are different nationalist projects that are using different vocabulary, or they link nationalism with different events.

According to the Foucauldian notion, discourse produces its meaning and truth; it facilitates to extend of the scope of specific actions to be connected to other actions and events, it “enables or disables certain other ways of speaking or acting, or that is recognized by others as entailing certain consequences” (Calhoun, 1997, pp.3-4).

Nationalism present nations as transcendental identities. However, conceptualizing nationalism with discourse helps us to understand nationalism as something constantly produced and reproduced. Nations do not exist before nationalism and are not self-sufficient. Nationalism, as it is discussed above, provides the framework to categorize politics and everyday experiencings. Thus, nationalism cannot be reduced to a mere political doctrine, rather it is “a more basic way of talking, thinking and acting” (Calhoun, 1997, p.11).

“The nationalist discourse tends to establish its hegemony and naturalize itself, presenting its truth claims as common sense, and striving, if unsuccessfully, to obliterate alternative discourses” (Özkırmılı, 2010, p.207). However, discourse as a concept does not only point out language or the sum of words; “rather, they are statements that are enacted within a social context and determined by that social context. Institutions and social context, therefore, play an important determining role in the development, maintenance and circulation of discourses” (Mills, 2004, pp.9-10, as cited in Özkırmılı, 2010, p.208). In this context, discourse does not mean disassociation from reality, but it is the mean that makes objects and events natural for our consciousness. “They determine what we can think and how we can act; they set the limits of our field of vision, excluding a range of phenomena from being considered as real or as worthy of attention” (Mills, 2004, p.46, as cited in Özkırmılı, 2010, p.208). Nationalism as a discourse argument is linked to what Brubaker (2004) calls nationalism “a perspective on the world” rather than “a perspective of the world”. Discourse is real because it has real consequences.

Discursive frameworks shape anything related to nationalism, ranging from direct political arguments to identity constructions such as *hemşehrilik* or ethnicity. However, nationalism alone does not form a direct cause-effect relation because nationalism as a process is complex and multifaceted. Therefore, studying nationalism and its implications with other experiencings is a valuable attempt.

Özkırmılı provides four different features of nationalism to differentiate it from other discourses. First of which is “the discourse of nationalism divides the world into ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Özkırmılı, 2005, p.32). As discussed earlier, nationalism provides a framework to categorize and make sense of life. The source of categorization, on the

other hand, can be contextual. According to Bauman (1992, p.678), identity is “always made-up, almost always contested, it tends to be fragile and unsure of itself”. Nationalism is not the first form of identification that created ‘us’ and ‘them’ feelings. *Hemşehrilik* relations also categorize individuals based on similar discourse. However, what makes nationalism unique is that it mobilized a significant number of people with modernity. Anderson (2006) argues that imagined communities existed prior to nationalism. The novelty of nationalism came from mobilizing a great number of people as a community (which every community is imagined) and became the ubiquitous source of identity.

Secondly, “the discourse of nationalism hegemonizes” and “legitimizes and produces hierarchies among actors” (Özkırmı, 2005, p.33). The power of nationalism is not only limited to its actors, but it has a hegemony also over other discourses as well “by ‘nationalizing’ narrative and interpretative frames, ways of perceiving and evaluating, thinking and feeling” (Brubaker, 1996, pp.83-84, as cited in Özkırmı, 2005, p.33). Nationalizing narrative can be traced in the conceptualization of *hemşehri* relations as well. Nationalism, as it provides a categorical hierarchy between actors, also affects the categorization of who can be a *hemşehri*. *Hemşehri* identity is a fluid and contextual identification. However, the boundaries of the identity can be aligned with the nationalist discourse. Nationalism becomes one of the most critical determinants while defining of regional identity which will be discuss more intently in the upcoming chapter.

Thirdly, the “discourse of nationalism naturalizes itself” (Özkırmı, 2005, p.33). It brings along the process of reification. However, nations acquire their meaning through nationalism, and nationalism can be treated as a discourse because nationalism is a “particular way of seeing and interpreting the world, a frame of reference that helps us make sense of and structure the reality that surrounds us” (Özkırmı, 2010, p.206).

Furthermore, nationalist discourse is not independent of contingencies and cannot be understood with homogenous identities. Nevertheless, it does not present itself as contingent; on the contrary, it presents itself as if it has an essence even though there is diversity within. However, internal diversity is not mentioned to create justifiable



ground for itself to emerge. It is an active exclusion. “Yet these choices are neither predetermined nor inevitable; they are the outcome of a dynamic and contentious process which involves diverse intentions” (Özkırımlı, 2010, p.210). This is what gives nationalist discourse a contingent nature. “Foucault called ‘eventalization’ which implies ‘rediscovering the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies, and so on, that at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal, and necessary’” (2002b, pp.226-227, as cited in Özkırımlı, 2010, p.210). It is similar to what Brubaker calls nationalism an “eventful perspective” which can “happen” (1996, p.21). “Such perspective permits us to see the definition of the nation is an ongoing process, with no sense of closure; that ‘identity is always structured by a plurality of relations’” (Walker, 2001, p.620, as cited in Özkırımlı, 2010, p.210).

Lastly, “the discourse of nationalism operates through institutions” (Özkırımlı, 2005, p.33). National identity is not innate, and people are not born with it. It is learned through various socialization processes and reproduced in everyday life. Since the discourse of nationalism naturalizes itself through daily reproduction, it is powerful because it is not disturbingly direct at all times. Furthermore, one of the institutions in that nationalism is reproduced is the public sphere. Therefore, civil society can be an arena where nationalist discourse is reproduced and competing nationalist views can be clashed. In the case of the divorce of the *hemşehris*, which will be discussed in next chapter, they have different political ideologies; it also includes how they conceptualize identity and nationalism.

#### **2.4. Citizenship**

In the world that we are living in, almost everyone is a citizen of a state. The definition of citizenship, however, is multifaceted in that it is related to a citizen’s legal status and practices. Citizenship is a crucial concept for understanding the relationship between the state and society, identity, civic participation, and public interest. It can be defined as the membership in a polity in its most basic form (İnce, 2012). The polity mentioned initially referred to the ancient Greek city-states; however, in the modern world, the polity corresponds to the modern nation-states. The citizenship concept encompasses a “dialectical process between inclusion and

exclusion, between those deemed eligible for citizenship” (İnce, 2012, p.3), which, within the modern nation-state context, those dialectical relations of inclusion and exclusion refers to being a member of a nation or not. Membership to a nation-state, essentially, based on ideals of cultural homogeneity within the borders of a nation. Therefore, in the literature, concepts of national identity, nationality and citizenship have been used interchangeably. It is because nations, through inclusionary and exclusionary legal practices, determine who can be a citizen or not, thus determining one’s national identity.

On the other hand, nationalism “is a vital part of collective projects that shape the modern world, transform the very units of social solidarity, identity, and legal recognition within it, and organize deadly conflicts” (Calhoun, 2007a, p.29). It can be said that nationalism and the discourse it produces provides a framework that enables people to make sense of their other identities. Ethnicity or regional identity is conceptualized in relation to the national identity, and how it is manifested in everyday life can be subject to change. Nationalism is still powerful and prevalent because it shapes our consciousness through the discursive framework it provides (Calhoun, 1997).

Citizenship mainly refers to “either a membership status in a particular nation-state recognized in international law or a sense of belonging to the national community represented by that nation-state” (İçduygu, 2005, p.199). On the other hand, the answer to how-to citizenship does not come automatically when one person has a legal status. “We are not born citizens, but are formed through education and experience” (İnce, 2012, p.7). One of the functions of the nation-state for its justification and maintenance is providing education through socialization processes involving mass schooling, where people learn how to become part of the polity as citizens, starting from a young age.

Together with the modern state, the perception of people has changed into perceiving them as citizens. However, the central problem of the modern nation state was “how to reconcile the public interest of citizens and the private interests of selfish individuals”. In order to overcome this problem, firstly, citizenship started to be used as a political concept. The modern state by making people citizens partake in

decisions in liberal democracy. The people were the nation where “the nation was simply the body of citizens and only the political rights of the citizens – not their cultural identities – mattered” (Özkırmılı, 2010, pp.86-87). Citizenship is used for the creation of the general will. Secondly, culture tried to be uniformed and standardized to become a source of identity for different social groups.

As stated earlier, citizenship is a complex concept that includes various elements within its definition. Citizenship can be conceptualized as “legal status, defined by civil, political and social rights”; secondly, citizenship means that citizens are part of a political community that provides a source of identity (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, as cited in İnce, 2012, pp.5-6). The third dimension of citizenship is related to citizens’ capacity to engage within the civil society, which is come into being through the emergence of the modern nation-state.

## **2.5. Civil Society**

Civil society implies “the space of uncoerced human association and also set of relational networks – formed for the sake of family, faith, interest, and ideology – that fill this space” (Walzer, 1991, p.293). Civil society is a space where people gather despite their personal differences without necessarily being acquainted with one another previously to engage to advocate for a cause. Civil society shows the ability to form such an association where this ability had been gained with the emergence of the concept of citizenship.

However, defining civil society brings forth complex set of other processes and concepts to be understood and discussed, such as modernization, nationalism, urbanization, and the idea of democracy. Civil society, to this day, still does not have a definition that is agreed upon because civil society cannot have ideal definitions due to the fuzziness of the boundaries of the definition and context-dependency.

People who are agents of civil society are citizens of modern states. Therefore, we can only talk about civil society because of the formation of the modern state. According to Calhoun, civil society is a “social foundation enables a collectivity of people to organize institutions through popular political participation” and is a way

to create “alternatives to the state organization of collective life” (Calhoun, 2007a, p.78).

## **2.6. The Relationship between Nationalism and Civil Society**

Before the Enlightenment the idea of social order was believed to be regulated by a divine entity who could either be a god or a king who had given the divine power to rule. With the Enlightenment, traditional norms and principles of order started to be questioned (Seligman, 1992, p.15). Enlightenment brought a new idea and conceptualization of society in relation to civil society and “the people” discourse as opposed to the state. “The break with past traditions and customs—as the binding forces of society—engendered the search for new principles of moral unity within (and earlier, with Grotius for example, between) societies” (Seligman, 1992, p.16). New moral unity brought by the changes that happened in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries paved the way for the emergence of civil society in the modern sense. Modernity, following Enlightenment, gave new meanings to the subject and power. The subject under a king or divine power now turns into a citizen of the modern state, which is a nation-state. The legitimacy of the modern state does not come from the will of God but from the people. Society now “be represented as self-moving and whole” (Calhoun, 1999, p.218). Nationalism enters into this picture because “the people” are defined with the help of nationalism: “nationalist rhetoric treated nations as categories of individuals, units of membership for persons equivalent in their common relation to the whole. The latter notion in turn strongly inflected the idea of citizenship” (Calhoun, 1999, p.218). Nationalism and citizenship are intertwined while consolidating a legitimacy for the modern state. Nationalism as a discourse “match between people and the state” (Calhoun, 1999, p.218). Therefore, nationalism is an essential part of what we understand from the term society.

Nationalism helps us frame our collective identity formation to be perceived. *Hemşehri* relations are a form of collective identity, and how we frame that collective identity is through nationalism. Nationalism can be thought of as contact lenses that we forget are there, and it shapes our cognitive functions, meaning how we interpret the world around us. From the cognitive perspectives, race, ethnicity and nations are:

Ways of understanding and identifying oneself, making sense of one's problems and predicaments, identifying one's interests, and orienting one's action...ways of recognizing, identifying, and classifying other people, of construing sameness and difference, and of coding and making sense of their actions...are templates for representing and organizing social knowledge, frames for articulating social comparisons and explanations, and filters that shape what is noticed and unnoticed, relevant or irrelevant, remembered or forgotten. (Brubaker, 2004, p.81)

Therefore, collective identities are perceived in relation to nationalism. "Nationalism has helped to produce a way of conceiving of society that lends itself to specific approaches to citizenship. Both in confusion and argumentative advantages for certain ways of thinking follow" (Calhoun, 1999, p.220). This thesis argues that the nationalism in people's minds can be traceable within civil society. Therefore, civil society can produce legitimate ground for competing nationalist discourses. HTAs as CSOs create discourses that, on the surface level, seem only related to the *hemşehri* relations. However, the collective identity produced around *hemşehrilik* is not immune to the nationalist discourses because "citizenship in this sense metaphorically located between the locally different and the nationally same" (Calhoun, 1999, p.219).

For Calhoun (2007a), the power of nationalism does not only come from the state, but nationalism also gives room for the role of institutions and practices that helps members to locate themselves, find commonalities among themselves and find a common other. In the case of civil society, even if it is defined as an opposition or a sphere where the state cannot enter, civil society provides grounds for discourse on nationalism to be proliferated or maintained, which can be in line with the state's official nationalist ideology or civil society can create and help to produce alternative nationalist discourses or provide a ground for political differences to compete. Therefore, we cannot define civil society with idealistic and Eurocentric expectations.

Gramsci describes civil society as not an opposite space to the state. The dichotomy created by the civil society literature idealizes the definition and scope of civil society and assigns roles that civil society might not necessarily carry. According to the Gramscian perspective, this illusion of a dichotomy between civil society and

state is created by the liberal point of view, which claims that the boundaries of the civil society and state are clear and independent realms. “Gramsci focuses on the contingent nature of these relations and emphasises that the relations between civil society and state might take multiple forms across time and space” (Dikici-Bilgin, 2009, p.108).

Gramsci “refrains from fixing these relations other than for methodological purposes, which emphasises that these relations are conditional, and that there are continuous interactions between these spheres as both civil society and political society are part of the hegemonic struggle” (Dikici-Bilgin, 2009, p.109). Not defining civil society with fixed relations and definition or giving it a boundary is what makes Gramsci's methodological approach novel because it does not delimit the analysis to a specific context which can apply to all. Therefore, contingency and the peculiarity of the situation and the context can be considered in the analysis. It is similar to the methodological approach of Brubaker (2004); he does not approach groups as something that has intrinsic values by themselves. Brubaker (2004) claims that groups are not direct categories of analysis. Their value emerges from the relations and contingent situation because of the different agencies involved. Therefore, they are categories of practice. They emerge with the relations once established. After they come into being with the social relations, they become “things” in reality. They can be called categories of practice. Therefore, approach adopted by this thesis will consider them as variables rather than constants.

State, for Gramsci, is the “sum of political society and civil society while civil society becomes the site for the struggles for hegemony, a sphere in which hegemony operates” (Dikici-Bilgin, 2009, p.109).

What hegemony means in Gramsci's readings can be varied. Hegemony can refer to being the “opposite of domination, and in other places, it is about creating and maintaining leadership...[or] ruling practice which aims at forming a collective will and a particular understanding of the world which would result in acquiring the consent of the ruled” (Dikici-Bilgin, 2009, p.109).

For Gramsci, the state establishes hegemony not only through coercion and domination but also through consent (Dikici-Bilgin, 2009, p.109). Hegemony implies “intellectual, cultural and political leadership”, and hegemony is not the totality of power over society. It requires a capability to make compromises and “articulate wider interest existing in society” (Mouffe, 1979b; 1979a, as cited in Dikici-Bilgin, 2009, p.109). Within this equation, it is a dull effort to create a dichotomy between civil society and the state as a binary opposition because since hegemony can be established with consent, they are not always strictly opposed to one another. Also, since there is consent, there is a dialectical relationship between civil society and the state. The nature of the relationship is not fixed. It is contingent, depends on the actors, therefore, fluid. It makes defining the boundaries of civil society highly difficult; furthermore, it is not an epistemologically meaningful attempt. Gramsci’s differentiation of civil society and the state as separate entities is only a methodological difference (Dikici-Bilgin, 2009).

Civil society does not always create counter-hegemony against the state. Civil society, as it contributes to maintaining nationalist discourse, therefore, provides legitimacy for the state. Thus, we cannot see civil society and the state as competitive spheres of social and political life. We should understand the relationality, interactions, and meanings attributed to nationalism and civil society by the people. Therefore, this view allows this thesis to discuss the relationship between nationalism and civil society.

Furthermore, civil society is perceived as a way of “describing the capacity of self-organization on the part of a political community, in other words, the capacity of a society to organize itself without being organized by a state” (Calhoun, 2007a, p.81). However, if that were the case for civil society to achieve such a level of integration of the people into politics, then people would be “the source of political legitimacy rather than merely the object of rule” (Calhoun, 2007a, p.81). It can be inferred that Calhoun criticizes the general view of civil society because it is idealized to fit into the democratic discourse. However, ‘the people’, who can also be the citizens, is not an inclusionary concept. Calhoun criticizes the notion of self-determination presented by the theories of democracy because it is “shrouded in illusions of

primordially” (Calhoun, 2007a, p.84). Self-determination and self-sufficiency of nations are unfinished projects within the modern framework. Nationalism includes exclusion and inclusion relations.

In the case of HTAs, one of their aims is to preserve a distinct, authentic collective identity. However, is it for democracy, or does it have to contribute to democracy? The answer is: not necessarily because how civil society is experienced can differ from the expectations of the literature. Civil society operates in different ways, and civil society can also complement nationalist discourses. Therefore, definitions of civil society must be flexible and move beyond Eurocentric attachments and idealistic definitions.

Furthermore, civil society cannot be reduced to CSOs, but it is the totality of relations both with the state and outside of the state. Civil society is also a realm of “the political”, an arena where power relations can be contested (Mouffe, 2011). The existing power relations and political or nationalist discourses can affect the people who partake in civil society. Thus, civil society includes a multitude of social relations; it can range from dissemination of certain ideologies, establishing definitions and drawing boundaries of identity, gaining political power through utilizing networks, coming together to defend groups’ rights, socializing around familiar ties, helping for the community, becoming a pressure group to implement social policies. However, it does not mean that civil society can resolve any conflict by simply existing because it is not a “magic bullet” (Edwards, 2004).

## **2.7. Hometown Associations (HTAs)**

*Hemşehrilik* is a phenomenon that is a crucial part of associational life in Turkey. *Hemşehri* relations manifest themselves within civil society in Turkey as HTAs. According to the General Directorate of Civil Society Relations (T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı Sivil Toplumla İlişkiler Genel Müdürlüğü), in 2018, there were 16221 HTAs where 11600 of them were active. HTAs made up 13.89% of all the active CSOs in Turkey (Şentürk, 2021). There are 12016 registered CSOs in Ankara; 2594 are HTAs, meaning that they make up 21.5% of all Ankara’s CSOs. In İstanbul, there are 25600 registered CSOs, and 6967 of them are HTAs, making up 27.2% of all



CSOs in İstanbul (T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı Sivil Toplumla İlişkiler Genel Müdürlüğü). First, HTAs in Turkey started to appear during the 1950s, and their numbers significantly increased in the 1990s (Aktaş, 2010, as cited in Şentürk, 2021).

HTAs emerged due to internal migration from rural to urban centres that started in the 1950s in Turkey, and this can be understood from the distribution of HTAs according to the regions in which they are founded. 53.52% of all HTAs in Turkey are founded in Marmara Region; 21.55% of all HTAs are founded in Central Anatolia Region; 8.29% of all HTAs are founded in Black Sea Region; 7.34% of all HTAs are founded in Aegean Region; 5.59% of all HTAs are founded in Mediterranean Region; 1.87% of all HTAs are founded in South-Eastern Anatolia Region; 1.84% of all HTAs are founded in Eastern Anatolia Region (Şentürk, 2021). İstanbul and Ankara are the most attractive urban centres for people migrating from the rural parts of Turkey. Therefore, when they settled in big cities of Turkey, their civic participation as HTAs was significantly higher than in other regions of Turkey.

Furthermore, according to 2018 TURKSTAT data, the cities with the most citizens in İstanbul are from Sivas, Kastamonu, Ordu, Giresun and Tokat, respectively (Şentürk, 2021). In addition to being the city with the highest number of HTAs, İstanbul also experienced the structural transformation of HTAs that the first attempts of founding federations and confederations of HTAs happened in İstanbul. There are 162 supra-association formations in İstanbul, of which 150 are federations, and 12 are confederations (Şentürk, 2021).

HTAs or *hemşehri* associations are structurally composed of village associations, district associations, city associations, federations and confederations. They are the products of internal migration in Turkey; they provide various kinds of solidarity and allocate resources for the needs of the hometown. These can include awarding scholarships to students, economically helping, and finding jobs for their *hemşehris* (Çelebi, 2018, as cited in Şentürk, 2021, p.10).

In the literature, it is argued that *hemşehri* relations, in their early forms, became visible within the coffeehouses in the gecekondu neighbourhoods to integrate rural newcomers into urban life and solve their problems (Şentürk, 2021). While only

24.2% of the total population of Turkey lived in urban areas in 1927, this ratio increased to 25% in 1950, 43.9% in 1980 and 75.5% in 2010 (Demir & Çabuk, 2010, p.194, as cited in Şentürk, 2021, p.15).

Turkey has experienced a multi-party system and industrialization process together with the Democrat Party since the 1940s. Democrat Party followed a social policy that encouraged urbanization that would benefit the industrialization attempts because of the flow of labour force from the rural (Aytaç, 2005, as cited in Şentürk, 2021, p.16). Consequently, this situation created a process of societal change and transformation. According to Köse (2008), this transformation of society with the migration flow from rural had accelerated during the 1980s when the Turkish economy started to be integrated into capitalism and peaked in the 1990s. In the 1980s, the change in the nature of migration brought about differentiation. While this change was considered “soft, integrative urbanization” before 1980, the new period was described as “tense, exclusionary urbanization” with the policies implemented (Uzun, 2013, as cited in Şentürk, 2021, pp.16-17).

### **2.7.1. Building Trust Through *Hemşehrilik***

According to Köse (2008), with the migration flow from rural to urban, the *hemşehrilik* was utilized as a coping mechanism to provide newcomers to a city with a familiar solidarity network.

The *hemşehri* is a relational term that interacts with other societal matters and identities in the urban context. Therefore, the term is subject to constant change and appropriation of new meanings. HTAs institutionalize the regional identity. Therefore, they obtain the power to alter meanings attached to *hemşehrilik* relations.

Today, there are new functions of HTAs: bringing *hemşehris* together under the association, preserving regional culture and values, helping the financially troubling *hemşehris*, awarding scholarships to students, and creating an environment for themselves to be able to express themselves freely (Kültür ve Eğitim Komisyonu, 2009, p.30, as cited in Şentürk, 2021, p.10).

According to Akpınar, the person who migrated to the city feels the “need for trust” and can find the reassuring face-to-face relationship they are accustomed to finding “only in groups of fellow countrymen from the same root” (2013, p.265, as cited in Şentürk, 2021, p.29). Trust is needed because, for the first time, people live in relatively more heterogenous social settings in the cities, and there can be conflicting values. They had come across more diverse cultural practices than they used to. Consequently, since they are confronted with strangers, they want to preserve their cultural values and traditions by creating solidarity through more familiar ties. “Some norms – like trust and even cooperation – have a different value for people in different circumstances” (Edwards, 2004, p.43). Familiarity can be established around different categories of practices, ranging from religion or religious organizations, like church, to sports teams or ethnicity. However, the uniqueness of Turkey’s urbanization process comes from choosing *hemşehrilik* ties to cope with the unknown. However, choosing *hemşehrilik* as a way to build trust was not a necessary outcome of urbanization in Turkey, but a contingent one.

In this context, civil society helps to reinforce trust in society. According to Edwards (2004, pp.41-42), “the level and frequency of face-to-face interaction that is possible in associations or small communities means that incentives for trusting and cooperative behaviour are likely to be stronger”. The way of perceiving the relations of *hemşehrilik* gained new function and meaning with the internal migration. Creating a new meaning of *hemşehri* is effective in the integration process because it creates a sense of belonging and a new identity in the city. The word *hemşehri*, used before to show sincerity, has been turned into a word that forms CSOs in the urban context (Köse, 2008).

Secondly, social norms can be reproduced within the relations of familiarity. CSOs based on familiarity can create a more prosperous environment for the people (Edwards, 2004). Besides the comforting emotions that *hemşehrilik* provides through solidarity and the creation of a sense of belonging, the institutionalization of *hemşehri* relations through HTAs as formal organizations pave the way for the building trust to enhance the trading capacity between *hemşehris*. Therefore, HTAs

can also be evaluated considering the relationship between civil society and the market.

Kalaycıoğlu (2002) tries to understand civil society's role in consolidating democracy in Turkey. He tries to understand the components of civil society: associability, interpersonal trust and civic or socio-political tolerance. These components are inter-correlated. Associability is about voluntary civic participation and overlapping membership to CSOs where cooperation and solidarity can be generated. In Turkey, associability is affected by primordial ties and religious orders rather than voluntary associations with autonomous actors, leading to corruption and exceptions to the rule of law. According to Kalaycıoğlu (2002), in Turkey, interpersonal trust is not significantly high, and in most cases, primordial ties become the only basis for partnership. Associability is also affected by the interventionist and distrustful state. However, Kalaycıoğlu (2002) disagrees with the argument of strong-state tradition in Turkey. The state is not strong but coercive and arbitrary. The weak state blocks the development of civil society with a lack of regulation and distribution capacities. Mutual suspicion leads to the use of arbitrary executive power.

Since interpersonal trust is low and primordial ties are the basis of partnership, it explains the increased number of HTAs after the 1990s. Furthermore, the rural-to-urban migration flow and keeping the identity of the rural to maintain the status quo paved the way for the HTAs to flourish as a CSO. As Kalaycıoğlu (2002) argues that Turkey does not show signs of strong state tradition and shows the arbitrary use of power, it can create an atmosphere where the self-interest of individuals can be more visible. For example, in the case of HTAs, they have certain power for political pressure. Nevertheless, HTAs can be an arena for seeking personal political interests as well.

### **2.7.2. *Hemşehrilik* as Buffer Mechanism**

At the beginning of the internal migration process and integration of rural migrants into the city, *hemşehri* relations are argued to be the “buffer mechanism” where people integrated into the individualistic city life with their informal relations of

*hemşehrilik*. The buffer mechanism is defined by Kıray (2000) as facilitators of the integration and formation of institutions while gaining new functions within the framework of social changes. According to the structural-functionalist school, a social structure consists of balanced but constantly changing institutions. Social structures can change at a different pace according to internal and external reasons. While social change is happening, there are anomalies in society. The “buffer mechanism” concept is helpful for understanding how people handle the unknown. Buffer mechanisms contain elements from old and new social structures; according to Kıray (2000), buffer mechanisms are efficient for restoring harmony within the society without damaging the society.

According to Kıray (2000), buffer mechanisms appear in medium-paced social changes because if the social change is slow, there would be no need for the buffer mechanisms to cope with the change, and there would not be vast differences in a social structure that people cannot cope with them. On the other hand, if a social change is too sudden, e.g. in the form of a revolution, the structure would have been changed significantly, so there would not be a need to maintain previously functioning institutions. The components of social structure are tied to one another through buffer mechanisms and if the parts that are no longer functional will disappear, enabling the society to be at its balance (Kıray, 2000). Kıray conceptualized the “buffer mechanism” concept in 1964, when Turkey was experiencing industrialization and, consequently, urbanization. The West had experienced urbanization parallel to industrialization, but it was a gradual process. For Kıray (2000), Turkey had experienced medium-paced urbanization compared to Europe “the immigration in Turkey was continuous, the change was recognized in 20-30 years while it took a couple of centuries in Europe” (Özdemir, 2014, p.66). Thus, Turkey’s medium-paced urbanization paved the way for the emergence of “buffer mechanisms”.

Furthermore, in Turkey, internal migration brought unemployment, urban sprawl, and the emergence of slums in the form of *gecekondu*, with problems concerning security. While people were facing such new and concrete problems, they needed solidarity networks to cope with them, and through HTAs and ties of *hemşehrilik*,

they tried to seek solutions (Şentürk, 2021, p.16). *Hemşehrilik* relations are perceived as the buffer mechanism for people to tussle their emerging problems in the cities. On the other hand, where the transition to new functions, defined within the scope of modernism, cannot be adopted, these mechanisms are seen as elements of “preventing urbanization” due to primordial characteristic of regional identity and *hemşehrilik* relations.

There are three interpretations of the position of HTAs within the buffer mechanism discussion. The first suggests that HTAs and the *hemşehrilik* ease the problems of newcomers and smooths the process of adaptation to urbanization (Altıparmak, 2015; Bal, 1997; Tekşen, 2003, as cited in Şentürk, 2021). The second interpretation treats HTAs as being harmful to the process of urbanization because they create resistance to adopting the new modern/urban identity by preserving rural traditions within the cities (Öksüz, 2018; Altay, 2009; Aytaç, 2005, as cited in Şentürk, 2021). The third approach claims that HTAs as buffer mechanisms will change and adapt to the new conditions and obtain new functions accordingly.

### **2.7.3. Hemşehri Identity**

*Hemşehri* identity can provide a road map for the people who migrated to cities to guide them to make sense of who they are and whom they will become. According to Kurtoğlu (2005), there is no clear definition of who can be a *hemşehri*. *Hemşehrilik* is relational and fluid; the answer to the question “who is *hemşehri*” is related to the context. Therefore, *hemşehri* is not an identity that is a thing-in-itself but a variable. How *hemşehris* are organized around an association would also be particular for each case. Therefore, the definition of *hemşehrilik* and organization around *hemşehri* identity would be plural. One reason is that each category of *hemşehrilik* reflects identity, and each identity is formed by interactions between other social facts and identities (Kurtoğlu, 2005).

The word *hemşehri* describes a person and the social status of that person, but there must be at least two people for the definition of *hemşehri* to come about. In other words, *hemşehrilik* is relational by definition. In this relation, the *hemşehri* is the

person whose family origin is in the same geographical area (Kurtoğlu, 2005). However, how geographical space is reimagined is not a unified process.

On the other hand, *hemşehrilik* defines the situational relationship between people, which points out the commonality of the geographical locality to the other person. The second definition of *hemşehrilik* is related to the feelings and ties attached to the hometown, which can harbour various ties and identities inside. These ties sometimes operate at the level of social identity. People who do not know each other can categorize each other based on their physical appearance, speech, and geographical location and evaluate each other in the categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’. The ties between people who belong to the same geographical place are sometimes the subject of personal identity. The sense of belonging in reference to the hometown can be built through civic participation in HTAs. Although they do not consciously act, they first draw the boundaries of the community and distinguish their community from the others while bringing community members together. It is the practice of attributing identity to this community, separating it from others (Kurtoğlu, 2005). Therefore, they are institutionalizing the *hemşehri* or local identity through civic participation. Once they are part of civil society with solidified identity, the relations of *hemşehrilik* take various roles, ranging from daily face-to-face relations with neighbours to creating clientelist relations with unknown *hemşehris*.

However, *hemşehri* identity may not only stem from the exact geographical location. According to Kurtoğlu (2005), like nations, *hemşehrilik* is a different “imagined community” form. Anderson (2006) discusses the imagined community concept concerning nationalism. Even though every community is imagined and institutionalized to present itself as a thing-in-itself category through different means, nationalism is the form that mobilized a significant number of people compared to other forms of imagined communities through modernization. In the case of ethnic nationalism, even though 80 million people with different everyday life practices and entailing cultures cannot belong to the same ethnicity, nationalism provides a ground where the ethnic identity can be tied to national identity, manifest itself in the political discourse to create a legitimacy for a nation-state.

The definition of *hemşehrilik* can be wrapped around other social identities as well. *Hemşehrilik* as an identity is formed around having the same hometown and culture entails that locality survives within the scope of the modern nation-state in the case of Turkey through civic participation. It finds a way to incorporate itself as an element of national or other social identities. Within this context, focusing on nationalism and *hemşehrilik* provides fruitful interpretations.

#### **2.7.4. Patronage, Clientelism and Politics**

Individuals are the main component of democracies due to their role as citizens in the modern state. The urbanization process transformed the rural informal group of individuals into formally formed groups by being an agent within the civil society in the urban context. In Turkey, with the internal migration flow starting from the 1950s, rural immigrants formed HTAs based on *hemşehri* relations to create solidarity and a sense of belonging. However, the organization's function and form have been subject to change according to the prevalent political opportunity structures. Arguably, HTAs at first served as “buffer mechanisms”, then turned into “interest groups” and have the potential to become “pressure groups” which can eventually become crucial agents within the political life of Turkey (Özdemir, 2014).

Charles Tilly (as cited in Kurtoğlu, 2005) discusses the political opportunity structures that social movements are organized within the opportunity structures offered by the political frames in which they develop. For Kurtoğlu (2005), the political opportunity structure offered by the political framework in terms of eliminating inequalities and conveying social demands to the political arena has always been limited in Turkey. In this context, “patronage patterns based on bilateral interests can be sustained through many cultural or social themes, among which *hemşehrilik* is one of the most common themes” (Şentürk, 2021, p.41).

Even though HTAs started to emerge during the 1950s, the crucial turning point of HTAs for the literature on civil society in Turkey was the 12 September 1980 military coup d'état. After the military coup, the government tried to implement depoliticization policies which meant restricting the activities of civil society and political activities within the society. According to Kurtoğlu (2005), given the



political opportunity structures of the early 1980s, HTAs became an acceptable way of associating due to their organization type. However, after the coup d'état, most HTAs were closed since they started to be politicized. The content of the hometown organizations became shaped according to the personal and political projects of the people and/or leaders who play a role in their politicization process (Kurtoğlu, 2005). It means that the meaning attached to the *hemşehri* identity is once more changed and political aspect is added to the framework which turned *hemşehri* identity to social identity. Some HTAs were labelled as 'right-wing' or 'left-wing' or associated with specific political parties, following the projects of the leaders of the HTAs, which implies that HTAs can be a place where the represented collective interest may merge with some people's private interest.

According to Yılmaz (as cited in Özdemir, 2014), HTAs can be associated with favouritism. According to Özdemir (2014), the hometown organization serves different purposes in which their initial function was acting as a "buffer mechanism". Along with the depoliticization policies of the military government during the 1980s, their organizational form had changed; they were perceived as non-political organizations. However, they became powerful actors for the politicians because "when the parties address the public, they need to declare their connection with the hometown associations and their stance with them" (Özdemir, 2014, p.69).

According to Hersant and Toumarkine (2005), HTAs have political power in Turkey, especially during election periods. It can be seen in two ways; the first one is related to the political participation of the region and becoming the "pressure group" to determine the politics despite the intention of the origination of the HTAs during the 1980s (Özdemir, 2014, p.70).

On the other hand, categorically, *hemşehrilik* is not a homogenous identity or an organizational form but contains a multitude of relations within the definitions and practices. Therefore, the HTAs, based on *hemşehri* identity, have peculiar ways of associating with the politics and political parties. HTAs can be seen as a means or opportunity for political mobilization and a provider of political power. However, the political participation of HTAs cannot only be understood through formal politics. There are power relations within the community of *hemşehris*, which makes

*hemşehrilik* a heterogenous category. The diverse category of *hemşehrilik* is also reflected in the organizational forms.

The number of HTAs is significant in Turkey; however, this does not point out the sole function they are fulfilling in the society, which is creating a place for solidarity around the *hemşehri* identity. According to Kurtoğlu (2005), HTAs can be instrumentalized as a source of status for the members of the associations. “Moreover, it is known that many political party followers are simultaneously members of hometown associations” (Özdemir, 2013, p.951; Narlı & Narlı, 1999, as cited in Özdemir, 2014, p.69). It shows that HTAs started to play a role in the political sphere and acquired new functions. This new role assigned to HTAs can be visible in practice when politicians visit HTAs whenever it seems necessary. On the other hand, the members of the HTAs also visit politicians to contribute to the solutions to the problems concerning the hometown or problems of their *hemşehris* in the cities. Thus, a single structure cannot explain the relationship between HTAs and political actors.

Together with new functions of HTAs, they have the potential to turn into “pressure groups which try to benefit from parties – that see them as votes—and the political processes to the end and to use pressure when required to obtain an interest/unearned income” (Kurtbeyoğlu, 2005, p.144, as cited in Özdemir, 2014, p.70). However, the pressure group function of HTAs does not mean that the member of HTAs are partisans and only relate to one political party. Their function as an interest group where they focus on the common interest of the *hemşehris* becomes more prominent. During elections, HTAs can support their *hemşehris* without considering the political party (Özdemir, 2014). On the other hand, Kurtoğlu (2012, p.154, as cited in Özdemir, 2014) observes that the relationships between HTAs and political parties can be resulted in “bidding the unearned income”. It is because migrants have more expectations from the opportunities presented in the urban context; consequently, they feel the need to affiliate themselves with politics which is perceived as the source of unearned income (Yılmaz, 2008; Schüler, 1999, as cited in Özdemir, 2014).

Furthermore, the literature on HTAs has not only focused on clientelism and patronage in the form of political favouritism. It can also include practices such as finding jobs for their *hemşehris*, helping them to find a spouse, helping them to buy a house, and helping them to find necessary appointments or job-related commissions. Especially by being a reference to their *hemşehris*, they try to help their *hemşehris* for their careers (Şentürk, 2021). Therefore, a multitude of social relations should be taken into account when clientelism and favouritism of HTAs are discussed.

## **2.8. Hometown Associations as Civil Society Organizations**

The HTAs are a crucial component of Turkey's associational life, but the civil society literature in Turkey has overlooked them. It is partly because there is no definition of civil society that is well-accepted in the literature. Therefore, this thesis attempts to adopt an approach to the civil society question that can capture the experience of civic life in Turkey and be more inclusive to the non-Western context without idealizing the role of civil society for the modernist understanding of progress.

Liberal tradition defines society, individuals and the State and their nature. “This tradition posits society as a self-regulating realm, the ultimate repository of individual rights and liberties, and a body that must be protected against incursions of the State” (Seligman, 1992, p.11). This definition implies the citizenship dimension of civil society, a modern phenomenon because of the introduction of individual rights and liberties. Therefore, “membership and participation in society were defined not – as in the premodern era – in terms of ascriptive, kinship, territorial, or religious affiliations, but in terms of a shared ideological membership in the community of reason” (Seligman, 1992, pp.143-144).

Following the arguments of Seligman on the “community of reason”, for Habermas, there is an “unrealized potential of the public sphere as a category of bourgeois society” (Calhoun, 2017, p.24). For Habermas, the ideal public sphere is where “private individuals could join in rational-critical debates, disregarding their differences of status, identifying the public common good common to all of them and their whole society, and so informing the state and public policy” (Habermas, 1989, as cited in Calhoun, 2017, p.24). In this context, Habermas’ ideal of the public sphere

revolves around the public good, including the whole of society. It can be argued that he perceives society as a homogeneous unit where the common good can be identified. He also expects citizens to be rational and critical. Habermas' ideal society includes a certain level of social solidarity despite the private interest of people. "The public sphere joined the civil society to the state by focusing on a notion of public good as distinct from private interest" (Calhoun, 2017, p.27). To achieve an understanding of the public common good, social solidarity must be created. Habermas points out that there must be cooperation with strangers for a functioning public sphere, meaning that people should trust people who do not have face-to-face relations.

According to these definitions, HTAs are out of the equation of the civil society question because their membership is based on primordial attachments, which are ascriptive and territorial. According to Seligman (1992, as cited in Srebrnik, 2000), the idea of civil society is mainly based on the rational individual who enters into the civic realm with a goal, and while doing so, the individual is detached from any communal or primordial ties. It is because, for Seligman, communal ties prevent individuals from being part of universal citizenship discourse and delimit their ability to trust within civil society (1992, as cited in Srebrnik, 2000).

Heper & Yıldırım discusses the drawbacks of flourishing civil society in Turkey, which they identified problems as "widespread populism, clientelism, opportunism, and personalism (as against individualism)" (Heper & Yıldırım, 2011, p.3). Furthermore, the "in-group-out-group orientation among the members of civil society...is usually an upshot of lack of trust among people. Trust among people is yet another important prerequisite for civil society" because societal trust enables dialogue and flow of ideas within civil society (Heper & Yıldırım, 2011, p.4). *Hemşehrilik* relations within civil society can create an in-group-out-groups orientation because *hemşehri* identity necessarily involves inclusion-exclusion relations. Therefore, within this conceptualization of civil society, HTAs may not be considered as being part of civil society. However, as the *hemşehri* relations are fluid, who can be considered a *hemşehri* depends on the context. It is not a rigid categorization.

Furthermore, HTAs can cooperate with other CSOs and identities because they are part of urban civic life. Hence, they have the ability to promote the “public good”. It will be further discussed in the next chapter.

On the other hand, other definitions of civil society can include HTAs as part of civil society. The definition of civil society is wrapped around universalism and exported by that promise. However, Hann (1996) argues that the universalism claim of civil society is not a fact but a way of presenting. He discusses that civil society had been unrealistically defined because it got itself into its contradictions, and it is defined by Eurocentric attachments. Additionally, the definition of civil society does not match the realities not only for non-Western but also for the Western world. Therefore, HTAs can be considered part of Turkey’s civil society. The motivation of the HTAs can provide services or raise awareness about the locality where the state is reluctant to do anything. HTAs are organized by those who took the initiative to unite to provide solidarity or other services to their *hemşehris*. Communal identities can survive within modern urban settings and change their functions according to the context. Thus, their lack of presence in the civil society literature only means deliberately ignoring the experiences of civil society in Turkey.

## CHAPTER 3

### DISCUSSION & FINDINGS

As stated earlier, HTAs are essential component of civic life in Turkey, especially in metropolitan cities. Approximately one out of every five CSOs in Ankara are a HTAs. The ratio of HTAs to all CSOs is even more significant in İstanbul by 27.2% (T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı Sivil Toplumla İlişkiler Genel Müdürlüğü). HTAs are established due to the need for solidarity when people face the anonymity of the urban and carry out different functions as time passes (Bal, 1997, as cited in Şentürk, 2021).

I will discuss the findings around 6 questions. However, the main problématique of this research is mainly related to the last 3 questions, which are ‘To what extent are HTAs part of civil society in Turkey?’, ‘Who is a *hemşehri*?’, and ‘How do HTAs, as CSOs, through *hemşehrilik* relations, contribute to the nationalist discourse in Turkey?’.

#### **3.1. Why is there a need for hometown associations?**

##### ***Hemşehrilik as a mean to build trust and a sense of belonging***

In the case of migration of people from Şebinkarahisar to Ankara, research participant #1, board member of the Ankara Foundation lists the reasons for establishing an HTA. People when migrating to cities have a problem of belonging and adaptation in the beginning. Such problems stem from breaking away from the

environment, traditions and social relations that people were born into. While trying to integrate to the city life, people might lack self-confidence due to lack of experience and can be anxious about their future. Those problems are all interconnected that in order to cope people seek familiar relations and find their *hemşehris* to be in solidarity with them to emotionally or financially support each other.

According to Edwards (2004), trust is built within civil society more easily with familiar relations because “first, the level and frequency of face-to-face interaction that is possible in associations or small communities mean that incentives for trusting and cooperative behaviour are likely to be stronger” (Edwards, 2004, pp.41-42). *Hemşehrilik* provides a strong bond between people and a way to socialize in the urban context and becomes the most desired relationality because having the same regional identity provides a reassuring face-to-face relationship that people are accustomed (Akpınar, 2013, as cited in Şentürk, 2021). Even if people do not know their *hemşehris* directly, once they learn they have the same regional identity, they feel a sense of belonging.

A sense of belonging is an important thing. People really ask each other “where you are from”. There can be an affinity when you find out that they are from the same place. There is also something psychological. It also has something a bit like regionalism but let us call it a sense of belonging. Let us say people are happier if they are together (Research Participant #7, board member of ŞEBDER).

We know that Black Sea people are in love with each other. That is what they say; that is how we see it. We love our hometown, as everyone loves their hometown. In Central Anatolia, let us say, people from Yozgat, Kırşehir, Çorum, they look after each other a lot; we also look after each other (Research Participant #4, board member of Ankara Foundation).

Furthermore, the largest groups who migrated to İstanbul are from Sivas, Kastamonu, Ordu, Giresun and Tokat, respectively (Şentürk, 2021). Şebinkarahisar, as a district of Giresun, had experienced intense emigration. In 1927, when the first census of the Republic was carried out, the population of Şebinkarahisar, which was a province then, together with its villages, was 18,533. In 1933, Şebinkarahisar became a district of Giresun, and the population of Şebinkarahisar increased to 43,904 in the 1997 census. According to the address-based census made in 2016, the

total population of the district is 21.200, with the population of the district centre being 11,678 and the population of the villages being 9,522 (T.C. Şebinkarahisar Kaymakamlığı). Since the number of people from Şebinkarahisar is increasing in the big cities, they have a higher potential for feeling the need to HTAs.

On the other hand, being a member of a HTAs can tighten those *hemşehrilik* relationships; and without an association, it can be hard to find *hemşehris*.

You meet our friends in association organizations. For example, I could not meet my friends here for many years, 20 years or so, after high school and at the organization of the association, I met there. Then, we immediately got our phone numbers (Research Participant #9, board member of ŞEBDER).

### ***Hemşehrilik as a mean to preserve values and traditions***

According to Edwards (2004), CSOs based on familiarity can provide more of a smooth transmission of values and social norms. Internal migration changes what *hemşehrilik* implies and continues to transform its definitions. People come across different cultures in the cities and try to co-exist. The confrontation with the *other* ignites the process of defining people in relation to the *other* to make sense of what contains *us*. *Hemşehrilik* can be seen as a solidarity type to make sense of their own identity. HTAs, as CSOs, help to institutionalize what that specific identity entails.

Hometown associations are needed. We have come to an age where even family values have almost disappeared...In order to ensure this unity, we organise various organizations and activities. Here [the Mutual Aid Association], we try not to lose our customs, the traditions of our *hemşehris* that we learned from our elders, and to provide that perception to the youth as much as possible. I think there is a huge need. I think these associations, which are the cornerstone of the country, provide that unity (Research Participant #10, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

So, when you say hometown, you have close relatives there. Even if they are not directly related, they are close relatives, at least you see them. You can explain a problem well, but you cannot find anyone to talk to here in the big city (Research Participant #4, board member of Ankara Foundation).

Furthermore, “Some norms – like trust and even cooperation – have a different value for people in different circumstances” (Edwards, 2004, p.43). In the case of HTAs,



another discourse wrapped around *hemşehrilik* is the sense of being far from home (being in *gurbet*). Sharing similar cultural practices and traditions can provide emotional solidarity to people, which brings a sense of comfort to cope with the sense of longing.

People have turned into associations in big cities in order to maintain their traditions and not break those ties, out of longing for their mother-father or their hometown. He cannot go there because seeing each other here satisfies the longing. Therefore, as long as this migration continues, as long as people here do not migrate back, this association will survive. Is it necessary? It is. Because he cannot do anything there, it should be here together (Interview #8, board member of ŞEBDER).

What I wanted was that if everyone gets to know each other, even once a year, because you are far from home here in every way. Many people have born and migrated later. What I want is to have that genuine relationship and continuation of it (Research Participant #9, board member of ŞEBDER).

### **3.2. Do hometown associations help to create an urban identity?**

#### ***Differences between people from Şebinkarahisar living in İstanbul/Ankara and Şebinkarahisar***

Rural migrants in the urban cities who want to protect their cultural identity with the value-norm systems they brought from their hometowns and rely on *hemşehri* solidarity to overcome the culture shock, find ways to integrate with the city over time and reconcile new values (Bal, 1997, as cited in Şentürk, 2021). According to Kurtoğlu (2005), *hemşehrilik* as a phenomenon emerges out of relations with a geographical space and re-imagination of that geographical space in the urban context. According to Akpınar (2013, as cited in Şentürk, 2021), due to the imagined and relational nature of the *hemşehrilik*, it is a form of relationship that develops and is protected as relations with *others* increase, rather than being an identity lost in urban life. Therefore, *hemşehrilik* cannot only be perceived as a primordial identification and attachment that cannot fit into modern discourse but as an identity and form of relationality that develops within the urban context. The

institutionalization of relations and identity through the establishment of HTAs, *hemşehrilik*, can be part of the power structure.

In order to understand the new identity created in cities, away from Şebinkarahisar. I have asked whether there are differences between people living in Şebinkarahisar and in big cities.

A little different. It is very interesting that those who make the real effort for Şebinkarahisar are the ones who are at *gurbet*. In other words, the rest do not move their fingers so much and they say, “*gurbetçis* [*gurbetçi* is who is far from home] have started to come, summer houses”. Even for the road construction of Şebinkarahisar, those who are outside really put more effort into it (Research Participant #2, member of Ankara Foundation).

There is a difference, that is, people from Şebinkarahisar living in İstanbul, that is outside Şebinkarahisar, are doing their best, thinking about what we can do for Şebinkarahisar. However, as far as I can see, the people in Şebinkarahisar should also be helpful for the development of Şebinkarahisar in any way but they have not a thought of helping. This is what I see (Research Participant #12, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

Also, I asked about the reasons for the difference.

In other words, if a wheel is spinning, when you get into that wheel, you start spinning in the same way without realising it, you do not see some things. We always say, learned helplessness. It passes into your being without realising it. You see the flaws when you go away. So, if you have the opportunity to compare, you can see it. It does not matter if you constantly remain in the same environment. A child who grows up in a constant physically abusive environment thinks it is normal. Likewise, if you live in those conditions, you cannot compare if you have not seen a better one. If you see something and make a loud noise, they say, “where did this crazy guy come from”. This applies to all humanity (Research Participant #2, member of Ankara Foundation).

Either most of the people who come to İstanbul have come to a certain point, have a certain income, have taken themselves to a higher point in some way and have come to the point of thinking about Şebinkarahisar, from small to large (Research Participant #12, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

Furthermore, the perception of everyday life is also different. Life has different paces, and the daily struggles are different from each other when comparing Şebinkarahisar and big cities.

The hardship of life here makes us age 10 years earlier in general for us. It is a very big city and a really tough city. To stay alive, to work in İstanbul... Even if

nothing else, even the traffic makes you very tired. But when I went to Şebinkarahisar, the biggest stress of the neighbours was “oh her husband did not come to dinner, she was a little late for coffee”. Oh, it is such a big stress! The definition of stress is not the same there and here. There are many differences (Research Participant #9, board member of ŞEBDER).

Therefore, social mobilization can affect their perception or willingness to help. Urbanization provides access to opportunity structures and paves the way for upward social mobilization. Also, according to the research participant #1, due to the stigma attached to rural lifestyle, people want to migrate to the big cities even though it does not guarantee upward social mobilization. However, adopting urban lifestyle provides a different outlook on life. Differentiation among *hemşehris* living in Şebinkarahisar and big cities also shows that regional identity is not a bounded entity. The location of individuals are constantly changing within social interactions.

What people expect from life has been transformed by the urban identity. Even though people are romantic about their hometown, they do not want to abandon their urban lifestyles. Therefore, we can talk about urbanized identity while having strong *hemşehrilik* relations.

Love there so much. I am out of my mind right now. I can stay there. I can go to Şebinkarahisar even for a day. I have such a longing, but to stay for a long time, city life, all your surroundings, where you lived for years... It has been 30 years since I came here. My whole life, my friends are here (Research Participant #9, board member of ŞEBDER).

Since we are in *gurbet*, our love and longing for Şebinkarahisar is greater. When we go there, we get hurt and sad when we see the smallest thing just because they do not do this, they do not take care of it, but all of our *hemşehris* are beautiful people (Research Participant #10, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

I asked whether they wanted to return to Şebinkarahisar and live there.

No. Very difficult conditions. I am telling you, there are only three places to go outside to sit. There is no one to talk to. So, there is my mother's aunt's grandson who stayed there. Other than that, there is no one to talk to. They also emigrated; my mother has no friends. How to contact new ones, no. We only go out, sit there, drink coffee, and come back (Research Participant #7, board member of ŞEBDER).

No. Because we live in the metropolis, we live in İstanbul. There is a very active life. Şebinkarahisar is very stable, that is, calm. It is not possible for me to live there permanently, as it would be contrary to my usual life. However, the

circumstances require something different, I can look for a calm environment. Then, of course, I can go and do something and stay permanently (Research Participant #12, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

The actors of HTAs have always been conceptualized as a carrier of rural values to the urban context in the literature. However, today, HTAs are part of urban life. They are urbanized; therefore, what *hemşehrilik* entailed has also been changing. Since they are different from what they used to be, urbanite members of HTAs also differentiate themselves from the people living in Şebinkarahisar, even though they claim to have the same identity. Nevertheless, it can be inferred that in the urban context, new identifications emerged. It is not a new identity because there is more than one variable to affect what it means to be from Şebinkarahisar. Eriksen (1999, p.60) sums up as follows:

The urban social network is based on the public sphere of anonymous individuals, while the rural one is based on kinship and neighbourhood. It is perfectly understandable that different groups, with radically different experiences, do not develop the same ways of relating to kinship, resources, belonging, and identity.

The arguments on HTAs should move beyond the question of “whether they are part of urban life or not” or “whether they are promoting the creation of urban identity” because HTAs are already part of the urban civic life in Turkey. People participating in HTAs are in the urban context, living in cities, and socializing in cities. As in the case presented above, even though *hemşehri* identity is an integral part of their self, it is not the only determinant for locating oneself within social relations.

### **3.3. What are the current functions of hometown associations? How have they manifested through their activities?**

#### ***Hometown associations as spaces of socialization***

HTAs are, first and foremost, a point on the map, a physical space in the city. The establishment and localization of associations may indicate the local concentration of migration or migration from village to city. In this case, associations are almost a natural expression of this concentration, although not all spatial concentrations are shaped as socialization spaces like HTAs (Toumarkine, 2001, p.434). Therefore, having a physical association centre is a crucial criterion for understanding their

activities. Out of three associations, currently, only Ankara Foundation owns an association centre located at Mithatpaşa Avenue in Ankara. It is used as a club where there is a small restaurant run by a woman who is not from Şebinkarahisar. It is open after 13.00, and the closing hour can vary according to the formal or informal association meetings. The members of the Ankara Foundation stated that it is an advantage to have such a place for themselves, without concerning about the rent. It allows them to act more independently and realize their projects as CSOs. Also, knowing that people come to the foundation centre are their *hemşehris* bring them sense of comfort and trust.

In the case of the Mutual Aid Association, they owned a building which is now used as a hotel and a restaurant.

Our association is established in 1964. As soon as they are established, they buy a land for our association to build a dormitory in Fatih-Laleli. Our elders at that time, the founders of our association, our charitable businessmen in the board buy that land, again with the support of our *hemşehris*. After buying that land, generally universities existed in İstanbul at that time, in those years, I am talking about 64. At that time, the tension between right and left were incredibly intense. Such a fight, fierce. Our elders at that time said that we should build this place as a dormitory, let our own children come and sleep here during the education period without being part of the political turmoil (Research Participant #10, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

The Mutual Aid Association has also owned an association centre since 2012. However, last year it was demolished due to an urban renewal project. As soon as the construction is over, they will move there again and convert the place into a “culture-centre”. In the meantime, the Mutual Aid Association held their weekly meetings via Zoom or meeting at the İstanbul Foundation centre at Zincirlikuyu.

On the other hand, ŞEBDER does not have an association centre, and they meet at a pub, which is owned by a person from Şebinkarahisar, at Kadıköy. They also meet via Zoom because of the COVID-19 pandemic. They also held meetings and carried out their activities at the İstanbul Foundation’s centre. One of the activities of ŞEBDER is learning horon of Şebinkarahisar that they practice at the centre of the İstanbul Foundation

### *Cultural solidarity*

Cultural solidarity is a different function of HTAs. According to Toumarkine (2001, p.436), numerous HTAs has a “culture” in their name. However, the name can be given without thinking about it and by imitating names of other associations and not necessarily bringing a function mentioned in its name.

In the case of ŞEBDER (Şebinkarahisar Culture and Solidarity Association), after their breakup with the Mutual Aid Association in 2005, they named the association in reference to culture and solidarity, putting more emphasis on the culture dimension. Their activities are oriented more on the cultural activities.

We are trying to do culturally oriented things. We care about culture and art. We have also worked on this issue. For example, for our young people here who want to learn local folklore dances but do not know. We formed a group called Garaysar Horon (Research Participant #7, board member of ŞEBDER).

One of our most important activities was the Şebinkarahisar Symposium. We organized a symposium on the problems of the Şebinkarahisar... We included the Mutual Aid Association, İstanbul Foundation, Şebin-Siad and other associations. We were the executive organizers. We included them in the work, and we held a three-day long symposium. The Mayor of Sarıyer is also from Şebinkarahisar, Şükrü Genç, allocated us the halls of Sarıyer Municipality for this symposium. Problems and solutions were discussed there. We also prepared a festival on culture and art, but everything turned upside down in the pandemic. We could not manage it due to the pandemic (Research Participant #7, board member of ŞEBDER).

ŞEBDER also try to organize an exhibition and a programme with joint efforts with Giresun Associations Federation (Giresun Dernekleri Federasyonu).

There are many writers, painters, novelists from Şebinkarahisar. We collected all their works and contacted them. We established a committee, and a preparatory committee, which also included other associations (Research Participant #7, board member of ŞEBDER).

Most of the efforts for cultural activities planned by ŞEBDER is not finalized mainly due to bureaucratic and financial reasons.

At that time of the symposium, I made an inventory of the cultural assets of the Şebinkarahisar. Şebinkarahisar is the city with the richest cultural assets in and around Giresun, and if you organize them properly, it will become a tourism centre. In other words, Virgin Mary Monastery, after the Sumela Monastery, second one in Turkey. Tamzara is really precious. We have churches, we have mosques. The mosque in Avutmuş, the Behramşah Mosque, is 700 years old. Fatih Mosque is very precious. The castle is very precious. As long as you bring it to the right point for tourist attraction...After the symposium, I told the mayor many times, “this is how it works. “There is no agriculture left”; Şebinkarahisar can only develop with tourism. I proposed, let us do a workshop, and let me organize the workshop. I bring a man from the Ministry [of Culture and Tourism], I bring a man from TÜRSAB [Türkiye Seyahat Acentaları Birliği/Association of Turkish Travel Agencies], I bring in the general managers of companies that are very specialized in this subject, in cultural tours. So, I can bring them all. Let us turn this into a workshop. No, they did not (Research Participant #8, board member of ŞEBDER).

The members of ŞEBDER also does not get along well with the Municipality of Şebinkarahisar as much as the Mutual Aid Association does and their planned projects can be interrupted because of the lack of cooperation coming from the municipality.

The municipality is already staying away from the things we do. For example, the last thing we did was we were going to open an Ara Güler Academy in Karahisar, the municipality officially provoked this. So, we found its sponsor. It would at least cover the cost of establishment and two years maintenance. Ara Güler’s assistant was financing it. When Ara Güler’s assistant came to the municipality, mayor made such cold and persistent speeches that the man hesitated. “This is not going to work,” he said. There is no point in using Ara Güler’s name for two years in something that will not work. However, if it had started, we could have continued its finances from elsewhere. It did not happen. Besides, we had a very valuable institution like Sarıyer Academy behind us (Research Participant #8, board member of ŞEBDER).

One of the cultural projects of ŞEBDER included publishing a cookbook to introduce Şebinkarahisar’s cuisine and opening a YouTube channel. However, it also could not be finalized because the restaurant owner in Şebinkarahisar, who was supposed to prepare the dishes, changed his mind without giving any reason. They also want to publish a book for the songs of Şebinkarahisar with the help of a musician and still pursuing the project.

In the iftar/board meeting organized by the Ankara Foundation, members of the foundation also have decided that they will try to contribute to the book for the folkloric songs of Şebinkarahisar and for that, they will arrange a meeting with TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation) and musicians.

The full name of Ankara Foundation is Şebinkarahisar and Its Environment Development Solidarity and Culture Foundation (Şebinkarahisar ve Çevresi Kalkınma Dayanışma ve Kültür Vakfı). Compared to ŞEBDER, they are engaging in fewer cultural activities. Also, it is a foundation which points out more economic dimensions according to their documents of the constitution.

The most important thing for the hometown foundations is to show interest, help for the people coming to Ankara. In other words, if a person who has come to Ankara from Şebinkarahisar does not have a place to stay, finding a place within the means is one of the duties of the foundation. If the student does not have a place to stay, providing a dormitory, providing facilities or paying the dormitory fee for a certain period of time and placing the student in a private dormitory is our duty (Research Participant #2, board member of Ankara Foundation).

According to Köse (2008), *hemşehrilik* relations can provide services such as finding a job and accommodation, which are the basic needs of people migrating to the cities. Therefore, the Ankara Foundation's primary purpose of existence is more related to economic solidarity. However, they also organize nights and dinners as a way to socialize and create a sense of belonging.

Every month, we meet at a certain time and plan a meal together with our fellow countrymen. We try to have iftar at certain times during Ramadan (Research Participant #2, board member of Ankara Foundation).

According to Köse (2008), cultural meetings can encourage the experience of authenticity in the *gurbet* (a space that is not their hometown) that those events bring *hemşehris* together, despite the differences among *hemşehris*, find a ground for emphasizing the sameness to help for building a sense of belonging and providing a network for the *hemşehris* that they do not know one another.

One of the common actions that all three associations are taking is meeting with politicians and visiting them in their offices. The reason for meetings can be various, but they are also meeting for the preserving culture of Şebinkarahisar. For example,



all three associations' members talked about the restoration projects concerning Virgin Mary Monastery in Şebinkarahisar and other cultural heritage sites. All three HTAs of Şebinkarahisar were willing to contribute to promote culture of Şebinkarahisar in various platforms.

Our association provided great support, especially in the restoration of the Behramşah Mosque. Restoration of Behramşah Mosque has been completed. Now the restoration of the Virgin Mary Monastery. Here, our association has always done what CSOs should do... Of course, our politicians have always supported us in the restoration by making visits and meetings there many times (Research Participant #10, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

### ***Economic solidarity***

There are also financial reasons for HTAs to emerge. According to Edwards (2004), solidarity among group members within small-scale units can increase the chance for better welfare for its members. Since people trust their *hemşehri* more in the urban context, the associations can also function as the mediator for people to benefit from the opportunity structures.

The thing I want most in İstanbul is that everyone to communicate with each other. For example, when I first joined the association, I asked, "Do we have a friend who has a business on textile?" I wanted to have my personnel uniforms made by my *hemşehri*. There is a bit of *hemşehricilik* there. I thought it would be much healthier. The same is true for personnel recruitment. Because when we need personnel, when we receive a project, I immediately inform the associations, it can be someone from Şebinkarahisar who needs a job or can be the relatives of people who migrated before. It makes more sense to me to employ our own *hemşehris*. You think that when they come with references, they will be more responsible for the sake of the favour (Research Participant #9, board member of ŞEBDER).

Moreover, both the Mutual Aid Association and Ankara Foundation provide student scholarships. However, the financial capacity to award scholarships is different from each other. The Mutual Aid Association collects money from businesspeople in İstanbul, Kocaeli and other surrounding cities of İstanbul. They have more close connection with Şebin-Siad that one of the board members of the Mutual Aid Association stated that as an association, they do not spend money on scholarships from the association's account, but they have the commission to collect money from

the wealthy *hemşehris*. They also have a bursary commission with sub-commissions for collecting money, distributing scholarships, finding students.

Without any political discrimination, we find the dormitories for who needs, without any expecting anything in return, as much as we could. For example, we are currently giving scholarships to more than 50 students. We have an annual budget of over 100,000 liras for a foundation, only for student scholarships (Research Participant #1, board member of Ankara Foundation).

We have a long-established association that was founded in 1964 that is established initially to provide scholarships for students from Şebinkarahisar, come to İstanbul to study. Today, we offer scholarship to 600 students, 500 of them awarded to students from Şebinkarahisar. 100 of them to students who come to Şebinkarahisar to study at the Vocational School there. They told us that there is a decrease in the number of students there, let us give scholarships to the students there as well (Research Participant #11, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

According to Köse (2008, p.229), for the sake of continuation of culture and solidarity, HTAs are awarding scholarships, food aid during Ramadan, publishing books, brochures and magazines for public use.

After the pandemic, there are local administrators there, the district national education director said, here we have a limited university exam preparatory course. Our students' budgets are also limited, and they asked us for additional textbooks for all our students to prepare for additional courses or to prepare for university and exams. We have 2500-3000 primary, secondary and high school students in Şebinkarahisar. We bought all of them a book approved by the national education, in which our district national education also approves (Research Participant #11, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

Due to the better financial stance of the Mutual Aid Association compared to the other two associations, they provide more economic solidarity among *hemşehris*. They also have the highest number of members and are associated with other HTAs, such as village and neighbourhood associations, businesspeople, and politicians. Their association has various commissions to deal with numerous issues.

We have a task schedule about what are the duties of the president, vice presidents, and we have commissions with 4-5 people. For example, health commission, other commissions or a few associations together... For example, we have one more association, Şebin-Siad, now, we have a commission where 3 associations come together. We have a commission on

R&D studies (Research Participant #11, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

İstanbul associations and foundations are made up of businessmen, in Ankara they are made up of bureaucrats... In İstanbul, the man leaves the Şebinkarahisar and finds a job in a factory through a *hemşehri*. After a while, while working there, he buys a part of the factory or the workshop. Now there is a difference in professions in İstanbul. İstanbul has more businesspeople or working in the private sector, Ankara is more dominant in bureaucracy... The bureaucrat is financially weak because his salary is certain. It is clear where he will invest his salary every month. In İstanbul, for a month, they have earned a lot of money, they can help their foundations and associations very well. There is such a difference between us and İstanbul. When he gives 1% of his annual income, he may not affect that person in İstanbul, but 1% of the salary of a civil servant may make a difference (Research Participant #2, board member of Ankara Foundation).

Compared to the Mutual Aid Association, Ankara Foundation has less income and financial capacity. It is because in Ankara, people from Şebinkarahisar are mainly civil servants and state bureaucrats.

Besides the better economic standing of *hemşehris* in İstanbul, the Mutual Aid Association also have a better relationship with the local government in Şebinkarahisar and with local people in Şebinkarahisar in general.

Besides, we have a Şebinkarahisar Belediye Spor Kulübü (Municipality of Şebinkarahisar Sports Club). Our association has a youth and sports branch. Şebinkarahisar Belediye Spor also became the champion this year. Most of the cost was on us. Then let us say they are playing away, they needed transportation. If I am not mistaken, we bought them a minibus last year or the year before (Research Participant #11, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

The Mutual Aid Association organizes summer festivals in Şebinkarahisar in cooperation with the municipality of Şebinkarahisar.

There are festivals in the summer period, we have such festivals that last 2 or 3 days organized by municipality and the Mutual Aid Association, but financed by the Mutual Aid Association which our association take the responsibility of 2/3 of the financial burden... We have a festival where we dedicate one night to our local artists and two nights to our national artists (Research Participant #11, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

According to the demand coming from the local government in Şebinkarahisar, the Mutual Aid Association bought a jeep, 5 heavy machineries for the municipality of

Şebinkarahisar through collecting money from the wealthy *hemşehris* in İstanbul and its surroundings.

It can be argued that besides providing solidarity for the *hemşehris*, HTAs are also spaces for political actions. Compared to the other two associations, Mutual Aid Association has more contact with the local governments, which enables them to realize their plans for Şebinkarahisar and make them more visible, thus, having more power over defining *hemşehri* identity than the other two associations.

### **3.4. To what extent are HTAs part of civil society in Turkey?**

Kalaycıoğlu (2002) discusses that the associability in Turkey has been affected by primordial ties. On the other hand, finding a source of solidarity through primordial ties is not a unique trend only in Turkey's civil society. According to Edwards (2004), civil society is wrapped around the ideal definitions of civil society, but there are still essential ambiguities about the boundaries of civil society. Civil society is not a fact but a way of presenting. Therefore, how civil society experienced is diverse "is cause for celebration, because it means that the associations that emerge – hybrid, fluid and maybe surprising to commentators in the West – might be able to avoid some of the problems encountered by their Western counterparts" (Edwards, 2004, p.32). Civil society, therefore, can acquire new meanings under different circumstances. Civil society as a category of practice is unfinished, or one example of good civil society cannot be the only example set for other practices to follow. If civil society is approached as something fixed and can be a category that can be identified easily, it would be a category of analysis which means it would have intrinsic qualities of civil society. In the case of HTAs, civil society is experienced with different patterns and intentions which do not have to match the characteristics of an ideally defined civil society.

On the other hand, board members of ŞEBDER do not directly categorize HTAs, compared to other CSOs, as a crucial part of civil society in Turkey. They underline that CSOs in Europe or in North America is much more capable of realizing their objectives due to the power they have. CSOs are important actors for obtaining and protecting the rights of the citizens. In order to be more vocal and influential about

specific problems, CSOs are more institutionalized and knowledgeable about their objectives. Their position in politics is effective in developing social policies. The members of ŞEBDER want to be powerful as CSOs as much as their counterparts in Europe and North America to serve their *hemşehris* more efficiently. In order to obtain such power, they are aware that HTAs should act more professionally. Research Participant #8 gives the example of professional chambers and how they are critical in law-making and in development of social policies. Also, he proposes that they need to be much more compelling in solving Şebinkarahisar's problems and for the development of Şebinkarahisar.

In fact, it is called that, it is always referred to as CSOs. But it is not. In other words, it is not an Atatürkist Thought Association (ADD). It is not like Association for Supporting Contemporary Life (ÇYDD). Because hometown associations have never been as institutional as them. When I say institutional, it is more disciplined. It unites on a focal point away from individuality. ÇYDD's main thing is to educate girls. This is an issue that almost everyone, even the most insensitive person, will care about (Research Participant #8, board member of ŞEBDER).

Their arguments on not considering the HTAs as CSOs as much as professional chambers, ADD or ÇYDD, depends on the fact that HTAs are based on *hemşehrilik* relations and do not find a larger audience apart from the people who are from a certain region. Also, their capability for the development of social policies is limited compared to the civil society in the West.

Since the idealistic definitions dominate the discourse on civil society. It also shapes the opinions of the research participants on civil society. Even though the members of HTAs perceive HTAs as part of civil society, they hierarchically order which association is the most fit for the definition of civil society. It can be concluded that the way of being part of civil society can vary according to the mission and intentions of the people. Not all parts of civil society are the same, and it cannot be expected that every association to fulfil the criteria for a well-functioning civil society. The mission of the HTAs is to provide services to a particular region. According to Habermas (as cited in Calhoun, 2017), civil society must be made up of people who thinks of the whole society where individual abandon their private interests and be motivated by the common good, which requires trusting people who

are strangers. It points out that in civil society, people should move beyond primordial ties, such as *hemşehrilik* relations, to be part of civil society. However, as Edwards (2004) pointed out, familiar ties can be the source of associability, and *hemşehrilik* relations can be the foundation of the solidarity that people built and enable people to raise their voices to obtain rights.

Of course, HTAs has to make a contribution to society. First, the foundation's priority or the rights and receivables of CSOs should be protected first. Because after all, associations or foundations may not necessarily be a hometown foundation. You can also be a member of a professional group. For example, you may have established something about the rights of METU graduates or students. You may have a malicious teacher here, that CSOs is to protect your rights... Even if this is a small thing, to protect the rights and laws of the members. Because the main purpose of the foundation or CSO exists together with its members. If those members do not exist, he does not exist (Research Participant #2, board member of Ankara Foundation).

According to Heper & Yıldırım, the literature locates civil society as a sphere where it “does not challenge the legitimacy of the political regime; it would rather have a relatively harmonious relationship with that regime, and it is thus able to contribute to the making of public policies and programmes” (Heper & Yıldırım, 2011, p.1). Nevertheless, civil society cannot be reduced to its contribution to the public policies. It can be argued that it is a realm of the “political” as well. Mouffe (2011) distinguishes what ‘the political’ and ‘politics’ implies that politics is related to the facts, but the fundamental starting point or philosophy of politics is ‘the political’. Mouffe explains it with the Heideggerian terms that “politics refers to the ‘ontic’ level while ‘the political’ has to do with the ‘ontological’ one” (2011, p.8). Since ‘the political’ is not a fact but a space, it can include power struggles, conflicts and antagonisms (Mouffe, 2011, p.9). The political is the constitutive part of social relations, while politics refers to practices and institutions organized for a space where people can coexist and ‘the political’ provides a base for these organizations. Since ‘the political’ can be traced in every human association, it can be said that civil society can be grounds for ‘the political’. It includes antagonisms within that enable people to discuss and foreground the power relations to come into being.

HTAs transforms the *hemşehrilik* phenomenon from an informal to formal structure through the institutionalization of identity and relations around it under the roof of a

CSO. Özdemir (2013) discusses the potential of HTAs transformation into pressure groups.

We should not expect everything from the state. For once you have to accept it. There are some dynamics that activate the state. One of them is civil society organizations. CSOs are also pressure groups as stated in the legislation. What is meant by a pressure group is not only about “I should not step out and protest in the streets. For example, what our politicians are doing, they come here during the election period ‘we will do this, we will do that’”, here comes the man being elected, I say this to the face of the deputies. I have no personal expectations, only for my hometown...When we go to bureaucrats and deputies, I say it loudly, “brother there has been a natural gas issue for two or three years. We have put the projects in front of you, how to do it or our road is a matter of this or that”. But when they come across a serious CSO, everyone should be behind this CSO...The deputies and politicians should listen to us because they are our deputy...We are not backyard of any political party (Research Participant #1, board member of the Ankara Foundation).

CSOs are pressure groups, for bureaucracy. In other words, it is easier for associations to make a press release. There are an organization means that there is a legal personality (Research Participant #2, board member of the Ankara Foundation).

HTAs, as CSOs, can convey the voices of *hemşehris* to higher authorities. *Hemşehrilik* relations became formalized when they institutionalized the relations in civil society

When we talk about civil society, what comes to mind is people from normal people come together and unite for a common purpose, even if they have the same or different ideas, within the scope of a certain subject, and take actions towards this. The more crowded and more active this civil society is, the stronger it will be. In this context, civil societies are already very important. So, when I think of civil society, what comes to mind here is that a voice is heard through collective people. This, of course, is important in terms of impact (Research Participant #6, member of Ankara Foundation).

The definition of citizenship concept underlines the relationship between citizens and the state within the legal rights and duties frame. On the other hand, citizenship activities require social capital that includes the ability to trust, willingness to participate, and a sense of justice. According to Keyman & İçduygu (2003), in the case of Turkey’s civil society, the duties of citizens were underlined more than their

rights. The main objective of the associations is also framed essentially with the discourse on service and duties.

I think of civil society as a community of people who have come together to serve the community. Each of them in their own way of service in their own field... service to others from themselves. Of course, service in line with your own opinion. Of course, it may also be for the purpose of spreading their own ideas. Ours was a bit like that. To come together with people of our own opinion and develop friendship. It is a cultural support-service that we can support and help in the environment, but not as a help (Research Participant #7, board member of ŞEBDER).

Altruism is another characteristic of civil society that “lead the members of civil society to have a concern for common good” (Heper & Yıldırım, 2011, p.5). Heper & Yıldırım (2011) sums up Turkey’s civil society that there is not enough participation in civil society to provide common good, and the altruistic character is lacking due to a lack of horizontal relations and the existence of vertical power relations with the state for specific interests. However, HTAs cannot be considered; their activities only depend on private interests. It can be inferred that while having altruistic intentions, civil society can also be a realm where it can be used for the dissemination of ideologies. Civil society is never complete. While civil society is discussed in the literature, there are vocabulary lists reflecting the definition of civil society, generally with ‘positive’ words. For instance, justice, democracy, and trust concepts are associated with a good and working civil society. However, besides those good values attributed to civil society, it can include a multitude of social relations such as the dissemination of certain ideologies, gaining personal power through certain networks that civil society can provide, socializing around familiar ties, to become a pressure group for particular agendas. However, the main argument is that HTAs as CSOs cannot be reduced to only certain characteristics; they can contain various characteristics simultaneously that seem conflicting on the surface level. The members of HTAs are at the same time underlining the importance of the service that they are providing to their *hemşehris* and also having particular private interests.

CSOs are of course necessary. Because we have a slogan, that is, we should not expect everything from the state from the very beginning, we should not expect everything from the state because we are not a very rich country. That



is why I can enter a CSO or like this in order to do something in line with the needs of the person in need... In fact, most of them are the duty of the public, that is, the duty of the state. So, the roof of our school was leaking. We had one of our schools built in Şebinkarahisar out of our own pocket... Service Delivery Union to the villages needed a tow truck. Normally, this need has to be met by the state at the governor's office or district governor's office. Since there is no allowance, we helped as an association (Research Participant #12, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

Civil society has been defined as the totality of public relations outside of the state. However, as stated earlier, the Gramscian definition of civil society includes the relations with the state, which does not point out a dichotomy where civil society and the state are opposite realms (Dikici-Bilgin, 2009). The boundaries between civil society and the state are fuzzy and unclear in everyday life outside the idealistic definitions attached to the theory. Civil society as a category of practice is contingent and shaped by social, cultural, political and economic conditions. In the case of selected HTAs, as part of Turkey's civil society, their position is not against the state.

In most cases, the members of HTAs of Şebinkarahisar have stated that they are engaging in activities that 'normally' state should handle. However, they do not resent the state for the lack of resources allocated for the development of Şebinkarahisar. Instead, they are in a position that it can be considered that they are supporting the state by fixing the shortcomings according to their abilities, capacities and willingness.

Furthermore, some associations are financially more powerful than some state institutions because they can collect money from their *hemşehris* due to well-established networks built and maintained over the years in the urban context. It shows their social capital and capacity as CSOs and their importance within the civil society discussions in Turkey.

The Şebinkarahisar Foundation [the Ankara Foundation] gives the greatest gift that can be given to a district. The building of the Vocational School is built and delivered to Giresun University. If you examine the history of Şebinkarahisar, the people themselves built and delivered the Şebinkarahisar High School to the state. It is one of the rare districts that built its own high school and secondary school and delivered it to the state. What we are most proud of is the work of Şebinkarahisar Vocational School (Research Participant #2, board member of Ankara Foundation).

Furthermore, the members of HTAs are proud to be fixing the shortcomings of the state. They are aware that Şebinkarahisar has been neglected in terms of allocating resources. The members of HTAs try to be vocal about the problems of Şebinkarahisar. However, at the same time, they are proud to be part of a CSO that can help their *hemşehri* and provide solidarity among them. Ayata (1991, as cited in Şentürk, 2021) discusses the *hemşehrilik* in relation to *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* dichotomy conceptualized by Tönnies that *hemşehrilik* creates communal relations as opposed to a societal relationship that modern state putatively needs. It is argued that *hemşehri* identity prevents the transformation of the rural/communal identity to the citizenship identity of the modern nation-state because of the sense of belonging conflicts with communal ties instead of societal ties. It paves the way for the lack of interpersonal trust in Turkey because the foundation of the partnership is depending on communal ties, which also includes *hemşehrilik* relations (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002, p.64).

On the other hand, İnat (2006, as cited in Şentürk, 2021) argues that *hemşehrilik*, as a communal type of social structure, manifests itself within the civil society in urban life. Since people are not automatically become a member of HTAs once they are born, there is a matter of taking the initiative while associating with HTAs that underlines what *hemşehrilik* constitutes can be altered. HTAs, as CSOs, step forward to deal with issues neglected by the state. People the initiative to help their *hemşehris*, *hemşehrilik* relations do not readily create a road map on how to become a *hemşehri*, but the members of HTAs learn through being part of civil society.

According to Heper & Yıldırım (2011), one of the weaknesses of civil society in Turkey is clientelism. The members of HTAs are aware of the fact that if they want to contribute, in any way, to the improvement of the conditions of Şebinkarahisar or actualize their projects, they need *hemşehris* in higher positions in the state bureaucracy or who can provide economic or political power to the association. As discussed earlier, having political power can help overcome the problems of HTAs. That is why the members try to stay in contact with deputies and members of political parties. Maintaining contact with the politicians as a simple *hemşehri* alone

can be challenging. HTAs, as part of civil society, provide a ground for their voices to be heard.

Furthermore, in time, as the number of members in the associations increase, their potential for being an agent in politics also increases (Özdemir, 2013; Akça, 2012, as cited in Şentürk, 2021). However, HTAs' political activities bring forth complex relationships. For example, their relationship with members of political parties is not one-sided. The HTAs and politicians can benefit from that relationality based on *hemşehrilik*.

What I observed is that the biggest shortcoming was that we were politically weak. It is necessary to be strong in politics, in the sense of providing a service to our *hemşehris* and our region. We think that there is a lack of lobbying regarding this. We have established a good relationship with the local administrators, here with our district governor, with our local administrators in Şebinkarahisar. When we visit parties, be it the CHP or the Ak Party, we visit them and determine what needs to be done in common. As I said before, we communicate with all of them, without any party discrimination. Whatever the benefit of our association and our country is, we try to do it with our friends (Research Participant #10, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

As they underline the importance of lobbying, it shows that to fulfil the missions that HTAs have in their mind in Turkey, they need to form close relations with the politicians.

According to Kalaycıoğlu (2002), the structuring of the state does not allow for the flourishing public interest, therefore, blocking the productive environment for civil society by decreasing its potential for associability. These arguments are linked to the 'strong-state and weak civil society'. A strong state has been defined as a "sovereign organization which can mobilize human and capital resources, and demonstrate high levels of regulatory and distributive capability over the population" (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002, p.70). According to this definition, it is claimed that Turkey's state is not fit into the strong-state definition that the state is coercive "and even arbitrary rather than strong" (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002, p.71). In Turkey, the state is not strong, so civil society cannot be strong. Strong state refers to established state organizations and consolidated democracy.

The political climate in Turkey affects associational life as well. People are aware that for CSOs to be taken seriously as political agents, they need influential figures supporting them officially or unofficially. Nepotism can be a symptom of a weak state, and it has reflections on civil society. As discussed earlier, HTAs can be a space where people can engage to increase their chances in the job market. In the name of solidarity and trust, people can find jobs in their *hemşehris*.

Civic engagement through civil society is at the core of Putnam's understanding of "social capital." By social capital, Putnam (1993) refers to the characteristics of a social organization, which can be classified as network, norms, and social trust that enables such an organization to be organized on behalf of a mutual interest. By this means, Putnam (1993) does not talk about a single form of social capital; instead, there are multiple forms of social capital; formal, informal, casual, visible, invisible and so on. The important thing is that we can identify social capital when there is a network and mutual reciprocity. Hence, *hemşehrilik* relations, informal social capital during the early years of the internal migration, transform into formal social capital with the emergence of HTAs. The social capital of *hemşehrilik* provides various social networks:

As a foundation, we introduce our *hemşehris* to high-level bureaucrats in Ankara, targeting them as examples and ensuring that they are together with them (Research Participant #2, board member of Ankara Foundation).

By following these children later [one's who are awarded with scholarship], our only request from them is that we hope and think that most of them will come to good positions in the future, we think, we ask the people of Şebinkarahisar, our *hemşehris*, to protect and support our *hemşehris* in the following processes. We say it in every environment, frankly, this is our only request from them. It is in the next process that they support our city and our *hemşehris* (Research Participant #10, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

In the scope of political favouritism, the understanding of the politics of HTAs is based on facilitating power and mobilization. Difficulties encountered in benefiting from essential public services such as health and education in metropolitan cities, or the impossibility of accessing services, can sometimes be overcome by utilizing *hemşehrilik* relations. With the possibilities offered by the mentioned network, these associations function as a bridge between those who provide the service and those

who struggle to access these services under normal conditions. For example, Ankara Foundation provided free dental check-ups for children in 2022 which the dentists are from Şebinkarahisar. Similarly, the Mutual Aid Association in cooperation with Sarıyer Municipality, provided free health check-ups to their members in 2022.

HTAs operate by taking advantage of their close ties with other institutions by “having someone on the inside” and, thus, tend to become established players in these webs of relationships. Taking advantage of these kinds of ties is quite common in Turkey (Köse, 2008, p.230; Kurtoğlu, 2005).

Ahmet Baha Öğütken and Mehmet Fatih Kacı, you may have heard their name, Deputy Minister of Industry-Technology. We have *hemşehris* there. They become role models for our children. Ahmet Baha Öğütken served as the Deputy Minister of Health. There, we are knocking on the door of the smallest thing about our hometown. They also support us in the name of accelerating our things as much as they can. We need to increase their numbers...In order to increase solidarity with our *hemşehris*, we need to be politically strong there. I get 2-3 calls a day, in terms of support. Issues can be solved when we have our own man. Here we say to them, “this person has a problem like this, you will solve it like this”. Frankly, we can say it more easily because we support them as much as we can (Research Participant #10, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

In a sense, *hemşehrilik* is like a political party. When starting a job, I do not say "aha, he is from Şebinkarahisar, from our region". In that sense, I am against regionalism. Otherwise, there is no problem in communicating with each other (Research Participant #, member of the Ankara Foundation).

### ***Decision-making mechanisms***

When you set foot in the Ankara Foundation’ centre, the smell of anise welcomes you. Just to the left, there are tables arranged like a restaurant. Almost all of the walls are filled with Şebinkarahisar’s pictures, newspaper clippings and collages of Şebinkarahisar. Next to the tables are chairs, amps, and a microphone stand positioned like a stage. Folk songs are sung when people gather for dinner at the foundation centre. The foundation also has a lunch service on weekdays. In the evenings, you can bring your alcohol and drink it. The dinners at the foundation centre also act as board meetings.

So, we organize dinners with wide participation every month. Everyone can come to this dinner, whether they are board member of the foundation or even

a member or not. Like the general assembly. For the first hour, before people start eating, people can bring their alcohol with them, we are comfortable about it. We do the first hour of it like a board meeting without opening the bottle. First, we talk about some things about ourselves. Then I want everyone to speak up and, especially, to criticize. I am trying to get everyone's opinion, like "You guys are in the board, but you cannot see this, or you are doing this wrong, do this or do not this" (Research Participant #1, board member of the Ankara Foundation).

According to Edwards, a robust civil society "can prevent the agglomeration of power that threatens autonomy and choice, provide effective checks against the abuse of state authority, and protect a democratic public sphere in which citizens can debate the ends and means of governance" (2004, p.15). Therefore, democracy within CSOs must be examined to understand their impact on society. On the other hand, not all CSOs founded primarily for the promotion of democratic values, as also in the case of HTAs. "Associations matter hugely and should be encouraged, but there is equal danger in expecting too much from associational life, as if it were a 'magic bullet' for resolving the intractable social, economic and political problems" (Edwards, 2004, p.19). Nevertheless, it is expected from CSOs by the civil society literature to create a democratic environment which would translate to social progress towards a more democratic society since the association value democracy and create a new appreciation.

In order to understand the relationship between civil society and democracy, I asked questions about the decision-making mechanisms of the associations and whether the mechanisms were democratic or not.

I always claim, only when people come together, they can achieve things. You create new things only when you talk with. So, think as much as you want alone, you cannot do anything. Different mindsets develop the associations...If people object one another, it is what actually improves you (Research Participant #8, board member of ŞEBDER).

We have a team of 28 people, and we have elders who have served our country and now support the administration. We work together with our friends to meet with the heads of village and neighbourhood associations every month, to gather the problems they observe in a field, to take notes at work, and then to solve them again. I think we have a very democratic structure. When we have a meeting, when we have to make a decision, we

vote. Sometimes, issues are decided by the majority of votes, sometimes unanimously. We have a democratic environment. Everyone comes there and offers us their suggestions for the activities and projects to be done for our Şebinkarahisar (Research Participant #10, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

However, understanding of democracy generally reduced to the good functioning of the associations.

The board members make very good decisions and implements very good decisions. I have no problem with that aspect (Research Participant #3, member of the Ankara Foundation).

So far, we have nothing taken by majority vote. I would say 100%, decisions are taken unanimously (Research Participant #12, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

### **3.5. Who is a *hemşehri*?**

The answer to the question “who is a *hemşehri*” is related to the identification process of *hemşehrilik* since the *hemşehrilik* relations are contextual and fluid. Therefore, I asked about who can be their *hemşehri* to understand how they locate themselves and others within social relations.

The *hemşehri* is who feel that they belong to that region. It does not necessarily have to be born or officially registered there. Each of the people who feel that they belong to that region can call each other a *hemşehri* (Research Participant #1, board member of the Ankara Foundation).

As in the quotations above, *hemşehrilik* or regional identity, is defined with feelings of loyalty and belonging. Identities are created, not readily-waiting sources of categorization. *Hemşehri* identity as a category of practice is fluid that people sometimes choose to identify themselves with specific categories that fit the situation in their everyday life encounters. Furthermore, the *hemşehri* identity formed under the roof of HTAs moves beyond just being from Şebinkarahisar. The loyalty and sense of belonging are reimagined in particular forms while participating in the activities of HTAs. The sense of belonging, loyalty or, in general, the identity of being from Şebinkarahisar is not manifested in the same way due to power relations among the HTAs, especially in İstanbul. It will be discussed more thoroughly in the ‘*divorce of hemşehris*’ section.

There is an active decision-making process revolving around the reimagination of the regional identity. For example, not all people feel the same level of loyalty or sense of belonging to their *hemşehri* identity, or they manifest it in different ways that not all people from Şebinkarahisar living in İstanbul or Ankara choose to be part of HTAs. Although almost all the research participants have underlined the importance of service to their *hemşehris*, they have different visions on how to serve and help for the development of Şebinkarahisar or define what Şebinkarahisar needs. Furthermore, how identity is manifested in HTAs also differs; it also depends on time and space.

When I say *hemşehri*, I immediately think of a person from Şebinkarahisar. In this context, though, people from Black Sea look out for each other. Let us say someone is from Ordu asks “where are you from”, when I say, “I am from Giresun”, they would tell me “Oh my *hemşehri*”, but when we look at it in general, I consider people *hemşehri* when they are from Şebinkarahisar. As I said, this may be unique to the Black Sea region (Research Participant #6, member of the Ankara Foundation).

*Hemşehrilik* relations as a source of identification provide a particular form of sociability. The identities pave the way for people to recognize other categorizations. According to cognitive perspectives, categorization is conceptualized as an essential and omnipresent mental process. Categories are important because they allow us to simplify cognitive, social and political processes behind the identity. Through categories, the social world becomes “intelligible, interpretable, communicable, and transformable... Thus categories underline not only seeing and thinking but the most basic forms of doing as well, including both everyday action and more complex, institutionalized patterns of action” (Brubaker, 2004, p.71). *Hemşehri* identity or regional identity help people frame their own and others’ location in a social encounter and provides tools to discuss the categorization. According to the quotation above, there is a category or a stereotype that people from the Black Sea region give importance to *hemşehrilik* ties. Stereotypes are linked to categorical thinking that they provide cognitive structures and show expectations. Stereotypes do not come from individual attitudes but from shared categorical understanding and mental workings. The existence of stereotypes also shows that there are “salience of racial, ethnic, and national ways of seeing, interpreting and reacting to social



experience” (Brubaker, 2004, p.73) which we will discuss more in-depth the “national way of seeing” in the next section. Stereotypes are the first step to understanding identification processes.

There are two outcomes of stereotyping; the first is social categorization. Social categorization refers to a ‘group’ that people can think of, and even if it is arbitrarily formed, there are in-group favouring or biases (Tajfel, 1986, as cited in Brubaker, 2004). Social categorization can be traced when members of HTAs try to find jobs for their *hemşehris* or vote for their *hemşehris* (which were discussed).

The second outcome of stereotyping is the “accentuation effect, ” which refers to exaggerating similarities or differences. The accentuation effect causes the reification of the groups where there are depersonalizations of individuals, meaning that they are merely group members (Levine, 1999, as cited in Brubaker, 2004, p.74).

Now when you are sitting with someone else, you cannot even have that some conversation. Since you are our *hemşehri*, you can talk about anything. *Hemşehrilik* provides that unity. Our people are good people. Of course, bad people appear everywhere, but I can say that we do not have bad people (Research Participant #10, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

The quotation above shows the accentuation effect and the reification process that it entails. Research participant #10 has an understanding that his *hemşehris* are the “good people”, and he believes that he can form such relationality more quickly since he trusts his *hemşehris*. It shows the power of categorization and how it alters one’s cognition that being a *hemşehri* solely would make the person good or bad. Therefore, *hemşehri* identity is, to a certain degree, reified.

Officially, Şebinkarahisar is a district of Giresun. I asked whether you feel from Giresun or not. There were mixed feelings. On an emotional level, they do not affiliate with Giresun.

They are not my *hemşehri*. But that does not mean I do not like them. We have reasons. Because people of Şebinkarahisar, if we leave our history aside, we have nothing in common in terms of culture. So, our air, water, food, dance, speech are different. We are closer to Sivas, maybe closer to Erzincan, maybe Gümüşhane, but not Giresun (Research Participant #8, board member of ŞEBDER).

Our way of life, customs, habits, etc. perspective on life culture are different... Their outlook on life is different (Research Participant #1, board member of the Ankara Foundation).

We are not saying that we are from Giresun. Şebinkarahisar is in completely different geography, in Kelkit Basin. Sivas and Erzincan have more folkloric connections with Şebinkarahisar. I think even the food in Giresun is not the same (Research Participant #7, board member of ŞEBDER).

In order to demarcate the lines between the two identities of being from Giresun and being from Şebinkarahisar, they immediately pointed out the cultural differences, which can be an example of the accentuation effect that they tend to exaggerate the differences between the two identities.

The third step of the identification process is using schemas that are “mental structures in which knowledge is represented” (Brubaker, 2004, p.75). Schemas are “how people perceive and interpret the world and how knowledge is acquired, stored, recalled, activated, and extended to new domains” (Brubaker, 2004, p.75). Schemas are essential in terms of organizing action. Schemas work automatically without any prior plans or consciousness. It is contextual, meaning that they rely on the information given with the ability to combine it with “available features without reference to an overall organizing structure, schematic processing treats each new person, event, or issue as an instance of an already familiar category or schema” (Fiske, 1986, as cited in Brubaker, 2004, p.75). As schemas provide an ability or familiar framework to make sense of contingent and contextual situations, in terms of *hemşehrilik* relations, it also provides a hierarchy among other identities. Firstly, in the hierarchy of *hemşehris*, the innermost circle comprises people from Şebinkarahisar. Even though not all research participants are from the city centre but from neighbourhoods (like Tamzara) and villages of Şebinkarahisar, they bring forth their identity of being from Şebinkarahisar as the primary source of identification. It can be argued that it is partly because of the existence of HTAs. To illustrate, in Ankara, the only HTA that is available to people from Şebinkarahisar is the Ankara Foundation. Their level of identification and sense of belonging increase under the roof of HTAs because they encounter people from Şebinkarahisar more compared to people from their villages.

The frequency of social interaction teaches how to create loyalty and a sense of belonging. One of the research participants from the Ankara Foundation is from a village that does not mention as much as he mentions the identity of being from Şebinkarahisar because it is hard to find people from that same village to create a sense of belonging and solidarity. On the other hand, in İstanbul, almost every neighbourhood and village of Şebinkarahisar has an HTA. However, in Mutual Aid Association, the oldest and more institutionalized one, members of the Mutual Aid Association, bring up their identity of being from Şebinkarahisar more in social settings. The members of HTAs are exposed to the discourse of being from Şebinkarahisar more, which helps their categorization and locating themselves in social relations. However, they are also members of their village association as well. Nevertheless, village associations in İstanbul also tied to Mutual Aid Association which acts as the “older brother”. Therefore, it can be argued that people were not born into and do not automatically acquire the characteristics of particular identities. They learn how to be part of an identity; they learn how to interact with other identities; they learn how other identities will possibly interact with them thanks to the stereotypes, social categorizations, and schemas. In addition, people learn how to manifest their identities and how to demarcate the boundaries of their identities through the institutionalization of that identity. In the scope of this research, they learn it through being part of civil society in Turkey. Therefore, we can analyze groups as transcendental entities or categories of analysis. The people, through peculiar social relations, including power relations, create groupness. The identity of being from Şebinkarahisar is a variable. It is shaped and altered the meanings attached to it according to the condition; therefore, identity does not point out bounded groups but “groupness” (Brubaker, 2004)

The identification process is fluid and astatic even though the identity is tried to institutionalize under the roof of HTAs. It can be affected by cultural, social, economic and political circumstances. *Hemşehri* identity is a variable, not a constant, that includes hierarchy and situationality. According to the majority of the research participants, the most *hemşehris* are from Şebinkarahisar, secondly from Giresun, then from the Black Sea, then Kelkit Basin and then Turkey. However, as it will be

discussed in the next section, national identity with nationalist discourse is all-encompassing and affects the perception of the innermost circle.

Throughout the years, the members of selected HTAs stated that there was a limited dialogue with the people and associations of Giresun. The reason was both political and cultural. As stated earlier, they did not feel emotional attachments due to a lack of cultural commonalities. Also, politically, Şebinkarahisar was a province independent from Giresun and included some of the districts of Giresun in its borders between 1923 and 1933.

I say I am from Şebinkarahisar, my mother's hometown. My birth record is in Giresun-Alucra, a village in Alucra, but it is 40 km away. Alucra was a district of Şebinkarahisar, when my parents were born (Research Participant #7, board member of ŞEBDER).

People from Şebinkarahisar wanted the political privileges of being a province, and HTAs' agenda reflects that claim. The situation and political history also shape the form of identification. As discussed above, schemas provide a basis for action through passing down, storing and recalling knowledge. The older generation insisted on that claim, passed the knowledge and on the discursive level, especially during the 1990s, HTAs of Şebinkarahisar were vocal about being a province.

Giresun identity is our upper identity. We love Giresun too, but when we are asked, we first say Şebinkarahisar when asked "where are you from", as we learned from our uncles from our fathers since our childhood. We have a city. Frankly, we have an expectation of return of reputation. Şebinkarahisar is an ancient city that served as a sanjak in the Ottoman Empire and a province in the Republic for 10 years from 1923 to 1933 (Research Participant #10, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

It shows that official borders, even within a province, do not match with the cultural commonalities or boundaries of culture.

Of course [I am from Giresun]. As a belonging, it is written on your identity card. You cannot say that you do not acknowledge Giresun. So, in the end, bureaucratically everything is tied to Giresun. So, this is the thing of our elders and some of our fanatical *hemşehris*. They say, I do not acknowledge Giresun as my hometown (Research Participant #2, board member of the Ankara Foundation).

Furthermore, *hemşehri* identity is fundamentally about relationality; it is not a property of the group, similar to ethnic identity. However, although the regional identity cannot directly be considered as an ethnic identity, there are parallels in the definition of both form of groupness. Similar to ethnicity, *hemşehrilik* is defined through the relationship that the members of the grouping establish. The distinctive cultural markers or objective markers (Brubaker, 2004) do not constitute a grouping without a certain degree of institutionalization of the identity. Since groupness is not a constant but a variable, the meaning attributed to the group, or the boundaries of the group is shaped through social and symbolic relations. In the case of Şebinkarahisar identity, they separate themselves from the people of Giresun, whom they are officially tied to, based on cultural differences. They create ‘us’ and ‘them’ distinctions. According to Eriksen, “ethnicity presupposes an institutionalized relationship between delineated categories whose members consider each other to be culturally distinctive” (2010, p.23) which can apply to the identity formed around *hemşehrilik* and regional identity. The existence of HTAs as part of civil society paves the way for the institutionalization of *hemşehrilik* relations and regional identity. Before modernism and the modern nation-state, people had identified themselves with their origins. However, with modernization, internal migrations, and urbanization, people have become more mobile, and intergroup encounters and relations have increased. People also have more institutionalized relations. Besides the state institutions, they developed relations within civil society, which is also an institution or a space that enables equal citizens while take the initiative to come together. Even though the people leave their hometown and become part of another space, they still ‘protect’ and institutionalize their identity through the associations that exist within civil society. As it is discussed, identities are fluid and what HTAs are ‘protecting’ is a putatively authentic regional identity. Attributing authentic characteristics would mean that they are eternal identities that are bounded units. However, this thesis aims to draw attention to link between so called authentic identities and nationalist discourse. Nationalism naturalizes the identities and present them as eternal. However, on methodological level it is problematic.

*Hemşehri* is anyone who expresses themselves as from Şebinkarahisar... I mean, now I think about Şebinkarahisar thing, within the framework of it, I

think a community of people who are in the same region, feel the same culture, have the same geographical characteristics and have a same lifestyle is called *hemşehri*. There is local *hemşehrilik* and there is provincial *hemşehrilik*. That is how I put it to myself (Research Participant #11, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

As *hemşehrilik* do not constitute a bounded group, but as a groupness. It allows the hierarchies within the definition can be made. As research participant #11 argues that there are different forms of *hemşehrilik* that have become available. The state as an external force affects the boundaries of the *hemşehrilik* relations, influencing who can be included in the identity.

Eriksen argues that individuals engage with multiple identities besides ethnic identification when it is relevant to the circumstances; therefore, according to the context, “over which the individual may not exert much control” (1999, p.55). Secondly, when people engage with any identification, how they choose what they choose is determined by the cultural framework they have; therefore, what is meaningful for them to choose is a matter of definition from within the given framework. Thirdly, Eriksen underlines the importance of the agency and that the structure in the form of a cultural framework cannot always determine the individual's choices. It leads to multiple approaches to the context and explains the different actions taken by the members of the same community.

In the case of people from Şebinkarahisar who engages with HTAs are not a homogenous group that can be easily categorized as a given entity. Their processes of identification are always at work, and the situation also shows itself when there is a power relation, within civil society, over the definition of being from Şebinkarahisar. Therefore, being from Şebinkarahisar and the identity entails it is not a fixed category; it is variable (Brubaker, 2004). Lastly, remembering hometown can create familiar feelings along with “nostalgia and warm sentiment, but unless they are socially activated through some kind of resource flow perceived as relevant by the actor, they remain at the level of representations and do not emerge as social and political corporations” (Eriksen, 1999, pp.55-56). As in the case of actors of HTAs of Şebinkarahisar starting to cooperate with CSOs of Giresun, it shows the agency at work. They had learned from the HTAs and their elders that they are not from

Giresun; however, the relevancy of the political context opens a door for associating with Giresun and it has an impact on the identification process. It enables us to support the idea of identities as variables have a fluid and contextual character.

As the HTAs obtain more formal character within civil society and act as pressure groups, the changes can also affect their organization type. It can be visible with the formation of federations and confederations. Federations and confederations pave the way for the issues presented by HTAs to be recognised by a wider audience and move discussions to the national level (Çelebi, 2018, as cited in Şentürk, 2021, p.39).

However, because of bureaucratic reasons, they have started to be affiliated with federations and associations of Giresun to gain more political power through solidarity manifested in the form of federations.

Now, it is necessary to think about the concept of *hemşehrilik* in a narrow sense and in a broad sense. Of course, Giresun is a *hemşehri* for us. Why? Because our interests are common, our problems are common. In a sense, we have a bond at the point of solving our problems... We have a legal bond with each other, even if it is not fully, but with the legislation. In other words, if an investment is to be made in Şebinkarahisar, it passes through Giresun. Giresun governorship is under the special provincial administration. Therefore, we have to be in solidarity with them as a *hemşehri*. When I go to a politician or a bureaucrat as a Şebinkarahisar Foundation, their perspectives on us are different, and when I say we come as Giresun CSOs, they are different. We can accept the people of Giresun as *hemşehri*, but not the main *hemşehris* (Research Participant #1, board member of the Ankara Foundation).

As it can be inferred from the quotation above, even though the people from Giresun cannot be considered as the primary *hemşehris* of the research participants, they are slowly learning to associate with them for obtaining power to solve the problems concerning Şebinkarahisar. It shows that identity, as a category of practice, is fluid and affected by political agendas; therefore, it is affected by identity politics.

When Giresun became a province and the Şebinkarahisar became district of Giresun, we did not see ourselves as from Giresun for years, we did not accept it. Giresun did not accept us, as well. A mutual refusal continued. Of course, Giresun also suffered from this, but I think, we suffered from the most detrimental consequences. Now Synergy of Civil Society Organizations of Giresun (Giresun Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları Birlikteliği) is being tried to be

established (Research Participant #3, board member of the Ankara Foundation).

“Individuals choose their allegiances, but not under circumstance of their own choice. For them to invest symbolically, politically, or economically into a corporation or an imagined community, it must offer something in return” (Eriksen, 1999, p.56). In this case, choosing to establish allegiances with the CSOs of Giresun would benefit them in terms of providing resources for the Şebinkarahisar and making the problems that Şebinkarahisar faces more visible.

I am also a founding member of Giresun Federation. I took part in its establishment with Hasan Turan who is currently a member of parliament, an AK Party deputy, in his second term... but I think it is different to be from Şebinkarahisar (Research Participant #11, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

Both in İstanbul and Ankara, there have been dialogues with the people from Giresun. However, they have stated that it took a little while to leave the “old feud” behind. The old feud stemmed from being a province. However, the research participants are aware that Şebinkarahisar, currently does not have the capacity to be re-qualified as a province due to migration to the big cities and lack of resources in Şebinkarahisar. The realization of this fact enabled them to be open to cooperation with the associations of Giresun. Even though they show newly formed sincerity and are active and have crucial roles with associations of Giresun, their level of identification with Giresun is still secondary. As discussed above, it reflects the learned hierarchy, which is a crucial part of the identification process of *hemşehri*.

### ***Divorce of hemşehris***

The values and opinions of *hemşehris* share may not always overlap. Together with urbanization, migrants also interact with other identities and thoughts. The socialization process continues, and in-group differences can rise to the surface. Kurtoğlu (2005) discusses that *hemşehrilik* relations constantly obtain new meanings with interactions that urban context can provide. Since the *hemşehrilik* relations are transforming, HTAs’ functions are also transforming. In the case of people from Şebinkarahisar living in İstanbul, the transformation paved the way for more than one HTAs’ emergence.



You know, [talk about Mutual Aid Association] really a crowd of men. I mean, I do not even want to stand there but, I have to go, I am the only woman alone there. There was the iftar program, opens with hymns. Everywhere is like that now. Giresun Federation had invited also, and again fast-breaking with prayers. When you say iftar, it has become that. You cannot also say anything. What a predicament. We try to do something different from them as much as possible (Research Participant #7, board member of ŞEBDER)

Now there is ŞEBDER, for example, let us say our Şebinkarahisar the Mutual Aid Association is the father of these associations, or let us say it is the elder brother (Research Participant #11, board member of the Mutual Aid Association).

I asked board members of ŞEBDER about how they got separated from the Mutual Aid Association.

Unfortunately, in the last 20 years, people have been becoming polarized.... I mean, when I come together with those people, I get mad. That is why I prefer not to meet with them. The establishment of ŞEBDER is a bit like that. All of the former board members of the Mutual Aid Association were democrats and Kemalist. Then, well, that is a word I do not like very much, but they filled villagers into the association. Along with that filling, in the first election, the men overthrew and seized our old administrations (Research Participant #8, board member of ŞEBDER).

To be frank, I never recommend associations to be guided by politics, unfortunately, how can I say? The Mutual Aid Association unfortunately has a great closeness to AK Party. Since these bothers me personally, I have not been participating in their organization much in recent years... ŞEBDER's point of view is more of a Kemalist mentality. Because today, there is a certain group that says very bad things about Atatürk. Unfortunately, this is also among our *hemşehris*. Therefore, I prefer ŞEBDER because we keep people together who do not lose their respect for Atatürk (Research Participant #9, board member of ŞEBDER).

The members of ŞEBDER are highly disturbed by Mutual Aid Associations' comments on being "father of the association". The members of the Mutual Aid Association are highly vocal about their self-acclaimed positions that during the interviews with the members of ŞEBDER, they have also mentioned such comments and showed their annoyance. It is because the members of ŞEBDER do not approve the political stance of the Mutual Aid Association and do not want to be affiliated with such political ideologies. It can be inferred from this situation that HTAs are critical actors in institutionalizing the regional identities where the research

participants are aware of that power of HTAs. To illustrate, if the Mutual Aid Association stands with or supports a particular ideology, people would consider all people from Şebinkarahisar would have to share similar views which means they can develop stereotypes and schemas toward the specific regional identity according to the image presented by the HTAs. Therefore, it can be argued that HTAs as CSOs have totalizing effect.

The members of ŞEBDER broke up with Mutual Aid Association and formed a different HTA as a counter-act. They could have just left the Mutual Aid Association, but they are aware that forming a HTA is also a matter of presentation of their self as well. The members of ŞEBDER consider themselves as Kemalists whereas they consider majority of the board members of the Mutual Aid Association as ultra-nationalist and conservative. Also, the alleged close link between the Mutual Aid Association and the ruling party is not approved by ŞEBDER. On the other hand, the members of ŞEBDER also try to totalize the identity in a counter-act in a peculiar way. For example, when the Mutual Aid Association meet during Ramadan, organize Umrah visits and overall use a religious language, the members of ŞEBDER try to underline how secular the people of Şebinkarahisar. They give example of the amount of alcohol consumed by the people from Şebinkarahisar. Even though secularism cannot be reduced to those practices, in Turkey the act has a subtext which can be considered as part of a discourse. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are competing discourses among associations and HTAs have power due to their capacity to institutionalize and totalize the regional identity by appropriating discourses. The power relations bring competition over the definition of regional identity and the culture it entails.

As discussed earlier, approaching *hemşehrilik* as a groupness (a variable, not a constant) allows us to make sense of the divorce of *hemşehris*. Since it was argued earlier that *hemşehrilik* relations do not necessarily create bounded groups, the identity boundary is subject to alterations. Furthermore, groups are perceived as homogenous units to certain degrees. However, the conceptualization of *hemşehrilik* as a groupness allows us to draw attention work of agencies.

According to Eriksen, people choose to be loyal to the imagined communities “not because they were born into them, but because such foci of loyalty promise to offer something deemed meaningful, valuable, or useful” (Eriksen, 1999, p.55). For the members of ŞEBDER, their other identities or views did not match with the board members of the Mutual Aid Association, and they did not feel represented. It is because there are power relations over the boundaries of the *hemşehrilik* relations. It shows that *hemşehrilik* relations are not relations or regional identity is not independent of other social and political relations. As discussed earlier, one of the functions of HTAs in their early years of the establishment was to create solidarity for people to cope with the newly encountered urban life. People do not exist with one identity that they have. There are multiple identities of an individual concur in everyday life encounters.

### **3.6. How do hometown associations, as civil society organizations, through *hemşehrilik* relations, contribute to the nationalist discourse in Turkey?**

As discussed earlier, nationalism and nationalist discourse create a hegemony by reifying and naturalising the national identity. It provides a ground for distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’. However, the creation of such dichotomy is taking shape in social relations. When we discussed who is a *hemşehri*, such contingent relationality came to light. Identity formation has been affected by a sense of loyalty, belonging, and external factors such as the state. One of the most critical determinants of the *hemşehri* identity is nationalism.

Discourse on nationalism is produced in daily life and through institutions like civil society. HTAs, as part of civil society in Turkey, are essential actors in the creation of such discourses. The discourse of nationalism is altering the hierarchy schemas on the *hemşehrilik* of the research participants. Therefore, in order to understand the fluid character of *hemşehrilik* when nationalism enters into the picture, I asked whether people from Giresun become their *hemşehri* when they come across them in outside of the borders of Turkey since they did not immediately consider them as their *hemşehri*, as discussed in the previous section.

Sure, they become my *hemşehri*. There is a more national format, though. Not because he is from Giresun, that is, even if I see a person from Yozgat, I hug him as my *hemşehri*. In other words, there is no difference for me whether people are from Diyarbakır, Yozgat or Giresun in that context (Research Participant #8, board member of ŞEBDER).

Of course, then it will be my *hemşehri*. So, maybe it is a little different when a person is abroad (Research Participant #6, member of the Ankara Foundation).

As *hemşehrilik* creates an emotional tie and sense of loyalty and belonging, those emotions can be transferred into nationalism. Nationalism does not create a mysterious passion for the nations. It is a discourse or a narrative that can be found in institutions and social life; it can be supported both by the state through its ideological apparatuses and civil society, which paves the way for nationalism to sneak into the realities of people (Özkırmılı, 2010, p.216). People are born into nations, but they learn how to be part of national identity. Dissemination of nationalist ideology, as Billig (1995) discusses, that everyday life rituals taken for granted are where nationalism reproduces itself. Billig (1995) calls it “banal nationalism” because for nationalist discourses to creep into daily life, it does not require great rituals. However, the symbols are regularly displayed, people start internalizing them without questioning, and actions are taken accordingly. Nationalism, in that sense, operates at the symbolic but unconscious level. For instance, many Turkish flags were visible at the centre of the Ankara Foundation, and the Atatürk’s words “Ne mutlu Türküm diyene” (how happy is who says I am a Turk) were engraved on the walls of the centre. Also, the HTAs’ social media posts frequently display a Turkish flag. Since I did not have a chance to visit the association centre of Mutual Aid Association, as I explored their social media accounts, I have come across that where they are having board meetings a giant Turkish flag was visible and near the meeting table. These are gestures displaying nationhood.

I would like to state that we are very proud to be Turkish. I get goosebumps when I see the Turkish flag. Nationalism is protecting our flag and nation. As Şebinkarahisar Mutual Aid Association, we both in terms of protecting Turkey and our *hemşehris*... There is no difference between the east and west of Turkey, but when I see a person from Şebinkarahisar, I get that pleasure

and happiness...Nationalism is homeland (vatan), nation, flag, the state (Research Participant #10, board member of Mutual Aid Association).

Well, you know Şebinkarahisar, its history is very old. An ancient civilization. It is the place where Fatih established his tent since the Seljuks. So Turkishness and being from Şebinkarahisar cannot be separated (Research Participant #11, board member of Mutual Aid Association).

Furthermore, all selected HTAs celebrate national holidays in different ways, varying from visiting sites that hold national importance to sharing posts on social media. For example, the members of the Ankara Foundation visited the Battle of Sakarya grounds on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day, and they want to include their members as much as possible. The members of ŞEBDER wanted to organize the “Ball of Republic” to celebrate Republic Day on October 29<sup>th</sup>, but they were unsuccessful due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moving further, the transformation of emotions of *hemşehrilik* into nationalist sentiments does not mean that *hemşehrilik* is a form of micro-nationalism. Forming a nation requires some level of social solidarity, integration and formation of collective identity so that individuals can define their ‘self’ as part of the whole. However, these conditions do not necessarily make up a nation (Calhoun, 1997). The *hemşehri* relations include a level of solidarity, integration, and collective identity, which categorizes people according to their terms. However, Calhoun (1997) questions what distinguishes nations from other forms of collective identity and groups with certain social solidarity and concludes that it is because of the “discursive formation of nationalism”. According to Anderson (2006), all groupings are imagined that are beyond face-to-face relations and communities cannot be categorized based on their realness in their essence but can be categorized based on how they are imagined. Besides the formation of collective identity and social solidarity “there are other ways of distinguishing communities...such as their scale, extent of administrative organization, degree of internal equality” (Calhoun, 1997, p.4). In order to understand the discourse of nationalism and how it is different from other forms of identification, Calhoun (1997) lists some patterns that can be founded in formation of nations: First of which is the “boundaries of territory, population, or both”; secondly, the invisibility because nationalism already a fundamental part; third is “sovereignty, or at least the aspiration to sovereignty, and thus formal equality with other nations,

usually as an autonomous and putative self-sufficient state”; fourth is related to legitimacy; fifth is “popular participation in collective affairs”; sixth is “direct membership, in which each individual is understood to be immediately a part of the nation”; seventh is related to culture “including some combination of language, shared beliefs and values, habitual practices”; eighth is “temporal depth – a notion of the nation as such existing through time, including past and future generations, and having a history”; ninth is “common descent or racial characteristics”; last is “special historical or even sacred relations to a certain territory” (Calhoun, 1997, pp.4-5). However, not all nations share these exact qualities, and this does not define the nations as such. It shows patterns that nations are distinct from other forms of imagined communities. In terms of those patterns, *hemşehrilik* does not have a bounded territory and is a more fluid identity than national identity. Within the given framework, it can be argued that regional identity is more similar to ethnic identity than national identity. Regional identity creates a culture. Regional identity can be considered partly as an ethnic identity. It is because the culture of the being from Şebinkarahisar is defined as a distinct form of collectivity from the other identities, and the identity that entails that imagined collective culture is institutionalized through discourse and engaging with the civil society in Turkey. There is an active process of re-imagination of the identity.

Nationalism also impacts the perception and re-imagination of ethnic identities. Hence, ethnicity or regional identity can be situationally defined. As in the case of who can be a *hemşehri*, the research participants located themselves in the social encounters according to the hierarchy in their mind. Therefore, regional identity and national identity are not the same form of identification in different scales. Nationalism overreaches and encompasses other identities.

Of course, if we are in the centre of Giresun, a person from Şebinkarahisar is my *hemşehri*, but if I am in İstanbul, a person from Giresun is also my *hemşehri*. If I am abroad, any Turkish citizen is my *hemşehri*... So, it is relative to place and time. I think it might change, so it is hard to give a clear answer (Research Participant #12, board member of Mutual Aid Association).

Furthermore, nationalism wants to defeat all other sources of identification to become the primary source of identification and loyalty. Also, “it represents the

nation as the ultimate source of (political and social) legitimacy – hence of sovereignty” (Özkırımlı, 2010, pp.208-209). Members of HTAs do not try to argue that regional identity is their primary identity or the sole identity that their loyalties lie within.

First of all, I am a Turkish citizen. It is my constitutional right. Whatever you say, today I am a Turkish citizen with the Turkish flag at the top and my constitutional right. Difference is of course my hometown, the place where I am registered, but firstly I am a citizen of this country. In other words, we have sworn to this country that we will serve this country as civil servants. First degree is this state for me [before Şebinkarahisar] (Research Participant #2, board member of Ankara Foundation).

I would put being Turkish, Turkishness in the first place. Then, when considered within Turkey, it is from being Black Sea, then from Giresun, then from Şebinkarahisar (Research Participant #6, member of Ankara Foundation).

In order to understand the relationship between nationalism and *hemşehrilik*, I asked them whether they consider non-Turks as their *hemşehri*. I asked questions based on an event that ŞEBDER organized, a trip to Greece and North Macedonia with a note that said “to meet with our *hemşehris*” there, as I learned throughout the interview that ŞEBDER had started learning the folkloric dance of Şebinkarahisar because prior to knowing that Greeks who forced to migrate to Greece as a result of population exchange of 1923, who knew the regional folkloric dance, there was not an initiative taken to learn the dance in ŞEBDER. The need for learning the dance in ŞEBDER was reflexive.

They also have a website on the internet: “Garaysar Garasari”, while looking at that site I said, “oh our dances”. My friend said, “no its their games”. We were dancing in the same way. They dance much better than us. We tried to learn the Tamzara Oyunu (Research Participant #7, board member of ŞEBDER).

Eriksen (2010) claims that nationalism tries to reify traditions, which is called traditionalism. This reification process presents itself as it is all about the ‘true’ nature of traditions. However, in the reification process, there are “supposed traditions”; this is related to re-reading or re-writing history from today's perspective. Therefore, traditionalism adopts a retrospective perspective but denies it as well because, through this reification process or attitude of traditionalism, nation-states

can create a legitimate ground for their politics. Since traditions are essential to mark their existence from other nations quantitatively, the motivation of the members of ŞEBDER stemmed from a wish for dialogue with the Rums of Şebinkarahisar and to resurge the forgotten traditions of Şebinkarahisar. In order to take action to resurge the traditions, civil society can provide an opportunity for them to come together, form a collectivity; and therefore, continue reimagining the identity.

Nationalist discourse works under the surface of relations; even though members of ŞEBDER consider Rums who forcefully migrated from Şebinkarahisar as their *hemşehri*, they still categorize people according to the ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy, which comes to light during their speech that they mention Turks as ‘us’ and Rums as ‘them’.

The members of ŞEBDER, to a certain extent, consider Rums who migrated from Şebinkarahisar and their children as their *hemşehri* more than the majority of the members of the Mutual Aid Association and Ankara Foundation. However, the dichotomy between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is visible, and there are trust issues stemming from the national identity. Therefore, even though research participant #8 previously included non-Turks as their *hemşehri* in the interview, he still questions the intention of the Rums people from Şebinkarahisar.

There are a few people there who have a lot of ties to [Şebin]Karahisar, they come and go all the time. They definitely come and visit once a year. There was one here, a boy, a sales-marketing manager at a company. He had more information than us. I was saying that he is an agent, how much he knows. He knows all the places in Şebinkarahisar. He knows better than us (Research Participant #8, board member of ŞEBDER).

As I interviewed the members of other associations, I realized they were aware of the trip to Greece. Thus, I was able to ask about their opinions on whether Rums and their children from Şebinkarahisar migrated to Greece can be their *hemşehri* as well.

But if it has been so long, for example 100 years, someone might have lost that thing when they went to Greece and their children and grandchildren might lost that thing. Honestly, I do not know if I can call them *hemşehri*. But if he has been in Şebinkarahisar a few times, that is, he has breathed the air and tasted the water of Şebinkarahisar even a few times, it is considered as a



*hemşehri* for me (Research Participant #6, member of the Ankara Foundation).

It can be inferred that research participant #6 was hesitant to call them *hemşehri* due to a lack of cultural ties and transmission of those ties to the next generations. As discussed earlier, identities are in the making and need constant reactivation and imagination. On the other hand, even though the cultural activities that can be marked as part of being Şebinkarahisar identity continued to a certain extent in Greece, nationalism enters the picture to question the importance of the cultural activities as the marker of being *hemşehri*. It shows that nationalism has the power to alter the view on who can be a *hemşehri*.

What about them now... do we have cultural ties? We have. If we think about it in that sense, or what does it mean to be a *hemşehri*? People of the same city, this is the lexicon. Citizens of the same city, are we considered citizens of the same city? We live in different cities now, but maybe it can be said that we are among our former *hemşehris* (Research Participant #1, member of the Ankara Foundation).

So, I think we cannot call them *hemşehri*. But they still keep that culture alive in Greece, they play that horon, cook the same food... I did not go there; I did not see them either (Research Participant #11, board member of Mutual Aid Association).

Furthermore, the *hemşehri* identity is tried to be reified that it is beyond the relational mode of identification (Brubaker, 2004, p.42). Relational identification is about the position of oneself in the “relational web”, which includes kinship, friendship, and student-teacher relations. Categorical identification is about ethnicity, race, language, nation, citizenship, and sexual orientation. Categorical identifications are powerful because external agents also institutionalize them. In the case of the regional identity, people from Şebinkarahisar include Giresun as part of their identity because it is where they are officially registered (in most cases). The nation-state appears as the identifier but does not create the identities in a strong sense. It has the material and symbolic resources to impose categories within the sphere where the nonstate actors must encounter. However, the state is not the only identifier. Agents of the identification cannot be reduced to the state institutions. As in the case of this research, identification processes can be carried out through discourses and narratives of the people via civil society. It also explains the differences among

HTAs on adopted nationalist discourses that while members of ŞEBDER, to a certain degree, acknowledge Rums as their *hemşehri*, while members of Mutual Aid Association hesitate to consider them as their *hemşehri*, and members of the Ankara Foundation do not consider them as primary *hemşehri* in the hierarchical schema of *hemşehri* that they constructed. The existence of nationalist discourses does not mean that the messages carried, and the ideology disseminated is univocal. Civil society paves the way for different voices to be heard within social relations and, as an institution, can help with the institutionalization of identities.

As it is discussed earlier, stereotypes are crucial for the hierarchy of identities that are constructed in the minds of the people. The existence of stereotypes, firstly, expresses the social categorization of people as members of a “group”, namely a being member of a nation-state and a “national way of seeing” or interpreting the world. Secondly, stereotypes produce an “accentuation effect”, which overemphasises differences and/or similarities of a specific grouping (Brubaker, 2004). It can be understood from the quotation below that nationalist discourse divides the world into groups that people can easily categorize the other as being a member of a certain group. However, it paves the way for the reification of a group and makes researchers unable to approach groupings as a variable. As identities are always at “work”, stereotypes do not always meet with the people’s expectations created through nationalist discourses.

Exactly the same melodies, dance. They [Greeks that ŞEBDER visited in Kavala] have nothing to do with the Rums. The Greeks... I learned how to dance Sirtaki, but they have no resemblance to them. Sirtaki is already from Izmir (Research Participant #7, board member of ŞEBDER).

In this case, for research participant #7, her categories for Greek people do not match her experiences. It creates confusion because the “discourse of nationalism naturalizes itself” (Özkırımlı, 2005, p.33). When discussing who is a *hemşehri*, the research participants did not deliberately speak as if they also involved nationalism in their discourse. However, their way of approaching hinted at the nationalist way of seeing the world that is taken for granted.

When the research participants have hierarchically categorized their *hemşehri*, national identity was not needed to be discussed further because it is perceived as common sense that there is no need for a further explanation why they cannot be their primary *hemşehri*. It shows how nationalism is naturalized and presents itself as a thing-in-itself category. Therefore, I have also asked about whether there is a relationship between being a Turk and being from Şebinkarahisar.

I already consider everyone living within the borders of the Republic of Turkey as Turkish. Therefore, I do not think that there will be such a regional or national difference. If they were born and raised in the Republic of Turkey, lives here, are citizen of the Republic of Turkey, I see them as a Turk (Research Participant #6, member of the Ankara Foundation).

After saying “how happy are they who can say I am a Turk”, it does not matter whether they are Armenian, Jew, Christian, Alevi, Sunni. If they hug this country with all their arms, if they accept the citizenship of this country, if they say that they are an inseparable part of this country, if they accept the first four articles of the constitution, it does not matter to me. There are hundreds of thousands of people in our country who are Muslims and Turkish, but who are shooting guns against the state (Research Participant #2, member of the Ankara Foundation).

So now we need to look at the definition of being Turkish. So which Turkish definition, that is, a subjective Turkish definition? For me, everyone who is attached to the state of the Republic of Turkey and Turkish citizenship is Turkish. So, it could also be of Somali origin. If the Republic of Turkey is bound by citizenship bond, it is a Turkish citizen (Research Participant #12, board member of Mutual Aid Association).

According to Özkırmılı (2005), nationalism studies encompass more than ethnic violence and conflicts. There are reasons why nationalism is mainly attributed to or discussed in the scope of ethnic violence. The first reason is the “coding bias”, as Brubaker and Laitin (1998, as cited in Özkırmılı, 2005, p.4) discuss that we can easily identify ethnic insurgencies due to the ethnic framing that is legitimate and available to people, however, we can also be blinded by it. It leads to exaggeration of the events based on ethnicity. Secondly, nationalism is located as something external by understanding it with past and primordial attachments. Nationalism, therefore, acquired a character that can be considered as something negative that people feel the need to externalize the feeling of nationalism from themselves. “Nationalism, in this view, becomes the property of ‘others’, not of ‘us’” (Özkırmılı, 2005, p.4).

Nationalism is split into two meanings here. The first one is the kind and not hostile type of “patriotism”, which is a “benign and necessary force, a kind of battery capable of storing power for future use without needing to be active all the time” (Özkırmılı, 2005, p.4).

During interviews, research participants claimed that their nationalist attachments are more patriotic than violent nationalism. However, when they were talking about their ‘questionable’ *hemşehris* from Greece, they were hesitant that the nationalist attitude of the Greek *hemşehris* might not be the same as their claimed patriotic/nationalist attitude. They hinted that even though they are proud to be patriotic, “the others” can be violent nationalists. They were afraid that; Greeks might carry out irredentist policies or that they could be spies working for the Greek state. Their loyalty was questioned. Therefore, nationalism with negative connotations was the property of the “other”; their patriotism is kind and welcoming. However, here, the nationalist discourses rise to the surface in different instances. Their patriotism is not also different from the nationalism of the “others”. In that sense, “nationhood provides a continual background for their political discourse” (Özkırmılı, 2005, p.4). Therefore, patriotism does not necessarily refer to “good nationalism” because it can have properties of “bad nationalism” simultaneously.

Kemalist nationalism, as expressed as patriotism in the interviews, therefore, as ‘good form of nationalism’, took different shapes throughout years. Up until the 1930s, non-Muslims, who were not considered as Turk in the initial years of the republic, did not enjoy the property rights, travel rights outside of their residency (Cagaptay, 2006). In the early years of the young republic, Turkishness was equated to being Sunni Muslim. Until the 1930s, the high Kemalist or official discourse on nationalism in Turkey was dominated by ethnic and religious connotations that is changed after the inclusion of non-Muslims into nationalist discourse through “Turkification” processes that underlined civic characters of belonging to a nation. Therefore, religion lost its significance as a national marker. The Turkification processes included discourses such as “Ne mutlu Türküm diyene” (How happy is who says I am a Turk) that still recalls some ethnic notions, but it is presented as civic notion to being part of a nation. However, not all citizens treated equally, as it

is argued above, and expected to be assimilated by consent. Even if non-Muslims converted to Islam, they still posed as a threat (Cagaptay, 2006). Through nationalist discourse, considering ‘outsiders’ as a threat reflects in the framing of *hemşehrilik* relations that even though non-Muslims or non-Turks can be a *hemşehri* to some degrees, they are acted upon with suspicions.

As I asked about the differences between nationalism and patriotism, research participants gave varying answers.

Our Anatolian people have the blood of nationalism in their veins... Because I think every Turk is patriotic. But we saw July 15. Here, everyone thrown themselves under the truck. Right and left or Islamists, they all tried to do something for the country, everyone went to the streets. Our people showed this on July 15<sup>th</sup>. Turkish nationalism is not about right-wing and left-wing. It is in everyone’s blood. All Turkish people have it. When a Turk goes abroad, he sees the people there when he lives there. But when you see another Turk, you feel heightened sense of nationalism (Research Participant #11, board member of Mutual Aid Association).

Nationalism is not a bad thing. Nationalism, in short, is to love your country. I am also a nationalist person; I love my country. Although my father’s side is from Diyarbakır, and Zaza Kurdish, I love my country. I can describe myself as a nationalist. For me, this is nationalism, who loves his country and homeland. For him, a nationalist is the one who does his job properly (Research Participant #5, member of Ankara Foundation).

The reason for such diverse answers is the competing nationalist discourses in Turkey. For example, the Mutual Aid Association considers the attempted Coup d’état of July 15<sup>th</sup> as an important event for showing nationalist attachments to the country. Also, members of the Mutual Aid Association said that they are proud to be Turkish where the ethnic dimension of nationalism was underlined. On the other hand, ŞEBDER equated the sense of nationalism or, rather, patriotism to the Kemalist worldview.

The most striking differences were between ŞEBDER and Mutual Aid Association. The different adopted nationalist discourses also explain the divorce of *hemşehris* in İstanbul.

A person who defends Turkism must also defend Kemalism. If he says he is Turkish, he must definitely respect Atatürk. He has to accept the reality, but if

he did not, I would not call him a Turkist or a Kemalist (Research Participant #9, board member of ŞEBDER).

Regarding the Ankara Foundation, research participants had different opinions on nationalism. It can be concluded that since there is only one association for people from Şebinkarahisar in Ankara, the political differences do not stop people from associating with one another.

Furthermore, the number of *hemşehris* and the number of people who are members of HTAs in İstanbul is higher than in Ankara, and İstanbul is a bigger metropolitan area than Ankara. These factors can also contribute to the emergence of more than one association of people from Şebinkarahisar. Therefore, civil society as a realm of sociability paves the way for the continuation and re-imagination of nationalist discourses in Turkey. While participating in the activities of HTAs, people can be more exposed to certain ideologies.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

HTAs comprise almost 14% of all active CSOs in Turkey. The percentage of HTAs to all CSOs even goes up in İstanbul and Ankara by 27.2% and 21.5%, respectively. Nevertheless, these associations have been neglected by the civil society literature. The literature does not consider them part of civil society because HTAs, putatively, do not fit modernist-progressive thought on urban society. However, HTAs, as CSOs, formed and developed within the urban context. HTAs are reflecting the relations developed within urban centres. Therefore, HTAs are a crucial part of urban civic life in Turkey. They are not “buffer mechanisms” (Kıray, 2000), and we cannot approach the civil society question with a structural functionalist approach. The approaches that capture the “workings” of identity or any relationality in everyday life should be adopted. Therefore, this thesis adopts an approach that tries to overcome “common sense groupism” and acknowledges the “performative character” of any identification process.

Moreover, adopting an approach that captures everyday life is crucial for understanding *hemşehrilik* because it is not a homogenous category. *Hemşehrilik* relations entail a multitude of social relations, flexibility to adopt certain situations and being affected by various political discourses.

In other words, how *hemşehrilik* relations are manifested and who is a *hemşehri* conceptualization are questions open to contestation. If *hemşehri* identity were a

homogenous category, it would be almost impossible to discuss the ‘*divorce of hemşehris*’ where values attached to being from Şebinkarahisar have been contested. When they do not fit into certain discourses, *hemşehrilik* relations become less influential in deciding whom to establish relations. The solidarity among *hemşehris*, stemming from merely sharing the same regional identity, becomes inadequate that different political projects reflect upon such differentiations. Therefore, it can be concluded that *hemşehri* identity is tried to be institutionalized, within civil society in Turkey, by HTAs, which are affected by political, economic, and social conditions. However, it is argued that discourse on nationalism has the most prominent impact on defining identity.

Furthermore, nationalism cannot be understood by a single factor that ignites and be the sole maintainer of the identity. The discourse on nationalism is always at work. Different nationalist attitudes can exemplify the ‘nationalism at work’ that ŞEBDER’s position on Kemalism and what Kemalist nationalism entails are subject to change over time; they adopt and transform with political and social conditions. In this case, the Kemalist discourse has changed for the members of ŞEBDER to include non-Turks in their equation of *hemşehrilik*.

Considering the approach adopted by this thesis, we cannot argue that *hemşehrilik* can be reduced to mere primordial attachments. It is because *hemşehrilik* relations are involved in a myriad of relations developed within the urban context. As *hemşehrilik* relations are institutionalized within civil society, it obtains the power to change the perception of individuals on identity and relationality attached to it. Moreover, even though the regional identity can be conceptualized as an ascriptive status, which this argument backs up the argument on *hemşehrilik* as a primordial attachment, it has been observed that people have the freedom to choose which identity they will carry and bring into social relations.

*Hemşehrilik*, as a familiar or recognisable form of relationality, has provided a sense of belonging and trust for people in the urban context in Turkey. *Hemşehrilik* relations and their importance heightened with the internal migration flow that started in the 1950s in Turkey. However, the type of solidarity catered by the HTAs



has been transformed over the course of time. It means that the functions of HTAs have the flexibility to adopt the conditions accordingly.

Previously, *hemşehrilik* relations solidified within HTAs provided means to preserve the values and traditions of the hometown. However, the values are not stable that can be frozen in time. They are also bound to change as people interact and socialize in the urban context. As the literature approached HTAs and *hemşehrilik* as homogenous categories, this dimension has been neglected, that changing values and power relations surrounding it went unnoticed. However, HTAs, as part of civil society in Turkey, also indulge in activities of reimagining traditions and values. Culture needs to be reproduced. Even though people claim authentic identities, the identity is situationally re/created and reproduced within daily life.

Another consequence of conceptualising *hemşehrilik* relations as a homogenous category is the prevention of considering them as part of urban identity. As discussed, *hemşehrilik* relations became momentous identification sources when the identity travels, moves and migrates. It is because the identity needs to be underlined when it confronts ‘the other’; otherwise, there is no need to create a ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy. At that point, other forms of differentiation of groupings are summoned to being. It is a contingent process that, in Turkey, the urban anomalies were tried to be overcome by *hemşehrilik* relations.

On the other hand, *hemşehrilik* relations do not create rigid boundaries. The people intentionally carrying identity surrounding regional identity have transformed their values when they meet with ‘the others’. The process calls for a reimagination of that specific geographical space and the form of grouping. Thus, what is imagined by the people who have stayed in Şebinkarahisar and who migrated to big cities has been diversified. The reimagination engenders the differentiation of people, based on values and lifestyle, who erstwhile have claimed to be the bearer of the same values. Therefore, socialization within CSOs paves the way for the parting of *hemşehris* both in the distinction of rural and urban and within urbanite *hemşehris* who display different attitudes towards identity, sense of belonging and relationality. It shows that groups are not constants, and we cannot consider them fixed and bounded units.

Thus, I have approached the question of *hemşehrilik* relation while considering groupness as a variable.

As HTAs are part of the urban life in Turkey, they have functions as CSOs, which provide a space for a particular type of relationality and socialization. They perform various activities ranging from providing economic solidarity to reimagining or reintroducing the cultural aspects from their hometown, within the scope of this research, from Şebinkarahisar.

Furthermore, their activities have been affected by associational life, politics, bureaucracy in Turkey, and the financial conditions of the associations. As HTAs' political affinities started to diverge, members of ŞEBDER, disturbed by the Mutual Aid Association's links with the ruling party, resulted in the '*divorce of hemşehris*'. It paved the way for differentiation in the activities of HTAs. The Mutual Aid Association grew political links with local administrations in Şebinkarahisar while they are acquiring a more considerable potential to influence *hemşehris* both in İstanbul and Şebinkarahisar. On the other hand, ŞEBDER, which was established in 2005 as a result of political differences with the Mutual Aid Association, is relatively less capable of influencing a larger number of *hemşehris* compared to the Mutual Aid Association due to lack of social capital, financial and bureaucratic resources.

HTAs, as part of civil society in Turkey, are creating political spaces where they influence and be influenced by politics where HTAs reproduce certain discourses on politics. They choose whom to associate with and can act as pressure groups in Turkey as they obtain more institutionalized character and their power over formalising *hemşehrilik* relations increases. Also, how to partake in *hemşehrilik* relations and what regional identity entails are learned and reimagined within civil society. Thus, it can be concluded that civil society can be a space of "the political" (Mouffe, 2011).

There are repeated claims of HTAs on their activities revolving around that they are providers of services to their *hemşehris*. However, who can be qualified as their *hemşehri* becomes another crucial point for this research. Qualification for being a *hemşehri* for the research participants requires an active process of drawing

boundaries of the identity that requires framing one's, as well as others', location within social relations.

The identification process includes creating stereotypes, social categorizations, reifying identity and creating schemas (Brubaker, 2004). In this context, the identification process of *hemşehris* or regional identity appears as a variable in which the process is affected by official borders drawn by the state, political and economic conditions, and emotional attachments. This process also entails the creation of the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy, which are also not fixed but fluid and open to interpretation by the agencies. Hence, individuals can choose whom to include in the 'us' framework depending on the context. *Hemşehrilik* relations are fluid and take specific shapes according to the geographical and social location, but they are also influenced by the learned and reproduced schemas. In the scope of this research, the research participants can include people from Giresun in their circle of *hemşehri*, but they would not be their primary *hemşehri*. Depending on the context, a person from the Black Sea can be their *hemşehri*. *Hemşehrilik* here is used to point out a possibility of certain sincerity. If they travel abroad, the *hemşehri* would be anyone who speaks Turkish. Thus, a hierarchy of *hemşehrilik* aligns with the geographical and social spaces and politics.

Moreover, one of the most critical determinants of who is *hemşehri* is nationalism. Discourse on nationalism creates a hegemony that has the power to alter the framing of social relations, sense of loyalty and belonging (Calhoun 1997; Brubaker, 2004; Özkırımlı 2010). Discourse on nationalism is robust because it is produced daily and even in the banalest part of social life (Billig, 1995), which is not always produced that can be visible to the naked eye. Therefore, tracing nationalism in other forms of relationalities is a laborious task for researchers. This thesis argues that civil society can be a ground for flourishing nationalist discourses. More specifically, it argues that *hemşehrilik* relations, institutionalized through civil society, are affected by nationalist discourses.

Nationalism altered the discourse and type of political legitimacy. Nations, culture and politics produced by nationalism are presenting the ubiquitous form of "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm, 1983, as cited in Özkırımlı, 2010). Since nationalism is

potent and ubiquitous, it has the power to affect people's cognitive schema. *Hemşehrilik* relations existed prior to nationalism. However, with the discourse on nationalism, the content, shape, and boundaries of the definition of *hemşehrilik* have changed. Nationalism, and the national identity it produces, try to be the champion of any competition over the identification processes, but it is not always visible or manifested by blaring out.

Some of the activities of HTAs can reflect that they have internalized nationalist discourses. For example, the Ankara Foundation engraved the words of Atatürk, “ne mutlu Türküm diyene” (how happy is who says I am a Turk), to the walls of the foundation centre. The selected HTAs celebrate national holidays on social media, where Turkish flags are visible. Also, they organise trips to places that hold national importance. However, most important of all, as explained earlier, the majority of the research participants consider any Turkish person as their *hemşehri* when they are not within the borders of Turkey.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that *hemşehrilik* is a form of micro-nationalism. Nationalism is a much more powerful source of identification that encompasses and regulates our location in the world, providing filters to whom to consider ‘us’. In that context, it can be concluded that non-Turkish people who are initially from Şebinkarahisar maintain the traditions of Şebinkarahisar, to a certain extent, have left outside of the *hemşehrilik* relations by the majority of the research participants. Even though members of ŞEBDER consider non-Turks from Şebinkarahisar as their *hemşehri*, they still draw boundaries to separate themselves from ‘them’. It can be said that it is hard to develop relations of trust and a sense of belonging, as they can with their Turkish counterparts, for the research participants. Thus, nationalism heavily influences the creation of the ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy even within *hemşehrilik* relations.

On the other hand, the existence of various attitudes toward non-Turkish *hemşehris* shed light upon the competing nationalist discourses. Some forms are considered “good nationalism”, as in the form of patriotism which is more open to the inclusion of “others” in the identity, while the bad form of nationalism fails to do so. However, this research aimed to move beyond the good and bad nationalism dichotomy by

arguing that these arguments are all part of the discourse of nationalism that produces hegemony, and nationalism can manifest itself within the civil society.

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## APPENDICES

### A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ  
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



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14 MART 2022

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

**Sayın Mustafa ŞEN**

Danışmanlığınızı yürüttüğünüz İrem SAYILGAN'ın "A Study on Civil Society and Nationalism: The Case Study of Hometown Associations" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 0153-ODTÜİAEK-2022 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof. Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY  
İAEK Başkan

## **B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Personal Information**

1. Can you talk about yourself? Where were you born? What do you do?
2. Who in your family is from Şebinkarahisar? Can you tell us about your migration story?

### **Hometown Associations and Their Activities**

1. When did you join the association? What are your roles in the association?
2. What kind of expectations did you have when joining the association? What are your current expectations?
3. What is the founding purpose of the association?
4. Why was the association not established before?
5. Why was a second HTA established in İstanbul? What distinguishes you from other associations?
6. Is promoting regional identity one of the aims of the association? Why?
7. Can you talk about the working mechanism of the association? How are decisions made?
8. How often are association meetings held?

9. How does it feel to be on the board of the association or to be the chairperson of the association? How can those who want to be active become active members? How are the members of the board and the chairperson chosen?
10. What characteristics (or connections/networks) do you think the members of the board members and the chairperson have make the association more effective?
11. What activities does the association have? How often they occur?
12. How many members does the association have?
13. Is there any new information you have learned about your hometown after joining the association? If yes, what is it?
14. Do parliamentary candidates visit the association before the general or local elections? If there is someone from Şebinkarahisar among these candidates, would you consider voting for the party that this person is a candidate for?

#### **Hemşehrilik and Civil Society**

1. Do you think hometown associations are important? Why?
2. Do you think there is a need for hometown associations in society?
3. Do you think it is important that there is a hometown association for Şebinkarahisar?
4. Do you think your association is different from other hometown associations?
5. Are hometown associations a civil society organization? If so, how would you define civil society?
6. Are you a member of another civil society organization? If so, which civil society organizations?

## **Ethnicity and Region of Origin Identity**

1. Who do you call your hemşehri? Can someone who is not from Şebinkarahisar be your hemşehri?
2. Do you see yourself as from Giresun?
3. What kind of feelings and thoughts does the word homeland (*memleket*) evoke in you? What are the images and images that come to your mind?
4. Are there any daily practices that distinguish you from people who are not from Şebinkarahisar?
5. Which geographical region do you think Şebinkarahisar reflects more?
6. What are the differences in daily life between the people of Şebinkarahisar living in Ankara or big cities like İstanbul and those living in Şebinkarahisar? Or is there a difference?
7. Do you consider yourself both from Ankara/İstanbul and from Şebinkarahisar?
8. How often do you visit your hometown?
9. Would you like to live in Şebinkarahisar one day in the future?
10. What are the cultural practices specific to Şebinkarahisar?
11. Do you see Şebinkarahisar as an important centre in terms of cultural heritage? If so, what elements of Şebinkarahisar can be included in this cultural heritage?
12. Are there differences on the basis of neighbourhoods and villages in Şebinkarahisar? Why?
13. Are there other ethnic groups in Şebinkarahisar? Do these groups fall into the category of hemşehri you define for you?



14. When you see someone, do you know that they are from Şebinkarahisar?  
How?

15. Who prepared the culture and art blog for ŞEB-DER?

### **Nationalism**

1. When did you organized the Greece-Macedonia trip? Did you meet with the people of Şebinkarahisar living there? If so, through which channels did you communicate? How were you received? What was shared? (For ŞEBDER)

2. If you were to identify yourself with a set of identities, what identities would you include in that set? Which identity would be the most important to you?

3. If there is any, what is the connection between being from Şebinkarahisar and being Turkish?

### C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de hemşehrilik ve bölgesel kimliğin, sivil toplumun bir parçası olarak hemşehri dernekleri çatısı altında nasıl tasavvur edildiğini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

İlk olarak, bölgesel kimlik, milliyetçilik ve sivil toplum arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamlandırabilmek için kimlik kavramına nasıl yaklaşıldığı önem arz etmektedir. Kimlik kavramı aynı anda hem çok hem de az şey anlatmaktadır. Kimlikler akışkandır ve bu özelliği nedeniyle kavraması güçtür. Bu nedenle bu çalışmada kimlik kavramına “analiz kategorisi” yerine “pratik kategorisi” olarak yaklaşılmıştır (Brubaker, 2004). Bu sayede kimlik kendi kendine yetebilen ve insan faktöründen bağımsız olarak var olan bir olgudan daha çok gündelik hayatta aktörler ve kurumlar tarafından yeniden üretilebilen bir olgu olarak karşımıza çıkar. Doğrudan kimliği bir analiz kategorisi olarak almak, çalışmayı deneyimlerden uzaklaştıracağı için kimliğin akışkanlığını ve gündelik hayattaki pratik edilme örüntülerini görmeyi imkansız kılacaktır.

Gündelik hayatın ampirik çalışmada göz ardı edilmemesi kimliklerin ya da grupların nasıl çalıştığını görmemiz açısından oldukça önemlidir. Eğer gündelik hayatı hesaba katmadan, gruplar olduklarını düşünüldüğü gibi sınırlı gruplar halinde kavramsallaştırılırsa buna “grupçuluk” denilebilir (Brubaker, 2004). Öte yandan, grup teriminden kolayca kaçınılamaz; üstelik tamamen gereksiz bir kavram da değil. Bununla birlikte, kimliğin nasıl çalıştığını anlamak için, gruplar veya gruplaşma sadece bir değişkeni gösterir. Gruplar sınırları net şekilde belirli olgular olarak kategorize edilmemelidir.

Bu çalışma özelinde, hemşehri dernekleri bölgesel kimliği aktiviteleriyle somutlaştırmaya, katılaştırmaya çalıştıkları öne sürülmektedir. Seçilen dernekler, hemşehrilik ilişkilerine dayalı ilişkiler oluşturmak için bir araya gelirler. Ancak “hemşehri kimdir?” sorusunun cevabı net değildir ve insanların günlük yaşamlarında aldıkları konulardan etkilenir. Bu nedenle bu tez boyunca hemşehrilik ilişkilerini çevreleyen kimlikler ve çağrışımların birbirine olan konumu anlaşılmasına çalışılmıştır. Hemşehri dernekleri içinde aktif bir kimlik oluşturma süreçleri vardır. Hemşehri dernekleri içinde ve dernekler arasında kimliğin tanımı üzerinde güç ilişkileri vardır ve bu dernekler sivil toplumun bir parçası olurken akışkan kimliği kurumsallaştırmaya ve kendi tanımlamalarıyla sunmaya çalışmaktadırlar. Bu nedenle, sivil toplumun aynı zamanda kimliklerin yeniden üretimi için bir alan olduğu ve sivil toplum içindeki insanların siyasi yaşamın aktörleri olduğu tartışılmaktadır. Ayrıca milliyetçi söylem kimin hemşehri olarak algılanacağını etkileyen en önemli faktörlerden biridir.

Anderson’ı (2006) takiben, milliyetçiliğin 18. yüzyılın sonunda tarihsel olayların keşişmesi nedeniyle ortaya çıktığı ileri sürülmektedir. Milletler tahayyül edildikten ve böylece var olduktan sonra farklı zaman ve coğrafyalarda kopya edilebilecek özellik kazanırlar.

Milliyetçilik siyasi bir ideolojiden daha fazlasıdır. Diğer kimlik ve siyasi meşruiyet kaynaklarına kıyasla milliyetçiliğin özgünlüğü, ulusun diğer üyelerinin varlığına ve bu üyelerle paylaşılan ortak kültüre dair bir inanç yaratmasıdır. Uluslar hayal edilir, çünkü insanlar kendi uluslarının üyelerini fiilen tanımadan ilişki kurar ve onlara bağlı hissederler. Yüz yüze ilişkilerin ötesinde tüm topluluklar tahayyül edilme sürecinin ürünüdür ama milliyetçiliğin başarısı, insanları daha görülmemiş bir ölçekte bir araya getirdiği düşüncesini yaratmasıdır.

Benzer şekilde, Billig’e (1995) göre rutinleştirilmiş günlük faaliyetler milliyetçiliği üretir ve sürdürür. Milliyetçilik sembolleri her gün sergilenmekte ve insanlar bilinçli olarak olmasa da bu sembolleri ve ulusun varlığını içselleştirmektedir. Billig, bu durumu “banal milliyetçilik” olarak kavramlaştırmaktadır.

Aynı şekilde Calhoun (1997), milliyetçiliğin günlük hayatımıza kök saldıđını, kategorizasyon süreçlerimizi şekillendirdiđini, ‘biz’ ve ‘onlar’ ikiliđini yaratmak da dahil olmak üzere şekillendirdiđini ve genel olarak dünyayı ve öz benliđi anlamlandırmamıza yardımcı olduđunu savunur. Calhoun, milliyetçiliđi Foucault’yu (1969; 1977) izleyerek “söylemsel bir oluřum” olarak kavramsallařtırır. Söylemsel oluřum, konuřma biçimini, bilincimizi şekillendirir ve aynı zamanda insanları ilgili konular üzerine konuřmaya ve tartıřmalar üretmeye sevk eder.

Brubaker’a (2004) göre milliyetçilik kendisini “dünya perspektifi” olarak sunar, ancak analitik düzeyde “dünyaya bakıř açısı”larından bir tanesidir, çünkü milletler kendiliđinden, insanın hayal gücünden bađımsız gruplar deđildir. Ancak inřa edilmiř olması milliyetçiliđin sahteliđini ya da gerçek dıřı olduđunu ima etmez. Milliyetçiliđin gerçek sonuçları vardır. Biliřsel řemalarımızı geliřtirmede belirgin etkileri vardır.

Ayrıca Özkırmılı’ya (2005) göre milliyetçilik diđer söylemleri de hegemonya altına alır. Milliyetçilik aktörler arasında hiyerarři kurar. Bu arařtırma kapsamında milliyetçiliđin kimlerin hemřehri olabileceđi kategorizasyonunda önemli bir faktör olduđu savunulmaktadır. Bölgesel kimliđin sınırları milliyetçi söylemle uyumlu hale getirilebilir.

Milliyetçi söylem kendini dođallařtırdıđı ve kimlikleri řeyleřtirdiđi için, bölgesel kimlik ile milliyetçilik arasındaki iliřki ilk bakıřta net olmayabilir.

Ayrıca “milliyetçilik söylemi kurumlar üzerinden iřler” (Özkırmılı, 2005). Milliyetçilik “dünya perspektifi” olmadıđı için, günlük yeniden üretime ve yeniden tasavvura ihtiyaç duyar. Bu tez, sivil toplumun, ulus-devletin kurumlarıyla birlikte milliyetçilik söyleminin yeniden üretildiđi kurumlardan biri olduđunu iddia etmektedir.

Vatandaşlık, devlet ve toplum, kimlik, sivil katılım ve kamu yararı arasındaki iliřkiyi anlamak için çok önemli bir kavramdır. Çünkü sivil toplumun ortaya çıkması için eřit vatandaşların olması gerekir.

Literatürde sivil toplum, birincil rolünün kamu yararını ve demokrasiyi sağlamakla birlikte olduğu geniş ölçüde devletin karşısında olarak konumlanmıştır. Ancak Gramsci'ye göre devletin hegemonyası sivil toplum içinde de yaratılabilir. Ayrıca sivil toplum hem devletle hem de devlet dışı ilişkilerin bütünüdür. Sivil toplum aynı zamanda güç ilişkilerinin tartışılabileceği bir “politik” alandır (Mouffe, 2011).

Dolayısıyla, sivil toplum çok sayıda toplumsal ilişkiyi içerir; Sivil toplumdaki ilişkilerin belirli ideolojilerin yayılmasından, kimliğin tanımlarının oluşturulmasından ve sınırlarının çizilmesinden, sivil toplumdaki sosyal ağların kullanılması yoluyla siyasi güç elde edilmesine, grupların haklarının savunulması için bir araya gelinmesinden, tanıdık bağlar etrafında sosyalleşmesine, topluluğa yardım sosyal politikaları uygulamak için baskı grubu oluşturmaya varıncaya kadar pek çok ilişkiyi içinde barındırır. Ancak bu, sivil toplumun bir “sihirli mermi” olmadığı için herhangi bir çatışmayı sadece var olarak çözebileceği anlamına gelmez (Edwards, 2004).

Hemşehrilik, Türkiye’de sivil toplum yaşamının önemli bir parçası olan bir olgudur. Hemşehri ilişkileri hemşehri dernekleri çatısı altında Türkiye’de sivil toplum içinde kendini göstermektedir. T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı Sivil Toplumla İlişkiler Genel Müdürlüğü’ne göre, 2018’de 16221 hemşehri derneği vardır ve bunların 11600’ü aktiftir. Hemşehri dernekleri, Türkiye’deki tüm aktif sivil toplum kuruluşlarının (STK) %13,89’unu oluşturmaktadır (Şentürk, 2021). Ankara’da kayıtlı 12016 STK olmakla birlikte bunların 2594 hemşehri dernekleridir, yani hemşehri dernekleri Ankara’daki tüm STK’ların %21,5’ini oluştururlar. İstanbul’daki 25.600 kayıtlı STK’nın 6.967’si hemşehri dernekleridir. Hemşehri dernekleri İstanbul’daki tüm STK’ların %27,2’sini oluşturmaktadır.

İlk olarak, Türkiye’de hemşehri dernekleri 1950’lerde ortaya çıkmaya başlamış ve 1990’larda sayıları önemli ölçüde artmıştır (Aktaş, 2010, aktaran Şentürk, 2021). Hemşehri derneklerinin Türkiye’de 1950’li yıllarda başlayan kırdan kente iç göç nedeniyle ortaya çıkması hemşehri derneklerinin kuruldukları bölgelere göre dağılımından da anlaşılmaktadır. Türkiye’deki hemşehri derneklerinin %53,52’si Marmara Bölgesi’nde; %21,55’i İç Anadolu Bölgesi’nde; %8,29’u Karadeniz Bölgesi’nde; %7,34’ü Ege Bölgesi’nde; %5,59’u Akdeniz Bölgesi’nde; %1,87’si

Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi'nde; %1,84'ü Doğu Anadolu Bölgesi'nde kurulmuştur (Şentürk, 2021). İstanbul ve Ankara, Türkiye'nin kırsal kesimlerinden göç eden insanlar için en cazip kent merkezleridir. Bu nedenle, bu şehirlerde hemşehri dernekleri çatısı altında sivil katılım Türkiye'nin diğer bölgelerine göre önemli ölçüde daha yüksektir.

Ayrıca 2018 TÜİK verilerine göre İstanbul'da en çok vatandaşın yaşadığı iller sırasıyla Sivas, Kastamonu, Ordu, Giresun ve Tokat'tır (Şentürk, 2021). İstanbul, hemşehri derneklerinin en fazla olduğu il olmasının yanı sıra, hemşehri dernekleri burada yapısal dönüşümünü de yaşamış, hemşehri derneklerinin federasyon ve konfederasyon kurma girişimlerinin ilkleri İstanbul'da yaşanmıştır. İstanbul'da 150'si federasyon, 12'si konfederasyon olmak üzere 162 dernekler üstü oluşum var (Şentürk, 2021).

Ancak bu dernekler sivil toplum literatürü tarafından ihmal edilmiştir. Literatür onları sivil toplumun bir parçası olarak görmez çünkü hemşehri dernekleri arzulanan kentsel toplumdaki modernist-ilerici düşünceye uymaz. Fakat hemşehri dernekleri, STK olarak kentsel bağlamda kurulmuş, oluşmuş ve gelişmiştir. Hemşehri dernekleri şehir merkezlerinde geliştirilen ilişkileri yansıtmaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu dernekler Türkiye'deki kentsel sivil yaşamın çok önemli bir parçasıdır. Bunlar “tampon mekanizmalar” (Kıray, 2000) değildir ve sivil toplum sorununa yapısal işlevselci bir yaklaşımla yaklaşamayız. Kimliğin işleyişini veya günlük yaşamdaki herhangi bir ilişkiselliği yakalayan yaklaşımlar benimsemelidir. Bu nedenle bu tez, “grupçuluğunun” üstesinden gelmeye çalışan ve herhangi bir özdeşleşme sürecinin “performatif karakterini” kabul eden bir yaklaşımı benimsemektedir (Brubaker, 2004).

Sivil toplum, milliyetçilik ve hemşehrilik arasındaki karmaşık ilişkileri çözmek için Şebinkarahisarlı üç hemşehri derneği seçilmiştir: bunlar İstanbul'da kurulan Şebinkarahisarlılar Yardımlaşma Derneği, Şebinkarahisar Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği (ŞEBDER) ve Ankara'daki Şebinkarahisar ve Çevresi Kalkınma Dayanışma ve Kültür Vakfı'dır (Ankara Vakfı). Ayrıca nitel araştırma yöntemleri bu araştırma için uygun görülmüştür çünkü öncelikle bölgesel kimliği milliyetçilik ve sivil toplum ilişkisinde araştırma katılımcılarının bu kompleks ilişkileri nasıl konumlandığı

anlaşılmaya çalışılmıştır. Araştırma katılımcılarının milliyetçilik, sivil toplum ve hemşehri ilişkilerine bakış açısını kavramaya çalışıldığı için yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmeler ve katılımcı gözlem metotları kullanılmıştır. Toplamda 12 görüşme yapılmış olup, bunların 6 tanesi Ankara Vakfı üyeleriyle ve yüz yüze gerçekleştirilmiştir. Diğer 3 görüşme ise İstanbul'da ve ŞEBDER'in yönetim kurulu üyeleriyle gerçekleşmiştir. Diğer 3 görüşme ise Şebinkarahisarlılar Yardımlaşma Derneği'nin yönetim kurulu üyeleriyle gerçekleşmiş olup, Zoom üzerinden gerçekleşmiştir.

Sorulan sorular, araştırmaya katılanların Şebinkarahisar ile olan bağları, göç hikayeleri, ilgili dernekle ilişkileri, dernek ve faaliyetleri hakkında verilen bilgiler, derneklerin işleyişi, beklentileri ve diğer kuruluşlarla ilişkileri temel alınarak gruplandırılmıştır. Katılımcıların hemşehrilerinin kim olduğu, bölgesel kimliğini nasıl algıladıkları, halen Şebinkarahisar'da yaşayanlar ile büyük şehirlere göç etmişler arasındaki farklılıklar, Şebinkarahisarlı olmayanlardan farklı gündelik yaşam pratikleri; sivil toplum hakkındaki görüşleri ve hemşehri derneklerini STK olarak nasıl işlev görmesi gerektiği ve hemşehri derneklerini kendi sivil toplum tanımları içinde nasıl konumlandıkları; milliyetçilik ve vatanseverliğe bakış açıları anlaşılmaya çalışılmıştır.

Araştırma kapsamında seçilen hemşehri derneklerinin bazı faaliyetlerine de katılım gösterilmiştir. Giresun Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları Birlikteliği'nin bir toplantısına Ankara Vakfı üyeleri ile birlikte katılım gösterilmiştir. Ayrıca Ankara Vakfı merkezinde bir iftar yemeğine/yönetim kurulu toplantısına katılmış olup, gözlem yapma şansı elde edilmiştir. Son olarak ŞEBDER'in yönetim kurulu üyelerinden olan bir araştırma katılımcısıyla görüşme sonrası, görüşmenin yapıldığı barda Şebinkarahisarlı insanların bir araya geldiği dostane bir toplantıya katılma fırsatı bulunmuştur.

Analiz kısmına gelindiğinde ise bu çalışmada hemşehri derneklerinin ortaya çıkma nedenlerini, bu derneklerin toplumdaki işlevlerini, araştırma katılımcılarının hemşehri derneklerinden beklentilerini ve sivil toplum üzerindeki düşüncelerini, hemşehri dernekleri çatısı altında hemşehri ilişkilerini nasıl kullandığını ve yeniden ürettiğini, dernek içi ve dernekler arası güç ilişkilerini, derneklerin siyasi hayattan

nasıl etkilendiğini ve nasıl etkilediğini, araştırma katılımcılarının kimi hemşehri olarak gördüğünü ve bölgesel kimliğin sınırlarını çizerken milliyetçi söylemin bu ilişkiselliği nasıl etkilediği anlaşılmaya çalışılmıştır.

Öncelikle hemşehri derneklerine neden ihtiyaç duyulduğu anlaşılmaya çalışılmıştır. İnsanlar şehirlere göç ederken başlangıçta aidiyet ve uyum sorunu yaşarlar. Bu tür problemler, insanların içine doğdukları çevreden, geleneklerden ve sosyal ilişkilerden kopmalarından kaynaklanmaktadır. İnsanlar şehir hayatına entegre olmaya çalışırken deneyimsizlikten kaynaklanan özgüven eksikliği yaşayabilir ve gelecek kaygısı yaşayabilir. Bu sorunların hepsi birbiriyle bağlantılıdır ki, insanlar başa çıkmak için tanıdık ilişkiler ararlar ve hemşehrilerini onlarla dayanışma içinde bulurlar, birbirlerine duygusal veya maddi olarak destek olurlar.

Edwards'a (2004) göre, sivil toplumda güven, tanıdık ilişkilerle daha kolay inşa edilir, çünkü bu topluluklarda yüz yüze etkileşimin düzeyi ve sıklığı insanlarda güven ortamı yaratırken iş birliği yapmayı kolaylaştırır. Hemşehrilik, insanlar arasında güçlü bir bağ ve kentlerde bir sosyalleşme yolu sağlar ve aynı bölgesel kimliğe sahip olmak, insanların alışık olduğu güven verici yüz yüze ilişkiyi sağladığı için en çok arzulanan ilişkisellik haline gelir (Şentürk, 2021). İnsanlar doğrudan hemşehrilerini tanımasalar da aynı bölgesel kimliğe sahip olduklarını öğrendikten sonra kendilerini bir aidiyet duygusuna kaptırırlar.

İkinci olarak hemşehri derneklerinin kentli kimliği oluşturma konusunda destekleyici olup olmadığı anlaşılmaya çalışılmıştır. Türkiye'deki sivil toplum literatüründe bölgesel kimlikler homojen gruplar olarak algılandığı ve hemşehrilik ilişkileri *primordial* ilişkiler olarak kavramsallaştırıldığı için hemşehrilik ilişkileri kentleşme üzerinde olumsuz etkileri olduğu savunulmuştur. Bölgesel kimlik ve hemşehri ilişkileri insanların şehirlerde memleketlerine göre 'biz' ve 'onlar' ikiliğini yaratmış olup arzulanan vatandaşlık üzerinden oluşacak bağın önüne geçildiği ve toplumsal toleransı azalttığı literatürde tartışılmaktadır. Ancak bu araştırmada anlaşılıyor ki insanlar grup içinde, Şebinkarahisar'da kalanlar ile İstanbul ve Ankara'da yaşayanlar arasında da böyle bir ikilik yaratabilmektedir. Bu nedenle bizzat kentte kurulmuş hemşehri dernekleri içinde hemşehrilik ilişkileri yeniden tasavvur edilmekte ve STK'larda sosyalleşme farklı bölgesel kimliklerin oluşmasına zemin hazırlamaktadır.



Sivil toplumun bir parçası olarak hemşehri dernekleri hemşehrilik ilişkilerinin içeriğini ve kişiler tarafından nasıl kullanılabileceğini değiştirmekte ve bir STK olarak bünyesindeki insanlara aktarmaktadır.

Üçüncü olarak, hemşehri derneklerinin işlevleri, faaliyetleri üzerinden anlaşılmaya çalışılmıştır. Kültürel dayanışmayı sağlama hemşehri derneklerinin bir işlevidir. Toumarkine'e göre (2001), çok sayıda hemşehri derneğinin adında bir "kültür" ibaresi yer almaktadır. Ancak, isim üzerinde düşünülmeden ve diğer derneklerin isimlerini taklit ederek verilebilir ve mutlaka adında belirtilen bir işlevi getirmez.

ŞEBDER (Şebinkarahisar Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği) örneğinde ise 2005 yılında Yardımlaşma Derneği'nden ayrıldıktan sonra derneğin adını kültür ve dayanışmaya atıf yaparak adlandırıp kültür boyutunu daha çok öne çıkarmışlardır. Diğer iki derneğe kıyasla ŞEBDER'in faaliyetlerinin daha çok kültürel dayanışma odaklı olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Örneğin yöresel oyunları öğrenmek için halk oyunları grubu oluşturmuşlar, Şebinkarahisar'ı tanıtmak ve sorunlarına dikkat çekmek için sempozyumlar düzenlemişler, Şebinkarahisar'ın kültürel envanterini çıkararak web sitelerinde yayınlamışlar, "Garaysar Koro" adında bir halk müziği korusu oluşturmuşlar.

Ancak kültürel etkinliklerin devamını getirebilmek için derneklerin finansal olarak durumunun da iyi olması gerekmektedir. Bu bağlamda hemşehri derneklerinin ortaya çıkmasının finansal nedenleri de vardır. Edwards'a (2004) göre, küçük ölçekli birimlerdeki grup üyeleri arasındaki dayanışma, üyeleri için daha iyi refah şansını artırabilir. Kentlerde insanlar hemşehrilerine daha çok güvendikleri için, dernekler de insanların fırsat yapılarından faydalanmalarına aracılık edebilir. Ekonomik dayanışmaya örnek olarak Yardımlaşma Derneği ve Ankara Vakfı'nın öğrencilere verdiği burslar örnek verilebilir. Ancak, burs vermenin mali kapasitesi birbirinden farklıdır. Yardımlaşma Derneği, İstanbul, Kocaeli ve İstanbul'un çevre illerindeki iş insanlarından para toplarken, Şebin-Siad (Şebinkarahisarlı İş Adamları Derneği) ile daha yakın ilişkiler kurduklarından dolayı Ankara Vakfı'na göre daha çok öğrenciye burs imkanı sağlamaktadırlar. Hemşehri derneklerinin ekonomik dayanışma ağı kurduğunun bir başka örneği ise bu derneklerin aynı zamanda hemşehrilerinin birbirleriyle tanışıp iş ağları bulmalarını sağlamalarıdır.

Bu çalışmada dördüncü olarak, hemşehri derneklerinin Türkiye'deki sivil toplumdaki yeri anlaşılmasına çalışılmıştır. Daha önce de belirtildiği gibi, hemşehrilik ilişkileri *primordial* karaktere sahip olduğu iddia edilerek hemşehri dernekleri Türkiye'de sivil toplum literatüründe göz ardı edilmiştir. Hann'a (1996) göre sivil toplum, gerçekçi olmayan bir şekilde Avrupa-merkezci evrenselcilik fikri etrafında tanımlanmıştır. Evrenselcilik iddiası, Habermas'ın, ideal olarak vatandaşların ortak çıkarlara ulaşmak için özel çıkarlarına rağmen bir araya gelebildikleri belirli bir toplumsal dayanışma düzeyine ulaştıkları "kamusal alan" konusundaki argümanlarıyla paraleldir. Ancak bu bakış açısı toplumu, ortak iyinin ya da kamu yararının ne olabileceğinin kolayca tanımlanabildiği homojen bir birime indirger. Öte yandan Mouffe (2011), sivil toplumun bir "politik" alan olarak tanımlarken güç ilişkileri ve çekişmeler için bir arena olabileceğini iddia eder. Bu anlamda, dayanışma toplum içinde ve hatta hemşehriler içinde bölünebilir.

Bu bağlamda, araştırma katılımcıları hemşehri derneklerinin asıl kuruluş amacının hemşehrilerine ve memleketlerine hizmet sağlamak olduğunu vurgulamışlardır. Hemşehri dernekleri, sivil toplum örgütleri olarak, Şebinkarahisar hakkında kamuoyunu bilinçlendirmeye ve hemşehrilerinin sesini üst makamlara ulaştırmaya çalışmaktadırlar. Keyman ve İçduygu (2003) Türkiye sivil toplumunda egemen söylemin yurttaşların haklarından çok görevleri olduğunu iddia etse de hemşehri dernekleri hak arama için inisiyatif aldıkları da görülmektedir. Aynı zamanda seçilmiş hemşehri derneklerinin devlete ve hemşehrilerine karşı görevlerinin olduğunu defalarca altını çizdikleri de doğrudur. Bu noktada araştırma katılımcıları derneklerin içinde kamu yararını sağlama hedefleri olduğunu belirtmişlerdir.

Öte yandan, aynı "kamu yararı" idealleri tüm hemşehriler tarafından paylaşılmayabilir ve bunu nasıl tanımladıkları, aktörlerin kendi siyasi görüşlerinden etkilenir. Ancak sivil toplumdaki kolektiviteleri ve dayanışmaları, bu derneklerin güçlü aktörler olmalarını ve haklarını arama kapasitelerini artırmalarını sağlar.

Hemşehri dernekleri ayrıca insanlara nasıl hemşehri olunacağı ve hemşehrilik ilişkilerinin nasıl çalıştığı ve kullanıldığı konusunda bir yol haritası sunar. Hemşehri dernekleri gayri resmi hemşehrilik ilişkileri resmi sosyal sermayeye çevirme gücüne sahiptir (Putnam, 1993).

Tartışıldığı gibi, bahsi geçen derneklerin hemşehrilerine hizmet sağlayıcı oldukları etrafında dönen iddiaları vardır. Ancak kimin hemşehri olarak nitelendirilebileceği bu araştırma için bir başka önemli noktadır. Araştırmaya katılanlar için hemşehri olma niteliği, sosyal ilişkiler içinde kendi konumunun yanı sıra ‘ötekiler’in konumunu da çerçevelemeyi gerektiren aktif bir kimlik sınırları çizme sürecini gerektirmektedir. Kimlik üretimi karşılıklı bir süreçtir. Kimliği tanımlama süreci, stereotipler oluşturmayı, sosyal sınıflandırmaları, kimliği somutlaştırmayı ve bilişsel şemalar oluşturmayı içerir (Brubaker, 2004). Bu bağlamda hemşehrinin kimler olabileceği devletin çizdiği resmi sınırlar, siyasi ve ekonomik koşullar ve duygusal bağlılıklardan etkilenen bir değişken olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu süreç, yine sabit olmayan, akışkan ve kurumlar tarafından yoruma açık olan ‘biz’ ve ‘onlar’ ikiliğinin de yaratılmasını gerektirmektedir.

Hemşehrilik ilişkileri akışkandır ve coğrafi ve sosyal konuma göre belirli şekiller alır, ancak öğrenilen ve yeniden üretilen şemalardan da etkilenir. Bu araştırma kapsamında araştırmaya katılanlar Giresunluları hemşehri çevrelerine dahil edebilirler ancak birincil hemşehri olmazlar. Bunun sebebi ise Şebinkarahisar’ın yıllardan beri süregelen il olma isteğidir. Bunu araştırma katılımcıları “iade-i itibar” olarak görmektedir. Bu nedenle Giresun’u kendi kimlik şemalarının içine dahil etmemişler ya da dahil etmemeyi öğrenmişlerdir. Araştırmaya katılanların neredeyse tamamı Giresunlularla olan kültürel farklılıklarının altını defalarca çizmiştir. Ancak duruma göre Giresun’dan ve hatta Karadeniz’den ya da Kelkit Vadisi’nden biri de onların hemşehri olabilir. Hemşehrilik burada bir samimiyet olasılığına işaret etmek için kullanılır.

Öte yandan, seçilen dernekler Giresun STK’ları ile ilişkilerini geliştirmeye başladıkları görülmektedir. Bu bağlamda Giresun STK’larına da üye olmaya başladıklarını ve bu sayede Şebinkarahisar’a katkı yapabileceklerini düşünmektedirler. Bu nedenle, bölgesel kimlik kendi başına hemen sınırlı bir grup oluşturmaz ve siyasi ilişkilerden etkilenir.

Ayrıca bu araştırmada bölgesel kimlik sabit değil değişken olduğu için Şebinkarahisarlıları bir bütün olarak görmemiz imkansızdır. Bu durumu İstanbul’daki “hemşehrilerin ayrılması” durumunda görülebilir. Hemşehrilerin

değerleri ve fikirleri her zaman örtüşmeyebilir. İnsanlar sürekli çoklu kimliklerle yaşarlar. Bireyler asla tek boyutlu değildir ve tek kimliklerine indirgenemezler. 2005 yılında ŞEBDER'e yeni üye olanlar, dernek içindeki siyasi/ideolojik kutuplaşma nedeniyle Yardımlaşma Derneği'nden ayrılma kararı almışlar. Bu nedenle kimin hemşehri olduğu ya da kimin daha çok hemşehri olduğu her zaman bağlamsal olarak tanımlanır.

Son olarak, bu araştırma boyunca öne sürüldüğü gibi kimin hemşehri olduğunun en kritik belirleyicilerinden biri de milliyetçiliktir. Milliyetçilik söylemi, toplumsal ilişkilerin çerçevesini, sadakat ve aidiyet duygusunu değiştirme gücüne sahip bir hegemonya yaratır (Calhoun 1997; Brubaker, 2004; Özkırımlı 2010). Milliyetçilik, ulusları hayal etmenin aktif bir sürecini gerektirir. Hemşehrilik ilişkileri milliyetçilikten önce de vardı. Ancak milliyetçilik söylemiyle birlikte hemşehrilik tanımının içeriği, şekli, sınırları değişmiştir.

Milliyetçilik üzerine söylem sağlamdır, çünkü her gün ve hatta toplumsal hayatın en bayağı kısmında üretilir (Billig, 1995), ki bu her zaman çıplak gözle görülebilecek şekilde üretilmez. Bu nedenle, diğer ilişki biçimlerinde milliyetçiliğin izini sürmek araştırmacılar için zahmetli bir iştir. Bu tez, sivil toplumun gelişen milliyetçi söylemler için bir zemin olabileceğini tartışmaktadır. Daha spesifik olarak, sivil toplum aracılığıyla kurumsallaşan hemşehrilik ilişkilerinin milliyetçi söylemlerden etkilendiğini savunur.

Hemşehrilik ilişkileri milliyetçilikten önce de vardı. Ancak milliyetçilik söylemiyle birlikte hemşehrilik tanımının içeriği, şekli, sınırları değişmiştir. Milliyetçilik ve ürettiği ulusal kimlik, özdeşleşme süreçleri üzerinden her türlü rekabetin şampiyonu olmaya çalışır, ancak bu durum her zaman görünür ya da yüksek sesle tezahür etmez. Seçilen hemşehri derneklerinin bazı faaliyetlerinden milliyetçi söylemleri içselleştirdiklerini anlaşılabilmektedir. Örneğin Ankara Vakfı, vakıf merkezinin duvarlarına Atatürk'ün "Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyene" sözlerini kazımıştır. Ayrıca, seçilen hemşehri dernekleri ulusal bayramları sosyal medyada kutlamaktadır. Ayrıca ulusal öneme sahip yerlere geziler düzenlemektedirler. Ancak hepsinden önemlisi, daha önce de açıklandığı gibi, araştırmaya katılanların büyük çoğunluğu herhangi bir Türk'ü Türkiye sınırları içinde olmadığında hemşehri olarak görmektedir. Yine de

bu, hemşehriliğin bir mikro-milliyetçilik biçimi olduğu anlamına gelmez. Milliyetçilik, dünyadaki konumumuzu belirleyen ve düzenleyen çok daha güçlü bir kimlik kaynağıdır ve kime ‘biz’ diyebileceğimiz filtreler sağlar. Bu bağlamda, başlangıçta Şebinkarahisarlı olan ve Şebinkarahisar geleneklerini sürdüren Türk olmayanların, araştırmaya katılanların büyük çoğunluğu tarafından hemşehrilik ilişkilerinin bir ölçüde dışında bırakıldığı sonucuna varılabilir. ŞEBDER üyeleri, Şebinkarahisarlı Türk olmayanları hemşehrileri olarak görse de kendilerini ‘onlardan’ ayırmak için sınırlar çizmektedirler. Araştırmaya katılanlar için Türk “hemşehrileriyle” olduğu gibi güven ve aidiyet ilişkisi geliştirmenin Türk olmayan Şebinkarahisarlılar’a göre zor olduğu söylenebilir. Dolayısıyla milliyetçilik, hemşehrilik ilişkilerinde bile ‘biz’ ve ‘onlar’ ikiliğinin oluşmasında önemli bir etkiye sahiptir.

Öte yandan, Türk olmayan hemşehrilere yönelik çeşitli tutumların varlığı, rakip milliyetçi söylemlere ışık tutmaktadır. Kimliğe “ötekilerin” dahil edilmesine daha açık olan vatansızlık biçiminde olduğu gibi, bazı biçimler “iyi milliyetçilik” olarak kabul edilirken, kötü milliyetçilik biçimi bunu yapamaz. Ancak bu araştırma, bu argümanların hepsinin hegemonya üreten milliyetçilik söyleminin bir parçası olduğunu ve milliyetçiliğin sivil toplum içinde kendini gösterebileceğini savunarak iyi ve kötü milliyetçilik ikileminin ötesine geçmeyi amaçlamıştır.

Sonuç olarak, hemşehri dernekleri Türkiye’deki sivil toplumun bir parçasıdır çünkü sivil toplum, bir “politik alan” olarak çok sayıda toplumsal ilişkiyi içerir. Sivil toplum evrenselci ve özgecil özelliklerine indirgenemez. Kaldı ki sivil toplum, devletin tam karşısında yer alan salt bir alan olamayacağı gibi, devletin gücünün yığılmasını önlemek, demokrasiyi sağlamak ve kamu yararı için hareket etmek de sivil toplumun asli işlevleri olamaz. Sivil toplumun belirli ideolojilerin yayılmasından, kimliğin tanımlarının oluşturulmasına ve sınırlarının çizilmesine, ağların kullanılması yoluyla siyasi güç elde edilmesinden, grupların haklarının savunulması için bir araya gelinmesine, tanıdık bağlar etrafında sosyalleşmesinden, topluluğa yardım sosyal politikaları uygulamak için baskı grubuna dönüşmesine kadar çok çeşitli rolleri vardır. Sivil toplum, milliyetçilik söyleminin yeniden üretilmesi için zemin oluşturmaktadır. Bu tez, Türkiye’de bölgesel kimliğin sivil

toplumda kurumsallaşırken milliyetçi söylemlerin üretilmesine ve güçlenmesine katkı sağladığını savunmaktadır.

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