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Rural–Urban Mobilities in Turkey: Socio-spatial Perspectives on Migration and Return Movements

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ABSTRACT

Based on original data, this article discusses rural–urban mobilities and the contemporary employment–migration relationship. Starting with the observation of reduced rural population but maintained family-farm numbers, it engages with multiple issues, including rural employment, the process of urban migration, settlement in the city, the relation of migrants to the rurality and (return) counter-migration. It supports the thesis that migration is not so much about a 'movement from one place to another', the classical migration definition, and more about a coupling of practices (related to mobilities, residence, employment, etc.) with places over time. Thus, migration and counter-migration are conceptualized as socio-spatial strategies, conceptualized as 'multi-place living' or 'dual life', which are based on variable engagements with rural farming, urban wage labour and return movements (for retirement, refuge, etc.). The newly emergent and growing dual/multi-place structures that result from this are re-shaping village life in particular, expressed in various ways, such as in a changing village demography and function.

KEYWORDS

Rural-Urban Mobilities; Peasants; Precarity; Counter-Urbanization; Turkey

Introduction

The changing character of villages in Turkey within the context of migration studies is a topical issue.[1] Some writers in this field have directed attention to the emergence of 'hip' or 'urbanite' villages, small settlements with a 'country style' in relative proximity to popular holiday destinations but situated in the mountains … [and which are] produced by/for individuals who easily slip from one category to the next'.[2] Others again have drawn attention to the phenomenon of 'retirement villages',[3] or, more generally, to the changing characteristics of village populations and the ways in which income-generating activities in the city are mobilized as a strategy to resist commodification in agriculture.[4]

It is in this context that the present article looks at various trends and developments in what may be referred to as the *reconstitution of rural space* in Anatolia. Specifically, the transformation of agriculture and the changing character of the state under the influence

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of neo-liberalism is analysed in terms of the emergence of new practices and interactions principally related to employment and urban migration. Taking the village as the basic rural unit and acknowledging that an increasing section of the rural and urban population is engaged in diversified and complex income-generating activities, the objective of this article is to investigate common spatial-economic strategies, how people move between and link rural and urban for reasons of income generation. Our main argument is that the search for income security is the root cause of a variety of rural–urban mobilities that are contextualized by circumstances of precarity.

From a theoretical perspective, this article starts from the position that we cannot assume the village or a city (place) as setting. Few people's lives, few households in Turkey can be described as simply local, as confined to a village or neighbourhood. Through the activities in which they engage, people create and operate in extended spatial networks, and we should take this into consideration in our social thinking. We need to think *socio-spatially*. Here, we explain the spatial by looking at the social and vice versa, to examine how both are constructed in everyday practices. First, we sketch a brief historical background; then we look at issues related to employment, the migration process, rural–urban relations, and the village; finally, we conclude with a review of the new precariat and contemporary movement (migration/mobility).

The argument is supported by a combination of data drawn from state (TÜİK) and other statistics on population and settlements with the results of original fieldwork. For the former, all citations from TÜİK (*Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu*—Turkish Statistical Institute, TSI/TurkStat) are, unless otherwise specified, to the official figures available online.[5] For the latter, qualitative and quantitative research was carried out in 2011. Rural data were acquired through a total of 25 focus groups organized in 25 villages in 19 of Turkey's 81 provinces selected as being representative of the range of Turkey's villages; then questionnaires were conducted with 436 households in 74 different villages located in 23 provinces spread across Turkey. Urban information was gained through 410 face-to-face interviews conducted with city-dwellers who had migrated over the past 20 years (so, first-generation migrants) located in mainly migrant and also central neighbourhoods in the largest 10 cities in the country. All unreferenced, non-TÜİK figures given here refer to this original research project.[6]

Background

The number of people living in the countryside in Turkey has been falling for some time now, both in relative and absolute terms. Since the middle of the twentieth century, Turkey's rural population has dropped from around three-quarters of the national total to less than a quarter. Initially, until the 1980s, the rural population continued to grow, but more slowly than the urban population, resulting in its relative decrease. Since the turn of the millennium, however, even the absolute number of people living in rural areas has fallen, and quite sharply (Table 1).

Of course, this begs the question of the definition of rurality. Originally, after the foundation of the Republic in 1923, the 'rural' was mainly determined by population, comprising the territories of settlements housing under 10,000 people.[7] That, of course, is problematized in the contemporary context, in the case, for example, of a small settlement where many of the people commute to work and which is thus no longer primarily dependent on its local natural resources (for agriculture, forestry, fishing or mining). In fact, recent changes

Table 1. National and rural population (1927–2010).

Year	Total population (million)	Rural population (million)	Rural population (%)
1927	14	10	76
1940	18	13	76
1960	28	19	68
1980	45	25	56
2000	68	24	35
2007	71	21	29
2008	72	18	25
2012	76	17	23
2013	77	6.6	8.7
2014	78	6.4	8.2

Sources: TÜİK; TÜİK, *Genel Nüfus Sayımları*, 1927–2000, Türk İstatistik Kurumu, Ankara, 2000.

to official measurements (the TÜİK statistics) have not only massively reduced the rural population figures—first, with the counting change to an 'address' system (in 2008) and then the incorporation of around half of the total villages nationwide into metropolitan municipalities (2013)—but even discontinued use of the rural–urban categories in their presentation (2014). These prevent direct comparison of the latest with the historic figures, yet even within these restricted bounds, a continued rural decline is observed. During the last year for which the urban–rural distinction was made, the single year of 2013/14 alone, the (rump) rural population fell by another quarter of a million people (3.4%).

Industrialization and urbanization developed quickly in Turkey from the 1960s, with a growing number of people moving to the cities, particularly Istanbul. By the mid-1970s, fully 10% of the national population was recorded as 'migrant';[8] between 1975 and 2000, some 3.5 million people migrated from rural to urban areas. This figure, however, represented only a *fifth* of the total intra-national migration recorded during the period; in fact, over half of the population movement occurred *between* urban areas, and there was also a major migration of almost 3 million people *out* of urban (to rural) areas.[9] Indeed, net rural–urban migration for the two-and-a-half decades up to the millennium totalled just 400,000 people, with even 'reverse' movements for two five-year periods (1975–1980 and 1995–2000).

Somewhat contrary to conventional assumptions, therefore, (i) the massive growth of the handful of major cities during this phase of development seems to have been significantly fuelled by migration from provincial towns and smaller cities (rather than the countryside); and (ii) from the 1970s, urban–rural ('counter') migration was already a major phenomenon. Regarding the former, the received wisdom is that people move from the countryside to cities, since the labour demand in agriculture is in decline and job opportunities in the city are on the rise. The urban-to-urban movement recorded here may also be explained along similar lines, with the movement of people seeking employment, and not just from villages but also from small towns to cities and from provincial cities to the new metropolitan conurbations. To better capture the basic idea of 'urban migration', then, we may also speak more broadly about an 'urban-directed migration' or 'urban flow' (i.e. broadly, from smaller to bigger places).

In the countryside, the mechanization of agriculture played an important role in reducing labour needs during the second half of the twentieth century. The increase in tractor numbers, from 1200 vehicles to 1750 in the 20 years 1928–1948, was initially quite slow—with iron wheels and limited traction power, these vehicles were hard to operate on stony and hard ground.[10] This changed upon the introduction of the Marshall plan for Turkey,

however, and by early 1952 the number of tractors had increased to 26,000. In other words, the relative decrease in the rural population from the 1950s is observed to have run parallel to the introduction of machines on the land. Yet we still witness the absolute rural population increase until the 1980s, in spite, that is, of the mechanization of agriculture. This was largely because the machinery was introduced not only to save labour but also to increase the area of land under cultivation (by around a third, from around 17,000 hectares in the 1960s to 23,000 in the 1980s).[11] This was facilitated by policies designed to promote farming, like the development of the dedicated state bank and administrative mechanisms specifically to finance capital transfers to the sector.

From the 1980s and especially after 2000, however, neo-liberal policies were applied to agriculture. It is no coincidence that the rapid fall in rural population commenced when state support to farming was largely withdrawn, agricultural industries denationalized and protective import duties abandoned. Indeed, as indicated in the development of national five-year plans, government strategy was specifically aimed at reducing the proportion of primary sector employment in order to increase the total value added to the economy.[12] Then, following a financial crisis that peaked in December 2001 that resulted in Turkey taking some $20 billion worth of loans, international (International Monetary Fund and European Union) programmes propelled a 'restructuring' of the agricultural sector, with the removal of protective barriers and state input supports and marketing/sales systems. The prices for agricultural products started to fluctuate strongly, with a general trend of decline, while costs increased, promoting the 'rationalization' of farming (increased farm size, mono-cropping, etc.).

The agro-economic policies introduced contributed significantly to a decline in farming income and the terms of trade, the latter by around 20%, which led, in turn, to a search for alternative income sources.[13] In the liberal spirit, a good farmer is an entrepreneurial individual who is responsible for himself and on the basis of rational calculation can make the right choices.[14] As Judith Butler puts it, 'In the neo-liberal morality, each of us is only responsible for ourselves, and not for others, and that responsibility is first and foremost a responsibility to become economically self-sufficient under conditions when self-sufficiency is structurally undermined'.[15]

One response to deal with the increasing pressure on agriculture has been income differentiation (pluri-activity). External (including self-)employment, retirement revenues and other social security benefits and transfers enable households to maintain and reproduce their smallholdings (strikingly, there has only been a relatively small reduction in the total number of smallholdings in Turkey through the period of massive rural depopulation). Rural employment opportunities are limited, however. Also, the squeeze on agriculture was exacerbated by the introduction of a new direct income support (DIS) scheme in 2002 that positively encouraged farmers to cultivate less. Although the negative consequences of this support policy were eventually realized, leading to a partial return to crop-based support by 2008, there was a decline in agricultural employment to the tune of some 3 million people during this period and an urgent need for rural workers to search for other employment opportunities. The introduction of neo-liberalism to agriculture in Turkey thus resulted in a mass urban flow (urban-directed migration), and the formation of extended (rural–urban) settlement structures involving various types of mobility and novel living structures (new spatial definitions).[16]

This brings an important dimension into focus, namely an approach to mobility which takes into consideration an understanding of the social specification of the decision-making framework within which people move residence. Social actors make decisions not as atomized individuals, but as members of larger social structures, such as extended families. Interestingly, this means that we should not only look at those who move, but also at the non-movers.[17] A critical factor in this decision-making is the (cultural) reproduction of the household, which in rural areas is organized around the land. Smallholders and small enterprise farming families make decisions about who will stay and who will leave and why and for how long according to a wide variety of social and economic considerations. Relatedly, therefore, this questions the idea of sedentary settlement and singular residence, especially in the context of the relative ease of transport nowadays (in Turkey, with a huge growth in air flights, as well as bus routes and private cars).[18]

The sedentary idea of residential relocation implicit in the idea of 'migration' has to be challenged for at least three reasons. First, migration as a bounded and discrete event does not convey movement as inscribed in daily life. Second, such movement does not (just) consist of single transfers from 'origin' to 'destination', transfers of permanent residence, but includes (also) multiple origins and destinations variously combined and blurred together in multi-place living structures. Third, the periods of residence cannot easily be distinguished as 'temporary' and 'permanent' migration, as shown, for example, by the post-retirement 'returns' of 'permanent migrants', and extended stays of 'temporary migrants'.[19] In short, movement and thus the specification of 'migration' is a function of time, around which conventional categories are in flux. Further, we may add, it is also a function of distance, which may be measured geographically but also socio-culturally and psychologically (e.g. does moving across the city or from a village to a nearby town constitute a migration? According to whom?). Essentially, the term 'migration' implies a sense of permanence and distance that fails to sufficiently capture the range of human movements.

As a result, what may be dubbed the 'mobilities paradigm' has come to effect a redefinition of migration as spatiotemporal transition; instead of a change of place of usual residence we refer to a spectrum of mobilities,[20] emphasizing the 'changing, floating, fluid' character of regular and irregular moves people make through their life-course, due to economic need, impelled by dangerous environments and for a whole host of other reasons.[21] In Turkey today, we observe the emergence of new demographics, for example of people who live in both rural and urban settings and of people who live in the countryside but work in non-agricultural jobs—in fact, in terms of the total rural employment, non-farm work in rural areas has reached nearly 40%, climbing from less than a quarter in the 1990s and around a third in the early 2000s. And regarding the urban poor, we see that the second biggest group (after homeless children) are the newly arrived from the countryside.[22]

Indeed, the high number of poor urban migrants indicates a motivation for return (a migration back) and, more generally, a *counter-urbanizing flow* (movements to the rural, including as part of an—increasing—mobility between the urban and rural). In fact, while rural areas generally have been witnessing the massive population loss referred to, it is striking that a significant proportion have seen an overall population *gain*. This has occurred especially in villages close to cities, as well as those (mostly in the west of the country) used as second/retirement home and holiday centres, located especially along the Aegean and Mediterranean coast tourist areas, and also in well-established market-integrated agricultural areas. Other villages, meanwhile, have seen dwindling year-round population numbers but revived fortunes due to extended summer visiting from the city.

This mobility—specifically the high level of return movement to rural areas—indicates a lack of profound change in the structure of land ownership. Official figures also show this, with, for example, the total number of farming enterprises (a little over 3 million) very nearly the same now as 50 years ago.[23] Basically, families are maintaining their properties, and Turkey's agricultural land base has not been much affected through 'accumulation by dispossession'. Coined by David Harvey, this term refers to 'the continuation and proliferation of accumulation practices which Marx had treated of as "primitive" or "original" during the rise of capitalism', including 'the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations', p. 159.[24] There are several reasons why such an accumulation by dispossession has not taken place in Turkey.

As our research showed, landownership in Turkey is generally characterized by its small and dispersed character; plots are widely distributed, mostly in small parcels, which thus cannot easily be collected into single-owner units without clear state enforcement. In addition, as said, external employment, retirement revenues and other social security benefits and transfers enable households to maintain and reproduce their smallholdings, which makes the reproduction of the farm independent of capital (debt). Indeed, cultural attachment to the land is strong, and the sales that do take place are mostly among villagers. Agro-environmental factors are also relevant; much of the country is mountainous, some three-quarters of the land is dry, eroding and at risk from drought, and over half the soil is of low quality with poor bio-mass capacity, all of which mitigate against accumulation. Thus, where land is currently being lost through dispossession, it is not through private capital accumulation, but state activity, mostly mandatory land purchases for large infrastructure projects, such as hydro-electric dams and industrial zones.[25]

Clearly, accounting for what is actually happening as regards the movement of people from and to the countryside requires more varied and nuanced perspectives than the national-level macro-economic. In fact, we would argue, a relational perspective is necessary, one that starts from the viewpoint of practices and interactions. Like most countries, Turkey has a socio-economic diversity of rural territories, with different areas being differently affected by and facilitating different responses to the recent upheaval in agriculture (for reasons of space, the special situation of Turkey's south-east, as an ongoing—again—state of exception, is not considered here). Simply, people do not move from and between rural and urban areas, city to village, in a constant wave-like flow with an even national spread, and villages do not just gradually decline in size and economic activity with urban migration.

Employment

There has been a significant change in employment in the countryside. While the rural population continues to fall, the numbers of non-agricultural workers continues to climb, to a historically high figure of 3.5 million people (many of whom, it should be added, continue to work their land). In addition to the high rural unemployment rates, therefore, it is to be assumed that the kind of work that villagers do and the future prospects they see indicate the bearing of employment prospects on their urban-directed movements. We took a novel approach to investigate this, asking villagers what they saw as a 'high-income' job. The main answers were employment in factory and construction work (together, some 28%), as professionals (18%), and by the state/local government (teachers, municipality employees, etc.) (15%) (Table 2).

These figures reflect aspiration—the kinds of jobs people would hope to have—based on personal experience, educational level and perceptions of the local job market. Respondents considered the realistic possibilities for them in their environment and stated which one struck them as well paid. Thus, a large number of people considered factory and construction work well rewarded because that kind of employment seemed both attainable and relatively well remunerated; similarly, professional positions are known to be lucrative and, though actually inaccessible for most, are at least conceived of as generally obtainable. The striking figure here, therefore, is that for farming. Although the overwhelming majority of those interviewed were, indeed, farmers, either full-time or part-time, hardly any (just 4%) stated this to be a well-remunerated form of labour. Combining this also with the 12% of people who could not imagine a well-paid job for themselves, and then combined with (chronic) conditions of under- and unemployment, the motivation to move to the city is manifest.

Concerning the gender dimension of rural employment, state statistics for 2013 show that although the proportion of women in villages registered as being in the labour force is low (37%), it is a third higher there than in cities (28%)—for men, these figures are similar, a little over 70%, in both urban and rural areas. Given that rural areas are widely regarded as more 'traditional' and 'conservative', this is striking. Our research supported this: among women living in rural areas, we found 36% to be engaged in household farm activities (so mostly out of the labour force as such), while 32% were employed in agricultural jobs and 10% in non-agricultural jobs—the remaining 22% being mostly young (in education), or aged (retired/incapacitated). What we learnt from focus group meetings and conversations with village householders was that while farming work was considered 'normal'—and had extended to employment in local town settings—work in cities was not (it was difficult for them to find jobs there). Thus, while mechanization, releasing the labour force from the land, is a major factor enabling the transition of women from unpaid household labour to formalized employment, this does not itself greatly impel their own urban-directed movement (see below).

Even though the rural population as a whole has fairly universally moved from subsistence farming to at least partial market integration, developing family farms as successful agricultural enterprises can be very difficult. Family farming enterprises are hard to sustain, since they operate on low margins and in conditions of constant risk (unpredictable market prices, inclement weather conditions, etc.), and they can only be prosperous if a number

Table 2. Rural population perception of high income jobs (village respondees, $n = 508$).

High-income Jobs	Share (%)
Factory worker	18
Professional (self-employed)	12
State employee (civil servant, teacher, military, etc.)	11
Construction (labourer, specialist)	10
Semi-skilled (craftsmen, repairman, painter, etc.)	8
Self-employed (retailer, tradesman)	6
Professional (employee, public/private)	6
Entrepreneur	5
Municipality employee	4
Farmer (includes fisherman, beekeeper)	4
Other (bank clerk, shop worker, driver, merchant, etc.)	3
None, don't know	12
Total	**100**

Question: *Which job has a high income for you?*

of factors coincide (sufficient land/labour resources, capital access, etc.). Thus it was that the removal of state supports (principally, guaranteed purchase quantities and prices) with the introduction of the neo-liberal regime made market conditions unattractive, difficult or just unbearable. Only 20% of the urban migrants we interviewed reported having had enough land and animals with which to secure sufficient means for subsistence on their farms. Thus, people look to supplement farming household income with employment, social aid and family support—and move to the cities.

In response to our questions to people who had moved to the city over the past two decades, the main reasons given for migrating were related to economics and employment, for a relatively high income and social security provisions, affording things like better health provision access and a pension. Unfortunately, though, the hopes for employment were not well realized. Some 30% of the (male) migrant labour force in the urban households that we interviewed in 2011 were seeking work, as compared with the official national unemployment average of 10% (we found 497 people were working in the 440 migrant households identified). And of these, few were well paid; approaching a half (44%) of those who had found jobs were in unskilled (including factory) and construction work (labourers and specialists, such as carpenters, tilers, etc.).

Further, around 40% of the households did not have a member with a social security number, either paying regular contributions deducted from their gross salary or else (rarely) paying for themselves as self-employed. Extrapolating from this, about half of the working migrants did not have employment-based social security arrangements, which roughly ties in with the 50% of workers who were not permanently employed (Table 3). This (latter) group was divided fairly evenly into non-permanent and self-employed—noting that 'non-permanent' here does not just mean temporary (since a fifth of them were only part-time/occasional workers), while 'self-employed' covers a wide range of occupations, from a minority of professionals through the larger proportions of retailers and merchants who buy wholesale and then sell on the street (on foot, out of the back of a vehicle).

The realities of low-paid and precarious work clearly diminished hopes and aspirations. Factory and construction work, which had appeared attractive to 28% of people in the village, was reduced to just 9% in the city—so the occupation type in which almost a half of the workforce was actually employed did not seem to provide a good income after all. The type of work that seemed to be most remunerative now was trade (39%), so purchasing and selling goods (with a wholesale or retail premises, or more informally, such as street-selling). And still, 11% of respondents did or could not imagine a well-paid job for themselves. The overall result was clear: the majority of people who have moved to the city over the past two decades had not been able to achieve their aims. As a result of this urban migration that may be classified unsuccessful in terms of employment, the following two conclusions were drawn.

First, the mass of people manage to get by, one way or another, yet they remain unable to properly integrate into the city and take their place in urban life. These people constitute an

Table 3. Migrant employment conditions (city respondees, $n = 440$ household, 497 individuals).

Employment status	Household (%)	Individual (%)
Permanent	61	50
Self-employed	27	22
Temporary/casual	33	28

important part of urban poverty, both in terms of population numbers, since the (urban) migrant proportions of city populations are high, and in terms of locality, since the incomers tend to cluster in specific parts of a city (hence, a 'ghettoization'). Second, some people cannot really survive in the city. Indeed, going back—village return—becomes a valid option, observed, for example, especially during economic downturns, such as after 2007 (when Turkey was affected by the crises in the world economy). Thus, among other things, villages become sites of refuge for the urban poor, for 'returnee migrants'.

To summarize, although one of the main reasons for moving to the city is to find a regular job that is well paid and provides social security, in actual fact, only a rather small proportion of those leaving their rural towns and villages are able to succeed in this. Therefore, an important proportion of every urban migration becomes return migration and an indeterminate mobility. Along with other factors, such as emotional attachment to the homeland (*memleket*), this uncertainty contributes to families' deciding to maintain their village properties, which thus serve as a *family resource*, a fixed point of reference allowing for a variety of mobility-and-residence (living) arrangements.

The migration process

Most urban migrations these days are undertaken as a family—around three-quarters, according to our findings. This constitutes a major sociological shift, since in the past men would more often migrate first, followed by (often new) wives and other family members. On the other hand, a significant proportion of the remaining quarter is constituted by single women, coming to the city for either marriage or work, especially those with education, which was not the case in the past. The life course remains, as ever, an important factor in migration dynamics: we found the average age for moving to the city to be 27 years old (most had been in their late teens or early twenties). This contributes to rural population decrease and average rural age increase, with fewer young families and thus children in the villages, propelling the further mass closure of rural schools and leading, in turn, to further decline in rural labour power. Much of the latter is offset by still ongoing mechanization, but villagers also cite it as causing some agricultural land to become uncultivated and agricultural activities to end.

Motivation

In our research, we asked villagers if they had had family members migrate, and, finding that 288 people had migrated from 436 households (so two people from every three families, on average), we then asked why (both in general and for the different family members). After general economic considerations (because of 'financial difficulties' and 'poverty'), the most common reasons given were, in order, 'to be with family' (for/by women, children and the elderly), 'for marriage' (women), 'to find work', 'social environment' and 'for better education' (youngsters) and 'health problems' (elderly). Further to the comments (above) related to income (farming and employment), the following conclusions may be drawn from this.

First, men move for economic reasons, while women move with them, as wives and mothers. 'Family' and 'marriage' were given as the motivation for/by around 70% of the women moving to the city (respectively, 40% and 30%), yet for/by not one of their husbands. In contrast, money issues and work were cited as motivating 80% of the men (65%,

15%), as opposed to less than a quarter of the women.[26] Manifestly, urban migration is very much a gendered action, reflecting socio-cultural norms. However the decision to move is actually made—the extent to which these are directed overtly or covertly, by the extended or nuclear family, by the couple together or the male as head of the household—the men mainly identify and are identified with its economic dimension (impelling the family as a whole) and women with that of its human (social) relations (within the family).

Second, while the problems with farming as a source of income were, indeed, the main cause for moving to the city, this was also prompted by major concerns about social environment, education and health, reflecting an overall lack of good-quality services and facilities in rural areas. In other words, the rurality in Turkey is relatively 'undeveloped', or at least perceived thus, so people move to where their needs/desires in general may be better met. Contemporary urban migration may thus be characterized as impelled, but in a both positive and negative sense, as a (forward-looking) urban drive propelling the (reluctant) rural exodus.

Third, the main reasons for young people to migrate were money and work, but the split (40%/30%, respectively) suggests a more generalized concern than just getting a job. This supports observations gained from the focus groups, that youngsters are not needed on the farm and, rather than act as a drain on the family resources, are better off going away to support themselves—and, indeed, contribute to the family budget where possible to help maintain the farm.

Finally, two negative results were striking. First, people do not move to the city to be independent; only one young person gave this reason, and no one else. This appears to attest to the continued strength of family bonds in Turkey (along with the predominance of moving together as a family). Second, people do not migrate specifically for their careers. Less than 1% of respondees gave this reason, compared to over 15% giving work, suggesting that the people moving generally have no more than a basic education. Although education is important for the youngsters (12%) and children (35%), this is not the case for the adults (3%)—which is hardly surprising given that these are mainly farming families—who are most likely destined for a life of precarity in the city.

Departure

When it comes to actually leaving the village for the city, the most important preparation for migration is finding a job and, secondly, somewhere to live (Table 4). In two out of five households, the people travelling to the city had their work already arranged. Nevertheless, for the majority, in three-fifths of households, this was not the case, and they would be

Table 4. Preparation for migration (city respondees, $n = 327$).

Preparatory action	%
First found a job	41
First found a house/flat	23
Saved money	13
Sold animals	11
Sold land	6
Sold tractor	2
Other	5
Total	**100**

Question: *What were the main things you did to prepare for your move to the city?*

going to the city without any guarantee of income, attesting to the dire village circumstances driving them to leave. Around a third of migrants had either saved money or sold their own property in the village to pay the expenses of migration and initial survival, or to purchase a property in the city or for/towards start-up capital for entrepreneurship (typically a small retail business). Some 54% of migrant households we spoke with in the city had no property in their village, mostly because, leaving as young people from a large family, they never had any to begin with. Indeed, only 6% of villagers pre-sold land to finance their move to the city. The remaining 46% still had their house and land, with the latter used by their remaining family members in the village, for farming. Thus almost half of the migrating families maintained their property, either because they could not sell it (due to poor land prices, especially dry land) or did not want to (indeed, villagers do not take kindly to selling land rather than giving or indefinitely loaning it to a family member). Overall, this indicates a lack of radical disengagement from the village; people left the village, but also left open possibilities of return.

Arrival, settling, struggling

Family and kinship solidarity for and among migrants is strong for those arriving in the city (Table 5). We found that 19% of migrants' home villages have a fellow countryman association in their city and that 57% of these associations actively support migrants. These associations commonly have a formal status, permanent premises and, nowadays, an online presence, and they organize occasional functions throughout the year, as general events and/or for specific (e.g. fund-raising) purposes. Informal networking and associated support also continues at urban community level (migrants from a rural district tend to move to the same urban areas as one another) and at events like marriages.

As in the past, it remains common for villagers to support new migrants, often their sons and daughters, with money and goods, especially family farm products (sent, for example, as a package on the regular bus service from the nearby town and then picked up at the city terminus). Also, over a third (35%) of rural households reported providing food and other basic assistance to migrant family members during return visits. Over time, those migrants who are successful in putting down roots are able to send money back home; over half (58%) of rural households receive such remittances. Thus, the rural support becomes extended to a system of two-way mutual support.

Although rural households widely supply migrants, however, the support tends to be distributed among several urban recipients. Thus the migrants are not actually greatly supported in this way. We found that only 7% of migrants still receive traditional food from

Table 5. Solidarity after migration (village respondees, $n = 436$).

Solidarity type	%
Rural-to-urban	
Financial support[a]	18
Food and necessities	28
Food and necessities during rural visit	35
Urban-to-rural	
Remittance from family members	28
Remittance from more distant relatives	20
Support village needs (school, reforestation, etc.)	8

[a]Gift: 11%, loan: 7%.

the village, the main reason given for this supply being healthy nutrition—so that migrants could consume their own (family) produce and maintain their dietary habits—rather than economic. Indeed, traditional food production in villages is itself declining as the market penetrates this area of life in parallel with increasing rural incomes. Thus, the exchange appears more symbolic than material; it represents the maintenance of a bond to one's roots, enacted through food provisioning and social relations, and again speaking of the connection to the village.

When urban migrants cannot find a suitable job, and/or in order to improve their situation generally, they look to increase their labour value on the market. We found 30% of all migrant households to have at least one member who had developed a profession after arrival, generally through education and achieving a professional qualification. Over time, a major proportion of migrants do manage to settle. With a strong construction sector and property prices relatively affordable outside and on the outskirts of the major metropolises, many are able to buy a home—almost a half (44%) of the migrant households we interviewed owned their house/flat. Impressive as this is, however, it remains a minority option, and poverty is widespread. If we assume a daily income of $4.30 as the poverty threshold, then, calculating from the family income reported in our interviews, 41% of first-generation migrant families are poor. In these families, in fact, the mean per capita income is less than half of the nationwide average.[27]

If a family cannot escape poverty, the children will tend not to get an adequate education (they need to contribute to income generation, the parents cannot afford school materials, etc.), and the family will require basic support for survival. Thus, 21% of the families interviewed were receiving at least one item of social aid of one form or another (at an average of 1.7 items per household). The main aid type was for health (General Health Insurance, GHI), which gives access to free health services. Half of the poor were not in receipt of any GHI, pension, disability or other financial supports, however, suggesting that a significant number (about 10%) of migrant families have no reliable income source of any kind whatsoever. They are able to access heating and food aid (in the form of reimbursements for bills paid, organized donation schemes, etc.) (Table 6). Thus does poverty amongst the migrant unemployed, under-employed and poorly and insecurely employed—in general, those in the conditions of precarious labour—extend through families.

If income and aid are not sufficient to survive, families borrow. We found that over a quarter (27%) of migrant families survive through the use of credit—the interest payments on which bring further hardships, of course. Eventually, if things become too difficult and they cannot survive in the city, people do have the alternative of leaving, either trying their luck in another city or going back to their village. Thus, in almost a third of the households

Table 6. Primary social aid (city respondees, *n* = 148, 85/410 households).

Aid type	(%)
General Health Insurance	38
Fuel allowance	24
Food aid	16
Conditional cash support	10
Pension	5
Disability support	5
Other	1
Total	**100**

we interviewed, at least one person *had* returned. Insufficient and unreliable income leads large numbers of people in families who have left the village for financial reasons to go back anyway.

Rural–urban relations: return mobilities and dual life

According to the results of our (urban) survey, over half (56%) of those migrants actively considering a rural return were doing so because of their difficult economic situation (low/unreliable earnings, pension, etc.)—but which means also that a large portion wanted to return for other reasons. The various motivations for out-migration certainly factor into return. For example, we found that one in five rural households had at least one family member who had come back after going to the city for (school and/or university) education—their 'migration', presumably, was only ever temporary. And more generally than that, migrants do not necessarily see themselves as settled in the city—almost half (45%) of the (first-generation) migrants we interviewed self-identified as belonging to their village. Alongside the material conditions of precarious labour, therefore, runs a profound psychological sense of provisionality, a feeling that the urban move was a forced choice and that home remains where the heart is—and where the land is.

In fact, close to a third of the urban migrants we questioned said they were planning to return to their homeland. Of these, approaching two-thirds were elderly and/or retired, while over a quarter were either unemployed or had major work/income problems (their businesses were failing, they did not earn enough, etc.) (Table 7).

When they do return, however, the migrants do not simply counter-migrate, or not necessarily, at least. Retirees, in particular, become more or less biannually mobile, exchanging their village home during the winters for an urban one (their own, children's, etc.). Among rural families, we found that of the 11% of retirees who themselves have at least one flat/house in the city, nearly all (88%) are leading a seasonally defined 'dual life'. Children and grandchildren join them and other family members in the village for periods in the summer (to work, holiday and just live), and from different cities. These patterns of rural–urban mobility—taken as a whole, and especially from a family systems perspective—involve a type of multi-place living, which takes multifarious forms, often, within a family, involving more than one urban centre (including nearby provincial as well as metropolitan cities).

Although there are many combinations of such multi-place living, they can be characterized for convenience in terms of the rural–urban binary, as a 'dual life'. This represents a different situation from that of traditional migration. Essentially, the locus of the family lies in both rural and (different) urban environments.

Table 7. Situation of those planning return migration (city respondees, $n = 164$).

Situation	%
Retired	46
Elderly	16
Employment issues	23
Unemployed	5
Prefer to work in village	10
Total	**100**

Question: *Are you thinking about returning?*

Some people lead a particularly mobile dual lifestyle, those who move to a town or city but also engage in farming. These are urban migrants who hold their rural assets specifically for agricultural purposes. A surprisingly high proportion—some 7% of all urban migrant households—continue to farm in the village (they typically grow crops like wheat that need little attention). For 2%, agriculture is their main occupation, while for the other 5%, the village farm provides a supplementary source. Moreover, the rural land is not just maintained by urban dwellers; another urban-to-rural movement is that of capital investment, as urban migrants purchase land for themselves or others, mostly family members (who may sometimes themselves also be urban migrants). We found that 5% of migrant households had bought land and/or buildings in the village, re-investing, therefore, in the very place they have left—or rather, not exactly left. Sometimes these purchases are for agricultural purposes, sometimes to re-establish a family residence for when they retire (future counter-migration and dual life practices).

Migration and villages

Because of the urban migration of younger people and the return migration of older people, the village population is reducing and its demographic shifting sharply to a higher age range. Reductions in population as measured by registered residential populations only tell part of the story, however. The dual lifestyle developing from urban migration has meant that some villages that were becoming moribund have sprung back into life—for part of the year, at least. With the advent of rural tourism also, old rural settlements have transformed into summer villages with the combination of a year-round, traditional agriculture base and contemporary non-agrarian, often urban employment.

Looking at the longer term, TÜİK data analysed for the period 1965–2008 show the populations of approximately 70% of villages as decreasing, 20% staying at the same level and 10% rising. Because of the population loss, the average village population size is decreasing and the number of small villages rising. Middle-size villages are losing population the most, while many growing villages are becoming urbanized through rural investment or integrated into expanding cities. Overall, the result is a rise in the number of small villages. Again, however, the overall picture masks complexities. For example, in three of Turkey's seven regions—the Mediterranean (in the south), Middle Anatolia and Southeast Anatolia—population loss declined after 2000 (in the south-east due to specific circumstances related to the Kurdish conflict), and the rural population is now actually higher than it was in 1965. The main reasons for this are the introduction of year-round agriculture (with market entry, irrigation projects, etc.), tourism (national and international) and also high birth-rates.

Finally, it is important to note that the largest proportion of internal migration nowadays is not urban but intercity. Although this does not necessarily impact greatly on demographics, it is obviously a major element of the social experience. One of distinctive characteristics of this migration is that of public employees, such as all newly qualified teachers and health workers (doctors and nurses), who are posted, mostly, in cities other from those in which they have trained. Clearly, this group of urban-to-urban migrants is distinguished from rural-to-urban migrants by employment and other (class, etc.) considerations.

Concluding thoughts

The new precariat

With approaching 3 million agricultural enterprises averaging less than 10 hectares, it may be said that the penetration of capital in rural Turkey has been limited and that the main character of its farming, at least from a social perspective, remains that of the peasant farm, or smallholding. In the contemporary peasant farming conditions, households are constantly adjusting their balances between home consumption and market production, traditional practices and risk investment, external inputs and holding/domestic expenditures.[28] Included in this ever fluctuating mix is the possibility for external inputs by family members working as wage-earners, either locally or further afield, and for younger members of the family—especially newly-weds setting up—to reduce household demand by migrating to the city. The adoption of neo-liberal policies in Turkey saw a huge increase in the push to leave farming and the pull of city life. Thus, the ongoing phenomenon of mass urban flow increased sharply.

Large numbers of agricultural labourers were left jobless and headed for the city; some farmers also ended their agricultural activities altogether as a direct result of this process and left. Some of these, unable to establish themselves, have gone back to their villages. Finding work again through an urban connection, some have even repeated this migration process. This category of returnees and returning returnees constitutes a part of the precarious mass, a section of the rural–urban poor, leading a dual or unfixed life, with no regular work/income or social security.

In the city also, living conditions and employment opportunities have become precarious. One reason for this is the commodification of land. In the past, migrants could relatively easily squat on land and create their own housing; today, land in the urban environs has become a scarce resource with high development value. The pressure to gain income for rent is thus much greater. Then, in the field of employment, both industrial job opportunities and, with the neo-liberal downsizing of the state, public sector positions have either failed to increase to meet demand or actually declined. In line with global trends, insecurity in income earning opportunities has gone hand-in-hand with reduced contract protection. Our research also indicates insecure labour conditions, with self-employment as the primary income-creating opportunity among urban migrants, which again indicates likely income insecurity.

The main self-employment areas among urban migrants are small retail outlets and craft workshops. Nowadays, however, retail chains and industrial production access consumers more cheaply. Street-sellers have become more and more a remnant of the past, especially in the big cities. This kind of employment, the ‘marginal sector’ in underdeveloped countries, has been transforming with economic development to a precariat. We found that over a quarter of the working people in first-generation migrated families were employed in conditions of precarious labour. The development of this precariat, which thus draws its ranks in large part from urban migrants, is also fuelled by the contemporary phenomenon of growth without employment.

Economic growth is based on capital-intensive and high-tech investments that do not require a large labour force, so manpower rises more quickly than the employment-creating capacity of business. Highly educated workers are in demand, which does not favour the migrant population, who instead compete for menial positions in a saturated market.

The situation is further compounded by the lack of trade protection facilitating imports; in Istanbul, for example, the clothing sector was badly hurt by the entry of cheap Chinese goods, further depressing wages and empowering employers in respect of workers—in other words, extending the conditions of precarity.

Urban migration, mobility, movement

Although there has long been seasonal migration—for example, in Ottoman times, to Istanbul for work and back (people would spend several days walking across Anatolia)—according to the classical 'migration' perspective, people simply and permanently move from one place to another. Movement may be realized in other ways, however, especially with the relative ease of travel nowadays. There may be more than a single movement involving more than one place and including return, and in addition to repeated (seasonal or other) rather than single return migrations, there may also be geographically and temporally more complex patterns, repeated or unique, especially if the unit of analysis is taken to be a group (e.g. family) rather than individual (which is certainly warranted to the extent that members share resources and in other ways show solidarity). Therefore, in order to understand these multi-place, multi-occupation, multi-directional living forms, the factor of *mobility* and concept of *movement* is more suitable than that of migration.

Although there are many motivations for the mass phenomenon of urban migration in the 'developing world' (including the 'newly developed' countries, such as Turkey), the main one remains employment: in another words, this is an economic movement. People leave their home (in a village) and go to another place (a city) because they need or desire a higher income. Thus, in order to balance population distributions or develop well-founded approaches to urban migration-related problems, we have to look at issues around employment and unemployment, including precarity.

In the city, the inability of migrants to find jobs and gain sufficient income contributes to urban poverty. Almost all the poor only survive with aid, but this also helps to mask the problem, insofar as poverty aid reduces poverty numbers in statistics but not poverty itself. Therefore, a proper livelihood policy approach (e.g. involving minimum crop price guarantees) should be introduced to ensure opportunities for regular income and social security and pension rights. Of course, this type of 'social engineering' flies in the face of the still dominant neo-liberal orthodoxy. Currently, the numbers of the unemployed, poor and needy working for low wages continue to accumulate in urban environments, creating a rise in the army of reserve workers. The pressure on wage levels and working conditions from this leads, in turn, to a state of permanent poverty. Indeed, our research has shown significant numbers of urban migrants who are working and also poor (in absolute terms).

In the countryside, meanwhile—as observed in Turkey—some rural settlements are growing while many are declining, a process that signals both the development and disappearance of villages. To follow village (and hamlet) population changes carefully and consider the implications of this for policy, further study of official statistics is required. In Turkey, this implies a stronger database, including gradations of 'residence' for population figures (and also old and new settlement names to better follow changes in time). Very generally, elderly and retired people exhibit a desire to move to rural areas, be it back to their homeland or to a new place (often as a development, over time, of a holiday home). This tendency also needs more detailed research. On the one hand, it promotes quality of

life in a healthy and intrinsically sustainable environment, but on the other, it increases the aged rural population, contributing to a variety of socio-economic pressures.

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