

## MODERNIST DESIRES AMONG RECENT MIGRANTS IN WESTERN TURKEY

### Abstract

In western Turkey, villagers have been engaged in a self-constructed modernization programme since the early 1980s, which includes founding and running a women's carpet-weaving cooperative and selecting aspects of the state's modernization project for their own use. Recently many have been losing hope, and young women in particular are abandoning rural life by marrying men employed in the city. This structural move allows them to stop weaving and become urban housewives, while also achieving adulthood. These individual efforts reveal collective female desires to achieve a 'modern' world. 'Traditional' marriage practices, which conceive of women as migrants and involve an intergenerational transfer of wealth to finance marriage, facilitate young women's ambitions, while problematizing ties to rural kin networks.

### Keywords

Female desires • marriage • migration • modernity • Turkey

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'Biz geziyoruz, onlar çalışacak' We will wander, and they will work.

## 1 Introduction

Millions of immigrants and migrants from Anatolian villages arrived in Europe and in urban centres in Turkey beginning in the 1950s. Migrants and immigrants retain links to kin, regional identity and notions of heritage and origin with regard to ethnic and religious identities, while some have become members of diasporic movements seeking religious and ethnic freedom abroad (Mandel 2008) or internally displaced refugees (Ayata & Yökseker 2005; Middle East Report 1996). Thus, Anatolian villagers constitute a diverse and heterogeneous population. The focus of this paper, on rural understandings and gendered strategies of migration to provincial cities in Turkey, contextualizes the experiences of Turkish immigrants in Western Europe because rural life is understood ideologically, through idioms of class and status in the Turkish national imaginary (Ewing 2008; Navaro-Yashin 2002). As well, the village plays a symbolic role in Western European notions of cultural progress, as Ewing argues is the case in Germany (2008). That is, among Turkish

elites at home and abroad, through Turkish state policies, in international legal domains echoed in state-level policies of citizenship and migration, and in well-meaning liberal perspectives on cultural progress and women's rights (Mandel 2008), there is a popular perception, sometimes filtered into scholarship, that Turkish villages are places which are culturally backward, underdeveloped and remote. These prejudices weigh heavily on villagers who are attempting to develop rural Anatolia economically, despite the Turkish state's lack of interest in providing support in terms of infrastructure, education and health care. Among those who migrate but retain dense networks of social reliance and reciprocity through kinship and regional, identity-based fellowship, a rural origin is both a source of support and embarrassment. These performances of personhood and identity (rural, migrant, immigrant) are managed through interpersonal relationships, in faith, and in patterns and displays of prestigious consumption at home and abroad, as ethnographers detail (DiCarlo 2006; Ewing 2008; Mandel 2008; White 2002). Additionally, though many Turkish immigrants have lived in Europe for decades, have children who were born there, are well-adapted, fluent in local languages and educated, some choose to locate spouses through their kin and regional networks, called *hemşehirlilik* (fellow city folk) in

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Turkish (DiCarlo 2006). The introduction of new migrants in Europe through 'chain migration' seems likely to continue through these paths of marriage, meaning that the Turkish immigrant population is being renewed by people who are from or have vibrant links with villages (Timmerman 2006).

I have conducted research in a Sunni village in the western Anatolian region of the Yuntdağ, north of Manisa and south of Bergama, since 1998, when I made my first visit, followed by ethnographic fieldwork in 2000–01, and short visits in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2008. In 2008, I found that individuals and families have begun to migrate in greater numbers than ever in the history of the village. Considering millions who migrated to urban areas in Turkey and those who emigrated, most famously those who joined the *Gastarbeiter* program in Germany, villagers from the Yuntdağ region have had an unusual experience: they did not migrate *en masse*. From Örselli, a village of ninety households, only one family left in the 1970s for France. Interestingly, one branch of this family returned to Turkey after twenty years to settle in Manisa, the closest city to their former village. When I conducted research in 2000–01, a woman in her thirties who had married her first cousin from her natal village while in France insisted that they return to the village to find a better life than the one they had either in France or in Manisa. This was because, as she explained, her husband had lost his job and they had a village family home, where they could live rent and tax-free. Considering the financial burdens of urban life, their move back seemed reasonable. Yet this family was an exception. One reason most others did not join them was because the village was the base of a women's carpet-weaving cooperative, founded in 1982, a member of the DOBAG project (*Doğal Boya Araştırma ve Geliştirme Projesi*, natural dye research and development project). The project was founded by a German chemist, Harald Böhmer, with a grant from the German government for helping Turkish villagers economically develop and create a sustainable rural life, and thereby not migrate to Europe. Until recently the project increased household income and provided some degree of empowerment for female weaving members. However, after 2003 the cooperative began to suffer a decline. It was not merely the loss in leadership after the death of the director, but disappointment over the emergence of socioeconomic differences and the struggles of living in rural places neglected by the state, which caused them to consider migrating. As a result, many have chosen to leave. In 2008, I began to consider this new development and found that the villagers categorize migrants into two groups: women who marry men in nearby cities, and young families with children who leave for the city.

## 2 The problem of the village: Ideology

In popular Turkish representations, migrants are simultaneously fascinating and terrifying because they carry on their bodies a world which urban dwellers believe they have left behind (Ewing

2008) or which, due to differences in class, they never experienced. Their clothes, foods and practices, their every physical movement, embodies a rural life, pointing to a difference in outlook and values (Erman 1998: 155; Göle 1996; Shankland 1999: 134; Stokes 1997). As Erman remarks, '[t]he squatter community symbolizes not only an oppressive social environment but also a rural society that is backward, vulgar, uncultured, and uneducated' (1998: 158). As one friend, a member of an elite family in Istanbul, noted, 'villagers are weird.' He feels embattled and overwhelmed by the masses of formerly rural migrants in the city, who, as many say, have turned Istanbul, the former capital of the Ottoman Empire, into a 'big village.' This reaction to rural people as ethnicized others is not limited to Turkey: it is characteristic of a theoretical deployment of identity to contain and manage diverse populations (Mandel 2008; Yiftachel 1998). As Pigg argues for Nepal, geographical configurations, defined through universalizing economic development policies, create ideologies of social categorization, of progress and modernity (Pigg 1992: 492). These attitudes, which connect social categories of personhood to geography, confine rural people as 'backward', *geri kafalı*, or 'the uncivilized', *terbiyetsizler*. In urban Turkey, contemporary attitudes toward the demonstratively rural or ethnic other continue to be characterized by this mixture of fascination and fear.

Villagers from Örselli are self-conscious of their own status as rural people, whether or not they have migrated, and they work to eliminate traces of 'tradition' from the discursive and material construction of their lives by intentionally forgetting and claiming that they have destroyed signs of the past (Hart 2007) which they associate with 'tradition'. The elision of the past is a widespread practice in Turkey, which was established as a new nation state in 1923 under a program of state-led modernization, westernization and secularization (Özürek 2006; Zürcher 2005), entailing a rupture with the Ottoman past. For this reason, amnesia and memory have become important foci in the ethnography of Turkey, explaining the mental effort to establish a Republic which would create a modern, progressive world disparaging and eliminating the old one (Neyzi 2002; Özyürek 2007; Pfaff 1963; Yavuz 1999). In Örselli, villagers are beset by these categorizations of social difference whenever they are visited by rug tourists, dealers, journalists and researchers, who expect them to be quaintly, culturally authentic (Hart 2007; Işık 2007). Trapped in the expectation that they should be something they reject, they strategically embrace cultural heritage to manage their production and sale of handwoven carpets of indigenous and traditional design. As they weave and sell carpets, which are marketed as 'revitalized tradition', they feel the weight of their apparent lack of modern development because their income is derived from these 'traditional' products. It does not help that visitors do not conceal their expectation that the village should be an example of 'traditional' Anatolian life, usually in their disappointed criticisms of satellite dishes, cell phones and other modern appliances, which villagers have been able to invest in because they have commodified weaving. Considering why and how they are deciding to leave their

village sheds light on the difficulties in managing rural and newly urban identities.

The construction of rural Turkish people as 'traditional' and/or 'backward' carries into places where people migrated, especially Europe, where their eastern, Islamic character further problematizes class identity (Ewing 2008; Mandel 2008). Even Turkish people in Europe have these prejudices. As Timmerman notes, many immigrant Turks seek Turkish spouses who grew up in Turkey because they are imagined to be more 'authentically' Turkish, less corrupted by Western European society and culture (2008: 134). While Turkish immigrants fetishize rural Anatolians as more authentic, Europeans, as Ewing argues, stereotype Turkish villages as places of patriarchal oppression and cultural backwardness, thereby creating a conceptual opposition to European progressive modernity, which justifies programmes for female emancipation and cultural development (2008). In both national configurations of social progress and international visions of European modernity (Ewing 2008) or cosmopolitanism (Mandel 2008), legitimized through concerns about universal standards for human rights, rural people symbolically embody what is considered socially conservative, religiously reactionary and culturally authentic.

### 3 The problem of the village: Material conditions

When Harald Böhmer, the German chemist who established the DOBAG project, first visited the Yuntdağ in the early 1980s, the region was poor. As one elderly man in his nineties described it, '*millet fakirdi, fakir!*' (the people were poor, poor!) Leaning forward to make his point, he exclaimed, 'Lice crawled down our collars. You know what lice are, don't you!?' Women described the numbers of babies they lost to disease because they could not reach doctors. The one dirt road to the south flooded frequently; there was neither electricity nor running water (see also Glassie 1993: 645). In comparison to other regions in Turkey, the Yuntdağ had not suffered the same degree of economic deprivation and ethnicized violence (Hemmasi & Prorok 2002), which helps explain why there was no push to leave the region. However, the villagers were unhappy because, as they are quick to add, their village was administratively connected to Bergama, a small market town. This town did not provide them with services. The villagers were attentive to how the state distributed resources and how regional governments provided services unequally. After they founded their cooperative, they petitioned to be connected to Manisa, which provided roads and electricity. They tackled other infrastructural projects through collective labour (*imece*) (Beller-Hann and Hann 2001; Delaney 1991). Cennet Deneri, the president of the cooperative, remarked that the villagers in Örselli are '*asabi*' or nervous and irritable. She explained that this was why they strove to change their village. Due to their efforts, the cooperative began to provide weaving families with more income. Additionally, herders

were able to earn cash by selling their sheep, milk and wool. Other sources of money came from seasonal cheese workshop labour for men, who had to travel far away for several months a year, and field labour for men, women and children hoeing and harvesting vegetables, tobacco and cotton in the fields near Manisa to the south.

Thus, before 1980, the villagers in this region were isolated. Despite its proximity to major cities in western Turkey such as Manisa and Izmir, the Yuntdağ was largely overlooked by the state. As one middle-aged man put it, 'the state has done nothing for me!' The villagers claim that this is because they have little water, no large and productive fields, little money and thus limited influence. In other words, as villagers describe things, visitors, including government officials, disparage their village by saying, '*burası hiç bir şey yok*', 'there is nothing here at all'. Not content to reject urban disparagements and the state's indifference, the villagers have struggled to be noticed by the state, as other scholars also remark is a characteristic of Sunni villages (Shankland 1999; Sirman 1990). By 2000, when I began my doctoral research, the villagers had grown accustomed to making money. Predictable weaving income helped families purchase consumer goods, marry their children in well-appointed houses, fund higher education and improve standards of living. After 2003, weavers began to lose interest when the cooperative lost its director and the enterprise began to suffer economic problems. By this time, the villagers had transformed their self-perception from lucky villagers who had found a market for their textiles to employees of a business which failed to provide them with benefits. This consequence of economic development in small-scale textile cooperatives and among independent weavers is well documented in other areas in the world (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; Cohen 1999; 1998; Ehlers 2000).

Thinking of themselves as employees, weavers realize that weaving labour does not earn *sigorta*, health and retirement insurance, while men working in factories, a form of labour they equate with weaving, gain these benefits. Interestingly, while female weavers conceptualize *sigorta* as a right of citizenship, they do not fight for women's equal status with men, nor do they demand that weavers obtain recognition through increases in wages and benefits. Instead, knowing that wives are covered by their husband's plans, many women argued in 2008, 'Why not let the men work and we stay at home?' Indeed, this would be a quicker route to gaining the benefits they desire than petitioning the government or organizing a gendered labour movement. Their arguments show that they agitate for benefits without expecting to sacrifice or endure patiently, thereby fulfilling ideals of Islamic womanhood (Işık 2008; Mahmood 2001), and they do not expect to emancipate themselves from kinship roles and become full citizens who can live independently from gendered social roles (Arat 1996). For young women who embrace the dream of becoming an urban housewife who can avoid the hard labour of the village and of urban factory work, marriage and migration is a new patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti 1988), a modernist woman's ambivalent emancipation (Collier 1997). They emancipate

themselves from their social association with rural drudgery, which marks them as low class, on the margins of modernity, the most reliable breadwinners of their households and therefore married to men who shamefully cannot care for them, raising children who most likely will struggle with a low status, little education and poverty. That is, migration releases women from association with the village and rural labour, and they obtain the benefits of urban life, while having husbands whom they expect will care for them. Naturally, many are disappointed when they discover they have to find work. As a new type of person (urban housewife), wage-earning labour is framed as a way to pass the time, even when it is conducted out of necessity, because men are expected to be the providers in the city.

Rural people from the Yuntdağ tend to move to cities that are close to their villages where they maintain ties with kin. As one village man said, 'Until about fifteen years ago, we didn't know about Manisa. Then a few people left and they found work. We learned how to work and live in Manisa, and then everyone started to go.' Yet, as they migrate and settle, they seek out a middle-class style of living, which is different from what several studies of female migrants in Turkey demonstrate in the stratification of migrant populations who live in shantytowns (Abadan-Unat 1982; Erman 1998; White 2004). The people I describe here do not settle in shantytowns or *gecekondu* (Karpas 1976; Şenyapılı 1991), though the term, and the space of these settlements, need to be problematized (Perouse 2004). They strive to rent or own an apartment in middle-class neighbourhoods. Achieving this urban life requires investment of a sort that is only possible in marriage. While kin networks are among the strongest and most sustaining in maintaining ties and forms of assistance, as well as control and domination (Delaney 1991; Ilcan 1994), village families work to establish their children in a stylish adulthood at marriage, but they do not expect to make these investments at other times. For this reason, establishing a new marital home is when many young men and women plan to create an urban life filled with material luxuries, which propel them from both rural drudgery and urban alienation. In other words, traditional marriage practices, which involve an intergenerational transfer of wealth, raises young people's statuses without cutting them from rural networks (Glazer 1979; Hart 2005). In fact, combining marriage with migration further connects rural and urban areas to dense networks of kin who have made significant investments in their children's urban futures. Many parents expect to retire to the city, where their children will care for them in the comfortable apartments they have helped set up at their children's marriages. These traditional practices underpin and support modernist displays of status and style, a performance of modernity dependent on material goods (Liechty 2003; Schein 1999), relocated in the city. However, life for those who marry and migrate, as my ethnographic stories of two young women show, is not always the easy, stylish life many had fantasized about while weaving carpets, kneading the bread dough and hauling firewood in the rural mountains.

## 4 Two forms of migration

In describing recent migrations from the Yuntdağ, I distinguish between those who left as brides (*gelin gitmek*) and those who migrated (*göç etmek*). These categories come directly from my village informants, who had classified women into these two very different conceptual groups. In 2008, with Cennet, the president of the co-operative with whom I live in the village, I collected the names of 32 individuals, about 20 who had migrated with a spouse and children (i.e. those who had previously married and had children) and twelve who had migrated as brides, thus combining marriage and migration. The women of the first group had all married men from their native village. Due to the rigorously patrilocal nature of the village, women never import men to marry in their natal village. Due to the rigors of village life, including weaving carpets, women from other villages are reluctant to marry and migrate to a 'foreign' village. The women of the second group all married husbands from other villages. Villagers expect that spouses will be from the 'same' socioeconomic class, and for this reason (uneducated) villager women rarely marry (educated) men who are natives of cities, though this is changing. It is interesting to note that the villagers' conceptual categories of *gelin gitti* (left as a bride) and *göç etti* (migrated) explain the style of migration through the female role. This reflects their gendered understandings of marriage, which is connected to notions of migration and exile. From the villagers' standpoint, every married woman is in exile (*gürbet*), much as migrants are from their homeland (Delaney 1991: 117). For those who left as brides, their path to migration followed that of any woman who marries, but extended this by putting them outside social and kin networks in the village. Those who *göç etti* or migrated left the village with their families, but they could easily return since they had a house in the village. Unmarried men who leave on their own to work have definitively neither migrated nor settled, since they are unmarried. They are only imagined as having migrated, that is, *göç etti* when they settle with a wife in the city. However, village families never fully accept that their sons have left. Many have a lingering hope that their sons might return. Sons remain connected to their patriline, which are in the village, while daughters join those of their husbands. Thus, the villagers' distinction between *gelin gitti* and *göç etti* is important to the notion of who belongs where and how their ties to the village are severed or maintained.

## 5 Gelin Gitti: She left as a bride

Of those who migrated, or *gelin gitti* from 2001–08, two left for Menemen or villages attached to Menemen, one left for Savaştepe, another for Izmir, and the remaining eight left for Manisa. Although these figures are modest, the village itself is small, with a population of about 300. Because the young women who *gelin gitti* married men from another village, town or city, their marriages were less secure

than if they had remained in their natal village, where their family and friends could come to their assistance, or if they had married a young man from their natal village and moved to the city later. In the later case, the two would be linked through kinship in some manner, relatives from both sides of the family would keep in constant contact and the bride would be less isolated.

For young women who married and migrated, geographical distance and distance from kin networks loosens their channels of support. Thus, the more ambitious move results in the most personal pain, and unless a baby is born quickly, this type of marriage is the most likely to end in divorce. From the man's perspective, his marriage to a village girl enables him to permanently settle in the city, since his parents help him locate an apartment. If he were to marry in the village, even in the unlikely case that he brought a girl from another village to his own, his parents would have invested in building and furnishing a house, even if he moved to the city later. In short, the groom's parents must not have built a home for the bride to migrate to a city and *gelin gitti*. Thus, migration for the bride and groom entails a severing of ties, including losing a house, a very solid tie to a place. Though other young couples also live in the city, villagers tend to lose some of their connections with their peers, as well as adult relatives when they marry and migrate. Some women express a sense of loneliness and isolation. Young brides without children cannot leave their apartments easily or freely because they cannot be unaccompanied on the city streets. Two young friends would have to live in the same neighbourhood in order to visit or venture further into the city, so that they could meet up at one apartment without needing to travel a long distance alone. Many women have to wait until they have a baby to explore the city. Even a woman with a baby is accompanied, in a sense. There are many more problems, however, for the young couple living in semi-isolation. In particular, the husband, a young man with little education, has to find a job that will support a young household. Many couples seem to never get a footing even after decades, and after the birth of a couple of children (two being the optimum number). They move from place to place, rely on in-laws for financial assistance when the husband loses a job, and need perpetual child care assistance from paternal grandmothers, who often take their grandchildren back to the village and raise them for years at a time. Given these insecurities, one wonders why young people make this risky move and why parents support it.

Naciye and Hatice's stories illuminate the circumstances, attitudes and desires of village women who are tired of the troubles and struggles of village life and opt to marry and migrate, despite the risks. Naciye and Hatice's lives are interestingly intertwined. To contextualize their urban lives, I will briefly describe their village lives in 2000–01. Naciye lived close to her mother, with whom she wove carpets on a wooden loom. At night, Naciye was perpetually bent over her handiwork, making headscarves, knitted socks, crocheted towel edgings and embroideries for her *çeyiz* or trousseau for marriage. Hatice had a similar life, working with her mother weaving and

creating her *çeyiz* during her free moments. Hatice was the first to marry a man from Maltaş. Hatice's mother's sister married a man from Maltaş, which enabled her to look and be seen while visiting, thereby exposing her to a larger pool of potential spouses. A few years later, Naciye found her husband through her friendship with Hatice. As Naciye described it, Hatice's husband's cousin visited her village to ask if there were any eligible young women. He was specifically interested in marrying a village girl. As I mentioned earlier, men and women expect and desire to marry a spouse who is in the same class as they understand it (i.e., are both from a village or have ties to a village), a similar status (i.e., never married or both divorced), of the same age group and with a similar educational background (an educated woman would not marry an uneducated man, for example). Although I did not talk to Naciye's husband because he was working at his factory job when I visited, I assume he was looking for a hardworking, well-behaved, obedient and inexperienced village girl (Timmerman 2006). Naciye said, 'He asked Hatice for my phone number and we talked on the phone, but since there was a wedding in the village at this same time, we had the chance to see each other as well.' After talking and seeing each other from a distance, his parents visited hers. The two families, through a series of visits and strategic gift exchanges, created a bond enabling the couple to create a relationship which led to their marriage.

Married to cousins, their mothers-in-law being sisters, Naciye and Hatice are connected in a new way. Not only have they become relatives as well as fellow villagers, they live in the same neighbourhood in the city. They are friends and accompany each other on their journeys through the city to the open market. They described their scheme to get jobs at a pickle factory in the late summer. Though they live in the city, their lives are as constrained as when they lived in the village. I commented on the fact that they lived close to the bus station, implying that they should know this route well since the buses to the villages leave from there. This is where they met me with much agonizing and trouble. Naciye said, 'I have never gone there alone. I cannot. My husband would not let me. I always go with someone, usually Hatice.' Women, especially young brides, cannot travel or work without the permission of their husbands. In the village women are free to move, but no young women leave the village alone to enter the uncultivated pasture which surrounds the area. In the city, women have less freedom of movement because they are surrounded by 'strangers' (Ilcan 1999). However, confinement in their houses and neighbourhoods in Manisa is not every woman's experience. I had hoped to visit Hatice's mother, for example, who had migrated with her husband and son, but Hatice said, 'She is out wandering about as usual.' Older women with adult children have more freedom of movement than young, childless brides, whose husbands and in-laws are concerned about the production of the next generation, as Erman also notes among migrants in urban Turkey (1998). Even Hatice and Naciye's constricted lives were exciting for them, however. Naciye said that being able to travel (*gezme*) about the city was the most surprising aspect of urban life.

Sitting with these young, childless brides, I asked how they compared life in the city to that in the village. They said that they are more 'comfortable' or *rahat* in Manisa because there is no carpet weaving. They were excited about this point. They said, 'In the village there is a lot of work (*iş çok*) in Manisa there is no work (*iş yok*).' They both explained that their husbands work and they stay at home, and that, unlike in the village, in the city everything is available. In addition, both husbands have *sigorta*, health and retirement insurance. Their assessment of urban life focused on the services that the state makes available and on access to the open market, thus on the neoliberal economy. Naciye explained that with carpet weaving it is difficult – there are problems in the village with people complaining: 'You are uncertain about the amount of money you will get, and there is no insurance (*sigorta*).' Both said that the reason families have left is because they want to 'escape from carpet weaving'. They predicted that only the elderly would remain to weave. 'But young women will all marry away from the village.' In other words, from their standpoint, the carpet-weaving cooperative, which the founders had hoped would help emancipate women by helping them earn money (Anderson 1998), would fail because no young women wanted to continue weaving. Hatice and Naciye predict that other young women would also use marriage as a means of escaping rural drudgeries associated with weaving. In fact, many in the village hold the same opinion. It was clear that they found weaving, village labour and the intrusiveness of gossip and discord oppressive. Faced with women's responsibilities in the village, Hatice said, '*Bıçağım attım, evlendim*' (I threw down the knife [used to cut the knots on carpets] and got married).

I was curious how they made the decision to leave the village, marry and migrate. I imagined that they would have mulled this over, weighing the benefits of village life against the potential disadvantages of the city. I asked them if they wanted to live in Manisa and how they decided to live there. To my surprise, Hatice remarked, *fark etmez*, 'It doesn't matter.' She was willing to go to Manisa or to stay in the village upon marrying. Of course, she pointed out there are big differences between the two places, but she claimed, 'It didn't really matter.' As Hatice put it, 'This was my destiny.' Hatice's response may be confusing to readers expecting to find empowered female ambition or expressions of agency and resistance to patriarchal strictures (Hegland 1998). Muslim women's culturally framed expressions of agency defy individualistic resistance, of those who strive against obstacles and overcome them, or desire personal fulfilment and work to achieve it. As Mahmood argues, modest and sober expressions are forms of agency, which work within cultural traditions, which do not value a secular, liberal framework in which the individual is encouraged to act autonomously (2001). As Işık notes of weavers in Konya, *sabır* or patience is the idiom through which women conceptualize their labour for the betterment of their families, as they seek to obtain a state of inner peace through resolve (2008). In a similar manner, these young women made choices that revealed their strategic interests in leaving rural life, but they accepted their

circumstances, or at least expressed their resolve, rather than their ambition. Hatice's remark that 'it didn't matter' seemed to fit a pattern in avoiding individualistic desire. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the risk she took in marrying outside the village and migrating, which I have described as ambitious.

The transition from village woman to city woman is fraught with class considerations and the potential of humiliation when one's rural origins are inadvertently revealed. Village women expect that when they agree to marry a man who is employed and has an apartment in Manisa, they will be released from the drudgery of village labour, as well as a personal association with rurality. They describe these choices as liberating, since it allows them to rest in comfort at home while their husbands labour, frustrating western feminist perspectives of female emancipation. Unlike the drudgery of village labour, which is focused on women's skills such as weaving but which receive no recognition by the state, men's factory labour is more prestigious because the state provides retirement and health insurance. Thus, as many said, 'We like city life because the men work and we sit at home.'

## 6 Göç Etti

While the choices of young women to combine marriage with migration demonstrate their ambitions for a different life, for young families the necessities of modern life include education for their children. They therefore see rural life as no longer sustainable, since employment requires education, and for that they must leave in order to send their children to school. When I did my research in 2000–01, I was struck by the consistency among the villagers about what constitutes a good life. It seemed there was a single path which everyone wanted to follow: get married, have children, become a household and obtain work to send the children to the required eight years of elementary education, after which the girls weave and the boys work in cheese workshops leading to their marriage. It was not the case that every person followed this path, but it was the ideal. Now, other options have presented themselves: leave the village forever, commute to a factory in Manisa, migrate temporarily, stay in the village but prepare one's children for migration or remain.

What is most interesting is the fact that not everyone wants 'urban modernity,' and many are reflective about these choices. While some wives say, 'It is better if the men work and we stay at home,' others say, 'I could never do it, stay in an apartment all day. I like my village. I like weaving.' Husbands are nostalgic for a time when they could 'wander' in the villages and get by with occasional wage labour. They say they miss the openness and freedom in the countryside. As one husband said, 'You feel your chest expanding here, not like in the city, where it is oppressively crowded with people and buildings.' Families who decide to have the husband commute to factory jobs face the inevitable move to the city with regret. As another man remarked, 'It was too exhausting, we had to

move.' They complain that, in the city, 'Everything requires money.' These young families are not financially launched into adulthood through a combination of marriage and migration and therefore they often suffer economically. Men's invigorated critique of urban life is demonstrated by their new cooperative in the Yuntdağ. A group of drivers established a minibus cooperative, which, as one driver argued, enables villagers to travel with greater ease to the city, children to commute to high school and men to find suitable employment as drivers. This new cooperative showed how the villagers continue to consider how they can make rural life more accessible to the cities and sustainable at home.

## 7 Conclusion

In the western Anatolian region of the Yuntdağ, villagers have struggled to develop their region economically and create an infrastructure that will sustain village life. In their collaborative work with foreigners in the carpet-weaving cooperative, they demonstrate their agency in making rural life sustainable in a world in which luxuries and comforts, media and commodities are available. After many decades, their commitment to the cooperative is waning because weavers understand that men's wage labour includes *sigorta*, health and retirement insurance, but theirs does not. Since the state ignores women's labour in small workshops and enterprises (Arat 1996; Işık 2007), women themselves are realizing that they would be better off if their husbands did the work. While older village women argue that rural life has its benefits and freedoms, young women who have laboured beside their mothers as unrecognized weavers feel differently. Many are therefore abandoning rural life in favour of being urban housewives.

Making the transition to the city requires careful strategic management of the self, as well as resources and networks. Rural identities, which are displayed on the body, need to be hidden due to prejudices against rural Anatolians. Neighbourhood choice points to origins, and for this reason villagers scrimp and save to pay the rent in lower middle-class neighbourhoods. These investments are difficult unless marriage and migration are connected because families invest in their children's new marital homes. For this reason, marriage practices, which always involve careful financial negotiations and the creation of new social networks between the bride and groom's families, can be stretched to include investments in urban property or assistance with rent. Young women who expect that marriage is '*gürbet*', exile, are willing to intensify this painful separation with physical distance. By accepting a loosening of family ties, they gain new marital luxuries, as well as a release from rural drudgeries. Back in the village, people actively debate the pros and cons of rural versus urban life. However, the state's lack of interest and involvement in rural society, as well as the cooperative's inability to afford the investment in health and retirement insurance, convinces many to leave.

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