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Political Participation in Alevi Diaspora in the UK | Tuncay Bilecen[±]

Abstract

Within migration flows from Turkey to Europe it can be postulated that the UK has proportionally received more politically motivated migrants than other European destinations. The political migration from Turkey to the UK is marked with the catastrophic events that uprooted people such as 1971 coup d'état, 1978 massacres of Alevis in Maras and 1980 military coup d'état and is known to have peaked with the civil war in the 1990s in the Eastern provinces of Turkey. Hence the majority of the migrants from Turkey in the UK are Kurdish Alevis from eastern provinces such as Maras, Sivas, Kayseri and Tunceli. This research was conducted between September 2014 and September 2015. 60 individuals from Turkish speaking communities were recruited and semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted. Interviews were transcribed and then analysed using tools of thematic data analysis. The findings indicated stronger interest in politics and higher level of political participation by Kurdish and Alevi participants. Hence this paper offers a detailed analysis of political interest and political participation of Kurdish/Alevi community living in London. Three key areas are: i) how they organize themselves under the umbrella of British Alevi Federation; ii) their relationship with civil society organisations and ethnic economy, iii) their activities in order to create public interest and opinion in relation to what is happening in Turkey.

Keywords: *Alevis; London; ethnic economy; diaspora; political participation.*

Introduction

Migration to Britain from Turkey differs in many ways from ordinary labour migration to Europe. Even though an agreement was signed between these two countries in 1961 migration from Turkey remained highly limited in the initial years of the agreement. In the decades from mid-1980s onwards, migration from Turkey to Britain gained pace and a community of about 250,000 emerged in the 2010s (Sirkeci & Esipova, 2013; Sirkeci, Bilecen, et al., 2016).

Political motives play a major role in migration from Turkey to Britain. In the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century, migrants who are mostly

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of Kurdish and Alevi descent have settled in eastern and northern boroughs of London, in which the textile industry, once, was dominant. Since the migration sourced from cities such as Maraş, Sivas, Kayseri and Malatya in which Alevis highly reside, London began to host a significant Alevi community (Bilecen & Araz, 2015; Demir, 2012:824). At this point, fluidity between Kurdish and Alevi identities should not be ignored. This fluidity between ethnicity and religious sect affects the political manners and behaviours of Turkish speaking migrants in Britain.

What solidifies the Alevi community in London is the ethnic economy. After the textile industry moved away from London, these people with their accumulated capitals become self-employed. They opened up their own particular small scale businesses, such as off licence, cafe shops and restaurants. As a result of this economic activity, the migrant community have built a strong business network among themselves. These business relations have led the community to form an 'ethnic economy' and thus, actively organise around informal economic practices. When all of these are thought together, the ethnic economy on the one hand solidifies the inter-group relations, on the other lets the migrants to become a part of the British society (Karaosmanoğlu, 2013: 373; Dedeoğlu, 2014).

This article is based on understanding why politicization and political participation, has risen among the Alevi community. In addition, interest and participation of the Alevi community in the political life of Turkey and the UK will be examined through the perspective of diaspora and the ethnic economy. On this inquiry, instead of trying to clarify whether the Alevi community qualifies to be called as a 'diaspora' or not, we will discuss the reasons behind the high politicization in the recent years, and argue that how the ethnic economy is the hidden force behind both diasporic identity and politicization.

Data and Methods

The results of this study have been obtained through participant observation, news sources about the community from Turkey in Britain, and the semi structured interview technique, a branch of qualitative methodology.

The study was carried out between September 1st 2014 and September 1st, 2015. The group of sixty participants were selected by simple random sampling. The participants' ethnical and sectarian identities, as well as their sex and age were carefully selected for a consistent distribution. Due to this fact, the survey doesn't only include the Alevi people. To understand Turkey descendant migrants' political participation in a comparative fashion, migrants coming from other sectarian backgrounds were included in the interviews as well. Each interview lasted between half an hour to an hour and twenty minutes.

Diaspora in migration literature

One of the most controversial concepts in social sciences is Diaspora. Within the concept of diaspora lays the emotions of dedication and loyalty to a

homeland which people had been forced to leave. Diaspora is shortly described as “communities which live outside, but maintain links with their homelands – are getting larger, thicker and stronger”. The term diaspora is used in common language, to refer to a religious or an ethnic group who had to leave their homelands, and as a consequence have built a strong identification through mutual solidarity. Safran views the existence of the diasporic consciousness highly essential in the formation of the diasporic identity.

Table 1. Participant profiles- Ethnic Identities

	Kurdish		Turkish		Turkish Cypriot		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
	11	9	11	10	10	9	60
Mother language							
Turkish		6		21		14	41
Kurdish		9					9
Zazaki		4					4
English		1				6	7
Single		6		9		12	27
Married		14		12		7	33
No schooling		2					2
Primary school		4		4		2	10
Secondary school		7		9		6	22
University or postgraduate		7		7		11	25
Mean age		41.25		39.23		47.26	

Table 2. Participant profiles- Religious Identities

	Alevi		Sunnis		The Others		Total
	Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.	
	8	7	16	10	8	11	60
Mother language							
Turkish		9		20		12	41
Kurdish		2		4		3	9
Zazaki		3		1			4
English		1		1		5	7
Single		7		9		11	27
Married		8		17		8	33
No schooling				1		1	2
Primary school		3		6		2	11
Secondary school		6		10		7	23
University or postgraduate		6		9		9	24
Mean age		40.20		41.30		45.78	

Since the end of the 1980's there has been an explosion in the literature of diaspora. The new form of 'nation-state' and the improvements in transportation and communication technologies have extended the field of the term diaspora to include the labour migrants who had to abandon their countries but remain emotionally and socially dedicated to their homelands, as well as those who support terrorism and extreme nationalism in their home countries (Fullilove, 2008). The term diaspora has also started to be used without any relation to migration, as seen in the case of the emergence of the term, 'gay diaspora'. With Brubaker's own words (2005:3) the usage of the term diaspora extended too much that the term lost its instrumental power, and thus, has been excluded from being an analytical term and became common. "If everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so." Cohen (2008: 8); too states that the diaspora seems to have escaped its conceptual cage by being used by scientists, intellectuals, engineers and even by football players.

Migration literature has always had a hard time distinguishing forced migration from voluntary migration. However, if there is an atrocity that forces people to migrate, it is possible to categorize and characterize according to the scale and density. There are qualitative differences between forcefully migrate due to the threat of being expelled by a cruel leader, being pressured by mass riots or having the threat of ethnic cleansing, as opposed to hunger, poverty or general social pressure. (Cohen, 2008:2) At this point begins the conceptual field of 'diaspora'.

Safran (1991: 83-84), who considers 'traumatic departure from the homeland' as a central notion, defines diaspora as follows:

- a) Spreading out of the group members to more than one country,
- b) Creation of united memories and myths about the homeland
- c) Not enough integration to the country of residence
- d) Living in the dream of returning to the homeland when the right time arrives
- e) Putting efforts for the development of the homeland, and protecting its interests
- f) Having a group mentality and relying on solidarity

According to Başer (2013: 72), this definition does not even represent the current situation of the Armenian and the Jewish diasporas, which are the main influences of the concept of diaspora, because the aims and activities of the diaspora groups, too, evolve and change according to the spirit of the time.

Brubaker (2005) states that diasporas resist being assimilated, without being too much alienated from the society they live in. This means that diasporas form borders for themselves and create group solidarity within those borders. Thus, Brubaker creates a new category and suggests 3 titles:

- a) Dispersion: Spreading out from the homeland,
- b) Homeland Orientation: Having a tendency towards the homeland,

c) Boundary Maintenance: Having definitive borders *vis-a-vis* the local community in the state of residence (Brubaker, 2005).

By modifying the criterions set by Cohen and Safran, Griffiths (1999: 33) suggests the following common features:

- a) the dispersal from a homeland, often traumatic in nature
- b) a collective memory of home entailing an idealisation of home or even its creation
- c) the existence of a return movement or belief in return
- d) a strong ethnic consciousness in the members of the diaspora
- e) a troubled relation with the host society
- f) the existence of ties with co-ethnics in other countries
- g) the possibility of cultural renewal in the diaspora.

The most important point, which studies on diaspora commonly agree is that diasporas are non-homogenous and multi-layered communities. Each diaspora member or each diaspora group has different benefits and purposes. Therefore, instead of saying diaspora, it would be more appropriate to say 'Diasporas' in plurality. It is a must to consider this non-homogenous construction, to understand the role of diasporas on a transnational basis and to understand their different strategies. (Başer, 2013 78-79). It is a very debatable subject to decide which features should be included in the definition of diaspora. The academics who study this subject have recently been struggling about determining the common features of the diaspora in light of the aforementioned developments.

Alevi Diaspora

The definition of Alevism is a controversial subject which surpasses this study's purpose. Are they a religious community or an ethnic group, or a political movement? The views on the topic are diverse and often contradictory. Some would describe Alevism as another branch of general Muslim community, whereas others would defend an opposite view claiming that Alevism is outside of Islam and that, it is a belief system on its own. To give a few examples from the relevant literature; for example, according to Çakır (2010: 86) "it is a movement which has religious bases". Massicard (2013) expresses his views on the Alevi identity by describing it "as much as a movement that is based on an identity, it's also an unidentified identity". Additionally, Alevism also refers to a political movement as stated above. While the Sunni theology is explained through religious doctrines, Alevi cosmology is formed around political rebellions. Thus, when one refers to Alevism, the political aspects become as relevant as the theological and cultural ones. As Hopkins suggests: "The Alevi identity cross cuts language, ethnicity and place-of-origin identity makers in complex and sometimes contradictory ways" (Hopkins, 2011: 448). For example, in the UK, Alevi and Kurdish identities

may have been in conflict on some matters, but sometimes they can also find common ground on which they are able to politically reconcile.

The Alevi movement has risen at the end of 1980's both in Turkey and in Europe at the same time. So, when one talks about the Alevi movement, he is not only talking about a national scale movement, but also an international movement. For Erol, (2012: 836) the movement has become visible through associations, foundations, and Alevi houses (Cemevis), established by Alevis living abroad. The author approaches this cultural identity that is in the formation in the last 20 years, from the concept of diaspora. For this reason, diaspora refers to a dynamic and a variable 'process'. It is affected by the homeland's and the host country's political, social and economical developments and hence, it constantly transforms its strategies *vis-a-vis* these developments (Brubaker, 2005: 12).

Alevi identity's recognition first began in Germany, then spread throughout other European countries. Thanks to this, so to say, migrants almost 'rediscovered' their identity (Dedeoğlu, 2014: 80). The reason behind the political consciousness, maintenance of strong relations within the community and being organized around common interests stem from the tragedies Alevi people had faced in their home country. The 1978 Maraş and the 1980 Çorum incidents forced Alevi people to migrate. Similarly, the 1993 Sivas Massacre has a very important role for Alevis to be organized (Gül, 1999: 111; Ata, 2015: 133, Zorlu, 2015: 150) Massicard, (2013) and Coşan Efe (2015: 94) identify the start for Alevis' political and ethnical polarisation as the 1993 Sivas and the 1995 Gazi incidents. Similarly, European Union's development reports and the decisions of European Court of Human Rights have positively affected the acknowledgement of Alevi movement internationally.¹

Cohen (1997) distinguishes five categories of diaspora: 1) victim diaspora, 2) labour diaspora, 3) trade diaspora, 4) imperial diaspora and 5) cultural diaspora. Following this interpretation - also considering the limited nature of regular migration from Turkey to Britain - if we examine the Alevi community in London, we may argue that they fall into the first and second categories. Furthermore, ethnic economy plays an essential role for the diasporic character of the Alevi community in Britain. As will be argued in the next chapter, the ethnic economy, causes migrants who have come in a fashion of 'chain migration' due to their social network, to get included in the ethnic enclave, following the reasons such as lack of language proficiency, job training and education. And this is one of the most significant elements, which socially binds the Alevi community. Sharing of values such as know-how, skills and

¹ EU reports draw attention to Alevi issue since 1998 (Massicard 2013: 348). Alevis were considered as "minority Muslims who are not Sunni's" for the first time in 2004 reports (Zirh, 2015: 83). EHRC recognized the application which was about obligatory religious classes in schools in 2007 (Massicard 2013; 253). The court also approved that there had been discrimination against Alevis with the decision taken in 1st of December 2014. (Coşan Efe, 2015: 93).

information, and especially solidarity play crucial roles in the development of the ethnic economy. In the era of globalization, ethnic ties also enable migrants to use their knowledge of other societies and their transnational networks to develop their business abroad (Pecoud, 2010: 62). However, oftenly these ties result in a neglect of cut-throat competition, conflict and exploitation within the ethnic economy. The ethnic businesses also possess a vital role for the community from a different perspective. For instance, Cao (2003: 1580) suggests that an ethnic enclave economy may effectively change the order in a poor, but an active area, making it safer and more desirable than a well-off, but a less crowded one.

Alevi Community's Activities Regarding the Politics in Britain

Religious and sectarian identities are one of the influential variables on political participation. Sectarian identity affects the migrants' behaviours, values and attitudes in the social life and in times of congregation. In fact, in some cases religion itself is purposefully politicized or different political perceptions may affect the perception of religion (Tatar 2003: 341). Also, religious foundations play an important role in political participation of the religious and ethnic minorities (Giugni et al., 2014). Öner (2012: 320) informs that religious communities make migrants feel confident like "a safe port in the storm."

Alevi foundations which are organized under the roof of the British Alevi Federation (BAF), play significant roles in increasing awareness of Alevism and its recognition.² Also, they organize activities to light the way for Alevis' problems in Turkey and in the Middle East. As a result of this, Alevism was recognized as a religion and faith by England and Wales Endowment Commission in October, 2015 (Cumhuriyet, 2015). All in all, in recent years, the Alevi community has gradually raised its recognition.

With the increasing social consciousness of Alevism, the community constituted an "All Party Parliamentary Group For Alevis" in the British parliament in December, 2015 (LondraGazete, 2016).³ The aim of the group is to shed light upon the Alevis' problems and make the community's voice heard. Additionally, the commission also concern themselves with Alevis' problems in Turkey. Hence, the parliamentary group tries to catch the British public attention in order to amplify the political conflicts regarding Alevis in Turkey.

An additional subject which Alevi community dwells on is the inclusion of Alevism courses in the school curriculums of European countries. Alevism classes, which are already being taught in Germany, Denmark, Netherlands and some other countries in Europe, were also included as obligatory classes of

²As well as Cemevis, the Federation also includes youth and women organisations such as the Alevi Youth Federation (Alevi Gençlik Federasyonu) and the Alevi Women's Union of Britain (Britanya Alevi Kadınlar Birliği). The Youth Federation of Britain has been formed with the aim to organise Alevi students in different universities all over Britain.

³ The group, headed by the Labour Party's Enfield deputy Joan Ryan, includes members from both the Labour and the Conservatives.

religion in some schools in London as a consequence of Alevi community's lobbying activities (Alevi Haber, 2011).

As a consequence of all these processes and efforts, as revealed during the field work and the interviews, the interest and participation of Kurdish and Alevi migrants into British politics is higher than the rest of the community from Turkey. Indeed, the 2014 local election results in England justify this finding. Alevi and Kurdish communities, due to their political lobbying activities, gained council memberships within the boroughs, such as, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Islington, in which Turkey descendent population is higher than anywhere else. Alevi community in Enfield's, and Kurdish community in Hackney's and Haringey's municipal elections made remarkable lobbying activities.

This case approves the fact that Kurdish and Alevi people are more active than their Turkish and Sunni counterparts. The reason behind the lower participation of Sunni people compared to the Alevis is because of the political differences between the Sunni community, which makes it harder for them to reach a common political view (Coştu, 2009).

An interviewer who appreciated the bonds Alevi people have within the community said that it should set an example to Sunni community as well.

Our Alevi friends are very organized here. Since they are very organized they stand shoulder to shoulder and they politically position themselves well. I appreciate it. I don't mean it in a bad way. It should set an example to our Sunni friends.... Sunnis should be able to make solidarity as well, which Alevi people do through Cemevis; actually whole society should be able to do so. (Interviewer 26, 43 years old, male)

In line with this, the research shows that many migrants from Turkey who live in north London know their deputies, which is revealed through the answers to questions about direct or indirect contact with the local politicians. Especially the deputies of Labour Party keep close ties with the community.⁴ It became highly evident in the interviews that the community from Turkey mostly supports the Labour Party.⁵

The reason why Alevi community is politically very well organized in London is due to localization. Migrants from Turkey had gathered in specific regions where the textile sector was dense in the first years of migration. Living together in a social community has improved solidarity and relations between them. The main provider of this fact is the chain of relations built around the

⁴For example, at the time when this survey was being held, Jeremy Corbyn, who was a candidate deputy for Islington's region Labour party at the time, visited Day-Mer (Turkish and Kurdish Community Center) and Britain Alevi Federation and London's cemevi to gain the support of the Turkish community.

⁵In June 2016 referendum for European Union, the district where the Turkish community located, voted for to stay within the union. Hackney % 78, Haringey % 76, Islington % 75, Enfield % 56. (bbc.co.uk, 2016).

ethnic economy.⁶ ‘Informal relations’ plays an important role in the improvement of ethnical economy. The underlying reasons behind these informal relations are formed by the fact that the community’s businesses in Britain are mostly compiled of small scale family businesses, which feed the need for employees from the community itself. Thus, family relations and the community ties strongly affect the business life of the migrants. This fact brings about some practical results for migrants, such as working intense and long hours with low wages for the sake of community ties. So, ethnical economy which makes the relations stronger within the community also makes the workplace exploitation invisible.

There are structural reasons behind the tendency of the community from Turkey towards family-oriented small scale businesses. These reasons can be summed up as; the lack of language proficiency especially among the first generation migrants, low education levels and inexistence of vocational qualifications (Bilecen, 2016). Moreover, the fact that the labour demand within the ethnic economy is supplied from the community itself bears practical results for the migrants, such as working long hours, high density of work-load and having lower incomes.

Interviewee 27 has described the ethnic economy of the community from Turkey in the following way:

In terms of conditions, there’s a huge difference between working for an Englishman or an Anglicized Cypriot, and a Turk. An Englishman gives you all the rights you want. It’s him who tells you to work for 8 hours. But a Turk would like you to work for 24 hours. And the money he gives you is nothing whatsoever. You cannot access your other rights as well. (Interviewee 27, 55 years old, male)

Recent years’ studies on the political participation of migrants in Europe have focused on the role of social capital and non-governmental organisations (Giugni et al, 2014; Long vd. 2014; Fennema and Tillie, 2010). As stated earlier, migration to UK is different than classical “labour migration”, but rather carries political motives, stemming from Kurdish/Alevi dissidents. Thus, the way immigrants relate to the NGOs is characterized mostly by their political leanings. In this regard, it is possible to analyze NGOs in London under four categories: 1) NGOs in relation with the left wing movements in Turkey, established due to the politically motivated immigration. 2) Kinship organisations; for instance, associations belonging to townspeople of almost all districts of Maraş, which actively work in London, and especially possess strong roles in creating an "ethnic economy" and social solidarity bonds. 3) Associations shaping their politics in relation to the ‘Kurdish issue’. People’s Houses and Kurdish Community Center, among all the Turkey-related associations, have the lead in terms of being the most active and having the

⁶In the year of 1975 the number of restaurants wasn’t much more than 200 in Britain whereas in 2001 it reached 15.000. It is estimated that just kebab sector contributed 2.2 billion pound to the Britain economy.

largest human base. 4) Religious organizations, providing for the socio-psychological needs of its members by creating a group consciousness and a sense of identity. "Alevi Culture Center and Cemevi" is one of the most prominent among the organizations founded in London by those from Turkey. In addition to being a religious institution, Cemevi is also a society centre providing counselling and translation services, resolving problems within the community, and facilitating various social, cultural and political activities. In addition to helping people free of charge, especially with language problems they have with the bureaucracy in the UK, Cemevi also constitutes a space where the funerals are undertaken. The Alevi community holds in the Cemevi not only all religious gatherings on special holy-days, but also other community meetings too.

Direct and Indirect Activities of the Alevi Community Regarding Turkey

Different studies in diaspora literature agree upon the existence of political interest and efforts of the diaspora regarding the conditions in the home country (Brubaker, 2005; Cohen, 2008; Safran 1991; Griffith, 1999). The Alevi community organises activities in the United Kingdom to get the attention of the British society towards the political developments in Turkey. These activities can be divided into two categories which are the ones carried out in Turkey and the others in England.

Today migrants can follow and reach their homeland much faster, as a result of the improving communication and transportation technologies. These developments required a redefinition for the concept of "human mobility" in the migration literature once again (Sirkeci& Cohen 2016). The ease of reaching their homelands enables Alevis to get involved with the problems in Turkey directly.

For instance, BAF has joined the initiatives under the flag of 'Maraş Life Platform' regarding the planned temporary settlement for Syrian refugees in Maraş. Also, the association held a press release in London to get the attention of the society on this matter (Telgraf.co.uk, 2016). The Alevi Association is also organising a remembrance ceremony in Maraş for the anniversary of Maraş massacre every year.

President of BAF, İsrail Erbil, highlights the Alevi community's demands from the Turkish government such as; Cemevi should be considered as a house of worship, the directorate of religious affairs should be abolished, Turkish government shall face with the Alevi massacres, Madımak Hotel should be converted into museum of shame, Dergahs and Darvish convents shall be returned to the Alevi community, construction of mosques in Alevi villages should be stopped, the obligatory religious classes which have programs according to Sunni Islam doctrine should be abolished, Alevi assimilation should be stopped, secularism must be implemented in real terms (Alevinet, 2016).

Thus, the Alevi community in London follows the political developments in Turkey closely. When asked whether they follow the politics in Turkey or in Britain more, most people answered that they are more interested in politics of Turkey since the first generation of migrants still have language problems. Having communication and language problems, and being a closed community due to the 'ethnic economy', it is inevitable that the first generation of migrants are interested more in the Turkish politics. Added to this, is the idea that "in English politics, although the parties and the actors change, this does not lead to a political change", which is a widespread judgement among the migrant community.

I don't follow it. Because we don't know how to read and write in English, and also there's not much that interests us here. An election is happening or not, you have no idea about it. I just go and vote for the Labour Party like a sheep. It's like the Alevis who vote for the CHP [Republican Peoples' Party] in Turkey like sheep. (Interviewee 6, 47 years old, male).

The interest of migrants in the Turkish politics increases at election times. As a matter of fact, before the general elections held on June 7th, and November 1st2015, numerous politicians from Turkey were invited by NGOs in London to meet their constituents. During the two days when migrants from Turkey living in Britain could vote for the elections in Turkey, HDP and CHP provided free transportation from Cemevis to the polls, namely the Olympia Exhibition and Conference Hall in Southern London.⁷ Turnout in the June 7th and the November 1st 2015 elections increased threefold compared to the turnout in the previous presidential elections. This is a strong indication of the high politicization level in the recent years.

Another aspect of political involvement is 'donation'. The group allocating most of the donations for political motivation is the Kurdish community. For some Kurdish migrants, donating money is almost a symbol of their adherence to the Kurdish cause and the movement. Similarly, among the Alevi community too, due to the strength of communal bonds, political donations are very common. It became evident through the studies that Sunni people mostly donate to the charities which operate for religious purposes.

Conclusion

The common sufferings from the past hold the Alevi community in Britain together, and the experience of trauma, by providing emotional attachment, motivates them to closely follow the developments in the politics of Turkey, as well as to get involved in the politics of Britain. Last twenty years have been a

⁷ At the 7th July 2015 general elections, HDP received 14,594 votes (%59.31), CHP 5,134 (% 20.8) votes and AKP 3,458 (% 14.4) votes out of 24,606 valid votes casted by Turkish citizens in Britain. At the 1st November 2015 elections, out of 33,238 valid votes, HDP received 18,105 (%54.4), CHP 7,123 (%21.4) and AKP 6,717 (% 20.2) (YSK, 2015).

milestone for the organisation of Alevis under an identity that is politicized. Changes in the economic orientation of the community and the 'rediscovery' of the communal identity enabled Alevis to stand for their minority rights in both of the countries.

However, it is not possible to understand this interest and involvement in the political life of the two countries without considering the ethnic economy. Ethnic economy, while binding people together socially and culturally by producing and reproducing the solidarity bonds between them, also creates a togetherness that is channelized into political activity. In this regard, BAF and Cemevi are the ones that have taken up the mission of being the bridges among the community.

Most importantly, it is mandatory to take into account the class positions at this point. In one of the interviews, when asked if they follow political developments, a migrant working long hours answered: "*you are expecting too much from a person who works 72 hours a week*". Many migrants often work long hours in the service sector. Their intense pace of work and long working hours do not leave them time to follow and participate in the political activities. Due to their socio-economic status, most migrants working in the waged labour force are not involved in the mechanisms of participation. This approves the idea of Bauböck that the diaspora is formed by creating a transnational identity and memory serving the interests and political projections of 'elite groups' (Başer, 2013). Therefore, it is a must to consider the ethnic economy and communal bonds with a perspective of class differences that are realized in the work place and goes hidden for the sake of the community. In summary, ethnic economy, while making exploitation invisible between different classes of migrants, essentially makes them only visible as a 'political community'. The ethnic economy by-passes the crucial class differences within the community, and creates a hidden practice of exploitation through the common identity, all in all favouring the community's elites. As a last note, it should be stated that this nature of ethnic economy is not only a specific case for Alevis. As shown in the work regarding the diaspora literature, the relation between the ethnic economy and diasporic identity is rather a mutual consequence. By focusing on the case of Alevis in Britain, this article sought to prove the politicization and diasporization processes are inevitably related to, and maybe to an extent inseparable from, the ethnic economic relations. Thus, it must be stated that this phenomenon is not only found in the Alevi community, but may easily be found in other migrant communities, which similarly have formed themselves in the dense ties of ethnic economy.

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