Transnational migrant politics in the Netherlands: historical structures and current events
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Citation for published version (APA):

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Download date: 02 Apr 2019
4. **Transnational Ties and Activities of Migrant Organisational Networks**

Previous studies on migrant organisations in the Netherlands have focused on their role in the integration of migrants into Dutch society. No systematic research, however, has been done on their ties to homeland organisations and states. This chapter aims to fill this gap. It analyses the transnational ties of Surinamese and Turkish (including Kurdish) organisational networks in the Netherlands over the periods 2001-2005 and 1999-2005 (respectively) and describes the form, content and type of activities channelled through these ties. It further examines how (migrant) civil societies and political opportunity structures in the home and host countries – and diplomatic relations between them – have influenced these ties.

Fennema and Tillie (1999) have argued that strong and dense organisational networks foster migrant political participation in the *country of residence*. This chapter asks how the strength and density of organisational networks influence *transnational* political participation. Are some migrant groups weakly organised because they direct their efforts to maintaining ties with homeland organisations? Or do strong organisational networks in the Netherlands facilitate both transnational and immigrant political participation?

To answer these questions the next section summarises the theoretical and empirical conclusions and methodology of migrant network analyses conducted by the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES) at the University of Amsterdam (Fennema & Tillie 1999; Van Heelsum et al. 1999; Van Heelsum & Voorthuysen 2002). The subsequent sections then examine the transnational ties and activities of Surinamese and Turkish/Kurdish organisations in the Netherlands.

**Civil society, networks and political participation**

Inspired by the work of Robert Putnam (1993), Fennema and Tillie (1999; 2001) have claimed that when migrant organisations are in greater contact with each other social trust spreads within the migrant group. This results in a community with more collective ‘social capital’ – an organisational network made up of trust relations. For migrants in Amsterdam, Fennema et al. (2000) have postulated that networks based on interlocking directorates increase the exchange of information while limiting free riding. Their studies found Amsterdam’s Turks – who have a higher turnout rate in municipal elections and more elected city councillors – to be organised in denser networks than Surinamese (the pattern holds nationally as well). Stronger networks create more social trust and social capital; social trust and willingness to cooperate increase political participation (Fennema, Tillie, Heelsum, Berger & Wolff 2000: 15-16).
There is a significant difference in municipal election turnout between Surinamese and Turkish voters.\textsuperscript{28} Table 4.1 shows the figures for Turks and Surinamese/Antilleans in five Dutch cities in 1998 and in Amsterdam and Rotterdam in 2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amsterdam</th>
<th>Rotterdam</th>
<th>The Hague</th>
<th>Utrecht</th>
<th>Arnhem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turks</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Compared to Surinamese, Turks voted more often for candidates of their own ethnic origin (Fennema et al. 2000). This may partly explain why more municipal councillors of Turkish origin were elected (see table 4.2). Turkish candidates also campaigned more within their own ethnic group, making them more attractive to Dutch political parties trying to broaden their electoral appeal. The majority of those elected as municipal councillors in the large cities were active within migrant organisations; some were approached by political parties on this basis. In the four large Dutch cities – Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht – half of the municipal councillors were elected through preferential votes; a quarter believed these were cast by members of their own migrant group (Van Heelsum 2002: 189).

Table 4.2 Number of Surinamese and Turkish municipal councillors, 1998 and 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turks</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Fennema and Tillie (1999) measured the amount of social capital available to migrant groups by (1) the number of organisations, (2) the density of organisations, and (3) the percentage of isolated organisations in the network. These same factors were the focus of the IMES fieldwork on Turkish and Surinamese organisations conducted, respectively, in 1998-1999 and in 2001. The IMES study found 1,125 organisations among Turks (including Kurds) and 882 organisations among Surinamese. As these numbers are fluid, the findings need to be interpreted in the year of study (1999 for Turks and 2001 for Surinamese). Table 4.3 presents the number of organisations in the Netherlands and their density (organisations per member).

\textsuperscript{28} Numbers for national elections are unavailable.
Table 4.3 Number and density of Surinamese and Turkish organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>Density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese (2001)</td>
<td>308,824</td>
<td>882</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turks (1999)</td>
<td>299,662</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The IMES network analyses were based on the interlocking directorates of organisations. This meant organisations were connected when one person was on the administrative board of two or more organisations. Data (names of the organisations, their addresses, and the names of their board members) were acquired from the Dutch Chamber of Commerce. This information was available for 80 per cent of Surinamese organisations and 69 per cent of Turkish organisations; the remainder were not included in the analysis (see table 4.3, 4.4).

Table 4.4 presents the results of the IMES network analysis. The second column shows the number and percentage of isolated organisations (those not connected with other organisations). The third column represents organisations tied to at least one other organisation; this is defined as a cluster. The fourth column indicates the number of organisations in the largest cluster while the fifth shows the number of clusters found.

Table 4.4 Isolated and connected Surinamese and Turkish organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>Isolated Number connected in clusters ≥ 2 organisations</th>
<th>Number in the largest cluster</th>
<th>Number of clusters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese (N=710)</td>
<td>374 (53%)</td>
<td>336 (47%)</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish (N=773)</td>
<td>374 (48%)</td>
<td>399 (52%)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There was an important qualitative difference between the largest Turkish and Surinamese clusters. While the IMES study reflected the ethnic, religious and ideological diversity of both groups (see table 4.5 and 4.6), one ethnic group (East Indians) dominated the largest Suriname cluster; in the largest Turkish cluster, all large streams were represented. The Turkish network was thus more diverse – in theoretical terms, social capital extends to more people outside any one ethnic, religious or ideological group. To sum up, the argument is that Turks are quantitatively and qualitatively better organised than Surinamese, which positively affects Turkish participation in Dutch politics. The question is what this means for Surinamese and Turkish *transnational* participation.

So far this section has discussed the empirical and theoretical conclusions drawn by the IMES researchers in their study of Turkish and Surinamese networks. Their
findings form the starting point of this study. This chapter first aims to provide a
general picture of the transnational ties of those migrant organisations central within
the IMES network – those with the most interlocking directorates and assumed to
have the most contacts (Van Heelsum et al. 1999). The aim here is to find all
transnationally active organisations, not only politically active ones. Most importantly,
by focusing on the entire organisational network, this chapter shows which
organisations are not transnationally active. It thus addresses one of the main criticisms
of research on migrant transnationalism (see chapter 2): reliance on single case studies
that due to their design find high levels of transnational involvement. In the words of
Portes et al. (2002), they ‘sample on the dependent variable’.

Many organisations found to maintain transnational ties were not included in the
IMES study. In large part this was due to dynamism within migrant organisations.
Since the collection of data, boards of directors have changed, organisations have
dissolved and new ones have been created. Some organisations were not included
because essential data was missing or because they were not registered with the
Chamber of Commerce. As noted earlier, the IMES network was constructed
exclusively using interlocking directorates; there are, however, good reasons to include
other types of ties. Membership in federations or umbrella associations – or structural
cooperation within, for example, joint projects – may provide organisations with as
many, if not more, ties than interlocking directorates. It further appeared that the
number of transnational interlocking directorates was negligible. Administrative boards
are seldom transnational in the sense that people from both the Netherlands and
Suriname or Turkey are represented. Thus additional research was needed to provide
a more updated picture of the IMES network (see figure 4.1, 4.3 and 4.5). More
importantly, including these other kinds of ties allows us to see which types of ties
between which types of organisations channel transnational political activity.

New data were collected in the Netherlands, Suriname and Turkey through
interviews with organisational leaders and elites, through my own observations during
activities, by reading newspaper articles, websites, organisations’ brochures and
reports, and secondary literature where available (for a full overview see appendices A,
C and D). The new national and transnational ties I found were based on structural or
sporadic cooperation, advice, memberships (among organisations and individuals),
and kinship. (While ties with homeland political parties are included in the network
drawings, these are discussed separately in chapters 5-7). During the interviews I asked
interviewees to provide me with the contact details of homeland organisations they
maintain ties with. Out of this sample, I selected persons to interview. All contacts –
including those not interviewed – were entered in a database, which allowed me to
update and transnationalise the original IMES network. In the end, the database
comprised 329 Surinamese and 416 Turkish/Kurdish names, most of which represent
one or more organisations.
Despite the advantages of including the new material, limits remain. While I managed to check most of the central organisations from the IMES study to see if ties were current, I could not trace these for the whole network. Thus it remains plausible that interlocking directorates that no longer existed in 2005 were included. Furthermore, any mistakes made in the IMES research (see appendix in Van Heelsum et al. 1999) were automatically transferred to my network. Finally, the qualitative research is not representative; there may be many more transnational ties than I found. My findings therefore do not allow speaking of a transnational network; they do, however, provide a snapshot of the transnational ties of migrant organisational networks – which provide insight into the structure of Surinamese, Turkish and Kurdish transnationalism in the Netherlands. The transnational ties of migrant organisational networks have not been analysed before. It is my contention that – given the available resources – this is the best picture of the collective structure of transnational politics one could draw.

Tables 4.5 and 4.6 show the types of organisations included in my analysis (see appendix D for a list of all included organisations). The first column establishes the type of organisation. The second and third columns indicate the number of organisations included in the IMES sample and the number of organisations I included from this sample in my analysis. The fourth and fifth columns show the number of migrant and homeland organisations I added to the sample.

By including ties other than interlocking directorates, the largest Surinamese cluster becomes much more diverse. Whereas the IMES network consisted predominantly of East Indian Hindu organisations, the network now also includes ‘general Surinamese’, Maroon, Javanese, a Chinese and an Amer-Indian organisation. Many relevant organisations were founded after 2001 when the IMES data collection was finished. The dynamism of the Surinamese organisational landscape in the Netherlands is breathtaking: there are almost no transnational ties on the collective level over five years old.

Table 4.5 shows that I included 25 Surinamese organisations from the IMES sample, 73 newly found migrant organisations, and 52 organisations located in Suriname. This brings the total to 150 organisations in one cluster (see figure 4.1). As table 4.6 shows, fewer Turkish organisations were included. The main explanation for this difference – which I elaborate on later in this chapter – is that many Turkish organisations are federations which unite dozens of organisations. The majority of Surinamese organisations in contrast are single operations and often very small.

For Turkish/Kurdish organisations, I included 18 from the IMES sample and added 41 new migrant organisations, as well as 32 organisations or institutions located in Turkey. This brings the number of organisations included in the analysis to 91, connected in six clusters. The two largest clusters consist of 64 and fifteen organisations (figure 4.3 and 4.5) while four smaller clusters consist of two to six organisations.
Table 4.5 Types of Surinamese organisations included in the network analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Organisations in IMES network(^{29})</th>
<th>Included</th>
<th>Migrant organisations added to the IMES sample</th>
<th>Organisations added to the network located in Suriname</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Indian</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-Surinamese</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javanese</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural with a Surinamese board of directors</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amer-Indians</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maroons</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Surinamese</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6 Types of Turkish organisations included in the network analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>In IMES sample(^{30})</th>
<th>Included</th>
<th>Migrant organisations added to the IMES sample</th>
<th>Organisations added to the network located in Turkey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minorities</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports/cultural</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platform/advisory board</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Turkish</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sections present two versions of each network figure. The first versions (figures 4.1, 4.3 and 4.5) present all national and transnational ties; the second versions (figures 4.2, 4.4 and 4.6) highlight the transnational ties of organisations that are not political parties (ties between organisations in the Netherlands and the homeland and third country transnational ties). In the figures a distinction is made between organisations located in the Netherlands and the homeland. I have also

\(^{29}\) Van Heelsum & Voorthuysen (2001: 10-22).
distinguished between highly institutionalised and low institutionalised ties. Highly institutionalised ties are those based on formal agreements and structural contact (interlocking directorates, organisations’ or board members’ memberships, structural cooperation). Lowly institutionalised ties are either highly informal or imply less structured contact (through kinship ties, sporadic cooperation, advice) (see table 2.3). Finally, a distinction is made between migrant organisations/NGOs and political parties. How homeland political parties are embedded (or not) in the migrant organisational network is discussed in the remaining empirical chapters 5, 6 and 7 (see figures 5.1, 6.1 and 6.2).

To gain insight into which types of organisations maintain which kinds of transnational ties, the descriptions of the network figures are organised by type of organisation rather than by network subcluster. For reasons of clarity, I do not describe all the ties and organisations included in the figures. The sections on Surinamese and Turkish/Kurdish networks first generally describe the composition of the networks and identifiable subclusters, followed by a brief description of their transnational ties. It then investigates the transnational ties and activities of the central organisations in the IMES networks’ largest cluster. This is followed by an analysis of the national and transnational ties and activities of the organisations that were not included in the IMES sample but are key players in transnational politics. Every description starts with an introduction of the organisation, followed by an analysis of their transnational ties and activities.

**Surinamese organisational networks in the Netherlands**

The complex Surinamese network consists of many small organisations often focusing on one ethnic group and a specific religious denomination. For example, the umbrella organ of East Indian Ahmadis Muslims maintains highly institutionalised ties with Ahmadi groups in Pakistan (Lahore) and lowly institutionalised ties with the Ahmadi Muslim organisation SIV in Suriname (SIV 1983, 1988). Though these organisations and ties appear in the network figures 4.1 and 4.2, they are not discussed further: the number of Ahmadis in both the Netherlands and Suriname is tiny while their organisational ties do not facilitate transnational political activities relevant to either country.\(^{31}\) This also applies to Afro-Surinamese organisations based on shared African roots, Afro-Surinamese Pentecostal and Moravian churches, Afro-Surinamese winti organisations, and the organisations of East Indian Sunnis, several East Indian Hindu denominations, Javanese Sunnis, Javanese Christians, Chinese and Amer-Indians. As previously noted, this section only examines the transnational ties of the most important organisations which represent the larger ethnic or religious groups (see chapter 1 for the ethnic and religious composition of Surinamese migrants in the Netherlands).

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\(^{31}\) Interview with SIV secretary, Paramaribo, 18 August 2005.
Figure 4.1 shows that these different ethnic and religious organisations form subclusters. Javanese are clustered on the bottom left around the Committee for the Commemoration of Javanese Immigration (CHJI) and the foundation Setasan. Just above this, the Maroon subcluster is centred around the foundation Sabana Peti (Sabana); on its right is an Afro-Surinamese cluster centred around the Global African Congress (GAC). East Indian Hindu youth organisations are densely connected in the middle around the Hindu Student Forum in the Netherlands (HFSN). This subcluster is surrounded by three central East Indian Hindu organisations (OHM, SHON and HRN). Holding the national network together are organisations geared at all Surinamese, such as the National Committee (NC30) and SIO, as well as branches of Surinamese political parties in the Netherlands.

Removing from figure 4.1 all national ties and transnational ties with political parties yields figure 4.2. It shows that – apart from ties with state actors which are discussed in the text below but not portrayed in the figures – the majority of transnational ties are ethnically or both ethnically and religiously defined. This is especially true for Hindus (Seva, Agni), East Indian Muslims (ULAMON), East Indian Surinamese (HVR, Radio VAHON, VVN), Afro-Surinamese (GAC), Maroons (Cottica, Sabana, Woko, R-Kabiten), Javanese (RBU, CHJI, BJS, Setasan, SVVM), and the Moravian Church (ZZG). The only migrant organisations that do not maintain ethnically or religiously defined transnational ties are those around the interest organisation VVR and the development organisation CSO. Thus transnational ties between migrant organisations and NGOs in Suriname are less diversified than ties within the Netherlands.

*Transnational ties of central organisations in the IMES network*

In the Surinamese IMES organisational network, three East Indian Hindu organisations are central (meaning they maintain the most interlocking directorates). The Organisation for Hindu Media (OHM) in Hilversum and the Foundation for Hindu Education in The Hague (SHON) maintain interlocking directorates with 22 and 20 organisations, respectively. The third is the Hindu Council in the Netherlands (HRN) and the organisations attached to it.

The establishment of these organisations clearly reflected Dutch political opportunities. Within the Dutch system of ‘pillarisation’ – which provides opportunities to specific religious groups – Hindus in the Netherlands have created their own government-supported schools and media. Three Hindu elementary schools are united under the SHON umbrella (Bloemberg & Nijhuis 1993). Even more interesting in the light of Dutch political opportunities is the foundation of the HRN, established under government pressure in 2001. The government had already requested such a representative organ in 1987 so it could subsidise one umbrella organisation instead of projects by several Hindu denominations. Conflicts over the
Figure 4.1 National and transnational ties of Surinamese organisations
distribution of seats, however, saw negotiations between the different streams stretch over fourteen years.\textsuperscript{32} HRN unites nine organisations covering the most important Hindu streams: \textit{Sanatanis} (including its splinters), the \textit{Aryas, Hare Krishna} and \textit{Sai Baba} (Bakker 2003: 99). Dutch political opportunities thus had an enormous influence on the establishment of the central Surinamese organisations. What does this imply for their transnational ties with Suriname?

OHM in particular presents itself as East Indian Surinamese by regularly broadcasting programmes in the Surinamese East Indian language \textit{Sarnami} (Marhé 2003) and by paying systematic attention to Surinamese news. During the 2005 election campaign in Suriname the OHM made two radio documentaries on racial structures in Surinamese politics (OHM 2005). OHM also has its own reporter in India who produces a programme on spiritual life (OHM 2006). Though it targets the East Indian Surinamese Hindu population in the Netherlands, transnational ties with India are more institutionalised than those with Suriname.

The SHON’s transnational orientation likewise focuses on India, although most children attending a SHON elementary school have parents born in Suriname. Books from India are used for \textit{Sanatani} religious education and Hindu classes (Bloemberg & Nijhuis 1993) while Hindi is provided as an extra language to give children access to cultural, spiritual and scientific sources in India (SHON 2003). \textit{Sarnami} is not taught because there are no books available (Bloemberg & Nijhuis 1993) and, more importantly, because of its low status (Marhé 2003). The school occasionally organises fundraising activities for natural disasters in India (SHON 2003).

HRN does not organise activities aimed at Suriname or India; nor does it maintain transnational organisational ties. There are, however, ties between the HRN chairman and Surinamese Hindu organisations; the latter invited him to lecture on the HRN in Suriname as they wanted to create a similar body to communicate with the government.\textsuperscript{33}

\textit{Sanatan} is the largest Hindu stream within the central organisations OHM, HRN and SHON. As various \textit{Sanatani} federations existed alongside each other until they were roofed under the HRN umbrella in 2001, it is impossible to give a singular view of the transnational ties of all \textit{Sanatan} organisations in the Netherlands. But looking at the broader picture, it appears they are losing their ties with Suriname and focusing more on India. One local organisation in Amsterdam maintains sporadic contact with local \textit{Sanatani} organisations in Suriname by sending books. But contacts with similar non-Surinamese East Indian organisations in other European countries are stronger. The chairman and pundits frequently visit India to study and to buy books (Van Heelsum 2004: 19).

\textsuperscript{32} Interview with founder/chairman of HRN, Zoetermeer, 18 April 2005.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
Whereas the Netherlands has never seen a strong national Sanatani federation, an umbrella organisation – the Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha – has existed in Suriname since 1929. According to its chairman, it had 150,000 members in 2005. When the first Sanatani organisations in the Netherlands were founded, they maintained contacts with Suriname. The chairman of the Sanatan in Suriname opened one of the first Sanatani organisations in the Netherlands, in Utrecht in 1975. Initially the two organisations maintained contact, but this faded over time. According to the chairman in Suriname, the Dutch Sanatani organisations do not feel attached to Suriname because ‘it’s all about the money’:

… they received money from the Dutch state to create their own organisations very easily. They came here to ask me for papers to prove that they were spiritual leaders, so they could get money…. They only create Sanatani organisations for nostalgic reasons… when we celebrated our 75 year existence [in 2004, LN] none of the Dutch organisations sent an official delegation…. 34

The Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha in Suriname does not maintain institutionalised ties with organisations in the Netherlands. Transnational kinship ties, however, exist (see figure 4.2). Both the chairman and secretary of the Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha in Suriname have relatives active in East Indian civil society in the Netherlands, including the HRN chairman who visits them frequently. Occasionally the Surinamese chairman visits his children in the Netherlands; on these visits he gives radio speeches to Surinamese East Indians. Kinship ties of its individual members have a great impact on the organisation’s work in Suriname:

…for example, traditionally when somebody dies we hold a ceremony after two weeks, six months and a year. Then the mourning is over. Now everything has to be done in two weeks, because the funeral is completely paid by the family in the Netherlands who come over for the ceremony only once… as such they fundamentally change our religious work here.35

The transnational ties of the central organisations SHON, OHM and HRN are culturally and religiously more focused on India than on Suriname. The fact that these three organisations were created in response to Dutch political opportunities probably explains why they do not maintain institutionalised ties with actors in Suriname and do not develop structured transnational activities. Instead they focus on the religious lives of Dutch East Indian Surinamese in the Netherlands. Transnational ties, however, are very much present at the kinship level. These ties mainly facilitate

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34 Interview with the chairman and secretary of the Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha, Paramaribo, 18 August 2005.
35 Ibid.
transplanted immigrant transnational activities by influencing religious practices in Suriname. The next sections investigate the transnational orientations of Surinamese organisations that are less central or absent in the IMES network.

**Surinamese student organisations**

As we will see in the next chapter, Surinamese student organisations in the 1950s and 1960s were the first collective transnational actors. Only one of these organisations (*Redi Dott* in Wageningen) still existed in 2005, but it no longer played a central role (see chapter 5). In 2005 the most important student organisations were the Hindu Students Forum in the Netherlands (HSFN), Studiname in Rotterdam, the Surinamese Student Association in Amsterdam (VSSA) and Wegwijzer in Delft. VSSA and Studiname were founded in the mid-1980s and Wegwijzer and HFSN in early 2000. These three student organisations are not connected to each other but all cooperate with the National Committee for the Commemoration of 30 years of Independence for the Republic of Suriname. Figure 4.1 shows the HFSN is the most embedded within the national network of Surinamese organisations, including ties with the central organisations HRN and OHM.

Especially the student organisations Studiname and Wegwijzer organise transnational activities focused on Suriname. In the 1990s Studiname arranged numerous conferences on Surinamese development (Studiname 1989; Progress 1990; Studiname 1991). Today Studiname financially supports charity projects in Suriname through the association Tamara. It also exchanges information with the Surinamese university ADEK (Runs & Verrest 2000: 50-52). Wegwijzer’s target group consists of first generation Surinamese students in the Netherlands, whom they help with differences in culture and finding their way in Dutch society. The association also arranges information days at high schools in Suriname, informing young Surinamese about the pros and cons of studying in the Netherlands (De Ware Tijd 2005c). In the Netherlands Wegwijzer organises activities geared to integration as well as smooth return to Suriname.  

HSFN and VSSA target Dutch students of East Indian Surinamese and Surinamese descent, respectively. Ties with Suriname are largely lacking. HFSN prefers to focus on the Indian community around the globe; according to its chairman, East Indian youths in the Netherlands have stronger ties with India than with Suriname: ‘Although they don’t have relatives there, it’s because of the films, you know. If you look at the roots, you always refer to India’. HSFN fundraises for projects in India but this seldom leads to structural ties with counterparts in India. As their activities focus on Dutch East Indians of Surinamese origin, ties with

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38 My own observations at the Hindu Fiestam, a fair co-organised by HSFN in Rijswijk, 18 April 2004.
organisations in Suriname are weak; they instead maintain contact with non-Surinamese East Indian organisations, mainly in the UK. These ethnic transnational ties are not included in the network as they do not facilitate Surinamese transnational politics.

Whether or not student organisations develop transnational activities and maintain ties with Suriname thus depends on the target group. Student organisations that primarily target Surinamese students aiming to return after graduation are more active in and towards Suriname than those organisations that focus primarily on students with Surinamese roots. For second generation East Indian Surinamese, Hinduism is a stronger basis for maintaining transnational ties than a shared Surinamese background.

Comparing figures 4.1 and 4.2, it appears that the transnational activities of student organisations are generally developed without maintaining institutionalised transnational ties. Transnational activities are developed in the Netherlands and only very sporadically encompass direct involvement of actors based in Suriname. Furthermore, student organisations seem to use the transnational ties of other migrant organisations to facilitate their transnational activities.

**East Indian grassroots politics and homeland directed development activities among the first generation**

East Indian organisations that do not focus on religion maintain stronger ties with Suriname than East Indian religious or youth organisations. Radio VAHON, directed by a first generation East Indian, sees it as its duty to critically follow Surinamese politics:

> Almost every month Surinamese politicians visit the Netherlands, so we invite them in the studio. We pose tough questions and criticize their policies, also the Vice President [Sardjoe of the VHP, LN]… he was not able to finish the interview… they may not like this, but we have this duty as journalists.\(^5\)

Radio VAHON sporadically cooperates with two radio stations in Suriname. During the 2005 elections I met the VAHON radio director in Paramaribo, where he was reporting on the campaigns.\(^6\)

First generation East Indian organisations maintain stronger ties with Suriname than organisations for the second generation. This was evident in the two migrant associations I encountered during my fieldwork in Suriname: Friends of Nickerie (VVA) and Hindu Women Rotterdam (HVR). Both VVN and HVR have established

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\(^5\) Interview with the director of Radio VAHON/ HRN board member, The Hague, 5 June 2004.

\(^6\) Fieldnotes, Paramaribo, 18 May 2005.
41 Interview with VVN Nicetarian chairman, Nicetarian, 22 July 2006.
42 Poignantletter HVR, received from HVR, Paramaribo, 5 August 2006.
44 Malin Simal Samant D storyboard, People's Trust Netherlands, Paramaribo, 5 August 2006.
45 Fund for Relief and Development, Surinam, World Hindu Foundation, Nederland, Wij en de Wereld, WON.

The VVN was founded in the Netherlands in 1985 by members of the Dutch Indian community. It focuses on issues related to Hindu culture and religion, and provides support to individuals and organizations that promote these values.

The VVN also maintains a sister organization in Suriname, which was founded in 1997. This organization is called the VVN Suriname, and it focuses on issues related to Hindu culture and religion in the Suriname region. The VVN Suriname is supported by a local board of directors, and it collaborates with a number of other organizations in Suriname.

The VVN Suriname organizes a number of events throughout the year, including festivals and cultural events, in order to promote Hindu culture and religion in the region. It also provides support to its members, including helping them find employment and providing education and training opportunities. The VVN Suriname also provides support to other organizations in the region, including schools and community centers.

The VVN Suriname is headquartered in Paramaribo, the capital city of Suriname. It is a non-profit organization and its primary goals are to promote Hindu culture and religion, and to support the development of the Hindu community in the Suriname region.

The VVN Suriname is led by a board of directors, which is responsible for making decisions about the organization's activities and priorities. The board is composed of volunteers who are committed to the mission of the VVN Suriname.

The VVN Suriname is funded through donations from members of the community, as well as through partnerships with other organizations. It also receives funding from the Suriname government, which provides support for cultural events and other initiatives.

The VVN Suriname is committed to working with other organizations in the region to promote Hindu culture and religion, and to support the development of the Hindu community. It is an important part of the Suriname region, and it plays a vital role in promoting the values and traditions of Hinduism in the region.

The VVN Suriname is a vital part of the Hindu community in Suriname, and it plays a vital role in promoting the values and traditions of Hinduism in the region. It is an important organization that is dedicated to supporting its members and promoting Hindu culture and religion in the Suriname region.
Local governments

The above example showed that transnational activities may have municipal sponsors. Indeed, municipal involvement has gained ground over the past decade with the launching of several initiatives to improve cooperation between Dutch municipalities and the Republic of Suriname. The Suriname Platform (SP) was established by the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG) in 2001 to coordinate initiatives towards Suriname and to improve cooperation between local governments (Suriname Platform 2003). The municipality of Amsterdam supports projects run by Brasa (‘hug’) in Amsterdam and its sister organisation Sekrapatu (‘turtle’) in Suriname. Brasa and Sekrapatu were founded in 2000 by a Dutch-Surinamese architect and focus on social housing in the Surinamese capital Paramaribo (Het Parool 2003a).

The municipality of The Hague supports the wish of many Surinamese in the Netherlands to contribute to development in Suriname. Towards this end, The Hague and the Surinamese Republic signed the SSDH agreement in 2002 to improve relations and information exchange between residents of The Hague and the former colony. To achieve these goals, SSDH created the project group ‘promotion of Surinamese Districts in The Hague’ (SDD). The creation of SSDH and SDD were fostered by the initiatives of a municipal council member and a municipal employee, both of Surinamese origin.

The SDD’s mission is to introduce social organisations from the Surinamese districts to relevant Dutch organisations and institutions. In this way SSD hopes to empower communities in the interior of Suriname and make them less dependent on the central government. In addition to the Republic of Suriname and the Municipality of The Hague, other partners within SDD include the Municipalities of Rotterdam and Amsterdam, the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG), the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the return migration fund for Surinamese elderly FARU, and the National Committee for the Commemoration of 30 Years of Surinamese Independence. All are represented on the administrative board – SDD is thus one of the few organisations with a transnational board.

The Suriname Platform, SDD, and SSDH are local state actors; their ties with Surinamese local state actors are thus not transnational, but international – diplomatic – relations. These ties thus do not appear in figure 4.2. These diplomatic relations were created through the input of Surinamese elites in the Netherlands: local politicians, civil servants and organisational leaders. This explains why the Suriname Platform, SDD and SSDH are strongly connected to a variety of Surinamese migrant organisations, regardless of their ethnic target group (see figure 4.1). Channelled through these diplomatic relations, the Dutch municipalities’ projects encourage

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different types of locally specific transnational activity. The activities of the Suriname Platform and the SSD are homeland directed as their aim is to contribute to the development of Surinamese districts; SSDH’s main aim is to stimulate homeland directed politics among Surinamese in The Hague.

**Relations between Surinamese-Dutch organisations and the Surinamese state**

There exist several organisations for Surinamese (return) migrants wanting to improve political opportunities for Surinamese Dutch in Suriname. To facilitate their transnational activities, they have been trying to establish ties with Surinamese state actors. But as the following examples show, relations with the Surinamese state remain delicate.

The ‘National Committee for the Commemoration of 30 Years of Surinamese Independence’ (‘National Committee’ hereafter) was founded in 2005 in response to Surinamese Minister of Regional Development Romeo van Russel’s statement that his government does not reject input from Surinamese living in the Netherlands. On the contrary, the minister claimed, Suriname is wide open to those who want to contribute without an ‘arrogant’ attitude. The National Committee was launched shortly thereafter. Its aim is to improve Suriname’s international image and to contribute to its development.

Figure 4.1 shows the National Committee (NC30) is connected with a variety of Surinamese organisations through the composition of its administrative and advisory boards and the many Surinamese migrant organisations with which it cooperates. Interlocking directorates also exist with the Dutch Green Left party and the Dutch Ministry of Integration Affairs and Justice. The committee is thus highly embedded, both in the Dutch political system and the Surinamese organisational landscape in the Netherlands. Figure 4.2 does not show the transnational ties of the National Committee because these, as will become clear below, are mainly maintained with state actors, which for the sake of clarity are left out of the drawing.

The committee claims in its mission statement that it
does not pretend to be superior. To keep contact with you [the Surinamese Republic, LN] the committee aims at improving the unity of Surinamese in Suriname, Surinamese in the Netherlands.... The National Committee realises that Surinamese in Suriname are very capable of rebuilding their own country... the committee aims to support, to help and to participate and to invest in long term development (Nationale Comité "30 Jaar Staatkundige Onafhankelijkheid van de Republiek Suriname" 2005a: 5-6).

To avoid charges of arrogance, the National Committee consults numerous parties when organising homeland directed and transplanted immigrant politics, including
Surinamese diplomatic staff in the Netherlands and Belgium, government partners and representatives of Surinamese abroad (Nationaal Comité "30 Jaar Staatkundige Onafhankelijkheid van de Republiek Suriname" 2005b).

Surinamese government officials nevertheless continue to emphasise the right ‘attitude’ Surinamese in the Netherlands must demonstrate if they want to be involved. This was re-emphasised by the Surinamese Minister of Planning and Development Cooperation Rick Van Ravenswaay at a conference organised by the committee:

> Because of your stay in the Netherlands, Suriname lost a part of its human capital... as a consequence there is a brain drain in Suriname... Surinamese are proud people, especially the ones who stayed behind. The people who left for the Netherlands now claim the same rights as the ones who stayed. This is not always appreciated in Suriname...[it] irritates us. All Surinamese are one, but special treatment is very difficult. Arrogance is no condition for return migration.... Holidays are often the incentive to return permanently, but returnees have a major setback when they try to settle in Suriname... they return to living conditions that also apply to the rest of the population.... We argue that we could all use you in a way that is fruitful for both of us. We need to establish a new relation, which is less emotional.... It should be a win-win situation for a collective cause... we have demand for highly skilled people, but this does not imply return migration. There are many other ways to shape your strong bonds with Suriname. You could offer money or labour, think about virtual coaching via the Internet. Use a part of your holiday to transmit knowledge. You could use your political position in the Netherlands to keep Suriname high on the Dutch political agenda. 48

The audience of Surinamese elites in the Netherlands – organisation representatives, public opinion leaders, branch chairmen of Surinamese political parties and employees of Dutch municipalities and ministries – reacted critically. A heated discussion followed. Some argued Suriname should again become part of the Netherlands, its independence being a farce. Others were angry with the way the minister distinguished between Surinamese ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘us’ and ‘them’. But the minister kept to his message: don’t come back all at once, the Surinamese Republic cannot accommodate large numbers of returnees. Returnees should not take jobs

from graduates of the Surinamese university. Don’t act as though you know it all; don’t expect special treatment. Don’t ask for dual nationality as this increases the inequality between Surinamese and return migrants.49

The above snapshot illustrates the tense relationship between the Suriname state and members of the Surinamese elite in the Netherlands. We see the irritation of Surinamese administrators with return migrants and the care and diplomacy the latter must employ if their transnational activities are to be successful. We also witness how ‘Westernized’ Surinamese are. This is true for both the emigrants’ frustration over not being seen as Surinamese but as ‘Dutchified’ or ‘Blaka Bakras’ (black Dutch). Heated discussions such as the one above are commonplace (see also KROSBE 2000).50

Surinamese elites in the Netherlands wanting to contribute to development in Suriname are no exception either. The International Organisation for Social Development (SIOSD) in 2002 invited Surinamese government representatives, NGOs and trade unions to discuss the possibilities for filling the ‘cadre shortage’ in Suriname with migrants from the Netherlands (Campbell & Derveld 2002). Two years later the Centre for Surinamese Development Issues (CSO) hosted a conference to explore the possibilities for dual citizenship. Again the aim was to broaden opportunities for Surinamese with Dutch passports to contribute to development in Suriname. One of the CSO recommendations to the Surinamese government was to implement special regulations to facilitate the social, economic and cultural participation of Dutch-Surinamese. More concretely, it requested an inventory of government functions for which Surinamese nationality was not required (CSO 2004).51

The organisations Shiva, the Association of Travellers (VVR) and B-Surned likewise lobby on behalf of Surinamese with Dutch passports; their activities are directed at institutions and governments in both Suriname and the Netherlands.52 VVR and Shiva argue both governments violate the rights of Surinamese-Dutch by not following the 1975 Dutch-Surinamese agreement on nationality legislation – the ‘toescheidingsovereenkomst’ – which states Surinamese-Dutch should have the same rights as Surinamese, including the right to enter Suriname without a visa. The organisations also find the shortening of Dutch old age pensions (AOW) for Surinamese-Dutch unacceptable. They further complain the Dutch state stigmatises Surinamese by carrying out ‘100 per cent controls’ for passengers arriving at Schiphol Airport and that the fares for Amsterdam-Paramaribo flights are unacceptably high due to the monopoly of the Dutch KLM and Surinamese SLM airlines. These organisations, which appeal to Dutch and Surinamese courts, have a transnational tie

49 Ibid.
50 Fieldnotes of the ‘sredieni’ party of Stichting Sreideni Dey, Amsterdam, 26 November 2005.
51 CSO is tied to the network via HRN, and SIOSD via the Dutch branch of the Surinamese party VHP.
52 Interview with Shiva and VVR chairman, Paramaribo, 13 June 2005; interview with VVR notary, Paramaribo, 24 June 2005.
to the Association of Notories (Notarissen) in figure 4.2. While the tie is highly institutionalised, it is also based on kinship ties between boardmembers. Finally, Shiva and VVR submit petitions to the parliaments of both countries and air their views in the Surinamese media in both the Netherlands and Suriname, activities for which transnational ties are unnecessary.\footnote{http://home.wanadoo.nl/s.n.Ljankie/tekst/20020827.doc, accessed on 15 March 2008.}

The above-mentioned B-Surned was founded in 2004 to represent the interests of Surinamese returnees. B-Surned is connected to Shiva and VVR through the latter’s chairman. B-Surned addresses practical issues concerning rights, social security, taxes, and driver’s licenses. Whereas the other organisations that aim to broaden opportunities for Dutch-Surinamese are directed by elites, B-Surned reaches the middle class of returnees in Suriname. Tensions between the Surinamese authorities and returnees were apparent at a B-Surned meeting I attended in Paramaribo. A representative of the Alien Registration Office had been invited to answer returnees’ questions; feeling exploited by the high cost of the residence permits, they swore at her. The next speaker, an employee of the tax office, explained how the Surinamese system works; he emphasised that every citizen in Suriname must deal with the same system. One furious woman in her thirties jumped up and shouted: ‘If they don’t want us here, they should just say so! I will not suffer here in poverty. Many people want to come [to return to Suriname, LN], but I said don’t do it. If I would have known how it really is, I wouldn’t have done it!’ Afterwards, I had a talk with another board member. According to her, Dutch-Surinamese belong nowhere: ‘Here they treat us as Dutch and in the Netherlands they treat us as foreigners, because we are coloured’.\footnote{Fieldnotes, 17 June 2005, B-Surned meeting in Paramaribo.}

These examples illustrate the fragility of ties between organisations led by Surinamese with Dutch nationality – whether living in Suriname or in the Netherlands – and Surinamese state actors. It also shows that the willingness of Surinamese state actors to broaden political opportunities for Surinamese with Dutch passports is essential for the success of transnational homeland directed and transplanted immigrant political activities. This hesistance of Surinamese state actors probably also explains why long-term transnational ties with actors in Suriname are limited despite the ‘transnational’ mission of these organisations.

\textit{Amsterdam organisations}

Transnational relations with state actors and politicians, however, do not appear so problematic when Surinamese-Dutch do not try to \textit{change} the homeland. Three organisations – two based in Amsterdam and one in Suriname, all directed by the same person – don’t ask support from or criticise the Surinamese state. Instead, his organisations praise Surinamese politicians and criticise the Netherlands.
For instance, the Committee 30 June/1 July (30/6-1/7) inaugurated a monument in Amsterdam where Keti Koti – ‘breaking the chains’, referring to the abolition of slavery in Suriname – is commemorated each year.\(^{55}\) In 2002 it sent the Dutch parliament a manifesto with ten requests. One of them was an apology from the Dutch Queen to Suriname and the Dutch Antilles for what they had experienced under slavery. It further requested government pensions (AOW) for Surinamese with Dutch passports regardless of where they live (Comité 30 juni/1 juli Comité 30 Juni/1 Juli 30 June 2002). In 2003 the committee inaugurated a monument to commemorate slavery in the presence of the mayor Job Cohen and the former Surinamese president Jules Wijdenbosch (Het Parool 2003b). The director of Committee 30 June/1 July was also behind the establishment of a Surinamese Service Desk (SBS) for members of the Dutch Trade Union FNV in 2005. The latter informs return migrants about their right to Dutch social services such as benefits and the AOW (De Ware Tijd 2005a, b).

Finally, Kwakoe Events (Kwakoe) organises one of the most important Surinamese events in the Netherlands: the yearly Kwakoe Festival in the Amsterdam neighbourhood of Bijlmer where many Afro-Surinamese live. The Kwakoe Festival began in 1972 as an annual football tournament between the residents of the neighbourhood’s high-rise flats. In 2005 Kwakoe provided six weeks of football and recreation and attracted one million visitors (Reus 2005), including many visitors and organisations from Suriname (De Ware Tijd 2005d).\(^{56}\)

In addition to summer leisure activities, the festival invites Dutch and Surinamese politicians to give lectures and participate in political debate; the Kwakoe keynote speaker is traditionally also invited to Suriname.\(^{57}\) One of the highlights of the festival is the Kwakoe Award, which has been given to Surinamese politicians and civil servants regardless of their ethnicity or political party. Recipients have included former president Jules Wijdenbosch (DNP 2000), the Javanese politician Willy Soemita (KTPI), the first president of Suriname Johan Ferrier, the paramount chief of the Ndyuka Maroon tribe, гаанман Gazon Matodja, and the captain of the Amer-Indian village Galibi. According to the director of Kwakoe Events, the award is meant to pay homage to the country:

> We are born and raised in Suriname. If you look at Kwakoe you see that many of its successful ingredients and its format are a copy from events that are held in Suriname.... We are thankful for this baggage from Suriname which has allowed us to continue and succeed here in the Netherlands. To show our gratitude to the

\(^{55}\) My own observations on the Keti Koti festivity on the Surinameplein in Amsterdam, 30 June 2004.

\(^{56}\) Interview with the director of Kwakoe Events, Amsterdam, 15 July 2004.

\(^{57}\) Fieldnotes on Kwakoe lecture by the former Minister of Interior Affairs and former mayor of Rotterdam, Bram Peper, Paramaribo, 18 May 2005.
country and its inhabitants we wanted to honour people
that have given their life for a public cause in Suriname. 58

The Kwakoe Award has become a prestigious prize for Surinamese leaders and
receives the full attention of the Surinamese press. In 2000 the award went to the
paramount chief of the Ndyuka Maroon tribe, gaanman Gazon Matodja. The gaanman
explained his appreciation for this sign of gratitude from ‘his people’:

When I left Drietabbetje… [a Ndyuka village on the
Tapanahoni River in southeast Suriname, LN] I was
angry, but this faded once I was in the Netherlands. I
saw that the people appreciated me as their gaanman.
They did not abandon or ignore me while I was there. It
was bigger than I expected…. If you have a large
number of people standing behind you, you feel
powerful, but if they all leave, you feel weak…. But
when I arrived, I was received traditionally, they brought
money, everything they could get a hold on they
brought. This strengthened me. 59

Because their activities are mainly based in Amsterdam, Kwakoe Events and the
Committee 30 June/1 July maintain few strong ties in the Netherlands (see figure 4.1).
However, through their director these organisations and SBS maintain ties with Dutch
local state actors (mainly in Amsterdam) and the trade union FNV, which facilitated
the establishment of a FNV desk in Suriname. The director’s personal network
combined with his organisations’ missions provide them with easy access to political
leaders and state actors in both Suriname and the Netherlands.

Country of residence directed politics of the Ndyuka

During the same visit in 2000, the gaanman of the Ndyuka personally established the
Council of Kabiten and Basijas in the Netherlands. Traditionally, the kabiten (captain)
is the head of the village while the basiya functions as the assistant to the gaanman and
the chief captain (Polimé 2007: 58-61). The gaanman explained why he wanted
traditional authorities represented in the Netherlands:

When there is a conflict, leaders solve it…. The way we
work here, we wanted it in the Netherlands as well.
There are many Maroons in the Netherlands, but the
way whites do justice is different. We in the interior are
used to straighten up quarrels before they get worse. 60

58 Interview with the director of Kwakoe Events, Amsterdam, 15 July 2004.
59 Interview with gaanman Gazon Matodja, Drietabbetje, 6 August 2005.
60 Ibid.
The captain, the head of Drietabbetje who was present during the interview, continued:

We arranged this council because not all quarrels should end at the police station. Some conflicts should be solved traditionally, not everything is for the police. The people who are appointed have already had positions as captain or deputy captain here.\textsuperscript{61}

The installation of this council in the Netherlands is a clear – and the only – example of Surinamese country of residence directed politics. The \textit{gaanman} extended Ndnyuka political opportunities from Suriname to the Netherlands to improve the living conditions of ‘his people’ abroad. Through its Kabiten, who is also chairman of the Maroon organisation Sabana Perti (Sabana), the council is embedded in a subcluster of Maroon organisations in the Netherlands and with the National Committee (NC30) (see figure 4.1).

On the collective level, Surinamese are most involved in (locally specific) \textit{homeland directed politics} and \textit{transplanted immigrant politics}. These activities are often channelled through ties between migrant organisations and local governments in the Netherlands and diplomatic agreements between Surinamese and Dutch state actors (the latter shows that diplomatic relations may channel transnational politics). The latter is not restricted to one ethnic or religious group but is geared at all Surinamese. Homeland directed politics was facilitated through ties between migrant organisations and their branches in Suriname. \textit{Country of residence directed politics} was channelled through ties between traditional authorities (Ndnyuka) and their branch in the Netherlands. The latter two are usually ethnically and/or religiously defined.

\textbf{Turkish and Kurdish organisational networks in the Netherlands}

The IMES network of migrants from Turkey looks quite different from the Surinamese network. One of the main differences is that the Turkish and Kurdish organisational landscape has changed little since 1999 when the IMES data collection was completed. I had to add fewer organisations and fewer new ties that were not already covered by interlocking directorates. This means Turkish and Kurdish organisations have longer life spans and the ties between them are more institutionalised than in the Surinamese case.

The national networks that appear after qualitative analysis thus do not substantially differ from the IMES network. A departure from the Surinamese case was inclusion in the Turkish/Kurdish network of transnational ties with third countries, mainly with confederations in Germany and Belgium (being migrant organisations, they are also grey in figure 4.3-4.6).

\textsuperscript{61} The captain of Drietabbetje, while interviewing \textit{gaanman} Gazon Matodja, Drietabbetje, 6 August 2005.
Six organisations have a central position in the IMES network: the Consultative Council of Turks in the Netherlands IOT, Diyanet-affiliated organisations, the Alevi federation HAK-DER, the extreme nationalist federation HTF, the social democratic federation DSDF and the Kurdish federation FED-KOM. The analysis thus expands outwards from these central organisations following ideological, religious and ethnic lines: the IOT, Diyanet, Alevis, Islamists, extreme nationalists, leftist organisations and Kurds. The analysis here includes two categories not covered in the IMES network: the radical left (figure 4.5) and local governments (see the empirical subsections).

Figure 4.3 shows on the upper left a PKK-oriented Kurdish cluster centred on the Kurdish federation FED-KOM, which connects other radical leftist organisations to the network (DİDF). The Kurdish/leftist subcluster is tied to the broader network via an interlocking directorate between a FED-KOM member (KNCCA) and the Islamic Centre (HİMV). The most central organisation is the Consultative Council of Turks in the Netherlands (IOT), connecting the majority of the other organisations except for the ‘rightist’ Turkish Federation (HTF). HTF is connected through an interlocking directorate between one of its member organisations (the Mosque Ulu Camii) and the Council of Mosques in the Netherlands (RMN).

**Figure 4.3  National and transnational ties of Turkish and Kurdish organisations**
Removing the national ties and political parties to focus on transnational ties (figure 4.4) reveals that especially the Kurdish cluster is dense, facilitated by third country transnational ties via confederations like KON-KURD and YEK-KOM (the German equivalent of FED-KOM). As will become clear in the following description, confederations play an important role in the formation of transnational ties for most of the other religious and political denominations as well: the Alevi (AABF), the radical left (DIIF-DE), the left (HDF, AADD), the extreme right (ANAF, ADUTF), the Islamists (IGMG) and the progressive Islamists (UETD) (see chapter 6). Figure 4.4 further shows that the network is less diversified when it comes to transnational ties: each religious or political group forms its own ties with similar religious or political groups in Turkey or other countries in Europe.

**Figure 4.4  Transnational ties of Turkish and Kurdish organisations**

*Square: political party  
Circle: migrant organisation/NGO  
Black: Turkey  
Grey: Netherlands/Europe  
---: Highly institutionalised  
---: Lowly institutionalised*

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**Consultative Council of Turks in the Netherlands (IOT)**

The Consultative Council of Turks in the Netherlands (IOT) is the official representative of the Turkish community in meetings with Dutch administrative organs as well as with other social and political organisations. Founded in 1985 by four Turkish federations on the request of the Dutch government, it has a spokesperson role vis-à-vis the Dutch government; as such, it does not maintain institutionalised ties with actors in Turkey. But as its director explained, the IOT
maintains ad hoc contact with the Turkish government: ‘If problems arise for Turks in the Netherlands that relate to Turkey, then we also address this with the ambassador or the Turkish government right away’. These issues include return migration, military service for Turkish men with dual nationality and Dutch admission policies for Turkish migrants.

Transnational ties with the Turkish state came to the fore in April 2004 when the IOT commemorated 40 years of Turkish migration to the Netherlands (the guest worker agreement between Turkey and the Netherlands was concluded in 1964). The Dutch minister of integration, the Turkish vice-president and the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Gül delivered speeches (Contrast 2004). Gül emphasised the importance of Turkish migrants integrating into Dutch society, stressing ‘it is not right to interpret the adaptation in a new country as a process that results in the loss of one’s own values, such as culture and language that have been brought from the motherland’. The 40th anniversary was also observed in Ankara, where celebrations were jointly organised by the Dutch embassy and the Turkish Ministry of Labour. The IOT was present at the three-day event, attended by all the Turkish ministries. This strengthened the IOT’s visibility in Turkey; it used the opportunity to discuss the position of Turks in the Dutch labour market with the Turkish Ministry of Labour.

In the period under study, the IOT was especially active in lobbying the Dutch government on EU membership for Turkey. It organised conferences and online initiatives, including a December 2002 email to its network to put pressure on European leaders, Dutch members of parliament and members of the Dutch commission of foreign affairs (whose email addresses it included) to support Turkish accession during the EU summit in Copenhagen.

The IOT has also had to deal with transplanted homeland politics – a consequence of the organisations that make up the council. The IOT’s task is to represent the interests of the entire Turkish community in the Netherlands. This, however, has not been easy: most guest worker organisations until the mid-1980s focused their activities on returning to Turkey, and further, mirrored the fragmented Turkish political spectrum. Left and rightwing groups in Turkey were clashing violently in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and this antagonism was transplanted to guest worker organisations in the Netherlands. While acceptance of permanent residency in the Netherlands has created common ground, opposing Turkish political orientations remain visible. This has made unification under the IOT roof difficult, as the director of one its founding federations explained:

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65 Email sent by IOT chairman, 3 December 2002.
Back in the days [in the 1970s and early 1980s, LN] we had one foot in the Netherlands and one foot in Turkey. Now both our feet are here. We [HTİB] were one of the founders of the IOT. We had gigantic disagreements, about religion, we still have. We say we have nothing with religion. It says in the IOT statutes that we do not speak about religion within IOT. There are too many… Turkish political parties [that have different interpretations about religion, LN] … it is just useless to talk about it [religion and politics, LN] together in IOT. But about the representation of Turks in the Netherlands, there we go together.  

Despite the agreement not to talk about Turkish politics and religion, several incidents have occurred, especially in 1995 (see also the section on Alevis). The first involved the resignation of the whole IOT administrative board (NRC Handelsblad 1995) over the admission of the Union of Turkish Islamic Associations (HTİKB). The leftist HTİB claimed HTİKB was ‘in liaison’ with the ultranationalist Grey Wolves – an extremist organisation hiding its true face behind an Islamic veil. HTİB voted against its membership, arguing that the IOT could not fight racism if the organ itself cooperated with racist groups (Develioğlu 1995b). 

The left-right divide came to a boil after the installation in the Netherlands of the Kurdish Parliament in Exile (PKDW). On the initiative of the Diyanet-affiliated Turkish Islamic Cultural Federation (TİKF), seven organisations formed an action committee. Including the TİKF, it included five (out of eight) IOT member organisations (Develioğlu 1995a). The committee called for a boycott of Dutch products in Turkey to protest against the Dutch government’s position on the Kurdish parliament. It further organised the demonstration ‘We are with you, my Turkey’ in The Hague, which began with the Turkish national anthem. The chairman of the TİKF emphasised: ‘Turks and Kurds in the Netherlands have no problem with each other; both groups do have a terror problem with the Netherlands’, referring to the PKDW holding its inaugural congress on Dutch soil (Develioğlu 1995a). An estimated 25,000 Turks attended the demonstration, including many from Germany (AD 1995a, b). The demonstration received ample coverage in the Turkish media, the call to join the demonstration coinciding with a fundraising campaign for Turkish soldiers fighting the PKK in northern Iraq. The campaign was broadcast in both Turkey and Europe through the state channel TRT and its sister TRT-INT. Many Turks reportedly transferred money through Turkish banks (Develioğlu 1995a).

The boycott and demonstration of the nationalist-inclined protest committee, especially the TİKF, was fiercely criticised by two leftist IOT members, the Federation of Turkish Workers (HTİB) and the Federation of Alevi Organisations

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66 Interview with HTİB director, Amsterdam, 19 October 2004.
(HAK-DER). They were joined by the Federation of Democratic Workers Associations (DİDF). In press statements they argued that the conflict around the PKDW was an issue between the Turkish and Dutch governments. They further claimed the Turkish government and media were behind the recent political activities of Turkish migrants in the Netherlands (Develioğlu 1995a).

What all this shows is that although IOT does not maintain institutionalised transnational ties (see figure 4.4), the council is clearly involved in homeland directed and transplanted homeland politics. Transnational ties are thus no condition for transnational activism.

**Diyanet affiliated organisations**

The previously mentioned Islamic federation TİKF is one of the ‘religious’ founding federations of the IOT. Its purpose is to maintain close contact with the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, normally simply called Diyanet) in Ankara which represents the ‘official’ Islam of the Turkish Republic (Landman 1997: 214-215). TİKF closely cooperates with the Islamic Foundation in the Netherlands (HDV), which owns the Diyanet mosques in the country (Canatan 2001: 88). Although TİKF representatives are chosen by local organisations, it is not completely independent of HDV. The HDV statutes, written by the Turkish embassy’s religious council, say that the chairman of TİKF should also be the chairman of HDV. This, the head of Diyanet in The Hague argues, is a logical construction as the TİKF manages the imams while the HDV is in charge of the mosques67 – and Diyanet pays them both. Thus formally Diyanet-linked entities are represented in the Netherlands by two organisations: the HDV is structured hierarchically and linked directly to Diyanet; the TİKF is structured democratically and is linked indirectly (Landman 1997: 221). This explains why TİKF does not have a transnational tie with Diyanet in figure 4.4.

TİKF has grown enormously since its establishment in 1979. In 1982 it comprised 70 organisations; by 2003 the number had grown to 143.68 Some argue this is a direct result of Turkey’s Islamisation policy following the 1980 coup, with the junta – to combat ‘extremist tendencies’ and the activities of unofficial Islam among migrant organisations – engaging in a campaign to spread official Turkish state Islam within Turkish communities in Western Europe (Canatan 2001: 88). One of the TİKF’s aims is to function as a counterweight to Marxist-Leninist organisations (see also chapter 6).

Over the past decades the TİKF has been particularly visible in responding to Dutch parliamentary discussions about preventing the ‘import’ of imams from Turkey. Imams trained in the Netherlands, according to the Dutch government,

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68 Interview with the TİKF chairman, Apeldoorn, 4 June 2003.
would contribute more to the integration of Muslim migrants than those sent by the Turkish government, who do not speak Dutch and know little about Dutch society (Het Parool 1997). The TİKF argued that such interference by the Dutch state was meant ‘to control and manipulate the life of Muslims’ (NRC 1997a). The TİKF proposed educational programs for imams in the Netherlands but without interference from the Dutch government (Landman 1997). In Turkey, however, Diyanet was and remains reluctant. It doubts whether such imam courses outside Turkey would deliver the same academic ‘quality’ as the theological departments of the universities with which Diyanet cooperates.⁶⁹

Diyanet itself began acknowledging in the late 1990s that imams going to the Netherlands needed additional country-specific training, though under the control of its own institution.⁷⁰ In 1997 an imam who had recently returned from the Netherlands set up a training programme in Ankara, a program of 100 hours taught in 10-12 weeks which covers Dutch language, history, society, health care, housing, and the specific problems of the Turkish migrant community in the Netherlands.⁷¹

The Turkish state is thus active in country of residence directed politics through its programme of sending imams and through its highly institutionalised ties with HDV, and through the latter, with TİKF.

Alevi

Alevi, among the Turkish guest workers who arrived in the 1960s, began organising later than other Turkish groups. Whereas Sunni Muslims created Islamic organisations upon their arrival in the Netherlands, Alevi had been active in progressive social organisations and political parties, including Kurdish ones (Landman 1992: 142-143). It was only in 1990 that the first Alevi federation HAK-DER was set up; by 2004 it united fourteen organisations. HAK-DER provides information on Alevi and Alevism and represents its members’ interests in the Netherlands. It also supports spirituals activities, for example alem services, and lobbies for the institutionalisation of Alevism in the Netherlands.

The late development of Alevi migrant organisations is best seen in the context of the 1990s ‘Alevi revival’ in Turkey. As Turkey’s official religion – regulated by Diyanet – is Sunni Islam, Alevi houses of worship (aemî) and organisations were not officially recognised. In the 1960s and 1970s Alevies were organised in hometown and saint-based associations. Then in 1977 and 1978 the Alevi community suffered massacres at the hands of nationalist Sunnis. The sectarian conflict became a political one as Alevi tended to support militant leftist groups while their Sunni Muslim opponents sided with rightwing nationalists. A separate Alevi identity began to emerge

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⁶⁹ Interview with the spokesman of Diyanet Foreign Affairs, Ankara, 15 December 2004.
⁷⁰ Imams going to Germany followed courses in German language at the Goethe Institute in Turkey. Interview with Diyanet director in the The Hague, 28 October 2004.
in the late 1980s as a result of the fall of socialism – previously a surrogate identity for Alevis (Yavuz 2003: 65-78).

The 1990s witnessed the revival of Alevi identity through separate media, associations and festivals. When prominent leftwing Alevi intellectuals gathered in Sivas in 1993 to commemorate the teachings of the Alevi saint Pir Sultan Abdal, a major conflict broke out. The gathering included a Turkish writer, a self-proclaimed atheist, who had published segments of Salman Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses. A mob mobilised by activists of the Islamist Refah Partisi attacked the hotel where the meeting was taking place; the fire that followed killed many of those present. The police sided with the mob. The conduct of the police, the government, and parliament in dealing with the assault was a turning point for the Alevi community, many of whose members no longer saw the Turkish state as their own. This intensified Alevi feelings of insecurity vis-à-vis the state and the Sunni majority, and catalysed their mobilisation and organisation (Yavuz 2003: 65-78).

The Sivas massacre also fuelled interest in the Alevi cause among Alevis in Western Europe. In 1998 nineteen Alevi organisations, including seven based in Europe, issued a declaration demanding legal recognition of Alevi culture and religion and the abolition of the Sunni-based state institution Diyanet. Their efforts have had some success; in practice they now enjoy the same scope for cultural and religious activities as Sunni communities operating outside the mosque congregations funded and controlled by Diyanet. They are tolerated as long as they steer clear of the public realm, though they still have no legal status and ‘officially’ do not exist (Schüler 2000: 208-209; see also Sökefeld 2002).

HAK-DER’s transnational activities and ties reflect these developments in Turkey. The involvement of Refah Partisi adherents in the Sivas massacre created tensions within the IOT, where HAK-DER had been a member since 1994. Between 1997 and 2002 HAK-DER gave up its IOT membership; the IOT in its view was cooperating too closely with the Turkish government, which was headed by the Refah Partisi in 1996-97.\(^\text{72}\)

HAK-DER’s transnational activities take place in the Netherlands (country of residence directed), on a European level, and in Turkey (homeland directed). In the Netherlands HAK-DER annually commemorates the Sivas Massacre. In 2003 it invited one of the survivors, Lütfü Kaleli, an Alevi intellectual who has published extensively on Alevism in Turkey and who has been active in many Alevi organisations there. After Sivas, Kaleli has travelled to Western Europe frequently to lecture on Sivas, on how Alevis should organise in Europe, and about Anatolian Alevi rituals.\(^\text{73}\)

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\(^\text{72}\) Interview with HAK-DER chairman, Rotterdam, 30 September 2004.

\(^\text{73}\) Interview with Sivas survivor and board member of İstanbul Shakulu Sultan Kulliyesi, Istanbul, 7 August 2003.
On the European level HAK-DER is attached to the European Alevi confederation AABF, founded in 2001. AABF unites federations from seven European countries. Together with AABF and Alevi organisations in Turkey, HAK-DER works for the official recognition of Alevism in Turkey. Towards this end, AABF lobbies in Brussels for the rights of Alevis in Turkey, including the official recognition of cem as places of worship (rather than as cultural sites within the current framework of Turkish accession to the EU). This latter issue has also been addressed at the European Human Rights court74 and taken up by Members of the European Parliament including Cem Özdemir from Germany and Emine Bozkurt from the Netherlands. To facilitate cooperation between the European confederation and organisations in Turkey, a supra-union (ABKBF) headquarteried in Ankara was set up in 2003, uniting 450 organisations in Turkey and 147 in Europe. Earlier attempts to establish such supra-organisations had failed due to the opposition of the Turkish courts.75

Leaders of the Alevi supra-union meet several times a year in Cologne or Ankara to discuss current developments concerning Alevism in Turkey. The annual highlight of Alevism, however, is a festival in August in Hacıbektaş, in the middle of Anatolia. It attracts half a million people including many Alevis from Europe.76 AABF and HAK-DER representatives deliver speeches while the supra-union meets.77

HAK-DER thus maintains institutionalised national ties with a range of Turkish organisations in the Netherlands and transnational institutionalised ties with Alevi organisations in Europe and Turkey. Whereas national ties (figure 4.3) generally facilitate transplanted homeland politics, (third country) transnational ties (figure 4.4 and 4.6) facilitate homeland directed politics.

Islamists

Millî Görüş organisations have been active in the Netherlands since 1975 (Landman 1992: 120) and were united under the Dutch Islamic Federation (NIF) in 1984. NIF split into two federations in 1997, one for the north of the Netherlands (MG-NN) and one for the south (which maintained the NIF label). Both are still officially roofed under the NIF, which is a member of the IOT (MG-NN is not). In 2004 NIF united 54, and MG-NN 24, mosque-owning organisations. These organisations include social, cultural, women and youth wings, all with their own administrative boards. In addition to their official members, both federations have ties to respectively 60 and 70 unofficially attached associations of entrepreneurs and boarding schools.78

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74 Interview with chairman of Pir Sultan Abdal Vakfı, Ankara, 27 November 2005.
75 Interview with AABF chairman, Nijmegen, 21 June 2003.
76 Own observations in Hacıbektaş, 15 August 2003.
77 Interview with HAK-DER chairman, Nijmegen, 21 June 2003.
78 Interview with NIF chairman, Rotterdam, 6 October 2004.
Both federations profile themselves as organisations focused on migrant issues; both command public platforms and encourage members to vote in Dutch elections.\textsuperscript{79} The federation in the south also encourages active participation in local politics; several members have been elected to office running for different parties. Such representation is felt to be necessary for the group's image: 'the Turkish and Dutch media portrayed us as radicals and fundamentalists, that was not good'.\textsuperscript{80}

In the mid-1980s \textit{Milli Görüş} organisations in Europe were united in the confederation IGMG (AMGT until 1995) headquartered in Cologne. Its relation with the NIF is hierarchical as the NIF chairman is indirectly appointed by the IGMG. According to the NIF chairman, the main difference between his organisation and the IGMG is that 'our activities focus 90 per cent on Dutch society and ten per cent on Turkey, while for the IGMG it is fifty-fifty'.\textsuperscript{81} NIF ties to Turkey are generally mediated by the IGMG, particularly when issues concern religion. \textit{Milli Görüş} religious practices are not controlled by Diyanet; the IGMG recruits imams in Turkey for \textit{Milli Görüş} mosques in the Netherlands.

This case once again highlights the importance of institutionalised European confederations in mediating transnational activities. In the case of \textit{Milli Görüş} this facilitates country of residence directed politics. This explains why NIF (including MG-NN) does not maintain direct transnational ties with (non-party) actors in Turkey (see figure 4.4).

\textbf{Ultranationalists}

The largest federation of the far right – also called 'Grey Wolves' – is the Turkish Federation in the Netherlands (HTF),\textsuperscript{82} founded in 1995. In 1997 the HTF comprised around 60 local cultural, youth, women and mosque organisations with a total membership of 19,500 (TFN 1997: 3). On the European level, HTF annually meets with European federations of 'grey wolves' to discuss problems affecting Turks living in Europe.\textsuperscript{83}

The 1997 appearance of a book on the Grey Wolves in the Netherlands led to extensive debate within the Turkish community, one which spilled over into Dutch politics as well (see Braam & Ülger 1997; 2004). In the eyes of the Turkish community, the book was damaging; it portrayed Turks as Mafiosi and extreme nationalists against integration. The HTF and the cultural organisation \textit{Türkervi} responded separately with counter publications (TFN 1997; El-Fers & Nibbering 1998). HTF claimed itself to be politically neutral, that it was no extension of a

\textsuperscript{79} Interview with MG-NN director, Amsterdarn, 24 June 2003.

\textsuperscript{80} Interview with NIF chairman, Rotterdam, 6 October 2004.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid. See the next chapter for \textit{Milli Görüş} ties with political parties in Turkey.

\textsuperscript{82} Also known as \textit{Hollanda Ulküçü Türk Dernekleri Federasyonu} (HÜTDF – Federation of Turkish Idealist Organisations in the Netherlands).

\textsuperscript{83} Interview with HTF chairman, Amsterdam, 26 October 2004.
Turkish political party (TFN 1997: 25). Questions on subsidies given to local member organisations and their affiliation to the Turkish extreme right party MHP nevertheless followed within the Dutch parliament and municipal councils. Extreme nationalist homeland directed activities, some argued, did not aid integration into Dutch society. While the interior minister emphasised the difference between the political ideas of an organisation and those of its members these developments resulted in the Dutch intelligence service monitoring the Grey Wolves in the Netherlands (BVD 1998: 26).

The present challenge for HTF is to clear its name by presenting itself as an organ in favour of integration. While the federation is attempting to build relations with local governments, Dutch political parties and Turkish organisations, especially the latter remain wary of the federation of ‘Grey Wolves’. While it has applied for IOT membership, at the time of writing this has not yet been approved.

One of HTF’s member organisations is attached to the Turkish Council in the Netherlands (HTR), set up in 1993. HTR’s aims partly mirror those of the IOT. For example it aspires to represent the interests of the Turkish community in the Netherlands and to stimulate and coordinate cooperation between different Turkish organisations. Unlike the IOT, however, it emphasises educational and scientific activities such as the organisation of study trips and the publication of books and studies. HTR is affiliated to the World Turkish Congress (WTC) (Van Heelsum & Voorthuysen 2002: 17) founded in 1991 by a Turkish federation in the US. Its sister organisations are located in Europe, Asia and Australia.

While the HTF, the main federation of ultranationalists, apparently does not maintain structural ties with other homeland-based actors, its ties to an ultranationalist political party in Turkey (see chapter 6) fosters transplanted homeland politics. On the basis of this tie they are excluded from Dutch political opportunities – becoming a member of the IOT – by other Turkish migrant organisations.

The left and social democrats
The four most important leftist organisations are the women’s federation HTKB, the Association of Workers from Turkey HTİB, the Federation of Democratic Workers Associations from Turkey DİDF, and the Federation of Social Democratic Associations DSDF. All were established by political activists fleeing Turkey in the aftermath of the 1971 and 1980 coups. The attachments of the founding members

86 Interview with HTF chairman, Amsterdam, 26 October 2004.
89 Uniting thirteen, five, ten and seven local organisations, respectively.
meant these organisations initially maintained close ties with political parties outlawed in Turkey. In the past they represented a wide spectrum of the left including various communist/socialist streams and Turkish social democracy (to be discussed extensively in chapter 6). At the same time they sought to advance the rights of Turkish workers or the emancipation of Turkish women in the Netherlands. Today these organisations are relatively large federations and prominent players in Dutch migrant politics.

Especially DSDF and DİDF remain involved in homeland-directed activities unrelated to transnational party politics. This can be seen in their institutionalised third country transnational ties, whereas HTİB and HTKB no longer maintain such ties (see figure 4.4). DSDF is part of the HDF confederation that currently unites 45 organisations in Europe.90 Within Europe HDF federations discuss the common problems of Turkish migrants: integration, political participation and discrimination.91 HDF also actively lobbies in Europe for Turkish accession to the EU.92

DİDF traditionally supports repressed groups and individuals, mainly Kurds (Van Zuthem 1994: 24); it lobbies for the Kurdish right to self-determination and the recognition of Kurdish rights in Turkey.93 One of its goals in the Netherlands is to ensure full equality between and the participation of all people from Turkey (De Voogd & Van der Meulen 2002). DİDF argues that the Turkish immigrant community is (ethnically) divided through the interference of the Turkish government via its consulates; it further criticises the Dutch government for directing policies towards ‘ethnic’ Turks and not for people from Turkey, thereby excluding Kurds from full participation. This is one reason why DİDF is not a member of the Turkish advisory organ in the Netherlands, IOT.

DİDF has independent sister organisations carrying the same name in other West European countries (see also Özcan 1992: 261-264). Comparable to the social democratic confederation HDF, they meet to discuss social issues relating to Turks living across Europe. The different European DİDF federations also organise summer camps for youths in the Netherlands and Germany.94

In the above examples we saw that third country transnational ties can facilitate migrant politics in countries of residence. Conversely, both DSDF/HDF and DİDF are engaged in homeland directed activities without relying on transnational ties, for example when they lobby in the Netherlands and Europe for Turkish EU accession or Kurdish rights in Turkey. DİDF is also engaged in transplanted homeland politics

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90 Member federations are located in Switzerland, Sweden, the UK, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Austria. See also: http://www.hdf-online.de/d(frameset-d.htm, accessed on 22 May 2006.
91 Interview with HDF chairman, Venlo, 2 October 2004.
93 Interview with DİDF chairman, Amsterdam, 15 July 2004.
94 Ibid.
when it criticises the Dutch government for using a similar model as the Turkish state when it comes to integrating Turks – and excluding Kurds.

**Kurds**

Many Turkish Kurds in the Netherlands are politically unorganised or affiliated to non-Kurdish organisations like the Sunni Muslim organisation *Millî Görüş* and the democratic workers association DİDF (Den Exter & Hessels 2003: 12). Kurds who are organised on the basis of Kurdish identity are gathered in two main federations: FED-KOM and KOMKAR. Via its local member organisation KNCCA, FED-KOM is tied to the Turkish organisational network in figure 4.3; KOMKAR is not. Because of their different political signatures (see chapter 7), these federations do not organise joint activities and are not tied to each other in the organisational network.

The Federation of Kurdish Associations in the Netherlands (FED-KOM) was established in 1993 to gather existing Kurdish social and cultural organisations under one umbrella. Its member organisations largely focus on settling into Dutch society; their activities include guiding refugees, mediating between the Kurdish community and local Dutch institutions, and encouraging political, economic and civil participation in the Netherlands (KNCCA 2003). On the European level FED-KOM is attached to the Confederation of Kurdish Associations in Europe (KON-KURD) headquartered in Brussels; it unites around twelve national confederations in Europe, Australia and Canada – all together about 200 organisations. KON-KURD meets four times a year to discuss common issues for Kurds in Europe, especially the integration and identity formation of third generation Kurds: ‘the first and second generation have identity problems: they are Turk, Kurd and Dutch. The third generation is able to say “I am Kurdish”. Such a strong identity will contribute to their willingness to mean something for the Kurdish cause’. 

KOMKAR (after FED-KOM) is the second largest Kurdish federation in the Netherlands. It was established by guest workers in the Netherlands in 1982 and in Germany in 1979; today KOMKAR has branches in eleven European countries. Initially its activities focused on issues relevant to Turkish workers in Europe, not on the national struggle in Kurdistan and Turkey. Its focus shifted towards the region of origin with the arrival of large number of refugees in the 1980s (Van Bruinessen 2000: 13).

KOMKAR’s activities regarding settlement in the Netherlands vary from specific projects in cooperation with municipalities (for example providing Kurdish language lessons) to organising meetings during Dutch elections to stimulate political participation. For these purposes KOMKAR cooperates with Dutch political parties.

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96 Interview with FED-KOM chairman, Amsterdam, 9 March 2004.
and a variety of Turkish and Kurdish migrant organisations (KOMKAR 2002: 12). Regarding Kurdish issues, KOMKAR organises discussions and activities about the ‘whole of Kurdistan’ – not only Turkey. Personally, the director of KOMKAR would wish for an independent Kurdistan uniting the Kurdish areas of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. But he reflects: ‘… the reality is different: who would support that? The aim of the organisation is that the situation for Kurds in Turkey becomes similar to Iraq. In Iraq two peoples are included in the constitution: Arabs and Kurds’.  

Together with Kurdish organisations from Iraq and Syria, KOMKAR in 2003 established the Coordination Group for Kurds to improve mutual solidarity and cooperation and to represent common Kurdish interests. It has paid particular attention to how the situation of Kurds in Iraq has affected Kurds in the Netherlands (KOMKAR 2003: 8).

Both FED-KOM and KOMKAR are not represented within the IOT. While KOMKAR was invited to discuss IOT membership, official talks ended when its chairman emphasised ‘Kurds’ should be included in the name of the organisation. But informally there are good contacts with IOT administrators as well as with some local organisations attached to the IOT through national federations. For FED-KOM, its ‘exclusion’ from the IOT is a clear example of the denial of the Kurdish question in the Netherlands, caused by IOT member organisations with ‘rightist’ backing and anti-Kurdish sentiment.

Each year FED-KOM and KOMKAR organise their own events to remember the victims of the poison gas attacks in the Kurdish town of Halabja, Iraq, in 1988 (KOMKAR 2003: 20). Neurôz, the Kurdish New Year on 21 March, is also celebrated by both federations in different Dutch cities. Neurôz celebrations in the Netherlands have become increasingly politicised, especially after the influx of political refugees; they now play an important part in mobilising for Kurdish organisations and political parties. Despite its political character, Neurôz remains a family event attended by tens of thousands (Van Bruinessen 2000).

During Neurôz FED-KOM also organises activities aimed to have effect in Turkey. To prevent Neurôz from becoming a PKK-controlled festival, the Turkish state tried to institutionalise the event. This led to a bloody ending of the festival in Şırnak in 1992, with over 52 civilian deaths and many arrests. FED-KOM and other European organisations responded by sending delegations to monitor the festivities from 1993. Within Turkey these delegations are coordinated by the Turkish Human Rights Association İHD (most Kurdish leaders in Europe are in exile, and thus unable

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97 Interview with KOMKAR chairman, The Hague, 16 April 2004.
98 Ibid.
100 Call of the Neurôzomiti Nederland (Neurôz committee in the Netherlands) for Neurôz delegates, Amsterdam, 30 January 1995.
to join the delegations). İHD ensures the European Nevyoş delegations are sent to places where they are ‘most needed’, for example to the small and politicised cities and villages around Srinak, Hakkari, and Tunceli (former Dersim). The İHD vice-president explains: ‘Up to 2000 Nevyoş was dangerous and the risks to be arrested and tortured were high… we invited delegations to protect the people’. İHD expects journalists’ and politicians’ reports and recommendations to European countries and the EU will put pressure on Turkey. Although İHD has received delegations from the Netherlands for several years, it denies official involvement with FED-KOM. Relations in 2004 were mediated by DEHAP, and for this reason there are no direct transnational ties between FED-KOM and İHD.

Kurdish diaspora politics is thus predominantly channelled through national ethnic ties (between Turkish-Kurdish and other Kurdish organisations in the Netherlands), third country transnational ties, and (supra) national ties with Dutch and European governments and media.

*The extreme left*

The extreme Turkish left in the Netherlands has long been active within migrant organisations. At the time of research, the most important migrant organisations with radical left sympathies were the Press Agency Özgürlük (Freedom), the music formation Grup Yorum and the Dutch branch of the Association for the Support of the Families of Prisoners (TAYAD). These groups are tied to each other via memberships and structural cooperation (see figure 4.5).

Removing both national ties and ties with political parties does not significantly affect the picture (figure 4.6). This can be explained by the high number of third country transnational ties with European confederations and organisations (AVEG-KON, TAYAD-EU, GY-EU, Hayat-EU). These ties are much more important for the formation of the network than national ties, showing the extreme left’s isolation from the Turkish organisational landscape in the Netherlands.

Özgürlük was established in the Netherlands in 1996 to bring the Turkish people ‘uncensored’ news and analysis of the leftist movement. The press agency is part of the political magazine Ekmek ve Adalet. Grup Yorum is known for its critical songs about the Turkish state; its lyrics often express solidarity with leftwing activists and prisoners. The European Grup Yorum unites artists who were part of the band in Turkey but whose political activities have since made them flee the country.

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101 Interview with İHD Vice-President, Diyarbakır, 30 March 2004.
103 See for example Video CD ‘BORAN’ by Grup Yorum, produced by Idil Yapin.
104 Interview with Grup Yorum representative in Turkey, Istanbul, 8 January 2005.
In Turkey, TAYAD (founded in 1986) reports on the state’s abuse of political activists who support small, illegal, radical parties (TAYAD Solidarity Committee 2001). In 2000 TAYAD proclaimed its support of the ‘Death Fast Resistance’ among prison inmates resisting the implementation of ‘F-type’ prisons ‘in which prisoners are isolated from one another, from legal advocates and from family members’ which would ‘make it easier for prison torture to go unrecorded, unchecked and unpunished’ (Anderson 2004: 816-817). F-type prisons were the Turkish government’s answer to dormitory-style prisons which political groups could use as ‘indoctrination and recruitment centres’ (Ibid. 2004: 823). In 2001, relatives and friends began solidarity death fasts in ‘resistance houses’ in Istanbul to support the imprisoned Death Fast Resisters (Kulaksiz 2003).

TAYAD branches in the Netherlands and Europe also began solidarity hunger strikes to draw attention to the situation in Turkish jails.105 The hunger strikers were entertained by Gripe Yorum (Rotterdams Dagblad 2000). Dutch media, however, were not very attentive; according to TAYAD, they only paid attention when Turkish

105 Solidarity hunger strikes were held in Germany, the UK, Austria and France. Interview with Anadolu Kultur Merkezi volunteer, Rotterdam, 6 October 2004.
nationalists killed a hunger striker in 2000.\footnote{106 Interview with Anadolu Kultur Merkezi volunteer, Rotterdam, 6 October 2004; press release ‘Tayad stuurden brief naar Tweede Kamer’, TAYAD Komite, 13 November 2001.} Alongside their lobbying efforts directed at the Dutch and European parliaments,\footnote{107 Interview with Press Agency Özgürlük spokesman, Amsterdam, 17 September 2004.} the Dutch and European branches of TAYAD financially support the mother organisation in Turkey.

**Figure 4.6 Transnational ties of the Turkish extreme left**

The activities of the radical left are clearly homeland-directed. Apart from directly supporting their counterparts in Turkey, the important ties are with supranational institutions, national governments and the media. Via this indirect route they aim to improve political opportunities for their counterparts in the homeland. The strategy resembles that of the Kurds. Both are excluded from political participation in Turkey, which makes it difficult – even dangerous – for actors based in Turkey to pursue transnational activities through direct transnational ties.

**City ties**

We can discern three types of ties between Dutch cities and Turkish municipalities or villages: partnerships, long-term friendship ties and short-term projects (no ties with
the national organisational network were found). The first grew out of guest worker agreements between Dutch companies and Turkish cities; the latter two were fostered by intensive contact between migrant communities and local governments in Turkey. All three today have the same locally specific country of residence directed aim: to foster the integration of Turkish migrants in the Netherlands. Ties between Dutch and Turkish municipalities are not presented in the network figures as these are not transnational but diplomatic relations. While some of these ties are mediated by Turkish migrant organisations, they have no national ties to the largest Turkish/Kurdish clusters presented in figures 4.3 and 4.5.

The relationship between Almelo and Denizli is a good example of an institutionalised tie between cities. Since it exists between two state actors, the tie is not transnational but international. The relationship dates back to the end of the 1960s when the Dutch textile company Nijverdal Ten Cate from Almelo opened a recruitment office in Denizli. This led to the arrival of many migrants in the Dutch town. Nijverdal Ten Cate institutionalised the tie between the cities in 1976 to facilitate contact between migrants and their hometown; activities have included reciprocal visits by mayors and school exchanges. Today the main aim of the relationship is to facilitate integration; activities are thus country of residence directed. A committee attached to the municipality of Almelo – the Denizli committee, with Turkish and Dutch members – functions as a bridge between the two municipalities108 (for a complete overview of all city partnerships see Van Ewijk 2007).

While friendship ties between cities have only recently been institutionalised, they have existed since Turks first migrated to the Netherlands. The tie between the cities of Haarlem and Emirdağ was formalised in 1995.109 The two cities have developed projects for children, including summer schools in the Netherlands. Another project focuses on seniors who spend the summer in Turkey and the winter in the Netherlands; the two municipalities share information to provide their health care (Den Exter 1993; Den Exter & Kutlu 1993; Gemeente Haarlem 2003). The contact between the two municipalities is facilitated by the Haarlem-Emirdağ Foundation in Haarlem and the Tema Foundation in Emirdağ – this makes the tie transnational.110 Tema also organises summer activities for youths from Europe spending the summer with their families in Emirdağ.111 The tie thus facilitates both homeland and country of residence directed politics as well as diplomatic relations between the two municipalities.

The majority of Turks in Dordrecht originate from the small village of Kayapınar in Kayseri province. Kayapınar has experienced mass emigration since the 1970s;

108 Interview with the coordinator of the Almelo-Denizli city tie, Almelo, 27 September 2004.
109 Haarlem is home to around 6,000 Turks, of whom 4,000 are from Emirdağ. Gemeente Haarlem, Alleenmaal Haarlemmers, cultuur en uitwisseling, Alleenmaal Haarlemmers, No.3 (Haarlem, 2003).
110 Interview with two board members of the Haarlem-Emirdağ Foundation, Haarlem, 17 September 2004.
111 Interview with Tema chairman, Emirdağ, 11 December 2004.
remittances from emigrants in Dordrecht have become a key source of income for the poor rural village. The village head has occasionally travelled to Dordrecht to raise funds, for example to build a new mosque (Emonts, Polat, Hert & Jeurgens 2001: 137). Another consequence of mass emigration is Kayapınar’s wildly fluctuating population – according to its mayor 2,300 in winter, 6,000 in summer in 2004 – due to seniors living there half the year and families returning in the summer. The 1997 census put the population at 1,234. As state subsidies are calculated per capita, this has created financial difficulties. For this reason the mayor asked emigrants to be present in Kayapınar during the 2000 census; 400 eventually were.\(^{112}\) Since 1999 diplomatic relations between Kayapınar and the municipality of Dordrecht have been facilitated by the Tuana Foundation,\(^{113}\) while civil servants in both places explore the possibilities for joint projects. Dordrecht’s aim is integration; Kayapınar’s is to decrease emigration by creating jobs, and with Dordrecht’s help it hopes to open a factory. The tie thus channels both country of residence and homeland directed politics.

A more dramatic occasion for establishing city ties was the earthquake that hit the western Marmara on 17 August 1999. About 18,000 people died while many more were wounded and lost their homes. The tragedy became the focus of a Rotterdam city council meeting; one councillor, born in Gölçük, had lost his parents. Emergency aid was sent to the region by dozens of committees and working groups organised by the Turkish community in Rotterdam (Gemeente Rotterdam 1999b). Almost all Dutch politicians with Turkish backgrounds pressured their parties to help (Gölpinar & Demirbas 2001: 25). 48 out of 483 Dutch municipalities donated money; five sent goods (Gemeente Rotterdam 1999a). Some municipalities took care of Dutch-Turkish citizens who lost relatives; Amsterdam and Rotterdam held memorial services. Five municipalities established special information phone numbers. Amsterdam supported the Turkish community with therapeutic aid and continued activities in İzmit on a project basis, training the local fire brigade and establishing social work places for disabled people. Dutch municipal actions were organised quickly and supported by Turkish delegates informed about the area (VNG 2000: 16).\(^{114}\)

The success of long-term, continuous ties between cities depends on large migrant communities maintaining strong transnational ties, as was the case in Dordrecht, Haarlem and Almelo. Larger Dutch cities with Turkish populations originating from different provinces, however, are reluctant to establish ties with only one Turkish city. In the words of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities:

\[^{112}\text{Interview with the mayor of Kayapınar, Kayapınar, 9 November 2004.}\]

\[^{113}\text{Interview with Tuana chairman, Dordrecht, 18 October 2004.}\]

\[^{114}\text{Interview with employee of the housing department of Amsterdam municipality, Amsterdam, 20 July 2004; observation during memorial of the Marmara Earthquake attended by representatives of the municipality of Amsterdam and the Dutch consulate in Istanbul, İzmit, 18 August 2003.}\]
By choosing one particular municipality, others automatically were excluded. This would create disappointments amongst Turkish citizens. The earthquake automatically created a consensus among all citizens to direct efforts to the municipalities of one particular area (VNG 2000: 16).  

We have seen that Turkish transnational politics come in all forms except transplanted immigrant and diaspora politics. Homeland directed politics is facilitated through third country transnational ties, migrants’ national organisational networks and ties with Dutch state actors. Locally specific homeland directed politics always seem to involve at least one Dutch or Turkish local state actor, or a diplomatic agreement. Diplomatic relations are an integral part of country of residence directed politics, as are ties between migrant organisations (often branches, sister or ‘copies’ of homeland organisations) and civil society and/or state actors in the country of origin. We witnessed transplanted homeland politics when conflicts on Turkish soil played out in the Netherlands. Actors who sympathised with the Turkish state had ties with Turkish state actors while opponents of the Turkish state maintained ties with Dutch state actors. Kurdish diaspora politics seems to require strong third country transnational ties with exiles elsewhere in Europe, as well as ties with state actors in the country of residence to place their claims on the political agenda.

We have additionally seen that transnational third country ties facilitate migrant politics by mediating ties between Turkish migrants in the Netherlands and actors in Turkey. National ties also facilitate certain forms of transnational activity. This means that solely focusing on transnational ties (figure 4.4) gives an incomplete picture of Turkish and Kurdish transnational politics. To fully understand the mechanisms at work, we need to know how the organisations maintaining these ties are embedded in national networks.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated whether Fennema and Tillic’s (1999) argument that strong organisational networks increase political participation also holds for transnational political participation. The qualitative analyses of transnational ties and activities on the one hand and organisational networks on the other showed that strong networks foster institutionalised transnational ties and transnational political activities – and with them, transnational political participation. This conclusion is based on two striking differences between Turkish/Kurdish and Surinamese civil society in the Netherlands.

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115 Interview with employee of the housing department of Amsterdam municipality, Amsterdam, 20 July 2004; observation during memorial of the Marmara Earthquake attended by representatives of the municipality of Amsterdam and the Dutch consulate in Istanbul, Izmit, 18 August 2003.
First, compared to Turkish and Kurdish organisations, Surinamese organisations with central positions in the network were established only recently; those found to be most transnationally active in 2005 were absent in the 2001 IMES network, meaning their transnational ties are more recent as well. In contrast, the ties of Turkish and Kurdish organisations with homeland-based actors are often decades old. Because of their persistence over time, their transnational ties are stronger by the criteria given in chapter 2.

Second, most Turkish and Kurdish organisations are part of larger federations while in the Surinamese organisational landscape we see few umbrella organisations. This implies that Turkish and Kurdish transnational political activities have broader scope and involve larger groups. The main explanation for this difference is that Surinamese civil society consists of many small ethnic and ethnic-religious groups, all with their own small organisations. Compared to Surinamese, migrants from Turkey are less ethnically and religiously diverse. The less diversity there is in a migrant group, the broader its organisational networks – meaning greater mobilisation potential for transnational politics. All in all, these findings correspond with the conclusions for transnational political participation among individuals in chapter 3.

Lower levels of Surinamese transnational political mobilisation can partially be explained by weakly developed organisational networks in the Netherlands. But as the empirical evidence shows, transnational political involvement is hampered by Surinamese state and civil society actors’ lukewarm reception of former citizens; the latter’s initiatives are often met with scepticism of ‘Dutch’ influence. This attitude is rooted in history as well as in Suriname’s small size, with non-migrants easily threatened by transnational initiatives. In contrast, actors in Turkey have been eager to cooperate with actors based in the Netherlands. This suggests that the responsiveness of homeland-based actors is as influential for transnational mobilisation as migrant organisational networks in the country of settlement.

Finally, this chapter has tried to establish which types of ties channel transnational politics. The empirical evidence shows that transnational politics is facilitated through diplomatic relations and national ties as much as through transnational ties ‘proper’ (e.g. ties between civil society actors). The importance of state actors – as channels for transnational politics or as actors within them – can be seen in the political salience of ethnicity and religion: their relevance depends on the state-created political context in which they are embedded. Transnational ties based on common ethnicity irrespective of the country of origin – for example Indian ethnicity for Surinamese or Kurdish ethnicity (including Kurds from countries other than Turkey) for Turkish-Kurds – play, at best, a minor role within transnational politics. In the Netherlands, religion appears to be a major factor for mobilisation: Hindu organisations are the most organised among Surinamese, Muslim organisations among Turks. This, however, does not facilitate transnational political mobilisation among East Indian Hindus because they do not maintain strong political ties with India. In
contrast, Turkish Islamic streams have been excluded from political participation by Turkish government policy, and this exclusion has facilitated transnational political mobilisation. I will elaborate on this point in chapter 6.

The relevance of the different kinds of ties for transnational political activities is summarised in table 4.7. The left column lists different types of transnational political activity. The first row distinguishes different types of ties. The extent to which a certain tie facilitates a specific transnational political activity is indicated as ++ (central), + (present), and – (absent).

**Table 4.7 Relevance of specific types of ties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ties of migrant organisations in the country of residence with</th>
<th>Diplomatic relations between the country of residence and the country of origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-state actors in the country of residence (mainly other migrant organisations)</td>
<td>Non-state actors (civil society) in the country of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeland directed</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of residence directed</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transplanted homeland</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transplanted immigrant</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaspora</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally specific</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that different types of ties are central to different types of transnational politics. Generally speaking, homeland directed politics depends on migrant organisations’ ties with civil society and/or state actors in the country of origin, while country of residence directed politics depends on ties with homeland actors and diplomatic relations. Transplanted homeland politics occurs when conflicts between specific ideological and/or ethnic groups are transplanted from the homeland to the host country. This seems to occur only when one of the two opposing groups maintains ties with state actors in the country of origin and the other has ties with state actors in the host country. To mobilise effectively, sympathisers and opponents of the homeland regime need strong ties within migrant organisational networks or with state actors. Transplanted immigrant politics needs responsive partners in the country of origin, be they civil society or state actors. Transnational homeland ties are not necessary for diaspora politics, though third country
transnational ties and ties with state actors in the country of residence are required. Finally, locally specific transnational politics – regardless of its direction – seems to require the involvement of at least a state actor in the country of origin or country of settlement or both (diplomatic relations).

This chapter has focused on recent transnational political activities and the resilience of the organisational networks and transnational ties behind them. But we still know little about how transnational political activities have changed over time. Furthermore, the starting point of the analyses thus far have been actors in the Netherlands. The next chapters reverse the gaze and approach the subject from the perspective of homeland political parties since the first phase of settlement: what were their motives to establish transnational ties and allow influence from abroad, and how are they embedded in migrant organisational networks?