

Mobilitas Kelas Kreatif dan Kualitas Hidup: Creative Class Mobility and Quality of Life: Migration of Creative Class from Istanbul to Izmir

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Abstract. The place attractiveness determines the movement of creative people in a city. Young and skilled people migrate to Izmir from Istanbul because Izmir offers higher standards of life with respect to social indicators and tolerance for people who are different than others. It was observed from the migrated creative people that Izmir has the social and cultural advantage over Istanbul to attract these free-thinking talented people. In the case comparative study, it was evident that Izmir has the potential to be creative milieu to develop into creative smart city in the region but Istanbul has some negative externalities such as over population, inaccessibility, conservatism, expensive city. This paper examines the migration of creative professionals from Istanbul to Izmir, testing Florida's creative class concept and the 3T model (Talent, Technology, Tolerance) via QoL parameters regarding creative migration. A mixed-method approach was used to gather and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data for locational preferences of the creative class. The study finds that young, innovative individuals are attracted to cities with high tolerance, advanced technology, and favourable work conditions. These factors not only enhance their quality of life but also drive economic growth and job creation in Izmir, highlighting that while quality of life attracts talent, career opportunities are crucial for their retention.

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Introduction

Creative migration is driven by opportunities in markets for creative products and services, yet despite Izmir's growing creative economy, its contribution to national income remains limited due to locational and social constraints (Kumral, 2020; Akin, 2019). The migration of creative professionals, though complex and often temporary, has received limited scholarly attention (Hugo, 2006). Despite Istanbul's abundance of job opportunities, professionals increasingly relocate to Izmir, drawn by its higher quality of life, tolerance, and supportive social environment. This aligns with the hypothesis that creative individuals favor cities offering enhanced social indicators and tolerance (Florida, 2002).

Urban regeneration, influenced by information flow and creative potential, is central to economic growth and technological advancement (Koca, 2015; UN, 2015; Harvey, 2014). Creative artists migrate to explore opportunities and access larger markets, driven by the nomadic desire to innovate and refine their talents (Haerdtter, 2005). Quality of life (QOL) significantly influences these migration decisions, with cities offering superior QOL acting as key attractors.

Creativity fosters societal progress, involving the generation and enhancement of ideas and products (May, 1994; Florida, 2012). Hartley (2005) argues that societal advancement depends on infrastructure, content, and creativity, while Florida's concept of "creative cities" emphasizes the 3Ts: Talent, Technology, and Tolerance. However, Markusen (2006) critiques this, arguing that individual choices shape the distribution of creative talent.

The creative economy integrates economic and cultural development, driven by innovation and technology (Bank, 1999; Henton, 2001; Howkins, 2001). Globally, the trade in creative goods reached \$510 billion in 2015, with Turkey ranking 12th (UNCTAD, 2016; Kumral, 2020). Creative industries account for 24% of jobs in the UK and 21% in the US (Hasan Bakshi, 2015).

Creative resources in Turkey are unevenly distributed, with Istanbul dominating in several key areas. Despite representing 19% of the population, Istanbul holds 28% of the country's revenue, 23% of human capital, 29% of the creative class in employment, and 50% of technology. In contrast, Izmir, with 5.3% of the population, contributes only 5.97% of revenue and 5.98% of technology, while accounting for 6.36% of the creative class and 5.74% of bohemians. The creative class in Istanbul is over four times larger than that in Izmir, with creative professionals and bohemians even more disproportionately represented (Doğrula, 2016; Guclu, 2020).

Izmir's creative economy, though growing, remains underdeveloped compared to its potential. In 2015, it generated \$544 million in turnover, employing 12,971 people. This represented just 0.6% of the city's total economy and 0.9% of employment, with crafts, advertising, marketing, design, and architecture leading the sector (Kumral, 2020; KEA, 2019). Despite these figures, Izmir still lags behind other creative hubs in Turkey, particularly Istanbul.

Creative migration is driven by several factors, including quality of life (QoL). Cities offering higher income, better health, security, and infrastructure are more likely to attract and retain talent. Creative workers, who often relocate to advance their

careers, are influenced not only by economic opportunities but also by factors such as tolerance and social support (Koca, 2015; UN, 2015). In cities like Berlin, creative professionals are drawn by economic and cultural opportunities, supported by policy and institutional frameworks (Berlin.De, 2019; Young, 2011).

The migration of creative workers is often characterized by mobility and adaptation to new cultural and economic contexts. While creative cities like Istanbul offer semi-permanent bases for many professionals, other cities like Izmir are attracting individuals due to their unique blend of affordability, social tolerance, and quality of life, despite offering fewer job opportunities (Haerdter, 2005; Evren, 2015; Brown, 2020). This pattern underscores the complexity of creative migration, where individual preferences and location-specific factors play a more significant role than broad economic indicators (Hugo, 2006; Markusen, 2006).

Historically, migration has been motivated by factors such as climate, conflict, and safety, but globalization has shifted this trend towards education and employment opportunities. The flexibility of creative professionals allows them to adapt to new environments, enriching the cultural diversity of the cities they migrate to (King, 2002; Malamassam, 2016). However, there is limited research on the specific drivers of creative migration and the preferences of creative professionals. Understanding these motives can provide deeper insights into how cities like Izmir and Istanbul can better attract and sustain vibrant creative communities.

Despite the recognized importance of creative industries, there is limited evidence questioning the reasons for migration by creative professionals. Existing studies often focus on broader economic factors, neglecting the specific motives behind creative migration. This gap in the literature presents an opportunity to investigate these drivers through Quality of Life (QoL) parameters. Understanding these motives can provide insights into attracting and sustaining vibrant creative communities. There is limited research on the migration of creative artists and their location preferences. The complexities of creative labour and the temporary nature of artistic migration have contributed to this gap. Researchers and demographers have not focused on this topic, finding it difficult to classify and analyse due to the transient and varied nature of the creative class (Hugo, 2006).

The primary goal of this research is to examine the migration of creative professionals from Istanbul to Izmir, testing Richard Florida's creative class theory and the 3T model (Talent, Technology, Tolerance) through the lens of quality of life (QoL) factors. The study seeks to identify the drivers behind this migration and explore the potential of Izmir as a creative milieu that fosters innovation and attracts free-thinking individuals. The research problem revolves around understanding how quality of life parameters, such as social tolerance, affordability, and work-life balance, influence the relocation of the creative class despite Istanbul's economic dominance. By comparing the two cities, this study aims to uncover the social and cultural advantages that motivate young, skilled professionals to choose Izmir over Istanbul, highlighting the importance of non-economic factors in creative migration.

Methods

Creative professionals from Istanbul are migrating to Izmir despite Istanbul's larger metropolitan size and greater

opportunities. According to TUBITAK report 2017, 17000 people migrated to Izmir in 2017 alone. The first hypothesis of this study is that "creative people have higher levels of satisfaction in Izmir." The second hypothesis is that "Izmir is a more vibrant and favourable city for the development of creative people." To test these hypotheses, the study aims to identify the reasons behind the migration of creative professionals from Istanbul to Izmir and to explore the relationship between Quality of Life (QOL) and creative migration through a comparative analysis of the two cities.

Data collection was conducted through various social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Online questionnaires were distributed, and responses were compiled and sorted based on the respondents' professions. Groups of creative migrants were found in creative hubs like Origin, culture café etc. The sample included 35 creative professionals who had migrated from Istanbul, categorized according to the DCMS (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) and NECE-revision 2 classification models. This sample encompassed a diverse range of professions, genders, and age groups.

The survey was structured to gather information on the reasons for migration, including educational, job-related, social, and political factors. The second part of the survey focused on evaluating the levels of satisfaction among creative professionals in both Istanbul and Izmir. Quality of Life standards set by UNESCO and the World Bank were applied to compare both cities. Respondents provided insights into various aspects such as transportation, education, affordability, safety, acceptance, freedom to work, and ease of movement in both cities.

Additionally, the survey assessed levels of tolerance, economic opportunities, and infrastructure accessibility. Economic conditions were quantified through measures such as buying capacity, affordability, and rent. Social characteristics were evaluated based on criteria like acceptability, freedom of movement, security, and individual freedom of expression. The physical environment and infrastructure, including transportation, water supply, education, and open spaces, were examined for both cities. The research was carried out both as online survey and face-to-face interviews to obtain accurate, first-hand information...

Results and Discussion

This study analyses the creative milieu in Istanbul and Izmir to investigate the link between quality of life and creative migration. While Istanbul boasts a larger creative workforce and significant economic impact, this study explores whether these factors are reflected in the quality of life in both cities. It also examines why creative professionals move from Istanbul to Izmir despite Istanbul's status as a major metropolitan center.

Migration Patterns and Creative Professionals

Data from the Turkish Statistical Institute indicates that approximately 16,129 individuals migrated from Istanbul in 2017, a trend that has continued in subsequent years (TURKSAT, 2017). This migration pattern reflects a broader global trend where creative professionals relocate in search of better living conditions and opportunities that align with their lifestyle and values. The survey conducted among professionals in sectors such as design, IT, advertising, and architecture uncovers the motivations behind their move to Izmir as shown

in figure 1. These motivations resonate with the literature on urban studies, particularly regarding the migration of creative professionals seeking improved living conditions, as suggested by Ponzini and Rossi (2010).

Figure 2 categorizes the reasons for migration into educational, environmental, social, and economic factors. As hypothesized in the introduction, the pull factors of Izmir—such as cleaner air, greener spaces, and a vibrant social scene—are increasingly attracting creative talent away from Istanbul. This shift is significant as Istanbul, while being a global city rich in cultural and economic opportunities, is also characterized by congestion, pollution, and high living costs, which diminish its appeal to individuals who prioritize quality of life.

Furthermore, the findings are consistent with Florida’s (2002) assertion that cities providing a conducive environment for creativity are more likely to attract and retain talent. This aligns with the notion that quality of life is a paramount consideration for creative professionals, who prioritize environments that foster innovation, personal freedom, and a vibrant community life.

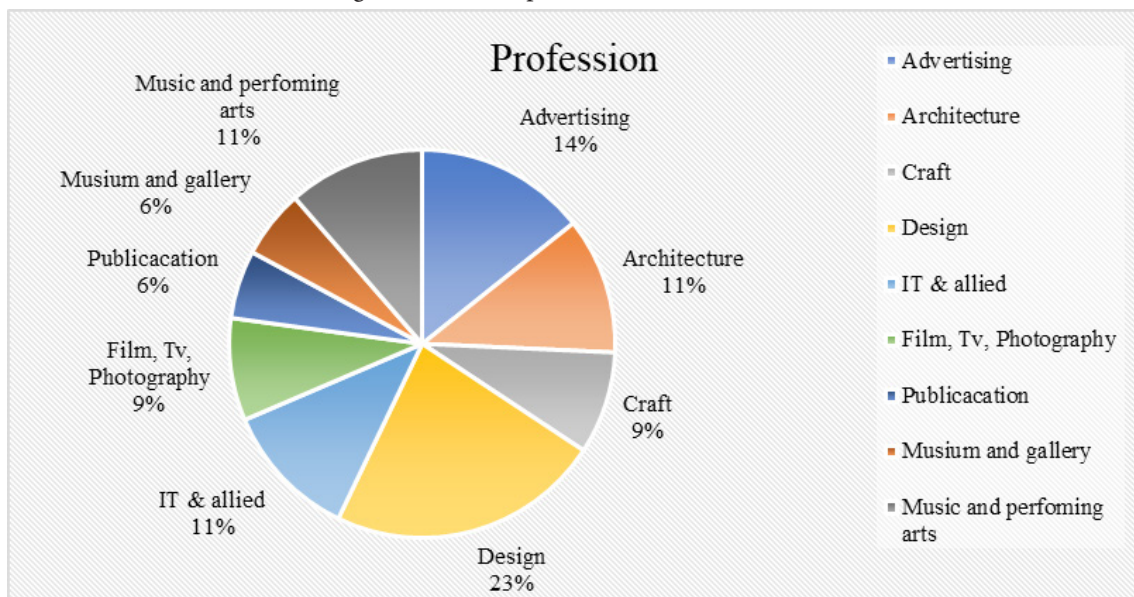
Based on the study’s objectives and findings, Izmir is identified as offering a higher quality of life compared to

Istanbul, as reported by respondents, making it a favourable environment for creative professionals. Izmir excels in public infrastructure and social indicators, providing a conducive setting for creative work. However, it falls short in technology and economic opportunities, areas where Istanbul remains superior.

To foster a thriving creative economy, a city must integrate the “3Ts”: Talent, Tolerance, and Technology. While Izmir possesses both Talent and Tolerance, it is still dependent on Istanbul for technological advancements. Figure 3 highlights that Istanbul ranks higher in certain aspects, such as technological infrastructure and economic indicators, which are crucial for creative professionals seeking opportunities and resources.

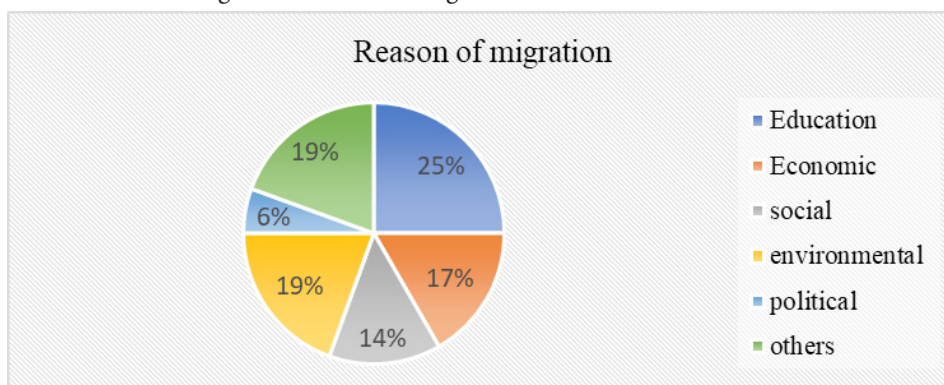
The study also reveals that Istanbul’s noise pollution, congestion, and high cost of living contribute to greater mental stress among creative professionals compared to Izmir. These negative externalities impact their ability to innovate and thrive. In contrast, Izmir’s more peaceful and supportive environment provides a more favourable setting for creativity, despite its current technological and economic limitations.

Figure 1. Creative professionals’ classification.



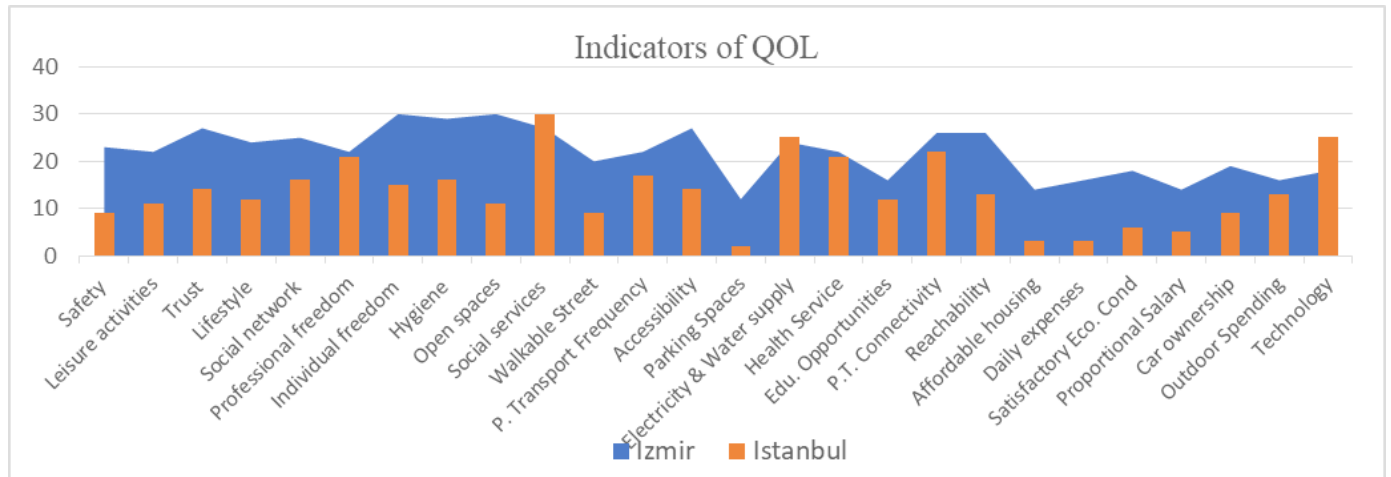
Source: primary survey

Figure 2: Reasons of migration from Istanbul to Izmir



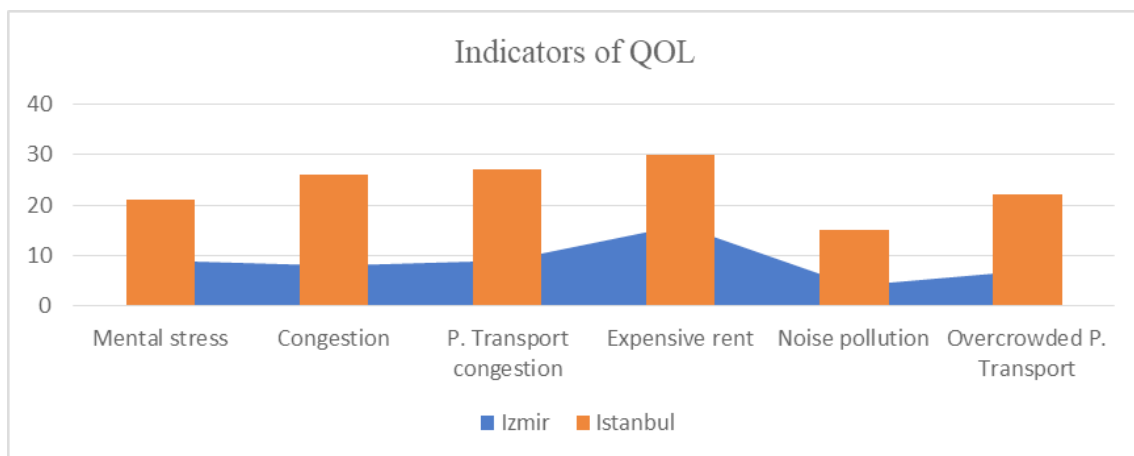
Source: Primary survey

Figure 3. Indicators of quality of life in Istanbul and Izmir



Source: Primary survey conducted in 2019

Figure 4: Indicators of quality of life in Istanbul and Izmir



Source: Primary survey conducted in 2019

Discussion

This research aligns with Florida’s (2002) theory that key drivers for attracting the creative class include tolerance, talent, and a high quality of life. It also corresponds with the perspectives of Landry (2000) and Bianchini and Parkinson (1993), who emphasize the critical role of environmental sustainability and social inclusion in cultivating a vibrant creative economy. Additionally, this study reflects findings from Ponzini & Rossi (2010), illustrating that factors like affordability and personal freedom are highly prioritized by creative professionals when deciding on a place to live.

Contrary to Nathan’s (2015) focus on economic and technological factors as the primary motivators for creative migration, this study finds that social and environmental factors are just as important, if not more so, in influencing the migration of creative professionals. While Istanbul presents significant economic opportunities, the city’s challenges—such as congestion, high cost of living, and elevated stress levels—dampen these advantages. This finding differs from Hutton’s (2009) argument that economic hubs are the primary factors in driving creative migration.

Social Indicators: Tolerance and Inclusion

The introduction emphasized the growing significance of social inclusion in attracting the creative class, as highlighted

by Florida (2002) and Landry (2000). This study confirms that Izmir’s high levels of tolerance, personal freedom, and inclusivity—especially for LGBTQ individuals and non-Muslim communities—render it an appealing destination for creative professionals. These findings highlight that the social fabric of a city, characterized by diversity and acceptance, can significantly enhance its attractiveness to creative talent.

In contrast, Istanbul’s more restrictive atmosphere adversely impacts residents’ overall sense of safety and freedom. As shown in Figure 3, creative professionals in Izmir report a heightened sense of acceptance and belonging. This aligns with Bianchini and Parkinson’s (1993) findings regarding the role of social indicators in enhancing quality of life, particularly in urban settings where the creative class seeks environments that support their identity and lifestyle.

This study diverges from Nathan’s (2015) findings, which prioritized economic factors over social inclusion in migration decisions. While economic opportunities are undeniably significant, this research demonstrates that social factors can often outweigh economic considerations, especially in creative industries where personal freedom is essential for innovation and job satisfaction. This highlights a critical dimension of urban planning: fostering inclusivity and tolerance can be as crucial as enhancing economic opportunities, especially in attracting the creative workforce.

Environmental Indicators: Green Spaces and Sustainability

Environmental quality emerged as another critical factor in this study, corroborating earlier assertions from the introduction. Izmir's commitment to environmental sustainability, availability of green spaces, and cleaner air significantly contribute to residents' well-being. This finding supports Landry's (2000) argument that a city's physical environment and dedication to sustainability are vital for attracting and retaining the creative class. The presence of green spaces not only enhances physical health but also promotes mental well-being, encouraging social interaction and community engagement, which are vital for the creative workforce.

In contrast, Istanbul's high population density, industrial activity, and associated environmental challenges, such as air pollution and urban congestion, detract from the quality of life for creative professionals. This situation aligns with Florida's (2002) assertion that cities must provide an attractive living environment to retain talent. The findings resonate with discussions in the introduction regarding the negative externalities of megacities, which often drive migration to smaller, more liveable urban centres like Izmir. The emphasis on sustainability and a healthier urban environment in Izmir positions it as a desirable alternative for creative professionals disillusioned with the challenges of life in larger metropolises.

Economic and Technological Discrepancies

While social and environmental factors are crucial drivers of migration, economic and technological opportunities remain essential for creative professionals. This study confirms that Istanbul maintains a significant edge in these areas. Hutton (2009) noted that Istanbul's technological infrastructure supports job creation and attracts a diverse talent pool, establishing it as a dynamic hub for the creative industries. Figure 3 illustrates that while Izmir excels in social and environmental aspects, its technological and economic infrastructure lags behind Istanbul.

This finding supports the argument made by previous studies, suggesting that while many professionals relocate to Izmir for its superior living conditions, they often remain professionally tethered to Istanbul due to its stronger economy and advanced technological capabilities. The introduction hypothesized that cities like Izmir could bridge this gap by investing in technological infrastructure to complement their strengths, a recommendation reinforced by the current study. Investing in technology and innovation can not only enhance Izmir's competitiveness but also attract creative professionals who wish to thrive in an environment that supports their work.

Literature Integration

The findings align with existing literature on creative migration, particularly Florida's (2002) theory of the "creative class," which emphasizes the importance of talent, tolerance, and technology in urban environments. The emphasis on social and environmental factors adds nuance to this framework, suggesting that while economic opportunities are crucial, they are not the sole determinants of migration. This aligns with the work of Landry (2000) and Bianchini and Parkinson (1993), who stress the significance of social inclusivity and environmental quality in fostering vibrant creative economies.

Conversely, the results challenge Nathan's (2015) focus on economic factors, demonstrating that quality of life elements—such as social acceptance and environmental sustainability—can be equally, if not more, influential in attracting creative

professionals. This underscores the necessity for urban planners and policymakers to adopt a holistic approach that integrates economic, social, and environmental considerations to create vibrant, livable cities that can compete in the global arena for creative talent (Dwi Nowo, Amri, & Sai, 2022).

Social Inclusivity, Environmental Sustainability, and Quality of Life as Migration Drivers for the Creative Class

Social inclusivity and tolerance are key factors influencing migration choices among creative professionals. Research by Coll-Martínez, Moreno-Monroy, and Arauzo-Carod (2019) in Spanish cities reveals that cultural openness attracts creative talent, a finding supported by Hansen and Niedomysl (2009) in Sweden, where cities like Stockholm draw creatives through their tolerant and inclusive environments. Similarly, Boschma and Fritsch (2009) observed that UK cities with high social tolerance appeal to young, educated migrants, a trend resonating with Izmir's attractiveness to the creative class due to its inclusive social climate.

Environmental sustainability also enhances a city's appeal to creative migrants. Marlet and van Woerkens (2007) highlight that green spaces and good air quality are influential in migration decisions across European cities, particularly in those with robust green policies like Utrecht and Amsterdam. Wang and Zhang's (2016) research in China underscores a similar shift, with young professionals increasingly valuing low-pollution cities with access to nature, mirroring Izmir's sustainable environment as a contrast to Istanbul's environmental challenges.

While some research, such as Storper and Scott's (2009) study of U.S. cities, emphasizes economic and technological factors—like professional networks and industry clusters—as primary migration drivers, other findings suggest that economic advantages alone are insufficient. Musterd and Murie (2010) found that while economic hubs attract talent, factors like affordable housing and social inclusivity are also vital. This aligns with the present study's observation that Izmir, though economically less prominent than Istanbul, remains competitive due to its quality of life (QoL) benefits. The strong quality of life and rich cultural appeal supported by national policies can influence individuals' migration preferences, often drawing them to economically advanced countries (Medvedev, Koblan, & Syzdykova, 2023).

Further supporting the significance of QoL, Zenker (2009) demonstrates in his study of German cities that accessible public services and cultural amenities are essential to attracting the creative class. Lee and Rodríguez-Pose (2016) similarly found that secondary cities in South Korea, known for their affordability and livability, attract creative professionals even when competing with economically robust hubs like Seoul. The migration from Istanbul to Izmir reflects this dynamic, where QoL factors play a substantial role in locational preferences among creatives.

Global research insights further underline the importance of balancing economic and social dimensions to attract creative talent. Clifton (2008), analyzing Australian cities, advises urban planners to emphasize tolerance, sustainability, and inclusivity along with economic growth to foster environments conducive to the creative class. Glaeser, Kolko, and Saiz (2001) suggest that for North American creative professionals, QoL often holds more weight than economic incentives alone. Reflecting these perspectives, this study suggests that cities like Izmir, with a combination of social inclusivity, environmental

quality, and balanced QoL, can attract and retain creative professionals effectively, challenging the notion that economic dominance is the sole attractor for this demographic.

Implications for Future Research and Policy

The findings provide actionable insights for policymakers and urban planners. To sustain and enhance its creative economy, Izmir should prioritize improving its technological infrastructure while continuing to emphasize social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Future research could explore the long-term economic impacts of creative migration on secondary cities like Izmir and develop strategies for improving the quality of life in Istanbul to retain creative talent.

Additionally, comparative research between Turkish cities and global creative hubs could yield a broader understanding of how smaller cities can leverage their liveability advantages without sacrificing technological and economic growth.

In conclusion, while Izmir offers a higher quality of life with its social and environmental benefits, it needs to improve in economic and technological areas to compete effectively with Istanbul. On the other hand, Istanbul must address its liveability challenges to better retain creative talent, despite its economic strengths.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the critical role of quality of life (QOL) in shaping the migration patterns of creative professionals between Istanbul and Izmir. It reveals that while Istanbul remains a dominant economic hub, its challenges—such as congestion, pollution, and social restrictions—drive many individuals towards Izmir, which offers a more favourable environment characterized by social inclusivity, environmental sustainability, and a vibrant cultural scene. However, despite its advantages in QOL, Izmir faces significant hurdles in retaining creative talent due to limitations in technological infrastructure and economic opportunities. The findings suggest that for cities like Izmir to enhance their attractiveness to the creative class, they must prioritize not only maintaining high standards of living but also investing in technological advancements and economic growth. This dual focus will be essential for fostering a dynamic creative ecosystem that can support innovation and ensure long-term talent retention. Ultimately, the study highlights the need for urban planners and policymakers to adopt a comprehensive approach to urban development that harmonizes quality of life with economic and technological strategies, thereby enabling cities to thrive in an increasingly competitive landscape for creative professionals.

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