

Comments by Floris Vermeulen (University of Amsterdam) on

Mediascapes, advertisement industries and cosmopolitan transformations: Turkish Immigrants in Germany

Ayşe Çağlar

In her paper *Mediascapes, advertisement industries and cosmopolitan transformations* Ayşe Çağlar takes up an important subject; the manner in which the relationship between the media (in Germany, but also in Turkey) and Turkish migrants in Germany has changed recently. Different types of media have become more receptive to Turkish migrants. Turkish people are more and more addressed in the Turkish language in television- and radio programs, articles and ads of German companies. New Turkish newspapers, radio stations and television channels are emerging to cater the Turkish community in Germany; in their own language and sensitive to the everyday experience of German Turks. The international satellite television channel TRT-international (owned by the Turkish state) and the independent Turkish radio station Metropol FM (based in Berlin) are good examples of this emerging Turkish media especially set up for Turkish migrants in Europe and Germany in particular (the country in which the largest Turkish population is concentrated). Çağlar explains these emerging Turkish media by several factors. First, the fact that German businesses have found out that Turkish migrants in Germany form an important consumer group. Surveys show that the annual net income of 1.85 million German Turks in 1995 reached 18 billion DM and that 97% of this amount was spent in Germany. Contrary to the popular belief that German Turks prefer cheap goods, German Turks spend more on quality and designer products. German Turks were characterised as loyal and conscious consumers who believed very much in advertisements. Second, Çağlar points to the growing market for ethnic media around the world (for instance: *Zee TV*, *MBC*, and *Telemundo*). The third factor that Çağlar mentions is the peculiarities of the media landscape in Germany, which provide special opportunities for Turks to gain a foothold in the German media. Germany's media system is very decentralized; it has a very strong regional press and just a few national papers. Due to the strong regional press, it was relatively easy to target Turkish-speaking migrants that were not evenly distributed in the country as consumers. In addition, the rise of new Turkish press, radio and

television channels made the German public media more aware of the Turkish audience, which resulted in more attention to and programs for German Turks.

These three sets of factors are responsible for the rise of Turkish media and Turkish programs/articles in Germany. Caglar takes the radio station *Metropol FM* as an example of a new Turkish media initiative, especially designed for German Turks, and she analyses what this radio station tells us about the development of the Turkish immigrants in Germany. *Metropol FM* is the first radio broadcaster in Turkish outside of Turkey, which is on air 24 hours a day. It has employees who speak German and Turkish and who are familiar with Berlin, German Turks in Berlin and Germany. The case of *Metropol FM* illustrates how the view of German Turks is changing as a result of their settlement in German society; more and more German Turks have become what Caglar calls 'localised cosmopolites', which basically means that German Turks have attachments to several places in the world (Berlin, Germany, cities in Turkey, but also other metropolises in the world). Looking at the way *Metropol FM* functions, Caglar feels that Turkey loses its function as a yardstick for understanding and evaluating the life-styles and the cultural formations of German Turks. It becomes only one of the multiple references of this translocal group.

Caglar's analysis of the Turkish media landscape in Germany provides a lot of interesting insights and questions. She places her story in a global spectrum, which enables her to make better sense of the transformation that take place within the German Turkish community. She is very positive and optimistic about the results of this transformation. She envisages a transnational European space in which Turks from all over Europe will have more opportunities to express themselves. This transformation process will make the German State more and more polyglot. 'Though motivated by economic concerns initially, these developments alter the opportunities and the terms of German Turks participation to the life of the society and consequently the nature of the public sphere itself to a certain extent'. Moreover (if this statement is not optimistic enough), 'the flourishing Turkish media in Germany also have consequences for the recognition of German Turks as a group in itself with distinct interests and identities in Turkey. In Turkey too we see some attempts to incorporate German Turks into the wider public sphere'. For which the most important indication is the inclusion of 'impure' German Turkish into the media in Turkey. These two statements are interesting and hopeful statements, but I believe we need more evidence than just media initiatives in Germany and Turkey to be able to say that German society is opening up for Turks and that the German Turks as a group have become more important in Turkey. If

it is indeed the case that Germany and also Turkey have become more and more receptive and inclusive towards German Turks as a group, this would also have to be visible in other domains (for instance: political, or social; how does for example Germans youth appreciate their Turkish class-mates, are they more positive towards them than before? Is there more opportunity for Turks to participate into the public sphere on schools? The same questions can be asked for the political domain, have Turkish politicians in Germany recently gained a stronger position on the national and local level?). Caglar might include insights from these domains in her paper to make her argument more convincing.