GENERATION TURKS' IDENTITY POLITICS IN GERMANY THROUGH FOLLOWING THE CONTENT OF THE MOVIE, BERLIN IN BERLIN

BERLIN IN BERLIN FİLMİ EŞLİĞİNDE ALMANYA'DAKİ BİRİNCİ, İKİNCİ VE ÜÇÜNCÜ KUŞAK TÜRKLERİN KİMLİK POLİTİKALARININ KISA BİR DEĞERLENDİRMESİ

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ABSTRACT

In 1960s and 1970s, Germany was a country huge foreign labour force from various ethnic origins migrated to as a result of the agreements signed between German government and countries like Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Turkey. Though considered to be the main reason of rapidly growing German economy, this labour force, as time went on, was began to be treated as problem, especially after the international oil crisis in 1973 and unemployment problem in Germany emerged as a consequence of this development. Turkish guestworkers were, probably, the main subjects of this reconsideration as they both formed the biggest population among the foreign labourers and were labelled as people with inability to integrate to

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German community. In this article, I will challenge the latter statement and suggest that Turkish presence in Germany should be reviewed with the terms of identity politics of betweenness, I mean, of everyday experiences of Turkish people between what is thought to be German and what is thought to be Turkish. Adding the content of one of the latest movies concerning Turks in Germany, Berlin in Berlin, to my analysis, I will argue that adaptation, rather than naïve statement of inability to integrate, is a key process, to reach the terms of which first, second, and third generations of Turks in Germany have distinct possibilities, limitations, strategies and choices especially in respect of age and gender and that negotiation of identities in everyday lives between two worlds is an ongoing practice through adaptation.

Keywords: Turks in Germany, Berlin in Berlin, identity, betweenness, adaptation

ÖZET

1960lar ve 1970ler boyunca Alman hükümeti ile İtalya, Yunanistan, Portekiz ve Türkiye gibi ülkelerin imzaladığı sözleşmeleri takiben çeşitli etnik kökenlerden geniş çapta bir işgücü Almanya'ya çalışmak için göç etti. Uzun süre hızla büyüyen Alman ekonomisinin altında yatan temel faktör olarak değerlendirilmelerine rağmen bu işçiler, zaman geçtikçe, özellikle 1973 yılındaki uluslararası petrol krizi ve bunun sonucu olarak Almanya'da büyüyen işsizlikle beraber, problem olarak anılmaya başlandılar. Türk işçiler, hem yabancı çalışanlar arasındaki en geniş nüfusu oluşturduklarından hem de Alman toplumuna entegre olma konusunda beceriksizlikle damgalandıklarından, belki de bu yeniden değerlendirmenin ana muhatabıydılar. Ben, bu makalede, Almanya'daki Türk işçilerin entegre

olmadaki beceriksizlikleri damgasına karşı bir argüman öne süreceğim ve Almanya'daki Türk varlığının, onların iki dünya arasındaki günlük yaşantılarının, yani aradalıklarının, beraberinde getirdiği bir kimlik politikaları diliyle yeniden ele alınması gerektiğini iddia edeceğim. Almanya'daki Türklerle ilgili çekilen en yeni filmlerden biri olan Berlin in Berlin'in içeriğini de analizime ekleyerek entegre olma beceriksizliği şeklindeki naif vurgu yerine, Almanya'daki birinci, ikinci ve üçüncü jenerasyon Türklerin özellikle yaş ve cinsiyet bağlamında farklı imkanlar, sınırlılıklar, stratejiler ve seçenekler ile giriştikleri bir adaptasyonun asıl süreci oluşturduğu ve iki dünya arasındaki günlük hayatlarında devamlı yürüttükleri kimlik müzakeresinin, onları bir biçimde adaptasyona doğru götüren süregelen eylemleri olduğu vurgusunda bulunacağım.

Anahtar kelimeler: Almanya'daki Türkler, Berlin in Berlin, kimlik, aradalık, adaptasyon

INTRODUCTİON

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Federal Republic of Germany had signed some agreements with a number of countries, such as Greece, Portugal, Italy, and Turkey to import labourers, called guestworkers (Gastarbeiter), who were the main factor of rapidly growing economic power of Germany in that period of time. However, the international oil crisis in 1973 and emerging unemployment problem in Germany led the evaluation of foreign workers as problematical entities. Turkish guestworkers, moreover, were thought to be the most problematic because they accounted the largest population and were labelled as the individuals with the "inability to integrate" (Mandel 1989: 38).

In this review, I will briefly endeavour to explain the problems of different generations and the identity politics that they have fostered. Far from new and original, what I will present here is just the very brief account of the literature devoted to this subject area. Interesting though are the similarities between what is theorised in the literature and what is shown in one of the newest movies about Turks in Germany, Berlin in Berlin. To reveal them by following the content of this movie[2] is, in fact, what I will try to do. What I will also try to reveal is my argument that so called 'inability of Turks to integrate to the host German community' is a naïve statement simplifying the real situation and needs to be reconsidered with the terms of identity politics. That is to say, though distinct in its appearance, intensity, and impact for different generations, each experienced problem has guided the very attempts of first, second, and third generations of Turks in Germany to develop their own identity to live with the undesired and uneasy consequences of being between two spaces, namely, of living in a country other than one's own. I suggest that distinct from homogeneous, every generation of German Turks has both different strategies and adaptation processes to deal with the existing situation. I argue that it is the time to talk about adaptation to betweenness.

[2] I do not aim to base my analysis on film or television theories. Neither do I seek to find the relationships that German Turks have with both German and Turkish television and cinema in general and their representations in movies and television in particular, to consider both of which Aksoy and Robins (2000) and (2002), Kosnick (2000), and Göktürk (1999) can be seen. I cannot claim that Berlin in Berlin is the full realisation and representation of Turks in Germany as well since it is, above all, a movie that may have more immediate goals like artistic competency and/or commercial success than representing Turks in Germany. Nevertheless, it seems to me that cinema has gained great importance for Turks in Germany to express their thoughts, beliefs, and emotions. That is why I choose a movie to enhance my account.

Berlin in Berlin

Thomas is a German engineer, interested in photography. One day, he sees one of the workers' wife, Dilber, who wears a headscarf, and starts to take her pictures. Dilber's pictures, however, do not stay hidden and somehow found by Mehmet, Dilber's husband. Getting angry and out of control, Mehmet finds his wife and starts beating her, accusing her of posing for Thomas. Thomas, who has developed some feelings for Dilber and continuously watched her, sees this fight and goes in a rush to explain that he took the pictures secretly. Mehmet, however, does not even listen to him. These two begin to fight. Fight concludes, though, with Mehmet's accidental death with an iron bar stuck into his head.

Three months later, Thomas, feeling a pang of guilt and having a desire to see Dilber again, memorises some Turkish words to tell her and spends all his time waiting and hoping to see her in a restaurant in front of her house, which is in reality administered by her brothers-in-law. Then, one day, he catches her and starts apologising for the accident and explaining his innocence. Mürtüz and Yüksel, her brothers-in-law, however, hear Thomas. Accusing him of being the murderer of their brother, they start beating him. Thomas escapes from them and takes refuge a house, finding its door open. He suddenly notices, unfortunately, that the owners of this house are those from whom he escaped. He then hides himself on top of the wardrobe in a room seeing that it is too late to leave the house. In the morning, everybody in the house recognises him and Thomas finds himself in "the diegetic space of 'Berlin in Berlin'-a city within the city" (Göktürk 1999: 12).

Entirely new in an environment which is somehow different from one's own, first generation Turkish workers have experienced difficulties of adaptation. Adaptation is a serious challenge for them to the extent that they

did not come into contact with urban life in Turkey either. It means that Turkish guestworkers who chose to settle in Germany in the 1960s had experienced more or less similar conditions in Turkey. As Kursat-Ahlers states

[t]he majority of Turkish *Gastarbeiter* came from rural and economically underdeveloped regions. Those from urban working-class backgrounds (one third) had only recently migrated from the countryside and did not have an established history of urban integration before leaving Turkey. Even in the 1990s, many industrial workers in Turkish cities are first or second-generation migrants from rural areas. (Kursat-Ahlers 1996: 118)

Adaptation to urban life, not even started in Turkey, has been severely experienced in Germany for the reason that this time language, in which first generation Turks in Germany have some serious problems, is indispensable to get in touch with the German community. Concerning first generation Turkish migrants in Germany, Abadan-Unat points out that "[m]ore than any other national group, Turkish migrants are handicapped by their poor if not non-existing knowledge of the host country's language" (Abadan-Unat 1985: 6). This inadequacy, accompanied by the poor education, makes them occupy the lowest quality jobs as well. Under these circumstances, adaptation turns out to be a struggle to exist in a new community. Attitudes of German society, however, are far away from getting this adaptation process easier for Turkish guestworkers. Majority of German people do not want contact with and rent their homes to Turks[3]. For them, Turkish guestworkers are no more than workers (Akcam 1982).

It is understandable if one needs in such conditions the feeling of security for oneself and one's family. I argue that to come about the terms of

[3] The results of an opinion poll in 1982 revealed that only 8% of German community evaluated Turks positively and 48% negatively (Abadan-Unat 1985)

this security, first generation Turkish workers have chosen to narrow the contacts with the host community as much as possible. Close-knit community is the response to reduce the tension of adaptation. More and more Turks in Germany have come into contact with each other and shared the same houses and neighbourhood by developing responsibility for each other against the very challenging difficulties of adaptation. This closeness provides the means of security and is considered to be good in familial and communitarian bases. I suggest, accordingly, that first generation of Turkish guestworkers have created their ethnic identity as a kind of reaction against and escapism from the host community. It seems to me that reaction and escape are, though defensive, conscious choices to express one's own and communitarian identities against the very difficulties, above all, their deficiencies initiated. In this viewpoint, one may emphasise the strategies the first generation create, apply to, and negotiate in their present situation, rather than approaching offensively, I think, with the terminology of "inability" to integrate.

Grandmother, the oldest member of the first generation, is the main authority in the house. She is a religious person who reflects the Islamic values. Every morning she wakes up with 'ezan,' an Islamic symbol to call the believers to worship and pray, whose voice comes from the alarm clock. Besides, several illustrations of Arabic alphabet and sacred symbols hang on the walls due to her influence. Father's authority is based on this Islamic figure as well. When facing problems with his children, he voluntarily transfers them to grandmother, being sure no one in the house objects to her decisions. Actually, this cooperation supported by Islamic principles aims to reconstruct the authority relations in the house in favour of the elders. The authority of the grandmother is not open to debate in the house.

When everybody notices Thomas in the morning, Mürtüz, the eldest son of the family, takes his gun and points it at him. However, grandmother stops him, saying that 'This man is our guest. We cannot harm him in this house. This is the test of God. If he dies without leaving the house, it will be our stigma for a long period of time.' Mürtüz tries to object, but the father drives him away, since everyone in the family has to accept the grandmother's authority.

The reactionary identity and close-knit community organisation are tied in with increasing importance of religion and 'myth of return' for the first generation.

Firstly, it seems that religion, which had hardly mattered in Turkey, emerges as a hallmark of Turkish identity in Germany. This does not mean to say that persons who stress their religious beliefs and practises in Germany did not have any religious belief at all previously in Turkey. Religion, however, has acquired more prestige in Germany as an important aspect of ethnic identity. The main reason for the increasing prestige of Islamic values is that it is considered "as a form of resistance against the prevailing norms of an alien society, a society commonly perceived as 'gavur,' dangerous, infidel, and immortal" (Mandel 1989: 41). Furthermore, a feeling of being marginalized by the host community and of getting more and more stranger to Turkey "provide the setting for explicitly religious experiences and concerns that might not be relevant where they are part of a society's mainstream" (Mandel 1989: 41). I suggest that a desire to show their distinctiveness can also be counted as one of the key motivations of the ethnic identity performed with increasing Islamic values. It is striking in this respect to see that even individuals of the first generation who had lived in a

relatively secularised environment in Turkey are bound to the Islamic practises in Germany.

G. Elwert reports, on the basis of personal observation, that a number of Turkish women who arrived dressed in skirts or pants, shifted over after a couple of years to the typical Turkish dress abroad-meaning headscarf, wide pants under the dress-in order to demonstrate their belongingness and identity to the in-group. They admitted that in Ankara or Istanbul they would reject this way of dressing by qualifying it as reactionary and conservative (Abadan-Unat 1985: 18).

Secondly, 'myth of return' to the country of origin is one of the most felt and declared aspects of first generation Turkish workers' identity. Mandel explains that

[t]he return must be considered as part and parcel of the migratory cycle, despite the fact that most migrants have not repatriated. Some observers have called this seeming contradiction-of preparing for a perpetually postponed return-the myth of return. The myth of the final return retains a prominent place in the consciousness of many, if not most, migrants. For many, this "myth" of the future justifies the indignities of the present difficult situation. (Mandel 1995: 271)

Myth of return can also be considered as a reactionary notion since it reflects the existence of the other choice, namely, the country of origin, to protect themselves against the difficulties of adaptation.

First generation Turkish workers' declared aspirations to religion and myth of return have gained enlarged meaning when the second and third generation arose. For, as Tan and Waldhoff argues

[t]he increased emphasis on Islamic customs and social rules, the insistence on traditional cultural values and norms, and the strong reference

back to one's place of origin, may in many instances be interpreted as an attempt by Turkish parents to recoup some of the authority they have lost through migration and to inhibit further changes. (Tan and Waldhoff 1996: 140)

It is the time for the first generation to think about and take care of their Germany-born children. Even though reactionary identity has somehow protected or created the sense of protection in them against the very problems of adaptation everything gets complicated with the touch of their children to the host community through a schooling system.

Mürtüz is the oldest child in the house. He is "a caricature of the Turkish macho, playing around with his gun and screaming for revenge" (Göktürk: 13). He is not good at German and generally speaks Turkish. He is a model for one of his brothers and always urges the other not to speak German and to behave like Turks, not Germans. He is not, however, sometimes good at being "Turk" either. For instance, he invites his girlfriend to his room to have sex while all members of the first generation are in the house.

Yüksel, a member of the third generation in the family, copies Mürtüz's behaviours. He sits in front of Thomas and threatens him as his brother does. He always speaks Turkish, even more so than Mürtüz. Yücel, though, the other member of the third generation, does not follow the constructed framework. He has a bad Turkish accent and generally uses German even when communicating with his family members. He is the only person who helps Thomas, since he does not feel any anger towards him, unlike the rest of the family.

In the literature, members of second and third generations are, on the one hand, labelled as the 'lost generation' with negative connotations

concerning the consequences of Turkish migration to Germany. This approach highlights the family pressure and the real or imagined discrimination of German society causing them to be lost between two worlds. There is, on the other hand, another point of view emphasising the creation of a completely different and successful identity called "hybridity" between two worlds. Çağlar states that

German-Turks' liminal and marginal state of being, which has been pathologized as "being torn between two cultures" for a long time in the discussions of German-Turks' cultural and identity formations, are now formulated with concepts like "hybridity", "cross-over" and creativity. (Çağlar : 2)

Whether creative or oppressed, second and third generation Turks in Germany are between two worlds and, I argue, coping with the strategies of adaptation to, this time, both. These children, who experience the problems of being "involuntary migrants" (Mandel 1995: 265), nevertheless, have more chance to adapt themselves to the host culture since the majority of them attend primary school education and see the ways of German life. They are at least more fluent in speaking German and more successful in their contacts with the German people as a result of language proficiency.

Found themselves at home in a Turkish environment and surrounded with the values of Turkish identity that the first generation individuals have created, on the one hand, they have to speak the Turkish language fluently because of their parents' expectations. On the other hand, they meet with the values of German culture in their environment, which are quite contradictory to those at home. It seems to me that they are in a situation to necessarily find a way to deal with the adaptation to these seemingly contradictory

worlds through experiencing and negotiating between both. Kağıtçıbaşı finds this situation somehow catastrophic:

The socialization process and the values therein show important inconsistencies between the migrant home (often reflecting the values of the traditional society) and the school (reflecting the norms of the dominant Western society). These inconsistencies are especially pronounced in the areas of sex-roles and sex-appropriate behaviour, discipline, moral values, obedience, self-reliance and independence. (…) In the bi-cultural context involving discrimination, an incoherent self-image and self-depreciation emerge as symptoms of the identity crisis. (Kağıtçıbaşı 1985: 118-119)

The identity crisis is not experienced by all children equally. The oldest child is probably the most desperate one to overcome the difficulties of dealing with dual adaptation. Above all, s/he has no model to follow and is between the truth of one's house and the requirements of the host community. S/he is also in a critical position to provide a model for the younger brothers and sisters to follow. As Morck states "[o]nce new boundaries are created by the oldest child, the younger have an easier time (Morck 1998: 139).

Thomas is the person who first Mürtüz and Yüksel and then almost all members of the family want to avenge the death of their relative. He is also the character with whom first generation members of the family have an interesting interaction consisting of the tone of desire to introduce and even inject Turkish values to him. Relation between grandmother and Thomas is especially interesting in this respect. She teaches him Turkish songs and how to kiss elders' hands in Bayrams, religious festivals related to Islam, and so forth. In this aim the family succeeds to some extent. For instance, when the husband of Mürtüz's girlfriend raids the house, Thomas is the first person

who protects the privacy of the home by behaving as a "Turkish man". He stops the fight between the husband and wife and tells them 'Fight in your own house, not in this house.'

Dilber is the person with the least contact to the outside environment. She wears a headscarf, one of the main symbols of Turkish women's identity in Germany (Mandel: 1989). However, while attending a course to get a traffic licence, she removes her headscarf secretly. Then when she sees Mürtüz who accompanies her to the house, she wears it again. Once all members of the family see her pictures, they have also thought that she posed for Thomas. Posing for a (foreign) man is not appropriate for the family. She is stigmatised and loses the respect of the family members, even that of her son, and socially forced to leave home.

Film comes to an end with the interaction between Thomas and the family members resulting in their friendship. He and the grandmother talk to one another in farewell. Thomas says using Turkish words that 'I am leaving,' and the grandmother responds 'we got used to you. I thank God that we have got a German friend now.' Thanks to this friendship Thomas and Dilber leave home safely.

Close community first generation Turkish migrants have created as a result of sheer need to feel secure in a new and alien environment, I argue that, does not mean the lack of desire to contact with the host community. In contrast, it seems to me that this community is in a great wonder of what is happening in the host society like how they behave, what they believe in, how German men and women interact with each other, together with the desire to express what Turks believe in, how Turks behave, and how Turkish men and women interact with each other. One side of this dual will (will of learning and will of expressing) is, in fact, fulfilled through the interaction

with their own children who are not as distant to the host community as their parents are for the reason that they have already had contacts with German people both in a schooling system and voluntarily through acting and existing in a host society. As Tan and Waldhoff points out

[t]he children import the norms of German society into the family and interact with their parents according to these norms, i.e., following the model they have derived from their German environment. Such behaviour includes teenage protests against the parent generation or against society. Many parents, on the other hand, having themselves been brought up in an atmosphere dominated by pressures to succeed, will not tolerate dissent. (...) Thus, parents tend to stress values such as obedience, tidiness and diligence. (Tan and Waldhoff 1996: 139-140)

Direct realization of learning to be German through their kids is not a pleasant encounter both because their own children, for them, turn to be a threat to defensively and reactively created identity and authority relations, beliefs, and all kind of appropriateness of this identity and because the other side of the mentioned dual will is far away from getting realised. I argue that German society has been continuously felt by the first generation to be indifferent to what the meaning of being "Turk" is.

Fair enough to see what is happening to their children in front of them, first generation Turkish people in Germany "seem to share a major worry, namely of 'losing their children'" (Morck 1998: 136). Fear of losing children reflects the growing distance between the first generation and their children and accompanies the parents' intended force on children to behave according to the identity they themselves have already created. This is, however, an extremely difficult task for the children, especially for the members of the third generation, since they have more contact with outside culture than their

parents. They consciously or unconsciously continue to bring values of German society into the family and feed their parents with them, though probably no longer hungry they are for.

Gender is an important issue in all this process. On the one hand, boys have more freedom than girls due to the rights with which traditional family pattern provides for them. They can participate in a German community, find, meet, talk, and have all kinds of relationships with their girlfriends, enjoy the social life, arrive home late or not to come at all. Girls, on the other hand, are under a severe control since they are the main focus for the parents' fear of losing children. As Mushaben points out

[a]bove and beyond the integration problems that exist with respect to housing, education and youth employment, a very special type of cultural crisis confronts the young females in the second and third generations. To the extent that roles and behaviors within the family are oriented to Turkish norms, the daughters of the guestworkers are subject to more significant restrictions on their freedom of movement than either their brothers or the German girls who may befriend them. (Mushaben 1985: 142)

The dissimilar rights of boys and girls in the Turkish family and the unequal participation to German society produce risk for girls to bring shame to family if they violate the way defined for them and be stigmatised. Stigma and shame are connected with appropriateness of the behaviour to the group norm, which is defined and redefined continuously by first generation Turks in favour of boys and opposite to girls.

Capable of using the advantages first generation's social identity provides, boys more easily adapt the notions of close-knit community like shame and stigma. I suggest that there is not an urgent need to challenge that identity as far as it does not hinder them to interact with and take the

advantages of the host community. The process is, however, problematically ongoing for the first generation that boys' contacts with the host community is bringing the values of German culture to home even if they do not aim to do so. Although it is strongly associated in the first generation Turks' minds with the threat to their close-knit community and social identity and of losing children, this situation is somehow indispensable and irreversible to the extent that boys have already entered the realm of betweenness for a long time. Through bringing German-related values to home and family and Turkish-related values to streets, parks, restaurants and friends, they negotiate their Turkishness, or one may even say that their Germanness, in two social spaces.

Being a Turkish girl in a German environment, though, is a different matter. Above all, they are subjects to shame and stigma. Close-knit community organisation has almost always exercised its power on girls to prevent and control the very emergence of violation of the appropriatenesses that first generation Turks' social identity fosters. This is what puts severe limitations to girls' participation to the German host. Betweenness is, however, on its way for the girls as well. Since the first touch was somehow established through coming in to schooling system or seeing the happenings in the everyday spaces like streets and media, dilemma between the pressures of home and possibilities of outside life has been more and more noticed and experienced by Turkish girls. Consequently, as Yasin observes "some of them, in the end, take a few clothes and leave home" (Yaşin 1985: 176).

Conclusion

Adaptation and identity politics are complex issues regarding age, space, and gender. Turkish community in Germany from the very beginning of their existence in this new and alien space has been defining appropriate ways of thinking, acting, and more broadly being between two worlds. Increasing importance of religion and overtly stated myth of return have provided the means of this appropriation process, especially for the first generation. Members of first, second, and third generations more and more come into contact with the host society through the appropriate identity they have negotiated publicly in streets, schools, works, and houses in respect of their age and gender. As I argue that adaptation to betweenness is at issue here to come to terms of which different generations and genders have had different possibilities, limitations, choices and strategies to cope with.

First generation Turkish guestworkers' adaptation has been a long and difficult process because of both the deficiencies like poor education, lack of language, and adaptation to urban life not even started in Turkey and attitudes of German host, basically treating them just workers, nothing more. It has been shaped, under these circumstances, in terms of need for security that finds its realisation in close-knit community organisation, accompanied by increasingly expressed and experienced Islam and myth of return.

The situation, though, gets more and more complicated for the first generation with the touch of subsequent generations to German host, either in a schooling system or voluntarily in everyday life. Touch of German values to their lives and close-knit community organisation might be something unpleasant for the first generation, but ongoing and even indispensable part of second and third generations' lives.

Boys are in a position to easily enjoy the advantages of their gender in participating German social life. Girls, though, are in a more critical standing. They are, on the one hand, seeing the possibilities and freedom that German social environment provides and, on the other hand, experiencing power that their parents and community exercise on them to stay in borders of being "appropriate" Turkish girls. To enjoy the advantages of Germany, they have been coping with different strategies like running away.

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