Articles (Theme)

EXPLORING (MIGRANT) WOMEN'S LIVES AND STORIES THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHS

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Abstract

This study, through the photographs, explores the life narratives of ten women who migrated from Turkey and live in Germany to understand the gendering aspects of migration with inhabited power dynamics, constraints, and possibilities. The photographs are analyzed in this process as both practice and content. The interviews with women on their lives and migration stories are conducted through the photographs they chose to show and those on display in the houses (on the walls, different parts of the house, including the fridge, their selections from their albums, boxes, or mobile devices). The study's research questions are as follows: What do women do and say about their lives with the photos at home and with the ones they show? Which themes, words, and discourses are repeated, absent, or silenced? How do they construct their identities and belongings? How do they remember and connect with their past places and relations and imagine a future?

Keywords: visual, photography, narrative analysis, life narrative, migrant women

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FOTOĞRAFLAR ARACILIĞIYLA (GÖÇMEN) KADINLARIN YAŞAMLARINI VE HİKAYELERİNİ ARAŞTIRMAK

Öz

Türkiye'den Almanya'ya göç etmiş ve halen Almanya'da yaşamakta olan 10 kadının yaşam anlatılarının izlerini fotoğrafları aracılığıyla süren bu çalışma, içerdiği iktidar dinamikleri, kısıtlamalar ve olasılıklarla birlikte göçmenliği toplumsal cinsiyet açısından anlamayı da amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada bu süreçte fotoğraflar hem pratik hem de içerik açısından analiz edildi. Kadınlarla hayatları ve göçmenlik hikayeleri üzerine görüşmeler, onların göstermek üzere seçtiklerinin yanısıra evde görülebilen (duvarda, evin değişik kısımlarında, buzdolabı kapağında vb.) fotoğraflar aracılığıyla gerçekleştirildi. Araştırmanın belli başlı soruları şunlardı: Görüşme boyunca hangi temalar, sözcükler, söylemler tekrarlandı, hiç yer almadı ya da sessizce geçiştirildi? Kadınlar kimliklerini ve aidiyetlerini nasıl inşa ediyorlar? Geçmiş yaşamlarındaki yerleri ve ilişkileri nasıl hatırlıyor, bunlarla nasıl bağlantı kuruyor ve geleceği nasıl tasavvur ediyorlar?

Anahtar Kelimeler: görsel, fotoğraf, anlatı analizi, yaşam anlatısı, göçmen kadın

1. Introduction

This study explores the life narratives of ten women who migrated from Turkey to live in Germany through their photographs to understand how they articulate their past and present belongings and future aspirations and articulate their life stories vis-a-vis hegemonic constraints. The photographs that are analyzed in this process have deepened the conversations and interactions as practice and content. As Giorgia Alu states, both migrants and photos move, circulate or travel in different forms: One of the traveling materials is the photograph album which is an "object to collect and preserve but also has content to narrate. All these acts are gendered: Women create, use or appropriate them to preserve the past, narrate the migration" (Alu, 2019:11). Visuals are essential for this research to show the gendering aspects of migration with inhabited power dynamics, constraints, and possibilities. In this study, albums are also included, but talks are mainly structured around the photographs visible in the houses and the ones shown to the researcher. Through the interactions we build via photographs, the study focuses on seeking the answers to what women do and say about their lives and identities, as can be traced through the repeated themes, words, and discourses. It also explores how they remember and connect with their past places, relations, and belongings and imagine a future. In both, the role of power relations, constraints, and possibilities are taken into consideration in the analysis.

2. Literature Review

It is challenging to frame the literature that inspires this work as it is vast, crosses over various disciplines, and deploys multi-layered critical visual methodologies in many geographical contexts that are different from each other. As Roland Barthes (2000) states, a photograph is "a certificate of presence" (p. 87). It has "... an evidential force, and that its testimony bears not on the object but on time" (p. 88-89). The visual, that is, photographs in this study, can be seen as objects being used, represented, and viewed within their visual and material dimensions (Edwards, 2012). Marianne Hirsch (2002) shows how family photographs tell complex, plural, contradictory, and interruptive stories of familial relationships (p. 187). She describes "the photographic aesthetics of postmemory" as "the photograph's capacity to signal absence and loss and, at the same time, to make present, rebuild, reconnect, bring back to life" (p 243). Research by Gillian Rose (2010) reveals that family photography as objects and practice has key effects, including familial togetherness, producing the domestic space as a space for family, and ambivalent mothering. Rose's analysis also informs us about the feminist literature concerning family photography. According to her, in this literature, this area has been neglected and underestimated as a domestic area by considering family albums as oppressive for women in line with the criticism of constructing family life as happy times with distorted and misled visions. Instead, Rose presents how the mothers can be active subjects related to family albums (p. 131).

Since my focus is also on women with migration backgrounds, research on transnational migrant families that are not gender blind contributes to this literature. For example, one of the recent studies, "Mobile Media Photography and Intergenerational Families" by Jolynna Sinanan et al. (2018) shows how visuality becomes apparent in the emotional labor practiced in the everyday life of transnational families. Through circulating and exchanging images, family members acknowledge and maintain bonds across space and time. Women play a significant role in emotional support, that is to say, securing the emotional well-being of family members. The visual materials are not used only to remember or commemorate but also to connect beyond the borders. The affordances of photography are changed and multiplied in the digital age, as Nancy A. Van House (2011) lists by drawing on science and technology studies: Overlapping technologies of memory; relationships; self-representation; and self-expression. Patricia Prieto Blanco (2016) explores into practices of Spanish families living in Ireland in her thesis and exhibits how digital photography is used to strengthen connectivity and emotional communication in distance. Using the data from her fieldwork, she underlines the importance of spatio- temporal emplacement of digital family photography and the diversity of materials involved. According to that, photographs involve intrinsic reflective practice and become the means of belonging and community beyond their referential character.

Other research projects extensively focus on the experiences of women engaging in different intersectional situations. For example, in ethnographic research on Iranian migrant mother's family photograph albums, Penelope Pitt (2015) shows how family photographs are means by which women negotiate subject positions. Pitt focuses not only on what is said on or with photographs but also on what is done with them. Unlike the literature that conceives mothers constructing family photograph albums according to a linear (progressive) historical time, Pitt introduces us to Parvin, who does not compare between 'then' and 'now' but accommodates and integrates past and future lives as an 'accommodating mother. '

Another study which similarly focuses on time (past, present, future) and space (domestic, public, home, urban, etc.) dimensions and carries out research with women in consideration of other "axes of identities" such as ethnicity and national identity is conducted by Jasmijn Van Gorp (2014). Capitalizing on visualized identities of 'former Yugoslav' migrant women in the Netherlands, Van Gorp's study carries out research on women with roots in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, or Croatia. Ten women are asked to depict their identities in self-representing photographs for one week in this research. Individual interviews which aim to reveal how the photographs are contextualized follow that. Van Gorp eventually concludes that conviviality and togetherness are the main features of the visualized identities.

In the research literature on migrant women and visual ethnography, we see more participatory techniques being used. For example, Faime Alpagu (2015) asks migrant women in Vienna to take pictures of places they spend time outside their houses. During the semi-structured interviews, she asked questions, including about how they would describe the process of taking photos, their thoughts during the shooting process, and further about the place and image. She also asks whether they could take all photos they would like to have and what else they would like to have photographed. The striking finding of this study indicates that among the reasons why women could not take all the photos they wanted included the conflict with their work schedules and their tendency to organize their daily life according to the needs of their husbands and children.

Prieto Blanco (2016) utilizes narrative interviewing with the technique of *fotobiografía* by Fina Sanz (2008). Sanz describes *fotobiografía* as follows: "The construction and description of our life story departing from certain photographs that appear in our own or somebody's else albums, and that it is shown as a synthesized recapitulation of what would be 'my life's album' by analyzing those facts, circumstances and happenings relevant to the construction of our identity and our bonds" (translated and quoted in Prieto Blanco, 2016, p. 29 from Sanz, 2008: 68). Prieto Blanco asks participants to select three to five photographs they had already shared and were significant to them.

Biographical approaches are widely used in migration research (Breckner, 2014: 26-29). Breckner lists the opportunities provided by the biographical perspective in another work (2007):

> *With a biographical perspective addressing an entire lifetime and the interrelations between different life spheres, it can be shown: how experiences of migration and trajectories are connected with dynamics and trajectories in other life spheres (e.g., the professional or the family sphere). o how migration experiences interact with specific life phases, careers, or status passages. o how the meaning of migration can change over the course of time and in relation to different biographical and societal contexts. o how members of the same immigrant community experience migration differently … (p. 118).*

3. Research

Research design, here, is informed by biographical research methodology from migration literature as well as digital studies and feminism. I noted our dialogue and interaction during the sessions and the ones listed in Tina Miller's work (2017: 46), including existing dimensions, such as; the dominant, repeated, and emphasized language/words. At the same time, there can be muted, rejected, or absent elements in the

narratives. As Miller notes, whether there are changes in these accounts or they remain the same during the interview/throughout interviews is also important. I realized some changes in the introductory talks before and during the interviews and noted them in my fieldwork.

In this research, first, I asked the participants to choose and show me a few photographs that would describe them or represent their life. Secondly, we talked about the photographs displayed in their house. Thus, the interviews with women on their lives and migration stories are conducted through the photographs they chose to show and those on display in the homes (on their walls, different parts of the house, including the fridge, their selections from their albums or mobile devices). The study's research questions were as follows: What do women do and say about their lives and identities with the photos at home and with the ones that they show? Which themes, words, and discourses are repeated? How do they remember and connect with their past places, relations, and belongings and imagine a future? What is the role of power relations, constraints as well as possibilities?

The interviews took place at the houses of interviewees between December 2019 and February 2020. Before December, mainly during November 2019, most of them were visited or met to inform about the interviews' aim and content. They were asked to prepare the photos they would like to show. The interviews mostly lasted around one hour, with two exceptions which lasted 90 minutes, and two others that lasted 20 minutes. With two students born in Germany, I interviewed in English as my German was not sufficient, and they did not want to speak Turkish. In two shorter interviews, there was no photograph visible at home; that is to say, all of them were taken from the walls, and talking only on those shown from boxes or mobile phones reduced the duration of the interviews. The interviews took place in the cities of Siegen, Cologne, and the towns in them. Four interviews were in the cities, while six were in the towns. The name of cities and towns will not be disclosed to maintain anonymity. The ages of women varied from 17 to 56, and their names were changed. The children were not included in the research. Women in their 60s and older were approached for the study; however, they seemed reluctant to join upon hearing the word "photography". I used the snowball technique and approached each person with reference to the earlier participant. Most women were factory workers, cleaning crew members, or temporarily unemployed, while 4 of them were expecting to work in similar sectors. In the second big group, there were students at different stages, such as; high school, undergraduate, and master's degree (3 women), and more "white collar" professionals such as; one teacher, one self-employed, and one retired professional from Turkey. Younger ones and the students were born in Germany (4 women) while some came as children (2 women), some as young women through marriage (2 women) or asylum process (1 woman) as well as one middle-aged participant who came several years ago after being retired in Turkey and marrying a man living in Germany. The longest migration background was 32 years, while the shortest duration experienced was six years. The period for the majority was around 20 years (6 participants). In the beginning, most of them felt uncomfortable signing the document after choosing one of the options regarding their names and photographs can or can not be shared in the research. One explained that they always feel uncomfortable signing a document in Germany. Then, I got oral permission initially and left obtaining the written consent at the end of the interviews.

There were striking differences between our informal talks before the interview dates and actual recorded interviews in some cases. One participant, Zeynep, talked about the problems and hardships she had as a

mother, including the divorce process before the interview; however, she chose to focus on her success as a businesswoman in the interview.

In half of the married participants (6 of them were married), husbands were either present in the same room or coming and going at times. In none of the cases they were there to help. On the contrary, the women I interviewed served coffee or tea. It was very interesting that despite the houses being large enough and I emphasized that I could only talk to women, neither we left the living room nor the husbands. In one case, the husband went to the next part of the big living room but still overheard us. Only in one case was the participant behaving comfortably despite her husband's existence, staring, listening, and even interrupting us with his replies. During her interview, Ümmü stated that she felt free in marriage and she was the one who made the decisions in the family. She grew up in Germany, and her husband came from Turkey through marriage. However, two women who felt disturbed with their husbands joining us had come to Germany via marriage. Both emphasized their identities as mothers and talked about the importance of children during the interviews. It was their strength as well as a constraint at the same time. Sevim (41 years old) was unemployed temporarily during the interview. She said it was a relief since working a double shift was hard for her with children. Narin's (54 years old) talks were interrupted and challenged by his husband's or her child's interventions. She felt more nervous than the previous interviewee when we were on our own.

3.1. Multiple, fluid identities and belongings

None of the participants called themselves "migrants" despite my title, so I felt compelled to use it in a bracket. The fieldwork also confirmed that migrating for economic and political reasons could sometimes overlap. The same person could be an asylum seeker and a "guest worker". Lack of opportunities in the "homeland" can be related to ongoing political oppression, militarization, and decreasing employment possibilities. Özlem's mother, for example, came to Germany at the end of the 1970s as a young woman because of the political atmosphere, even though she was not a political activist.

Some of the participants were Kurdish by origin, yet none described themselves as Kurdish. Only one of them said, "yes, in Turkey, I feel my Kurdish and Alawite identity more prominently but here, not that much. I feel that I am someone of Turkey origin". She continued: "I describe myself as Turkish. Also, I feel like as *putzfrau* (cleaning lady, my translation). Cleaning, serving all day, and cooking in the kitchen. There is nothing else" (Sevim). These are the words of a woman who was temporarily not working because of the heavy burden of housework and care of a small child and a factory job, indicating how multiple, intersectional, and fluid identities can be. Differently, Hatun, a university graduate retired professional, stated that "I am not a wife or mother, but someone on her own. I belong to Turkey. I never plan to live in Germany permanently. I have a son and family members in Turkey". She came to Germany 6 years ago after her second marriage with a Kurdish man who came here 35 years ago as a university student and settled down. She never wanted to come to Germany and was expecting that her residence in Germany was temporary as things could change. She stated that her husband "... is behaving like a typical man, choosing where we will live. Initially, I agreed to live here for several years and then return. It is not only his wishes and his circle that matter. He belongs here, to Germany, but I am not". These brave and challenging words show that migration may not bring some advantages depending on a person's conditions. Besides, it also shows the gender roles and patriarchy even in those circles where men would describe themselves as

politically progressive or different from the mainstream. As mentioned above, that was the case for two other women whose husbands interfered.

Ümmü, who came to Germany as a child, spoke somewhat differently:

I do not like these divisions such as Turkey or Germany. I live in Germany. I have German friends and colleagues. I like the rules here. I feel safe here. However, one part of me is in Turkey. I was born in Turkey. My childhood was in Turkey. I did not come to Germany by choice. I did not like it initially, but now I can not live in Turkey. My children are here, my friends and my circle are here.

Some describe themselves as world citizens or just humans as well. For example, Özlem, born in Germany, describes herself as German of Turkish origin. Yet, she adds: "National identity is not important. I feel that I belong to the world. I can live anywhere in the world." Zeynep, a self-employed businesswoman, stated that she was scared about where to belong, like her parents in the past. "Losing our own culture was a theme those days. But that was a long time ago. They understood that it was wealth. We got from both cultures; we are world citizens now ... I always wanted to travel and see different countries. Otherwise, I get bored."

Meryem said, "I am a human, neither Turkish, Kurdish, or German". In Meryem's narrative, there were often references to friends and relatives outside Germany and Turkey such as France, Austria, and England. These routes were mentioned not in terms of family kinship but for travel and holiday destinations for younger women. As Angela Veale and Giorgia Dona argue (2014a: 2), the "second-generation children of migrants" who are not actual migrants live highly mobile lives affected by global youth culture. Gülsüm Depeli (2010) asks where the different generations are connected as "home" in Berlin in 2007. For the first two generations, it was Turkey, while for the third one, it was Germany. In my research, second-generation women could also be connected to Germany as home, while third-generation women could mention many other countries. Yet, all those young student participants born in Germany described themselves as German and stated they "loved to live here".

Asiye (17), who used Turkish only when she talked with her parents, said: "German is my language. I love Germany. This is my home".

University student Irem stated:

Yes, I think Germany is my country. I can' think that I' living in Turkey, that is to say, I wouldn' feel comfy in Turkey because I love Germany and I' so glad that we were born here. You have so many options here. You have so many things that you can do here, yes, I love Germany … I would say I' German because I love Germany so so much, but I also love our culture, our Turkish culture, I love the food, I love the language, I love how the way people act, and I love the food you eat when you go to a Turkish home (laughs).

One young woman (Çiçek) came to Germany as a child and was working as a teacher as the interview was conducted. She described her identity as German of Turkish origin and said: "I am more comfortable with my German friends. My everyday life is with German people". Yet, Çiçek shared anecdotes from her life and explained how her German friends or colleagues sometimes approached her with stereotypes in their minds about being a Turkish woman or married to a Turkish man, serving him even though she worked, etc. She

seemed to have challenged the stereotypes that saw Turkish women as passive, submissive, or agonized by using playful ways, jokes, and humor. We know that earning income does not directly lead to emancipation, and working women carry the double burden of performing efficiently in public and private life (Kadıoğlu, 1997). However, the subject matter here was not gender equality per se but stereotyping of migrant women. There can be many sources of this. It is possible to connect this with the general migration experience. Nermin Abadan-Unat (2006) traces unfinished migration from guest workers to transnational citizenship. Kaya approaches the issue of migration from a comparative perspective to Euro-Turks. Lea Nocera (2018) offers textual analyses of these stereotypes through Turkish press and German public policy sources on migration. The portrayal of migrant women as victims or placing them in submissive positions in German media as an extension of ethnocentrism, orientalism, and even racism can be the sources of these stereotypes if we follow Gülay Toksöz (1993). Giritli-Nygren and Schmauch (2012) discuss and challenge these stereotypes in the case of Sweden and show that there can be variations in the life experiences of migrant women. Concentrating on the victim discourse and underestimating the changes and varieties can be seen in the social media representation (Gencel Bek and Prieto Blanco, 2020).

3.2. Talking about selves through photographs: Home, family, and beyond

As photographs were opened up, they deepened the talks and confirmed the diversity and ambiguity of identities. There were conventional photos such as marriage photos or the ones about children and their education successes on the walls and around the furniture in most houses. I should acknowledge that my interpretation and their actual meaning could be different. For example, in Hatun's place, pictures of Kurdish women on walls (Figure 1. Kurdish women on the wall) made me think that the photos showed her husband's Kurdish identity. She was a Kurd too, yet she never emphasized it. She said the images were of her choice, not her husband's. Moreover, she did not primarily see Kurdish women in the photo but a culture centered around women, and she was proud of it.

Figure 1. Kurdish women on the wall.

Despite this example, the spaces of the houses I visited were not merely organized by women but also by men. Such was the case in the organization of photographs as well. Narin's house was full of photos of leftist activists and artists from Turkey as a manifestation of "collective memory" (Halbwachs, 1992) or even "post-memory" (Hirsch, 2008) to transmit these values to their children who were not born in Turkey but Germany. Since the husband talked more about them, it might be more of his choice. For her, the photograph chosen to talk about was more of her personal and intimate memory, her sister, who passed away suddenly after being caught an illness. She kept it at the center of her

house and on her social media pages. In Sevim's house, her husband removed all the photos because they overcrowded the house. It was interesting to see a similar attitude in Çicek's place because she did not idealize marriage and protected her own space. She said she loved taking photos and putting them everywhere at home. Until this house that they lived together, the walls of her earlier houses were full of pictures. Her husband, however, did not like them on the walls. She then picked up the refrigerator door as her space and put the photos of her choice on it (Figure 2. Refrigerator as a space of women).

Figure 2. The refrigerator as a space for women.

Besides the practices of photos, the contents of images deepen our understanding of their lives. The chosen photographs by Hatun were from her mobile device, showing her friends mostly. Her printed albums were in her house in Turkey.

That is my photo from the office when I was a businesswoman. These are my friends in Izmir.

So nice and sunny. Is that you here?

Yes.

You are as if different in this picture, no?

Yes, I know, I am different in İzmir while I am like a housewife in Germany. I was happier in Turkey. What can I do? I want to communicate with people like me here, but there are only a few. People in İzmir have more European lifestyles compared to the ones in Cologne. Especially evenings, people go out. I used to do that as well. Here I am confined to my home.

Hatun said she shared photos of her when she was in Turkey and photos of Turkey but never of Germany. "Only when my friends ask about the weather, then I send a rainy weather picture."

Ethnographic research on photographs and families from a feminist perspective reveals how idealized family visions or myths in accordance with male dominant and sexist understandings are constructed through frames on the walls (Erkonan, 2016) or family albums (Tuncer, 2017). However, they also show that one can see contradictions even then: Tuncer states: "The reality of family and what is exhibited has a fragile relationship" (Tuncer, 2017). In my research, it was striking how the photos shown by women could be so different from the ones that hung on the walls, which became more evident as we set out for deeper and more intimate conversations. It can tell a lot about women, not only as family members but also as a person in their own right. Such was the experience with Ümmü, for example. She showed the photo of her mother, brothers, and sisters. It was not a typical family photo considering the father's absence: "My mother went to a photo studio. That is something which is not done anymore since there are other possibilities. As if my mother is trying to say something to me". This photo and her reading were in harmony with her understanding of self as a powerful woman who did not back down from struggle. She also showed a photo of her school. She started with some specific photos and then opened up the whole album of school years. I told her that I found it so interesting that she still kept the photographs of all her friends, including the ones that she was not there. She said, "of course, that is my classroom" (she said "is" not "was"). The photographs tell a memory and a turning point in her life. At the beginning of the album, she appeared with a Turkish friend, her only friend at that time, separately from the rest of the class. Later, she looked happier and closer with the other kids, especially in the photos of the last year. When I asked whether it actually was the case, she confirmed. She replied that it was taken after a school trip. Her close friend did not join; therefore, she was alone. She got closer to the German students. She understood that "not only they were excluding us, but we were excluding ourselves too. That trip increased my confidence. I made them accept me. I was alone. They did not exclude me. Previously they were leaving us alone with my friend. None of us were making an effort. We were telling that they were German while they were telling that we were Turkish. I love these photos. It was the first time I was outside home. I felt so free on that trip. I did not feel so different from them". She showed another picture of a young German girl and said, "she is still my best friend". They still meet often. (Figure 3. Ümmü's photo album).

Figure 3a and b. Ümmü's photo album.

With these photos, I witnessed that she was not only a mother and wife, as suggested by the images on the wall, but also a student once someone achieved, broke the walls, and established life and circle where she lived. She owned her story with pride.

3.3. From Past to Future, From Here to There: Multiple Spatialities and Temporalities

As we looked at the photos, we talked about how and what was remembered and how they were connected with places and times. Ümmü explained with great sadness that whenever her mother got pregnant in Germany, she went to Turkey and left her baby ten days old to her mother-in-law and returned to Germany to work. The other children, including Ümmü, used to wait for their mother in anticipation, who only used to come to give birth to a new brother or sister. They were five children. "There were nurseries in Germany that time too. The workers had rights back then too. However, they did not know German, and they did not know their rights". Ümmü remembered her arrival in Germany and the preceding period also with sadness:

I came when I was 9. (Before...) We were not rich; in fact we were a poor family in Turkey. We were five children. We had many needs and were in poverty, but we were happy. Back in the time, we could be happy with so few things. We were out all day, playing hide and seek on the streets. We were free. We were picking fruits from trees. The journey here lasted three days. When we came here, we felt as if we were locked in a cage. We did not know anyone. I used to dream of those places and cry at night. After traveling to Turkey again, I understood that I did not belong there but here, in Germany.

The realization of a new belonging, that is to say, not to Turkey but to Germany was a theme in another narrative as well. Çiçek, who came to Germany as an asylum seeker when she was a child, said, "during those 12-13 years, we could not go to Turkey. The night of the day we finally returned, I was so upset because it was not the place I longed for, but somewhere else". As Massey (1994:172) states, "... places can be home, but they do not have to be thought in that way". Bell hooks (1991: 148) argues that "home is no longer just one place. It is locations". Here, the differences between exile, expat or refugees also are significant, as Edward Said (2000) explains regarding the feelings of loss and being cut from someone's roots.

In Gökçen Karanfil's (2009) research on migrant homes of Turkish Australians, we read about this "dual" or "second loss of homeland" not through actual physical travel but via accessing Turkish television channels. According to him, after the migratory loss, being separated from home, familiar surroundings, and everyday routines, migrants construct the "frozen image of homeland" (p. 890). With the fear of losing their culture, they design their homes so that "the home serves as a space in which the loss is preserved in the form of a snapshot of the unchanged, unspoiled, authentic cultural aura" (p. 891). The second more traumatic loss happens when they watch Turkish transnational channels from satellite and realize that they are not familiar with what they left behind. The place they call "home" has changed, and they have lost their homeland. Thus, the loss occurs not only via place but also via time. The first is the physical loss of home, while the second is the loss of an imaginary home that they preserved in memories and nostalgia.

Interestingly, in this research, the use of media such as TV or newspapers was not popular amongst the participants. Almost all of them said they did not watch TV but followed the news mostly in German via mobile devices. One young woman mentioned having decided to sell her TV because she never used it. As for younger women, they wanted to use the media after deciding what to watch, such as "TED talks" and "movies," or read the "news" from their mobile phones. Only in one house Turkish TV channels were on during my visit. Watching in Turkish was not popular in general. One woman said after the Gezi events, where a teenage child, Berkin Elvan, was killed alongside several other young people by police, she could not stand hearing the news from Turkey, complaining about the government's oppression. As a young girl, her sister was killed in the 1970s by police. We could see her photograph in the living room while we were talking, and the interview was emotionally loaded (I do not attach any photos here even though permission is granted from the participant).

Compared to today, the past communication environment in Germany was a theme referred to by relatively older participants as a constraint and hardship they experienced as migrants. Ümmü said, "in those years, there was no telephone. Communication was through letters". Narin said, "before, we did not have mobile phones and sometimes not even landlines after moving into a house. We did not use to go to Turkey that often either. Everything was more difficult". Such difficulties are never seen in the narratives of the new generation. According to two young participants, communicating with the loved ones in Turkey does not directly occur. The young ones like Asiye and Irem mostly participate in the communication through their mothers. While their mother talks to their grandmother, they also get in and say hello. They hardly visit Turkey. Instead, they prefer to go to other countries for a holiday. Exceptionally another young student, Özlem, communicates with her grandmother in Turkey through WhatsApp and photos. Her grandmother lives alone, and she learned WhatsApp when she was 77 years old. Özlem visits her every year. She talks with her through a video conference on WhatsApp 2 or 3 times a month. Her grandmother sends her nice pictures in good clothes and sends a message meaning "you see I am OK". That is how Özlem interprets. Özlem sends her flower photos from here because "my grandmother likes flowers". As such interactions suggest, a significant amount of affective communication and connection happens from a distance between women through photographs.

Middle-aged participants either go to Turkey every year or every other year, even though some encounter difficulties when going with their husbands. Those who would like to live in Turkey (3 participants) have loved ones there; sons, brothers, or close girlfriends. They communicate through video calls regularly. WhatsApp and Facebook also are used commonly. Çiçek says, "There are WhatsApp groups. I celebrated someone's birthday. Sometimes with my mother, we take, 'yeees, here we are together' photos and send them. They send a teapot photo on the stove and say; 'come over while tea is still hot'". Ümmü also sends photos of meals from WhatsApp to invite her children living in the nearby city to dinner.

Instagram was the most mentioned platform. It was more popular among younger ones compared to Facebook. Çiçek stated that she used social media pictures to get inspiration, such as Pinterest, before she traveled, cooked, bought, or prepared a gift for someone. Özlem said she was using social media more creatively, that is to say, to write messages on humanitarian values and self-love. It can be inferred that even though the younger generation -in general-used photography and social media more creatively to express themselves (see Figure 4. Young people's creative use of social media), memory and connection are important for them too as seen in Özlem's case above. İrem, for example, shared photos of her clothing and

traveling in other countries on social media. However, she used a Polaroid camera for more important moments, such as celebrations with family members. The new and valuable memories with Polaroid and black and white photography became more tangible objects for her that can never be lost in digital space. They are too valuable to share in digital environments.
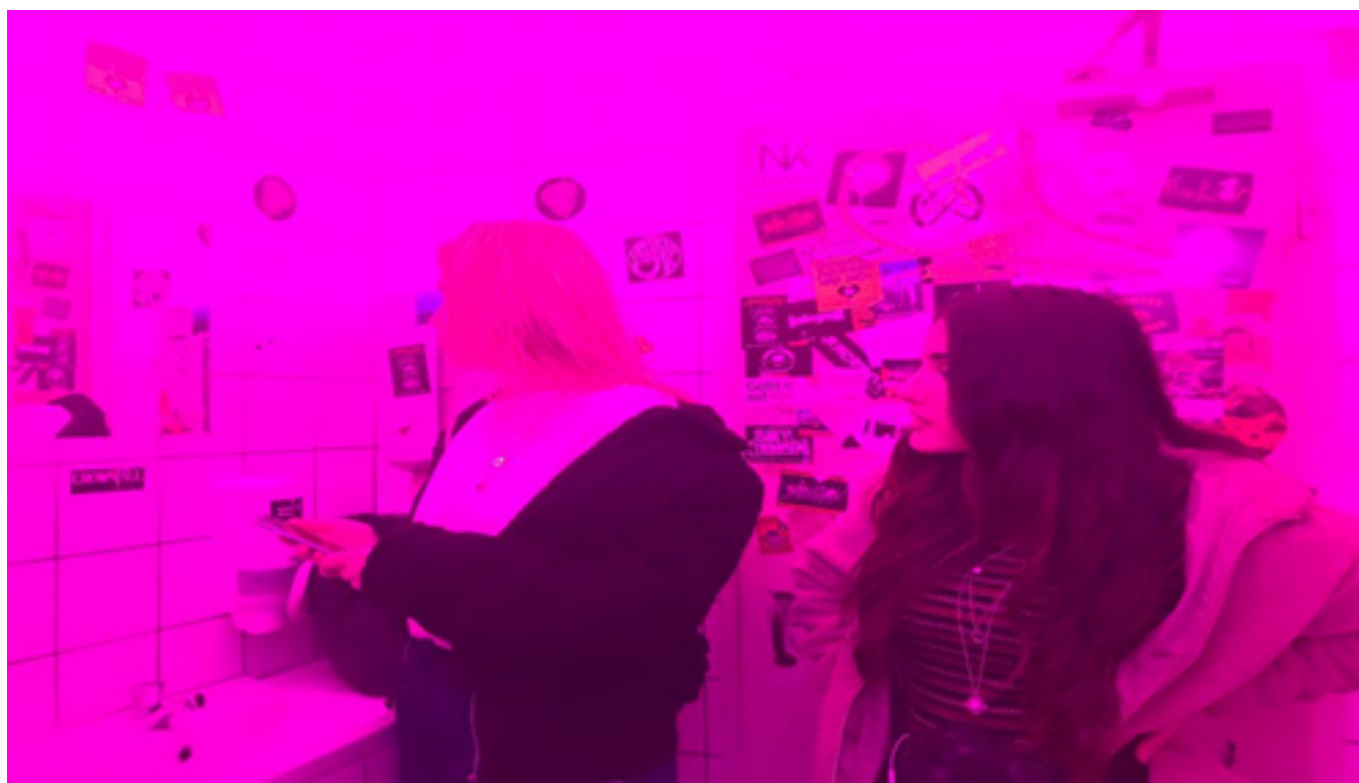
Figure 4. Young people's creative use of social media

The majority of women (7 women) stated that they would probably keep living in Germany throughout their lives. For Hatun, life in Turkey, especially in the city that she lived; İzmir, is much better than in Germany as she explained above. For younger ones who express their feelings towards Germany as love, 3 of them gave more enthusiastic answers about living in Germany. For Cicek, "The future is certainly not Turkey, but Germany". She is a French teacher, and she could teach French somewhere else. That could be Mexico, south France or Spain, but only for a while because she "always misses the order of Germany, its cleanness and rules after living one or two months somewhere else".

Meryem, 58 years old woman, "there is no idea of returning to Turkey for me anymore. Nothing belongs to me in Turkey. Neither friends nor family. My father has already died. My mother is too old. We go to Turkey for them and also for holidays. That is it. We do not feel like we belong there".

For two people, the answer was "anywhere in the world ."Angela Veale and Giorgia Dona (2014b) introduce the concept of "mobility-in-migration" (p. 236) to describe multi-directional and multitemporal movements that occur within the individual, family, and community migratory "arcs" in the context of multiple mobilities. "As a result of globalization, individual migratory trajectories have shifted from being long-term, bi-directional, permanent and somewhat static to being characterized by multiple journeys, short, circular or seasonal migrations, holiday and pleasure mobilities that are dynamic and ongoing into the future." During our talks, Zeynep, who has her business enterprise that has a connection with other countries, including China, said:

> *Wherever there is money, our kids will go there. There is not only Turkey or Germany. It can be anywhere in the US or China. They can establish a business there. Or can meet someone and settle down in another country. That is life. That is a global world. There will be nothing like you are in a job and stay there 40 years in this world. Maybe there will not be anything like Europe after 20 years.*

The middle-aged women who came after getting married and worked either as housewives or cleaning and factory jobs wanted to live in Turkey. Still, they could not do that because of their children who continue their education here. What we see here is what Doreen Massey (2005) calls "geometry of power" which relates to the constraints on traveling as a result of intersections of power structures. Massey (1994: 179) explains how the limitation of women's mobility as identity and space can be related as "a crucial means of subordination" in her book titled *Space, Place, and Gender*. One of the participants, Narin, stated that compared to the past, they could go to Turkey more often now, that is to say, every summer, some years, even in winters. "I was so upset when I came. I even wanted to go back to Turkey. I thought about it several times (at this point, she gave signs of discomfort talking in the presence of her husband). How can I? The kids are here". For her, it was impossible to make any changes. She could only dream: "I wish I were born in Germany. I would have liked to live from the beginning here. Preferably as a daughter of a German family. I would get a better and different education here. Growing up here. Everything else would be different." The reality was, "The future waiting for me is just a classical retired person's life. The kids are here. We will be here as well". A very similar emphasis was also seen in Sevim's narrative, who was missing her brother and hometown in all the awareness that the permanent return was impossible because of the kids. She would love to live in Turkey in the seaside town where her family lived. "Since I grew up in Turkey, it is special for me. But I know that is impossible. I want something impossible". She was not happy that she could go only once every 2-3 years. Sometimes they only visited her husband's family and came back without visiting her parents when they went. At this point, her husband interrupted and explained that "it is because our parents lived in opposite parts of Turkey. Visiting both are difficult. Money is a problem. We could not afford to go that often". She was upset because her parents could not come either. After all, they were too old. It seemed that the ideal of motherhood had become the main obstacle in realizing the dreams of these women. Yet children were mentioned by almost all mothers (6 people) as source of strength that makes them "keep going" (Besides their children, women also mentioned relatives and friends as sources of power and strength. In two women's narratives, Turkish or German solidarity networks were also emphasized). Motherhood came out in this study as an important subject and practice which deserves to be researched separately, that is, in another work. Umut Erel (2009: 192) in her research on exploring the life stories of highly educated and skilled migrant women and their citizenship, labels migrant women as "cultural workers". According to Erel, migrant mothers' activities are not limited with caring for their children but intervening to validate their children's identities in the public realm against racist marginalization (Erel, 2009: 192). In our research, we have seen this element especially in Ümmü's struggle regarding her children being treated as not psychologically competent in the school system.

4. Discussion

The narratives of ten women touch upon many vital issues that can potentially develop the research on migration, visual studies, and feminist research further. Through the article, I tried to engage with this

literature at the beginning of the article as well as in discussing the research part. The ten migrant women that I talked to through their photographs and visited in their houses were significantly different. This finding is so striking, especially when how I reached them is considered. The women I reached through a snowball technique in relative geographic vicinity (the longest distance among them was only 120 km) had one thing in common; migrating to Germany from Turkey. Their identities were multiple, fluid, ambiguous, and intersectional despite this common point.

The interviews can not produce some generalizable outcome since the aim of this study was not to reach that with a respectful appreciation of the uniqueness of each life. None of the participants called themselves "migrants" despite my title, so I felt compelled to use it in a bracket. The fieldwork also confirmed that migrating for economic and political reasons could sometimes overlap. The same person could be an asylum seeker and a "guest worker" due to the political-economic conditions in the "homeland," such as ongoing political oppression, militarization, and decreasing employment possibilities. The women I interviewed followed the path of migration because of these multiple reasons. Yet, migration does not necessarily bring a more advantageous position for all women.

It is possible to see some tendencies and parallelisms by relying on the content and practices of their photographs and the observations during the interviews at their home. In fact, inequal gender roles were visible even in the circles where men would describe themselves as politically progressive or different from the mainstream. It was visible in the organization of the spaces of the houses, including the organization of photographs. The overall interaction and talk among themselves showed the range of constraints strikingly. For example, one stated that they migrated because her husband could not find a job in Turkey, but her husband got angry and claimed that the actual reason was his leftist political activism. He argued that she came for employment, but he came for political reasons. He interrupted her again when she talked about something pleasant about her brothers and claimed that it was about him and his family tradition. Later, she added that she wanted to learn something (for safety reasons, I do not disclose any more details), but she could not. During our talks, I encouraged her as she was not only a research participant for me, and the whole process might empower them and me at the same time. Her child, however, was teasing her all the time, reminding her age and saying, "Mom, you are x age. My father also says it is too late". Upon hearing what we were talking about, the husband came from the other side of the living room, denied saying anything like that, and added: "she was late for home the other day, and this is why I said it. I did not mean it was late to learn x. She was late for home, not to learn x". She explained some constraints at the pre-interview meeting, but she did not want to talk about them at home. I did not insist for the sake of the participant's security and still can not write here.

Two women with more fragile situations similarly expressed more constraints in decision-making, including where to live and how often and how to travel to Turkey, where they "dream" of living in. As one said: "But I know that is impossible. I want something impossible." During the interviews, I could relate to the obstacles of travel some suffered due to my position as an exiled academic whose passport was suspended and a migrant woman and a mother like most of them. Another very striking theme was motherhood which was shown as their strength even though it leads to a constraint at the same time. Motherhood's "ambivalent" character (Rose, 2016: 55) was not spoken up much. The idealization of motherhood has been observed as one of the obstacles in realizing the dreams of these women besides the other constraints, including

economic fragility and in relation to that husbands' dominance. Yet, almost all mothers mentioned children as a source of strength that makes them "keep going".

Gender roles are not without contestation and are not experienced the same for all, though. Many struggles have been heard at home and beyond. For example, the working women who grew up and went to school in Germany and married men from Turkey expressed themselves as more powerful and free in marriage. The similar was almost the case for the one who was retired with a good salary and came to Germany after marriage. It should also be mentioned that their struggle was not only on unequal gender roles directed at their husbands or partners or fathers but also racialized discrimination in the German system and the society. A professional woman seemed to have challenged the stereotypes of her German girlfriends and colleagues who were similar to her in many senses and yet consider her and Turkish women as always passive, submissive, or agonized by using playful ways, jokes, and humor. At the same time, the other fought as a mother against the discrimination of the German school system and as a worker advocating her rights at the factory, differently from her parents and the earlier generation in Germany.

Despite the still popular framework as two places, Turkey and Germany, many women I talked to had more than two places in their lives. They were not only connected to a country of origin and a host country but had multiple routes in Europe and beyond. These routes were mentioned not in terms of family kinship for younger women but more as travel and holiday destinations. In this research, second-generation women could mostly be connected to Germany as home, not as a wish but as an experienced reality. The third generation could mention many other countries, not necessarily only Germany. That was the case for even those young women who were born in Germany, described themselves as German and stated that they "love to live here". However, we should be cautious before idealizing or romanticizing the idea of belonging to the world or being a world citizen. In fact, for some participants mentioning the world as a space of identification, it should be mentioned that it was not only a wish but a projection that can be a necessity in the global neo-liberal economy.

The photographs as practices and content in this research opened up and deepened the talks about their life and migration stories and confirmed the diversity and ambiguity of identities. It was striking how the photos shown by women could be so different from the ones that hung on the walls. Those shown from the album, a box, or a mobile phone can tell a lot about women, not only as family members but also as people in their own right. With these photos, I became a witness in one case that she was not only a mother and wife as suggested by the photos on the wall, but also a student once who someone achieved, broke the walls of discrimination in Germany, established a professional life and social circle where she will live in the future.

Sharing photographs in the digital age was one of strengthening interactions and an affective communication and connection from a distance between women compared to the past communication environment in Germany referred by relatively older participants as a constraint and hardship they experienced as migrants. Yet, using digital devices and photographs for memory and connection is essential even for the younger generation, whose photography practices are more creative and self-expression oriented.

I do not know to what extent this modest research could be a reply to the challenge that Kelly Lockwood, Kate Smith, and Jo Woodiwiss (2017) invited for feminist narrative research: That is, the relationship between dominant/hegemonic narratives and individual stories/storytelling. Has it contributed to understanding how the first informs and constrains the second? This study, by using the affordances of photographs as content and practices, exhibited the struggles of women with racial discrimination, class and gender inequality in family, at work, and in broader society. Hegemonic narratives like being a mother and being married, have also revealed that some of the content could be hardly spoken and told. In closing, I wish to remove all the constraints obstructing our communication with ourselves and others by increasing self-awareness. Only then, perhaps, we can dare to voice our desires on how to live our unique and precious lives.

Acknowledgement

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