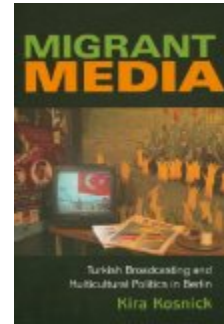


Kira Kosnick. *Migrant Media: Turkish Broadcasting and Multicultural Politics in Berlin*. New Anthropologies of Europe Series. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007. x + 240 pp. \$60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-253-34948-4; \$22.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-253-21937-4.

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Turkish Media in Germany: Multiculturalism in Action?

The year 2010 witnessed a heated debate on the issues of integration, multiculturalism, and Muslims in Germany. In December 2010, a study conducted by researchers from the University of Münster found that a majority of Germans view Islam negatively. Multiculturalism in Germany has failed, claimed the German chancellor Angela Merkel in October 2010. With her remark she aimed at capitalizing on the debate concerning the failed integration of Muslim immigrants, which was triggered a couple of months earlier by Thilo Sarrazin. In his highly polemic book, *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (2010), Sarrazin, at this point on the board of the Bundesbank, claimed that Turkish and Arab immigrants do not integrate into German mainstream society, that indeed they are not capable of integration, and that Jews are genetically different, among other statements. While criticism of his diatribe was abundant, it hit a nerve in Germany. Why are Turks and Arabs not integrated in the mainstream was a question asked by some, others asked why they appeared nonintegrated, and some rejected these generalizations and outlined Germany's shortcomings in terms of immigration policies. Emotions continue to run high on this recurring debate in Germany. Turkish immigrants in Germany are a problematic issue for German politics, and for parts of the German population.

In *Migrant Media*, Kira Kosnick offers some highly interesting clues about the lifeworlds of Turks in the country. To elucidate these lifeworlds, and it is important to stress that there are a multiplicity of lifeworlds,

Kosnick focuses her ethnography on *Turkish Broadcasting and Multicultural Politics in Berlin*, as the subtitle reveals. Beginning in the early 1990s, Kosnick conducted ethnographic research among migrant media producers in Berlin. She occupied the position of a journalist for a radio station, Radio MultiKulti, which allowed her to gain insider knowledge of program production at this station. According to Kosnick, Radio MultiKulti defines itself as a station with voices that have a (foreign) accent. It stresses that the voices with foreign accents, that is, migrants, represent themselves, and that others do not speak for them. This is exactly where Kosnick's critical undoing of migrant broadcasting begins: who speaks for whom, with which agenda, to which (imagined) audience, and embedded into which hegemonic discourses of power?

To answer these important questions, Kosnick starts with an overview of migrant broadcasting. In line with the German policy of defining (Turkish) migrants as guest workers who would sooner or later go back home, initially this broadcasting was aimed at offering help and information for their temporary sojourn, and supplying some news about their native homes. This early policy concerning program content shows that there was little interest in integrating Turkish migrants into German society, because the migrants' supposed point of reference was Turkey. However, while the conservative German government of the 1980s encouraged home migration, it could no longer be overlooked that many Turkish migrants had settled in Germany. By way of this

fait accompli, broadcasting networks reconsidered their policies: the Turks were given a new reference point of identification—localized migrants, or in Kosnick’s words “Berlin Turks” (p. 73). As Kosnick stresses earlier in the book, policymakers ignored the transnational connections of the immigrants; the fact that Turkey and Germany functioned as reference points was not part of the hegemonic discourse that underpinned the production at Radio MultiKulti. This finding leads her to ask about the construction of migrant voices, and the “community” for which they speak (p. 78). She asks as well why some migrant voices carry more power than others and questions the authenticity of these voices (in particular, who defines them as authentic?). These questions bring Kosnick back to her earlier point concerning community construction. She contends that the “Turkish community” is multi-accented, and that the accented voices of Radio MultiKulti signify differences within the Turkish community. Yet the migrant voices on Radio MultiKulti do not cause offense like those on the Offener Kanal Berlin (OKB), a station Kosnick researched to gain further insights into the conflicts of the Turkish community and discourses of power.

Before analyzing the differences between OKB and Radio MultiKulti, Kosnick introduces the important notions of “culture” and “cultures.” The crucial difference lies in the definition of the former as high culture and the latter as ethnic culture. The station Kulturradio focuses on broadcasting classical Western music styles. Other music styles, one could say high-culture contributions from countries defined as non-Western, are nearly absent on this station. Non-Western productions have their space in the ethnic niche covered by Radio MultiKulti. Broadcasting on either channel is thus defined by hegemonic discourses that reflect still existing attitudes concerning the West and the rest: Radio MultiKulti is for ethnic broadcasting, while Kulturradio is for broadcasting “non-ethnic,” as in naturalized, Western styles of music. Artistic merit does not play a role in this distinction, which reifies perceptions of whiteness. However, this distinction reinforces the difference between Turks and Germans. It leaves one party in the ethnic (low) culture corner, while the other assumes the position of de-ethnicized (high) culture. This distinction not only recreates the discourse that drives cultural policy but also disables any recognition of transnational cultural production that takes Germany and Turkey as reference points, and, as Kosnick outlines, drives artists who reflect their transnational experience in their art “to seek their fortunes abroad” (p. 102).

The essentialization of culture versus cultures from the German side is not all that influences the content of Turkish media. Content is important to the German (as well as the Turkish) nation-state; both countries attempt to marginalize voices that are not desirable. Feedback between the voices of Turks in Germany and Turks in Turkey poses a problem to the Turkish-nation state: Turks in Germany might well be out of line with the policies of the (then) secular government, and argue for different policies. Similarly, Kurds in Germany broadcast to other Kurds in Turkey, as well as to the Kurdish diaspora beyond either country. The stage for these voices is mainly OKB. While Radio MultiKulti gives clues about the diversity of Turkish voices, OKB shows that “Turks” are anything but a community in Germany. The two radio stations have different agendas concerning Turkey. At OKB, Alevis promote their matters, Kurds argue for those important to them, and Islamists address their own audiences. This means that each group tries to reach out to an audience favorable to their politics. A quotation from an OKB producer puts this succinctly: “They [Radio MultiKulti] have the good guys, we [OKB] have the bad guys” (p. 152). OKB challenges German cultural policy and the dominant notions—to localize immigrants—on which it is based.

By way of thick ethnographic descriptions, Kosnick provides detailed insights into broadcasting production and practices in Germany, she elucidates the policy framework that defines access to media outlets, she highlights the multiplicity of voices of Turkish migrants, and she examines important questions regarding transnationalism and self-definition (*Selbstzuschreibung*) versus ascription (*Fremdzuschreibung*). For these reasons, her work contributes not only to the anthropology of media, but also to other areas of anthropology, such as community and migration studies. Her work is truly timely, as it offers answers to questions that German politicians are now (again) asking with populist overtones. I hope that expert voices, such as Kosnick’s, will be heard in this debate, and that they will be included in the development of policies that do not go past “Turkish migrants” but include them in the discussion. Unfortunately for realpolitik, Kosnick addresses the ascription via Islam in only four short pages (pp. 194-198). Maybe this is the case because she conducted her research prior to 9/11, which marks a shift in the discourse concerning Muslims in Germany, or maybe this is because Kosnick is aware that many, if not most, of her respondents are little observing Muslims. However, their self-definition as Muslim recreates a discourse of otherness on a different, supernatural,

level.[1] It also recreates a discourse that since 9/11 has gained a strong foothold with the German mainstream as the discussion triggered by Sarazzin shows. Furthermore, her short discussion “Muslims in Europe” is based on the United Kingdom, not Germany. The Muslim population in the United Kingdom is mainly from South Asia, not from Turkey. Such issues as citizenship are dealt with differently in the United Kingdom than in Germany, and discourses of marginalization also run along different lines. While Kosnick’s point on Muslims in Europe is important, the book would have been stronger had she developed this point earlier and in more depth. Belonging to *Umma* (global community of Muslims) as opposed to being a citizen or resident of Muslim faith of a specific country are significant in current affairs, regardless how

nonobservant single Muslims might be.[2] However, despite this shortcoming, which is based on the changes of geo-politics since Kosnick carried out her main research, her contribution is important. Again, I hope that voices like Kosnick’s will be heard in German debates on Turkish migrants, and that she continues her work in these policy-relevant areas.

Notes

[1]. See, for example, Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967).

[2]. John R. Bowen, “Does French Islam Have Borders? Dilemmas of Domestication in a Global Religious Field,” *American Anthropologist* 106, no. 1 (2004): 43–55.

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