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Anthropology of Transnational Space: Euro-Turks

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THE aim of this paper is, first, to retrospectively outline the stages of the scientific works made on the Euro-Turks since the beginning of the migratory process in 60s. The account of these works shall be made through an anthropological gaze. Subsequently, I shall define the newly emerging border-crossing transnational space between, and beyond, the borders of Turkey and the European migrant receiving countries. Besides, I shall also mention the merits of anthropology in studying transnational spaces. Consequently, I will conclude with the constant tension transnational, or diasporic subjects come across in the border-crossing spaces.

An Account of Works on Euro-Turks. We can identify three stages in the studies on Turkish migrants in Europe, most of which concentrate on German-Turks. In the early period of the migratory process in the sixties, the syncretic nature of existing migrant cultures was not of interest to scholars analysing the situation of Turkish migrants in Europe. The studies carried out during this period were mainly concerned with economics, statistics, 'culture in particular' and the dreams of return (cf., *interalia*, Abadan, 1964; Castles and Kosack, 1973). As Ayse Çağlar (1994) has rightfully stated, the reason behind this neglect was twofold: First, at the beginning of the migration process, Turkish workers were demographically highly homogenous, consisting of either single males or females, and were not visible in the public space. Second, workers in this period were considered temporary, and they themselves regarded their situation as such (Çağlar, 1994: 16-17).

The end of recruiting foreign labour to European countries in the early 1970s, and the beginning of family reunion mark the beginning of the second stage. The number of studies on Turkish migrants' culture increased with the visibility of Turkish migrants becoming more visible in the public space after family reunification. Faced with the choice of leaving Eu-rope without a possibility of returning, most migrants decided to stay in their countries of settlement for the time being and were joined by their families. The transformation from being a rotatable workforce to becoming increasingly settled went hand in hand with the emergence of community structures such as the development of ethnic small business enterprises, sport clubs, religious organisations and meeting places, which made Turkish migrants more visible to the local population. Furthermore, the rising presence of non-working dependants, women and children, necessitated the provision of some basic social services, such as education and housing. Against this background, studies of this period concentrated on the reorganisation of the family, parent-child relationships, integration, assimilation and 'acculturation' of migrants to the European cultures (cf., *interalia*, Abadan-Unat, 1985; Nauck, 1988; Kağıtçıbası, 1987). The key words in these studies were 'cultural conflict', 'culture shock', 'acculturation', 'in-betweenness' and 'identity crisis'. What is striking in the first two stages is the fact that there was hardly any anthropological research made regarding the 'habitats of meanings' of Euro-Turks.

The third stage -starting in the 1990s- is characterised by a wide diversity of approaches. In this last stage, questions pertaining to the relationship between structure and agency, and interest in cultural production have come to the fore. Studies have dealt with such questions concerning citizenship, discrimination and racism, socio-economic performance and, increasingly, with the emergence of diasporic networks as well as cultural production (cf., *interalia*, Vassaf, 1982; Çağlar, 1994; Mandel, 1996; Schwartz, 1992; Zaimoğlu, 1995; Faist, 2000; Schwartz, 1992; Mandel 1989, 1990, 1996; Kaya, 2000, 2001). The third stage has also witnessed some anthropological works such as Çağlar (1990, 1994), Tertilt (1996) and Kaya (2000, 2001).

The first two stages were dominated by the works of the sociologists, economists, and psychol-

ogists. And the last stage has been covered by the scholars from all social science disciplines. Here, a separate note should be made concerning the deployment of the notion of culture in those three stages. Scholars in the first and second stages employed *the holistic notion of culture*, whereas researchers of the third stage generally used *the syncretic notion of culture*. The holistic notion of culture considers culture a highly integrated and grasped static 'whole'. This is the dominant paradigm of classical modernity, of which territoriality and totality were the main characteristics. The syncretic notion of culture is the one, which is most obviously affected by increasing interconnectedness in space. This syncretic notion of culture has been proposed by contemporary scholars to demonstrate the fact that cultures emerge in mixing beyond political and geographical territories.

The main claim of the holistic approach is that 'shared meanings and values' are the principal constituents of each distinct culture. The focus on 'shared meanings and values' may sometimes make culture sound too unitary, homogeneous, and too cognitive. The disturbance of this unity and holism is considered to result in crisis, breakdown or degeneration. The themes of 'identity crisis', 'in-betweenness', 'split identities' and 'degeneration' raised by some scholars in the study of ethnic minorities is the product of such an assumption. This assumption claims that culture emerges in discrete ethnic lines, and holds no place for syncreticism and bricolage. Syncreticism could merely be considered, in this approach, nothing but an impurity polluting the 'authentic culture'.

Most of the studies on Turks and Turkish culture in Europe were based on a notion linking ethnicity and culture. This approach mainly rests on the assumption that Turkish migrants carry their own distinct cultural baggages all the way along from home to the country of settlement. Underestimating the situational and instrumental nature of ethnicity, these scholars went back to the place of origin of migrants to find out the main parameters of their social, cultural and ethnic identifications. These analysts took the 'traditional culture' of Turkey as their basis to ascertain the migrants' social and cultural identities in their new social milieu. The emphasis is usually placed on the norms, values and codes that predominate in rural areas of Turkey. Islam, on the other hand, comes to the fore in these studies as the core of this 'traditional culture'. Moreover, this group of scholars approaches the issue through the lens of an 'identity' framework in which identity is considered stable, fixed, centred and coherent (Abadan-Unat, 1976, 1985; Kağıtçıbası, 1987; Mushaben, 1985).

On the other hand, *the syncretic notion of culture* claims that mixing and bricolage are the main characteristics of cultures. In this approach, culture does not develop along ethnically absolute lines but in complex, dynamic patterns of syncreticism (Gilroy, 1987: 13); and cultural identity is considered a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being' (Hall, 1989, 1994). It seems more appropriate for this perspective to treat migrant cultures as mixing their new set of tools, which they acquire in the migration experience, with their previous lives and cultural repertoires. The major challenge to scholars who are bound by the holistic notion of culture comes from those who reject the idea of viewing ethnic groups as pre-given social units.

Lately, the works of Nermin Abadan-Unat address the notion of transnational space expressed by scholars such as Arjun Appadurai, Ulf Hannerz, Thomas Hyaland Ericksen, Jonothan Friedman, Steven Vertovec, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Robin Cohen, and Thomas Faist, many of whom are anthropologists. The study of transnational space deserves a particular attention because of the rising visibility of border crossing cultural reproduction, capital accumulation, political engagement, hyphenated identities and cultures in fluidity.

Anthropology as a habitus: Anthropology is an essential transdisciplinary discipline providing researchers with valuable tools to conduct their research in transnational space with the transnational subjects, families, and cultures. There are many different reasons giving a distinguished flavour to the discipline. To name a couple of them, it is an transdisciplinary discipline which makes it very suitable to study transnational spaces. Furthermore, anthropology is a social science, which should be considered as a *habitus*. This peculiarity of anthropology is manifested by anthropologists studying transnational spaces, who are themselves migrants and/or travellers, and thus transnational.

As Eric Wolf (1964) has defined earlier, anthropology is *a discipline between disciplines*. It is practiced in a liminal space where different traditions of disciplines interact and collide. Thus, it is performed and embodied in what we call the *third space*. This openness poses recurring problems of self-definition for anthropology. And partly because its theoretical framework has remained so broad and interdisciplinary, despite many attempts to cut it down to size, the discipline has focused on research practices as defining, core elements. Fieldwork has played, and continues to play, a central disciplining function. In other words, its dedicated investment in fieldwork is the defining character of anthropology.

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Studying Transnational Space and Modern Diasporas. Being a discipline between disciplines anthropology is granted an excelence in studying the border-crossing transnational space, which is also phrased by others as the third space (Bhabha, 1990, 1994), rhizomatic space (Guattari, 1989; Kaya, 2000, 2001), and diasporic space (Brah, 1996; Kaya, 2000, 2001). Transnational spaces refer to relatively stable, enduring and dense sets of ties reaching beyond and across the borders of sovereign nation-states. Space is never onthologically given. It is discursively mapped and corporeally practiced. For instance, an urban neighbourhood may be laid out physically according to a street plan. Let's name it a 'place'. But it is not a 'space' until it is used and practiced by people's active participation, their movements through and around it. Thus, transnational space covers more than routes and destinations between, or beyond, territorial nation-states. It rather covers a wider spectrum of social, cultural, political, and economic transactions among transnational subjets, families, institutions, corporations, networks, images, figures, languagaes, discourses, arts, rituals, cuisines and symbols. Hence, place is onthologically given, whereas space is discursively constructed. Space comprises the ties among actors in multi-locale places. This broader understanding of space owes a lot to the border-crossing expansion of social ties, contemporary processes of globalism, and rising speed of transactions. Present labour diasporas are illustrative in the sense that they are the typical forms of border-crossing transnational communities.

Gains and losses of being in the middle: rhizomatic space. Turkish migrants and their descendants experience a permanent tension between homelessness and home in a way that leads to the construction of more complex and multiple identities. What is the characteristics of this new condition of uprootedness and displacement? This is the question to answer by scholars. Should this condition be called 'degeneration', 'in-betweenness', 'loss of identity', or should it be named as 'third space', 'rhizomatic space', 'transnational space', 'diasporic space' or 'hyphenated identities such as German-Turk, French-Turk or Dutch-Turk'?

Zehra Çırak is a German-Turkish poet. Her metaphor about the bridge, in which she suggests migrants, nomads, exiles and disporic subjects to enjoy the passage across the bridge as it has a definite start and end, and also warns them that it is cold and stormy to stand on it (1991: 49). This metaphor very well summarizes the gains and losses of standing on a bridge connecting two worlds together.

Transnational space provides a ground for its subjects to construct what Felix Guattari (1989: 14) calls the '*processes of heterogenesis'*, or what we call the '*processes of bricolage'*, in which elements from different cultural traditions, sources and discourses are constantly intermingled with and juxtaposed to each other. The process of heterogenesis, or the process of cultural bricolage, is expected to lead to

> **Warming-up**
> As bridges are known to have borders
> No need to hurry to cross over
> The surface of bridges freezes ever.
>   (my own translation)
>
> **Isınmak**
> Köprülerin bir sonu olduğu bilindiğinden
> Tez geçmeye gerek yok üzerlerinden
> Köprülerin üstü dondurur ezelden.

the emergence of relatively strong subjectivities. The term *rhizome*, for instance, phrased by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), corresponds to this phenomenon, which is exposed by many transnational subjects in general, and the Euro-Turks in particular: *rhizome* is rootlike underground stem that produces roots below and sends up shoots from the upper surface. In exposing what rhizome means, Deleuze and Guattari provide us with a convincing standpoint:

A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb 'to be,' but the fabric of the rhizome is conjunction, 'and…and…and…' Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions. Making a clean slate, starting and beginning again from ground zero, seeking a beginning or a foundation –all imply a false conception of voyage and movement… The middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed…(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 25).

The 'middle' does not refer to 'caught betwixt and between', it rather connotes a separate space in itself where, for instance, diasporic subjects, *bricoleurs*, cosmopolitans, and hybrids dwell.

Conclusion. To conclude, the lack of an anthropological perspective to Euro-Turks' dwelling and travelling in the transnational space has so far been a great gap in the literature. This deficiency has so far led researchers to consider cultures as 'distinct', 'isolated', 'fixed' and 'unitary' wholes having no interaction with other cultures. Anthropology can rather convince us that cultures are not a primordially given set of shared norms and values, but instead cultures are socially constructed and reconstructed syncretic sets of practices. On the other hand, anthropology has also undergone a serious transformation in a way that made it more competent for studying transnational space. The fact that most human beings today live in a similar cultural predicament and that everyone is *dis*located; and no one is rooted, has made this impact on anthropology. In studying this cultural predicament, some of the notions introduced by Ulf Hannerz (1992) to the vocabulary of transnational anthropology can be beneficial. *Flows, boundaries,*

and *hybrids*. Flows refer to continuity and passage between cultures and civilisations; boundaries refer to discontinuity and obstacles between cultures and civilisations, hybrids address the syncretic character of emerging cultures. The exposure of those cultural syncretisms, or processes of heterogenesis, in the transnational space could help us understand what Renato Rosaldo (1989: 26) once said: "cultures are learned, but not genetically encoded".

As a final statement I should say that the expressive culture of the Euro-Turks such as music, painting, dance and literature clearly displays the fact that they have developed something anew on the way. Therefore, these transnational communities cannot be studied along with the culturalist and nationalist paradigms, notions and methodologies. Some new study techniques and methodologies should be developed by social scientists, and anthropology has a key role in this endeavour.

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Айхан Кайя

Антропология транснационального пространства: евротурки

Статья написана профессором департамента международных отношений университета Стамбула Айханом Кайя. В центре внимания автора стоит проблема антропологического изучения транснациональных групп, на примере турок, проживающих в странах Европы, за пределами Турции. Доктор Кайя выделяет пишет о значимости антропологического подхода к изучению турок-мигрантов, т.к. до этого, эта тема изучалась больше сквозь призму экономики, демографии, политики. Антропология же, как «дисциплина между дисциплинами» может дать нам возможность взглянуть на процессы формирования идентичности вообще, т.к. сейчас реально можно наблюдать как возникают новые общности, такие как например германские турки.