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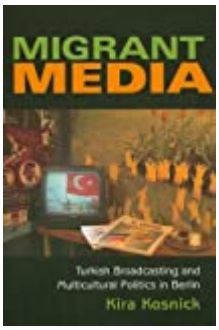

Kira Kosnick. *Migrant Media: Turkish Broadcasting and Multicultural Politics in Berlin.* New Anthropologies of Europe Series. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007. x + 240 pp. $60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-253-34948-4; $22.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-253-21937-4.

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The Search for an "Authentic" Immigrant Medium

Anyone interested in and working on broader theoretical and empirical issues concerning immigration problems in Europe might not find this book's title especially enticing or conclude that it demands immediate attention. I , at least, assumed that I would find a more descriptive listing and technical discussion of a seemingly marginal topic, limited, to boot, to the situation in Berlin; only the subtitle on "multicultural politics" remedied that perception to some extent. Yet, perusal of the book itself made it apparent that we are dealing here with a splendid, theoretically provocative, and productive ethnography.

Kira Kosnick notes, rightly, that activism around these marginal migrant media is "politically central when it comes to debating issues of democratic empowerment and minority participation in immigration countries" (p. 3). The study focuses on media use by immigrants from Turkey who are conceptualized, primarily at least, as Muslims, and their exclusion in western Europe today would be based primarily on religion, not on ethnos. Indeed, Kosnick suggests, citing Matti Bunzl, that in the early twentieth century, exclusion was based upon race or nation and the protection of ethno-national purity, whereas in western Europe today, exclusion is based upon European/Christian civilization, from which Muslims are excluded. This point is certainly debatable: Antisemitism before the Holocaust had focused similarly on behavior that was deemed, in "racial" and religious terms, contrary to the norms of the "host" society. Biological racism, then, has been replaced by a cultural one, and "purity" is still at issue.

In pursuing an appropriate characterization of the nature of this situation, Kosnick sketches the evolution of migrant-oriented media in Berlin from the guest worker period until about 2005. In the early period, these radio programs were geared towards new guest workers, who needed basic information about work-related issues and how to cope with their environment outside the factory. They presented news from back home and addressed homesickness and legal and other issues. It was, then, broadcasting "for" the migrants. Over the past two decades, and partly at least, migrants have taken program production under their own control, engendering a "baf-

fling variety of competing voices" (p. 16).

Two quite different types of immigrant media have emerged during this process. An example of one of these for the case of Berlin was Radio Multikulti, where the author worked as an intern for the purposes of her field work. (It has recently been shut down.) At that station, ethnic Germans were preparing programming that was geared at integrating immigrants, "turning migrants into locals" (p. 76), and turning them into "good citizens." Their programming used the accented voices of immigrants as actual speakers who, however, had no influence on the content of the programming itself. Kosnick makes the point, debatable as it may be, that speakers with an accent signal to their German audience that there is an "ineradicable difference" between themselves and the immigrants (p. 56). The question here is whether it is not simply a way to present the programming as authentically immigrant-produced. Here, the reader might take issue with the author's employment of the racializing concept of "whiteness" in the contemporary German context; the idea of "civilization," Christian against Muslim, might have been more appropriate.

The other type of media programming, Kosnick finds, is that of Open Channel Berlin (OKB), where, with the new cable technology, a multitude of programming from below, and of many different orientations, more often Muslim in character, can be presented by individuals and organizations. This format also allows programs to be broadcast back into the immigrants' country of origin, much to the annoyance of local governments. Kosnick makes the important point that this seemingly local, "authentic" activity, which is strongly shaped by the national environment, is itself part of a project of German self-definitions, about which it reveals much. In it, immigrants are set up to perform ideological labor within and for the German polity. As the author puts it, immigrant groups have been inserted into a racialized system of ethnic classification that is very much an indigenous classificatory process of "differential incorporation" (p. 58).

This type of grassroots programming has re-oriented many immigrants back to the country of origin–but which, I would argue, now takes on the form of an imagined community rather than the really-existing society they left behind, often many years before. We find, then, Kosnick argues, media representations, "representing" both in the sense of "talking about" (*darstellen*) and as "speaking for" (*vertreten*) the community, and she sees that as the central problematic of her book: community (and ethnicity) is not a concrete, demarcated, entity. It is internally diverse, conflictual, and even assumes different shapes depending upon the subject's representation of German Turks in relation to Germany or in relation to Turkey, respectively. Since the work of Georg Simmel, we know that community exists by virtue of its internal conflictuality, and any conception of an homogenous community would be naÃ¨ve. By the same token, it would also be erroneous to subscribe to the postmodern idea that denies ethnos altogether just because it is internally diverse, without defined boundaries, and perpetually subject to change.

As far as these representations are concerned, the author makes crucial observations about the gap between high *culture* and ethnic *cultures*. This distinction, she argues, represents multicultural difference rather than artistic excellence, which really should be the criterion for broadcast. Part of high culture are the standard theaters, concert halls, and museums. In Berlin, these include the "high" Haus der Kulturen der Welt, in contrast to the lowly Werkstatt der Kulturen. This "multicultural trap" (p. 96) confines migrants to ethnoculture and, rather than inviting migrants into the mainstream, it produces and promotes transnational activities. We recognize a similar phenomenon in other western societies, such as Canada, with its implicit distinction between Anglo- or Franco-Canadians and ethno-Canadians. In Germany in particular, it is indeed remarkable how highly accomplished German Turkish authors, such as Feridun ZaimoÄlu, Zafer Èenocak, and Emine Sevgi Ãzdamar, or musicians, such as Aziza A., remain "minor" figures, unable to make it in German mainstream culture and better received abroad than in Germany itself. Here, as elsewhere in the book, some comparisons with the position of other immigrant minorities in Germany, especially *Aussiedler* and Jews (of whom 95 percent are postwar immigrants) would have been of help; in fact, they do not fare better than German Turks. Their cultural production tends to be similarly compartmentalized and separated from that of the *Leitkultur*.

The author, then, addresses the local, national, and transnational dimensions of the migrants and their media production and, following Arjun Appadurai and some others, shows how ideas of migrant transnationalism or globalized village ethnicity have become apotheosized as new forms of community. While Kosnick seems to sympathize with some of these ideas, she importantly recognizes the "hegemonic reach of nation states" (p. 189). But this reach is not symmetrical, "bi-focal" between country of origin and country of residence; rather, it is the country of immigration that principally shapes and re-

shapes its citizens, including its migrants, and it is the country of residence that shapes the character of its diasporic groups and compels them to perform ideological labor on its behalf. Only in the new country are Kurds, Alevites, and others in a position to newly elaborate their values and identities, thereby also helping to transform their co-ethnics back home, much to the annoyance of the Turkish government. All of that is happening on the territory of the new country, and it is perfectly obvious that the new environment fundamentally shapes peoples' consciousness. How could it be otherwise? Dealing with German bureaucracies, schools, and hospitals, obtaining German drivers' licences, playing against German soccer teams, shopping and watching television (including German-language TV)–all of these things radically restructure ways of thinking and organizing one's life. There is no real symmetry, then–and here I disagree somewhat with the author–between the migrants' two societies, no true bi-focality regarding old and new country, no hybridity or in-betweenness (which are problematic conceptions in the first place, because they deny authenticity to the migrants' new life). The same can be said for all other immigrant groups in Germany, including Jews. Up to this day, the notion of their alleged existence between Israel and Germany is a particularly stubborn myth.

In sum, then, we have here a rich ethnography that deftly confronts currently established theories and discourses in the field. I only hope that readers will not put the book aside when they see its innocuous title.