LOCAL MEDIA PRODUCTS IN THE TRANSNATIONAL FIELD: THE TURK OF AMERICA EXAMPLE

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Abstract- In this study, the role of local media in transnational societies has been analyzed. The event of migration signals a dynamic process and migrants, as the subjects of this process, establish connections between their homeland and the country where they migrated to or currently live. These economic, social, cultural, and religious connections surpass the borders of both countries and advance in a transnational geography. At the same time, they continuously change, transform and develop with the additional effects of technology and mass communication devices. In this study, local media activities, which are the products of transnational activities of migrants, have been analyzed over the Turk of American magazine, which is an example to ethnical media, and which is produced by Turkish migrants living in the USA. As a result, it has been seen that migrants participate in economic, political and cultural fields within the host country through local media and that local media mediates the development of communication and collective consciousness between migrants.

Keywords- Migrant, Diaspora, Media, Transnationalism.

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of migration is a significant dynamic of social change and inter-social relations. In general terms, migration refers to the movement of individuals or groups beyond symbolic, geographic or political borders towards new life spaces and societies [1]. While globalization, developing communication and transportation technologies accelerating migration, they have also had an effect stretching the boundaries of the migrant. Migration theories explaining the concept of migration primarily through economic factors have been left face to face with two tendencies along with globalization. On the one hand, the strength and independence of states have decreased with the rise of international organizations and on the other hand, a transnational civil society independent from states and government federations have appeared [2]. Soysal connects increasing migration with growing international civil society and argues that a post-national citizenship has appeared. One of the characteristics of passage to a post-national membership which is independent from any state and which has transnational membership requirements has more than one place and status [2]. According to Portes [3], who suggests that transnational activities can be initiated by more ordinary individuals such as migrants and their friends and relatives in their homeland as well as great migrations, these activities are not only economic attempts. They also involve political, cultural and religious attempts. Defining international migration as a multi-dimensional economic, political, cultural and demographic process defining two or more place summarizing various connections between those moving within more than one nation state and those staying, Faist [4] emphasizes that this process is recurrent and cyclical. Drawing attention to the transformation processes in the concept of transnational migration, Steven Vertovecise argues that these are economic, political and socio-cultural transformations and that they should be considered different than each other. According to Vertovec, although these concepts are considered separately, the link between them should not be overlooked [5]. As stated by Castles, Miller [6], transnational migration, which is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, will continue to grow and transnational communities will become more important in terms of defining people in two or more countries with close relations and whose numbers are increasing. According to transnational migration approaches stating that different relations of migrants and migrant networks occur on an international platform, migrants participate and invest in the host society in terms of social, economic and political aspects but are also involved in the daily life of the country of origin [7]. With the opportunities offered through modern transportation and communication devices, migrants can now live in real and symbolic platforms within their homeland and the new country they settled in as if on two sides of a river [8]. Thus, “the migrant” in this process becomes an actor effecting each phase of the process in both the country of origin and the host country. As stated by Linda Basch and others, migrant origin communities today, create social areas cutting geographic, cultural and political borders [8]. In this new area they created, migrants develop changing belonging types against their homeland and new lands by really and symbolically visiting their homelands [8]. While being effected from a series of cultural, social, political and economic sources, this process dynamically produces and develops its own strategies of existence with daily practices and intergeneration transfer.

Media, which has a bi-directional relation with globalization, is an important dynamic in this process representing transnational area in terms of migrants or “transnational communities”. This dynamic effects migration and the migrant and is effected by

migration and the migrant. According to Knut Lundby and Helge Ronning, media contributes to the creation of new cultural shapes, is effected by currently existing cultures, reacts to them, functions by creating a new cultural frame within a localized cultural frame and uses "real culture" as raw material by recreating, changing and reshaping it in order to create its own culture [9]. A result of dual lives in transnational areas, referred to as "local media", "migrant media" and "ethnic media" in literature, and a product of activities of transnational actors, diasporic media also creates and develops its own frame.

II. MIGRATION FROM TURKEY TO USA

Migration to USA - the land of opportunities – is sometimes a dream and sometimes a hope for many people. For Turkish people, the journey to hope began in the Ottoman period, continued and is continuing parallel to the characteristics of the era within the historical process.

The traces of the first migrants coming from the Ottoman Empire and preserving the Turkish identity are picked up in the mid-1800s. Although the census conducted in 1820 gives the number of Turkish people in the United States as 21, it is difficult to know exactly how many Turkish people arrived at America during the time because the migrants coming from the Ottoman Empire consisted of different ethnic groups [10]. Considering the migration of Turks to the USA, Kaya states the existence of three different migration waves. The first wave of the migrations took place as a result of the economic depression the Ottoman Empire experienced in the beginning of the 20th century and consisted of migrants with low education and income levels. The second wave consists of the migrations that took place during the 1950s and 1960s of people with high level education and the third wave are migrations that occurred at the end of the 1980s and continue at an increasing rate of a cosmopolitan group with people from various social and economic groups [11].
Today, according to official numbers, a Turkish population of 199.180 [12] live in the United States of America but according to unofficial figures, it is thought that this number is over 300.000. Research shows that the visibility of Turks within the US population is low but their mobility in the fields of education and economic levels are rather high.

III. LOCAL MEDIA AND THE TURKISH MEDIA IN USA

New media Technologies open new paths that exceed distances and establish links between their homelands and themselves. Through this, it enables the continuation of ethnic, national or religious identities with the homeland in transnational areas despite the distances [13]. While media used by diasporic subjects make communication possible at both local and transnational levels, it also contributes to the establishment of diasporic and transnational public spaces [14]. With the effect of migrant generations having a multi and sectional identity structures, these areas mediate the development of different media areas and different media practices. These media areas in which migrants restructure their identities and belonging, also mediate "their" participation in the social, cultural, economic and political life of the host country. In this study, the Turk of America magazine and its news portal broadcasting on the internet, which represents an example of the diasporic Turkish media within the USA, has been analyzed. The history of printed newspapers and magazines published in America by Turkish people dates back to the beginning of the 19th century. Being published on a weekly basis in 1893, Sada-yi Vatan carries the significance of being the first newspaper published in the USA with the Turkish language. The newspaper that could be counted as the first product of the Turkish local media in the USA is the FORUM that started being published in 2014 [15].

Various magazines, newspapers and televisions have been in service with the economic support of Turkish private companies, associations and federations in the USA but many of them failed to be long lasting. A majority of the newspapers, magazines, radios and TV publications outside of this scope have occurred with the individual efforts and means of people who have set their hearts on the profession of journalism. However, they too have struggled under the weight of economic difficulties in a short period of time and were forced to stop publication after a few issues [16]. There are still magazines, newspapers and digital media contents and news portals answering the news and information needs of Turkish migrants in the USA. Due to the limitations of this study, it has not been possible to include every single one of them in this research. Among them, the Turk of America, which is a media tool that attracts attention with its long lasting publication and which makes an example of both traditional and new world media products, has been analyzed. In this study, the Turkish media in the USA have been evaluated as examples to media environments developed within "opportunities offered by the internet which is one of the new communication technologies", "which contain local-ethnic media examples such as radio programs, radio broadcasts and newspapers and monthly bulletins are supported by resources such as local administrations, NGO funds etc., which are prepared by Turkish origin people living in host countries", and which has been included by Binark [17] in his classification of media areas used by Turkish origin people living outside of the Turkish borders in their "identity construction".

IV. TURK OF AMERICA MAGAZINE



The Turk of America magazine and the news site http://www.turkofamerica.com broadcasting on the internet have been chosen to be the sample of this study. The above stated magazine and portal has been analyzed because it belongs to the Turkish migrants living in the US, and because it is a migrant media reaching out to the whole of the US continuously for over 10 years. Content analysis, the ownership structure, number of employees, target audience, objective and function of the magazine have been evaluated through the news and information found in the magazine and portal. Moreover, a face-to-face meeting has been conducted with Cemil Ozyurt, one of the owners of the magazine. After the meeting, a semi-structured question form was sent via electronic mail and information about the magazine was received and the analysis was supported with this meeting.

The Turk of America was founded by two young Turkish entrepreneurs in August 2002 [18]. Being a business magazine, Turk of America is published throughout the US. Cemil Ozyurt and Omer Gunes - the owners of the magazine – are first generation Turkish migrants migrating to the US after receiving education on journalism in Turkey. The attempts of Ozyurt and Gunes have begun with their desire to reach Turkish professionals and "successful" entrepreneurs living in the US, offering services in a variety of sectors from economy, finance, space, industry, health, law, science, communication technologies, travel, tourism, food and restaurants and pass on their achievements to other Turkish migrants in the US as well as the Turkish and American press. According to Ozyurt and Gunes, "the activities, efforts and achievements of Turkish migrants in the US are important but are not sufficiently known by other Turkish migrants and there is a need of a publication to close this deficit". The story of Turk of America turns into an enterprise setting off from this idea. Ozyurt, with whom we interviewed under the scope of this study expresses the process: "In those years, there was no magazine passing on the stories of Turks living in the US to other Turks living in the US. The content of Turk of America was allocated to the success stories of Turks living in the US and set off with an understanding that prioritizes human stories." The content of the magazine is expressed as "The magazine's content includes primarily the lives of Turkish people in the U.S. and their social, cultural and economic activities as well as the activities of Americans who are related in any way with Turkey or the Turkish community" in their website (http://www.turkofamerica.com). The magazine, whose center of publication is New York, publishes both printed and over the internet. Published by the profit making LLC, the magazine is printed in English and is financed with the income it generates from advertisement it receives and membership incomes. Published 4 times a year with 80 pages every three months, the magazine is sent out to about 5000 members. The magazine is also changed into a digital format and is published over the internet and each issue reaches about 30 thousand readers. In each issue, a photograph parallel with the agenda topic appears on the cover of the magazine. The content of the magazine, which is printed in color with many photographs, consists of news and articles in accordance with the topics of the current affairs and themes along with advertisements. The advertisements, which are important in terms of financing the magazine, can be full, half or quarter page. Although it can demonstrate differences according to the content, the magazine employs about ten full-time or outsources employees. It is seen that the target population of the magazine consist of businessmen, professional administrators and entrepreneurs from the business world. Stating that the Turk of America magazine is functionally the same with the news portal published over the internet, the magazine owner Ozyurt says that "the difference between them is the magazine being published with distinctive topic and contents while the turkofamerica.com website aims to publish more current affairs." It is seen that the magazine and the news portal is an effort to inform Turkish migrants about each other. By saying "While the magazine creates agenda with special research files, the website mainly transmits current affairs", Ozyurt indicates that media activities are means of information for the society and "create agenda" and that they provide source for the main stream media in the homeland. Aiming to contribute to the common belonging and collective consciousness of the Turks in the US, it is seen that another aim of the Turk of America is to ensure consolidation of the Turks with the American society. Ozyurt says that the reason of the magazine being published in English is to express the Turkish migrants to the American public and integrate them with the social, political and cultural life and with this it has a functional characteristic. The magazine mediates the development of different social networks between members of the host country and members of ethnic groups by being the only and most long-lasting business magazine.

The magazine being in English and publishing over the internet enables to reach not only the Turks in the US but also the different Turkish societies living in countries like Australia, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Canada in accordance with the nature of transnational activities.

We see a reflection of the dual identities and different belongings in transnational areas within the logo of the magazine. As stated by Smith [19], various symbols of the collective life is good for differentiating the society members from the

outsiders. By using the symbols of the Turkish Flag – the crescent and star – with the symbol of the United States of America – the Statue of Liberty – connections and belongings between both of the societies have been emphasized along with "common heritage" and "common fate" [19].

Consequently, Yuksel [14] has also determined that the Turkish origin migrants living in New York and New Jersey continue to live an understanding of an imaginary or structured sense of belonging to Turkey and that this sense is supported by media transmissions but also create diasporic areas with completely different dynamics and relations network from Turkey.

RESULT

An example of local ethnic media products have been analyzed in this study. It has been seen that the Turk of America magazine and the news portal, which is the sample of the study, is one of the common communication areas of the Turkish migrants living in the US and that it contributes to the development of "diasporic" and "collective" conscious in transnational areas and extents by reestablishing the connections with the homeland. The magazine also carries a mission of contributing to the establishment of a social and cultural capital within the Turkish community in the US as well as the development of economic and social networks. In the issues it publishes every three months, Turk of America gives place to "successful" names who have stepped forward in their fields and thus drives forward the names that can be a role model to the Turkish community living in the United States of America through its news. It establishes agenda with the various events it organizes (foundation anniversary concerts, award ceremonies etc.) or its special file news ("Golden Turk", "The 50 Most Influential Turkish-Americans", "The 30 Most Influential Turkish-American Women" and "The 40 Under 40" etc.). By doing so and through the names it emphasizes, the members of the community are influenced with the extent to the development of both local and national capital in the economic, cultural and political areas.

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