

BOOK REVIEWS

Esin Bozkurt, *Conceptualizing “Home”. The Question of Belonging Among Turkish Families in Germany*, University of Chicago Press, 2009, 244 pages, ISBN 978-3-593-38791-8

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The book of Esin Bozkurt, *Conceptualizing “Home”. The Question of Belonging Among Turkish Families in Germany*, represents, in our opinion, a careful and deeply analysis insight the Turkish community living in contemporary Germany, emphasizing how the members of this immigrant community reconstruct their home away from their homeland. It discusses the question of belonging among Turkish people by examining their relations with the residential places in Germany (with a special reference to their daily experiences, living circumstances, opportunities and limitations, socio-economic and cultural resources), and by conceiving them not only as a part of an ethnic minority, but also as members of a family, influenced by family roots, experiences, representations, discourses and intergenerational communication.

Based on in-depth interviews with Turkish people from three generations (grandparents-the first generation; their children- the second generation; grandchildren- the third generation), the analysis captures the processes of home-making among men and women in light of their generation specific motivations, experiences and hopes.

The volume is organized in seven chapters. The first one deals with the core concept of this book- the concept of *home*- providing the lexical definitions of home and homeland in three languages (English, German and Turkish) and discussing the multi-referential understandings of home in the context of migration, the multiple facets of belonging in the relocation process and home-



making away from the homeland. Thus, “home is more than merely a roof with four walls. It is a multi-dimensional and dynamic concept that refers to emotional, spiritual, social, cultural, territorial and political self-location over time and space” (pp. 25).

The broad framework provided in the first chapter is narrowed down in the second one, which is focused on the ways Turkish people living in Germany position themselves and refer to home and homeland. Also, the author explores the key literature on Turkish migrants and their children in Germany and this review is continuing in the third chapter of the book through the gender perspective. The literature on gender in migration studies from the last three decades demonstrates that there are differences in the way men and women experience migration, negotiate between home and host cultures and deal with conflict. While man is firstly the guardian of home/woman, the woman is perceived as homemaker and “ethnic actor”, protecting home against outside influence and handing down the national, cultural and religious values and affiliations to young members of the family.

The review of the literature on Turkish people in Germany is used in the next chapters as a solid basis for comparing the literature and the findings of the research on which this book is based. The author explores the understudied dimensions of migration and adaptation process and enriches the generation perspective with the inclusion of a third generation, enabling comparisons across three generations and combining the perspectives of gender and generations in a family context.

The next chapters discuss, with different focuses, the narratives of the participants to this study, originated from six Turkish families with different orientations, views, convictions and environments, reflecting in fact the diversity of the Turkish immigrant families and communities in Germany. Thus, chapter 5 presents the profiles, experiences and affiliations of participants from the first, second and third generations in relation to each other. In chapter 6 gender differences in the conceptualization and (re)construction of home are presented on the basis of comparisons between couples and general frameworks for men and women are drawn in their reference to home. Finally, chapter 7 combines gender and generation perspectives, discussing the gendered structure of intergenerational communication within and across Turkish families in the sample.

The results of the research demonstrate significant generational and

gender differences in the conceptualization of home among Turkish people in Germany. As the author says, “the reference of the first generation to the metaphors of *heaviness* and *lightness*, the second generation to *breathing* upon arrival and departure, and the third generation to the sense of *incompleteness* in Germany constitute complementary findings to the literature on Turkish people in Germany” (pp. 210). The research demonstrates that family discourses and intergenerational communication have a significant impact on the sense of belonging of individuals and this influence is weakened or strengthened by certain factors such as living circumstances, socio-economic placements, institutional contexts, cultural resources, daily experiences (particularly exclusion, stigmatization and marginalisation), individual motivations and aspirations as well as the relations with reference groups in Turkey and in Germany.

The book reveals the changing profile of Turkish people in Germany, the diversity of their origins, training, occupations, language skills, relations with the majority within society and the ethnic and religious community, experiences in the homeland and in Germany, which makes generalizations impossible and necessitates sensitivity to individual differences. But, despite the variety of profiles, certain experiences are shared by the majority of Turkish men and women, influencing their sense of belonging and self-positioning. Almost all participants to the interview belonging to the three generations complain about their socio-economic marginalisation, which disable the identification with Germany. The feeling of exclusion reveals the desire to maintain the unity of home and the need to protect it from “over-foreignisation”. These protection efforts and the closure to one’s family/community/nation could be discussed not only with reference to immigrants’ individual or collective attempts, but also with reference to the majority in the society and its self-closure and rejection of other ethnics.

The book emphasizes the necessity to include the non-native residents in education, training, labour market and social services, to support them for access to resources, services and benefits provided by state institutions and stresses the need to provide the equal chances to all members of society in order to acquire and develop their competences.