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This is not journalism. Mapping new definitions of journalism in German exile

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Abstract

This article aims to present a picture of Turkish journalism in German exile. By Turkish journalism, I refer to the production and circulation of news about Turkey, in Turkish and for a Turkish-speaking audience – primarily those living in Turkey. By German exile, I mean journalists who have migrated from Turkey since 2010 due to the country's increasingly oppressive political climate, which has made journalism a dangerous profession there. Understanding news in this context as the outcome of processes of transnational transfer of knowledge and experience from one regime to another, I ask how dissident Turkish journalists currently living in exile in Germany practise their profession from a distance, and what tools they use to critically engage with the overall political situation in Turkey. For this project, I have been carrying out ethnographic research in Berlin since November 2018. This research stands at the intersection of the anthropology of journalism and transnational migration. In the light of mapping the journalism scene in Berlin through this filter, I anchor historical foundations of the current migrant media scene where paths cross each other to understand their political references and to situate them in the context of Turkish–German migration. Then, I discuss the process of project-based journalism, by exploring the challenges and opportunities offered by the conditions within which journalists can practise their profession from a physical and temporal distance. Reviewing the choice of the audience that journalists aim to target, I also show how they meet a need for community media that had remained unaddressed in the Turkish–German context, in connection to the difficulty of establishing solidarities among themselves. Finally, I discuss recent debates on what journalism should be – or what happens to the expertise when activism and profession collide.

Introduction

Conditions in Turkey have never been conducive to the kind of journalism that could function as a 'fourth estate' (Albayrak 2019). For many years, the media has been under the unofficial control of the military, the guardian of secularism and nationalism as establishment principles (Duran 2000; Yeşil 2016). Although the first coup of 1960 introduced certain regulations seemingly in favour of journalists, to protect them from press owners , military regimes rolled back these limited rights following subsequent coups (Kurban and Sözeri 2013). After the coup in 1980, the media became closely connected to business

groups, which are dependent on the state (Yeşil 2016; Sözeri and Güney 2011). At the same time, alternative means of news production and circulation through digitalised media have existed in Turkey since the late 1990s. The control over a greatly diversified media loosened slightly after the start of the European Union (EU) accession process in 2005 and with the advancement of technology.[1] An environment in which freedom of the press flourished was mainly the result of the efforts of independent journalists and activists in Turkey and also in Europe, who launched monthly magazines, television channels and online platforms to produce and circulate stories not covered by the powerful news media companies that dominate the mainstream media (Ayata 2011).

However, this short period in which the European Commission's progress reports indicated improvements regarding freedom of expression in Turkey (B. Erdem 2017) only lasted until the authoritarian turn of Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the late 2000s (Özyürek, Özpınar, and Altındiş 2019).

Thus, it is not surprising that different newspapers print the same stories with identical headlines, nor that coverage of critical issues is suppressed in a climate of rigid and overwhelming censorship – which includes self-censorship among journalists. Although in the aftermath of the Taksim Gezi Park protests in 2013, journalists became more daring in their criticism of state practices, the government gradually intensified political pressure on the press and managed to silence oppositional public figures. Akser and Baybars-Hawks (2012) identify five systemic pressures on journalists in Turkey: conglomerate pressure, judicial suppression, online banishment, surveillance defamation (damaging reputation by not banning circulation of private information gathered through surveillance) and accreditation discrimination. The law regulating the Internet in Turkey was changed in 2013, after the release of information about corruption involving members of the government. With these changes, the government extended its authority to block or ban entire websites and was able to take control of DNS to track the web activity of citizens (Akgül and Kırlıdoğ 2015). Reports have demonstrated that thousands of news articles have been banned from

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[1] Alternative means of news production and circulation through digitalised options existed in Turkey already in the late 1990s, for example, in the form of video activism and earlier practices of activist groups.

online news portals in Turkey for political reasons (Akdeniz and Güven 2019).[2]

With the statutory decrees released by the government since the declaration of a state of emergency after the failed coup attempt in summer 2016, the vast majority of alternative or oppositional online news channels in Turkey were closed down – together with print media – and their archives made inaccessible. As a result, the European Parliament reiterated its decision to place a temporary freeze on accession talks with Turkey in 2017 (Philippe 2019). Moreover, the mission report funded by the EU and prepared by several international press institutions illustrates that press freedom has not improved since the state of emergency was lifted in July 2018. Instead, new regulations were introduced that facilitate cancellation of the 'yellow' press cards that allow journalists to access high-level government press conferences and events (Luque 2019).

Ethnographic research confirms that the conditions for 'the participation of journalists as the custodians of public interest in the public sphere based on the principle of common good' have disappeared in Turkey (Aşık 2017, 69). Nowadays, the financial support of international organisations enables a limited number of online news portals to survive. According to the website of the Turkey Journalists Association, 10,000 journalists have lost their jobs over the last ten years (Özer 2019). The report says that in 2017, 520 journalists faced prosecution under the Turkish Penal Code and Anti-Terror Law. Together, these journalists faced 237 penal servitude for life and 3,672 years and six months in prison (Önderoğlu 2018). However, this report was not updated in 2018 by its author Erol Önderoğlu, who is also the Turkey representative of Reporters Without Borders, because he was facing a number of trials, having been accused of 'terrorist propaganda', 'justifying crime' and 'inciting crime' (RSF 2019). Moreover, the news website *Bianet*, which published the report mentioned above, was recently ordered blocked by a judge for 'threatening national security' (BIA News Desk 2019). *Bianet* has been online for more than a decade and is an enduring example of journalism funded by third parties, in this case supported by the Swedish Development Agency to cultivate rights-based journalism in Turkey. Meanwhile, although there is controversy about the number of journalists who have been murdered in the history of modern Turkey, it is clearly troubling; *Wikipedia*, for example, has a page entitled 'List of Journalists Killed in Turkey' (Wikipedia 2017). However, people in Turkey cannot access this list because the authorities blocked *Wikipedia* in Turkey between April 2017 and January 2020 (Wikipedia 2020). In this climate of oppression in Turkey, where independent journalism has become almost wholly extinguished, and news has become inaccessible, we can observe an 'epidemic of brain drain' involving journalists who previously had a significant role in shaping Turkish public discourse.

There have been many interconnected waves of migration from Turkey to Germany since the first guest workers, mostly coming from rural areas, arrived in the 1960s, after the West German government started to recruit workers from abroad. During the political turmoil in the 1970s, after the coup of September 1980 and throughout the armed conflict between Turkey and guerrilla fighters of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), people from Turkey sought refuge in Germany. In the last few years, many highly skilled workers have arrived in search of better job opportunities. Finally, the coup attempt in 2016 created its own wave: academics, artists and journalists have emigrated to Germany by mobilising existing social and historical ties. In this process, self-exiled journalists have established new media networks and communities. Oppression of journalists in Turkey was a popular topic until recently in Germany. During the first months of 2017, new Turkish-language media platforms were launched one after the other in Germany, where academics and journalists coming from Turkey were welcomed.[3] Meanwhile, *Deutsche Welle* paid close attention to developments in Turkey, enlarged its Turkish services and in this way created job opportunities for opposition journalists.

In my research, I ask how dissident Turkish journalists currently living in exile in Germany perceive practising their profession from a distance. With this broad main question at hand, I have been doing ethnographic fieldwork in Germany since November 2018 to discover what tools they use to critically engage with the overall political situation in Turkey. In this article, I aim at mapping the migrant journalism scene and developing a better understanding of journalism itself as a changing profession. I argue that journalists in exile do not consider themselves migrants, and do not believe that they are practising 'the ideal journalism' due to the changed circumstances they have faced after moving to Germany, including in (i) media ownership relations, which rely heavily on volunteer supporters, and which are based on their victimhood and recognition as political actors opposed to Erdoğan's governance; (ii) the audience and solidarity networks, which are more diverse owing to broadcasts on the Internet, and therefore difficult to define and address; and (iii) their impartiality as professionals and not as political activists.

Studying sideways in the field of migrant journalism

As a researcher curious about the question of representation, I am attracted to the idea of conducting research on journalism. Like other ethnographies on journalism, mine is a sideways study as defined by Ulf Hannerz, as I focus on 'others who are, like anthropologists, in a transnational contact zone, and engaged there in managing meaning across distances, although perhaps with different interests, under other constraints' (Hannerz 1998, 109). Hannerz defined his work on foreign news correspondents as studying sideways, in reference to the debates of the time about representing 'the other' in anthropology. His proposal was a response to Laura Nader's renowned call for anthropologists to study up, that is, 'to study power-

ful institutions and bureaucratic organizations [...] for such institutions and their network systems affect our lives and also affect the lives of people that anthropologists have traditionally studied all around the world' (Nader 1972, 302). In contrast to Nader's emphasis on power relations, however, Hannerz pays attention to similarities in tasks while defining his field as sideways to anthropology.

Studying sideways translates to my research in two ways. Firstly, in order to gain access to the field, I searched for ways to establish reflexive connectivity in knowledge production with journalists as intellectual practitioners (Boyer 2015). However, this was not always possible, both because they preferred to collaborate with unemployed journalists (in co-/authorship of op-ed pieces, for example) and because I lacked the experience and knowledge (such as in news-making or German language skills) that would be useful to them. As a result, despite my enthusiasm, I was unable to convince some journalists to collaborate with me because they did not want to be 'the object' of my study. For instance, a journalist friend of mine refused to be a participant of my research because, in her words, 'I do not want to be objectified'. One journalist agreed to participate in my study with the condition that I did not ask questions about his experience 'as a *journalist in exile*', while one of his colleagues flatly refused to be a part of the research, even though he respects academic work. Rejections such as these, and failed attempts to access the field through friendships, discouraged me from time to time. Moreover, although I myself deal with uncertainty and instability as unavoidable conditions of an academic career, I felt guilty for receiving funding to do research about journalism in exile while most people I spoke to were frustrated by and constantly concerned about making a living to ensure their stay in a country where they did not want to end up in the first place. Given the challenges that the group of people I study in this research project face due to economic and political vulnerability, I am glad that I nevertheless was able to gain the trust of most of them. I followed public events, carried out short-term direct observations in multiple media domains, spent days in their newsrooms and attended their meetings. While these observations deeply informed my research process, I also rely heavily on data retrieved from the 25 semi-structured in-depth interviews I have conducted to date. Most of the interviews were offline, but I also had to conduct some via video calls on a variety of social media platforms.

While there is a structural break between production and reception in terms of their separate contexts (newsrooms and everyday life), I acknowledge their interconnectedness, or 'the necessity of linking media production, circulation, and reception in broad and intersecting social and cultural fields: local, regional, national, transnational', as the concept of 'media worlds' establishes (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin 2002, 6). That being said, studying digital cultures and using online information sources mark the difference in the knowledge production process of contemporary anthropologists in comparison with earlier anthropologists. This shift in practice, next to the shift in the perception of the practice, is similar to what online journalists experience today as professionals (Boyer 2013). My second take from Hannerz's approach to study sideways reflexively, therefore, directs me to underline this similarity between changing professional practices of journalists and anthropologists. Accordingly, I take into account my own online engagements as a researcher. Adapting my research strategy according to the needs of the field and the people I work with for this study, I read, watch and listen to the news produced by exiled journalists, and I actively follow their and their organisations' cyber appearances on the Internet, but mainly on social media. I do not situate my work as digital ethnography, rather I examine news-making in exile in all fields of life and social relations by 'acknowledging and accounting for the digital as part of our worlds that are both theoretical and practical' (Pink et al. 2016, 8).

When journalists become migrants, they bring with them their culturally shaped professional practices and stories, and the news is the outcome of processes of transnational transfer of knowledge and experience from one regime to another. Although I am in touch with other researchers in the field, to date there is no other existing or ongoing research that focuses on the perceptions and practices of this diverse group of journalists, who joined an already diverse migrant media scene.[4] Studying journalists on the move, I faced two methodological challenges in defining the limits of my field (Amit 2000). I primarily focused on journalists in exile, which denotes a diverse group of people who moved to Germany due to a real or possible threat of official sanction and continued to practise their profession abroad.[5] However, there were other migrants who had left Turkey because of political, economic or other factors, and who were also migrant journalists or involved in journalism practices targeting Turkish-speaking audiences in Germany and elsewhere. Sometimes weak but sometimes solid ties and collaborations between these two highly diverse groups led me to also include others who were involved in making news from a distance in various ways. Accordingly, I also talked to people who engaged in migrant media practices and who could not be categorised as journalists in exile. This includes journalists holding German citizenship with or without a migration background related to Turkey. Still, I defined the boundaries of the field in reference to the first group and included others only when there was a strong connection between them and the journalists in exile. Although some journalists in exile contribute to German media, the group of people I focus on in this article do not work in the pre-existing migrant media. Instead, they have established their own platforms. They mobilised their ties both in Turkey and in Germany, and collaborated actively with journalists working on the ground in Turkey to meet the need for critical journalism for a Turkish-speaking audience.

In Germany, approximately 150 journalists hold temporary residence permits or are in the process of seeking asylum, according to unofficial numbers obtained from

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4 Migrant academic Dr Özlem Savaş's recent publication on a transnational blog gives a hint about emerging interest in the topic and the group I am concerned with, see Savaş 2019.

5 For security reasons, I excluded the group of people who still or used to identify themselves with the Gülen movement, which was once an ally of the AKP government but is now accused of being a terrorist organisation responsible for the 2016 coup attempt.

my interlocutors.[6] However, others claim to be journalists but are not acknowledged as such by migration authorities in Germany. This situation required me to make decisions about whom to include, and therefore to define journalism. Instead of making up my own definitions, I turned this problem into a research question and asked who a journalist is and what news means. Besides locally specific meanings and interpretations, there is also the crisis that journalism as a profession is facing globally – most recently with the fake news debates, but already since the 2000s because of the processes of digitalisation. While migrant media has a long history in Germany, the new global ecology of new and old media platforms offers many opportunities for diaspora communities to engage with audiences near and far. Despite the complexity of convergence in the migrant media ecology, I focus in this article on three media forms that exiled journalists use: a satellite television station, a radio station and a website, which I call *NewsOnly*, *Voice in Exile* and *Redaktör*, respectively.[7] Although the production and the dissemination of news differ in different media forms, they all come together on the Internet as satellite TV shows are uploaded and watched widely on *YouTube*, and internet radio shows are transformed into podcasts. Therefore, this anthropological study of media stands at the intersection of migration studies and internet studies. In the following, I will first present the diversity of the field. Then, I will move on to my arguments on the implications of new media ownership systems, relations between journalists, demands and reception of transnational news, and blurred boundaries between activism and journalism in exile.

Socio-historical contextualisation of diversity within migrant media

According to the 2018 report of Germany's Federal Statistics Office, one in four people residing in Germany had a migration background, that is, at least one of their parents did not acquire German citizenship by birth. Fourteen per cent of these people (around 2.9 million) had Turkish roots, constituting the largest minority group in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt n.d.). Compared with other ethnic groups living in Germany, the Turkish community tends to make greater use of native-language media, of which there is a correspondingly extensive offering, especially television and print media.

The history of the Turkish-language press in Germany goes back to 1917, with the publication of the weekly bilingual *Die neue Türkei* in Berlin, in both German and Turkish (Becker and Behnisch 2001). Some journalists in exile associate themselves with those in the era of the Young Turks, who also published newspapers in exile to criticise the dictatorship of the Ottoman Empire (Dündar 2017). In East Germany, two radio stations, *Bizim Radyo* (Our Radio) and the Voice of the Turkish Communist Party, established in 1958 and 1968 respectively, broadcast in Turkish and in line with Soviet politics (United States Department of State 1982). In West Germany, regional broadcasting corporations started media programmes targeting 'guest workers' to build a 'bridge to home' (Kosnick 2007b) in the 1960s. The Turkish-language radio broadcast *Köln Radyosu* (Cologne Radio), started in 1964 by Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR), provided information about politics and society in Turkey and was popular in Turkish households. Moreover, newspapers published in Turkey were regularly available for guest workers in West Germany, though arriving one day late (Özsoy 2014). In the 1970s, these newspapers started to be published in Europe, including West Germany, as part of the diaspora politics of Turkey (Tokgöz 1985; Baser 2017). One of the participants in this research, who was born in the 1970s, told me that there were plenty of Turkish-language newspapers coming from *memleket* (the homeland) in Berlin throughout her childhood and youth. In the 1990s, the Turkish state broadcaster, or TRT (*Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu*), started broadcasting via satellite in Europe 'to connect together the imagined community of Turks at a global scale' (Aksoy and Robins 2000). Broadcasts from Turkey were challenged by both private and public broadcasting in Germany. The third and fourth immigrant generations, namely those whose grandparents or great-grandparents immigrated, who have lost interest in the 'old-fashioned' Turkish-language shows that reflect the perspective of the Turkish state, created a demand for alternatives in the Turkish language. Representations of German-Turks in German-language media did not fully correspond to the political complexity of their 'hyphenated identities' (Çağlar 1997), which allow them to identify with cultures in Turkey and cultures in Germany as they please but also to belong to both without becoming immersed in either (Yalçın-Heckmann 2013). Therefore, they looked for and actively created Turkish-language radio and television projects targeting local audiences (Kosnick 2007a). The rising diaspora consciousness of these young people resulted in a new market for Turkish-language commercial media, such as Berlin-based local radio station *Metropol FM* and *Aypa TV*. In response to the high demand, radio stations such as *Radio Multikulti* and public broadcasting services such as *Funkhaus Europa* from the regional broadcasting corporation in Berlin (SFB) and Cologne (WDR) responded by developing dynamic programmes that combine world music and news from homelands as well as from Germany that concern migrant communities (Raiser, n.d.). Today there are thousands of commercial websites which provide information about Turkey and issues related to migrant communities in Germany (Doğan 2019).[8]

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6 According to migration law in Germany, journalists are defined as cultural professionals like interpreters, translators, academic scholars and artists. The law says: 'As it is impossible to list all existing free professions in the Acts mentioned above, the Acts also refer to similar professions, which are based on listed professions, but take into account the changes in the economic and professional landscape.' These professions include communication trainers, advertising copywriters, online editors and online journalists. This statement allows citizen journalists and activists from Turkey to claim temporary residence permits as free professionals in Germany. Moreover, the Blue Card was introduced in 2012. The aim was to simplify the process of receiving a work and residence permit within the EU for highly qualified professionals. Among other reasons, the Blue Card is criticised for having a high minimum wage requirement (66,000 euros per annum).

7 To preserve anonymity, I use pseudonyms for these three media organisations and the interlocutors whom I quote or refer to as working or involved with them.

8 Turkish journalists had no organisation until 2016 when the Association of Turkish Journalists in Europe was established, see Avrupa Türk Gazeteciler Birliği n.d.

Broadcasting by the Kurdish national movement was yet another challenge to the Turkish state's transnational television – and to the establishment idea of Turkish nationalism. Reporting on politically sensitive issues has been hazardous for journalists and media organisations in Turkey, and particularly Kurdish journalists in southeast Turkey. In this context, where Kurdish activism and propaganda were severely punished inside Turkey, Turkish-language Kurdish satellite television broadcasts from Europe 'reveal the potential of diaspora media activism to seriously challenge the territory-based cultural politics of the Turkish state' (Kosnick 2008, 5). Despite the efforts of the Turkish government, hundreds of Kurdish satellite television channels have been functioning as a shelter for migrant journalists (Hassanpour 2003).

Studies on media producers and migration in English and from the discipline of anthropology are rather rare, while many works approach the topic from the angle of integration, in the German language, and from the lenses of political science. As Martin Sökefeld (2003) argues,

> Turkish-language media in Germany are often identified as a problem because it is assumed that they prevent immigrants from learning German and integrating into German society, and perpetuate a 'Turkish' orientation, tying immigrants to a 'homeland perspective' (p. 134).

The most recent research on the topic offered by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees shows that native-language media has a social function and is used for entertainment during family time. In contrast, German-language media is preferred for obtaining information (Doğan 2019). In general, Turkish-speaking people in Germany perceive German-language news sources as factual and trustworthy. However, they perceive political reporting in particular as one-sided and incomplete (Worbs 2010; Schührer 2018). This is related to the fact that newsrooms in Germany still do not mirror the diversity in society. Therefore, news sources fail to provide different perspectives or to reflect the everyday experiences of people with a migration background, as government reports also demonstrate (Lünenborg and Bach 2009).[9]

In the post-2016 coup context, while journalists from Turkey called on their foreign colleagues to open a space for them abroad, journalists in Germany (with or without a migration background) helped their colleagues to flee Turkey legally (or illegally), mobilised their existing ties with activist groups, pressed European politicians and the public to demand more assistance, and spoke up about press freedom to extend the struggle to the global level. Media organisations in Germany supported journalists in exile to establish new platforms, even with limited resources, and raised funds for them. As migrants in a new country, some well-established journalists from Turkey switched to new

media, such as podcasts and tweets, and learned many new skills such as fundraising, while young journalists gained their first experiences under extraordinary conditions. In this way, they transformed what they knew about the profession while they were themselves being transformed under the conditions imposed upon them.

Media ownership as humanitarian responsibility

Anna is a young German woman with no migration background. She is a journalist and a specialist on Turkey with a trained sensitivity about post-colonial contexts and relations. Although she prefers to work in the field – and in her case this means Istanbul – when I met her she had been working at the office of *Redaktör* for more than 11 months. As an online newspaper for both German- and Turkish-speaking audiences, *Redaktör* was launched to support unemployed journalists in Turkey as well as those who had migrated to Germany. Anna thinks that people in Germany care about foreign journalists because they believe in press freedom:

> Also, it was a popular topic back then. Every day another journalist was being arrested in Turkey. Then, Deniz Yücel, a German citizen, was arrested. This event urged people to take a measure against such oppression on the free press, which can spread easily to other places too.

Yücel was arrested and charged with 'terrorist propaganda' in 2017 while working as the Turkey correspondent of the German newspaper *Die Welt*. He was kept in prison for one year, causing tension between the two countries. According to Anna, this may be why the charity aspect of Germans' support for dissident journalists from Turkey was stronger, and why the *Redaktör* project was successful in obtaining funding. Anna agrees that 'this is an efficient type of solidarity'.

Yasemin, an experienced reporter working for the public broadcasting service based in Berlin, also thinks that specific individuals served as symbols for the German public. Having lived in both Turkey and Germany, Yasemin's articles always focus on a concept, event or character that can serve as a bridge between the two societies. She says that public attention also has a political motive, but more importantly, empathy is necessary for people to take action for others. I learned that *Redaktör* came to life owing to another likeable character, who happened to be in Germany as a fellow on an exchange programme for journalists. After watching television coverage of the police arresting his colleagues in Turkey, this young journalist convinced the journalists with whom he was working in Germany to take concrete rather than symbolic action. In the end, with the help of a non-governmental organisation, a project was developed to create an alternative platform for journalists in Turkey. Despite my determined requests, however, I could not convince the young journalist who initiated the project in the first place to talk to me. He insisted that he does not do what I am looking for. He said that what they do at *Redaktör* is *not journalism*: 'If you make a research on journalism, you should better go and do your research in a proper newspaper.' In his view, a 'proper newspaper' refers not only to those traditionally published in print but also to those that have more staff

9 Inclusive internship programmes of media outlets and various training courses offered by organisations, such as the New Media Makers, German Section of Reporters Without Borders and Infomigrants, aim to act to encourage diversity. Journalists with a migration background actively claim the space by publicising their biographies to fight against prejudices and making fun of hatred directed towards themselves, see, among various examples, Arıkan and Ham 2009; Bota, Pham, and Topçu 2012; Böcü 2017; Akrap and Yücel 2018; Aydemir and Yaghoobifarah 2019.

with separate services that have well-defined fields, such as sports, culture or diplomacy. Different services with specialised reporters suggest, however, an institution with long-term financial means instead of a project with small funds for a limited period.

Leyla, a social scientist and journalist who produces programmes for the satellite TV channel *NewsOnly*, mentioned making news under the roof of cooperatives or associations, such as the 'street/solidarity academies' founded by exiled academics as an alternative to unsustainable short-term initiatives.[10] She said, 'if the public needs information, they should create solutions accordingly. Good journalism is costly.' A satellite TV channel is particularly costly, requiring more capital than a website and also more advertising. However, people hesitate to invest in an opposition channel because they think that supporting dissident journalists and/or commentators may put their business or family in Turkey at risk. With little advertising revenue and few sponsorships, *NewsOnly* relies on several businesspeople in Europe, who make donations via a foundation explicitly established for this purpose.

During a meeting of the Vienna-based International Press Institute held in Berlin, Deniz Yücel, pointing out the empty seats in the hall, commented about the German public's declining interest in the situation of journalists in Turkey after his release. He functioned as a symbol of the oppression of the press in Turkey because, he says,

> [p]eople need to feel empathy to be in solidarity, which brings reaction and protest. Of course, it was easier to mobilise people in Germany against my imprisonment as they could access easily to my articles. This is not the case for an ordinary journalist in Turkey.

German people supported independent and critical Turkish newspapers, such as *Evrensel*, *Birgün* and *Cumhuriyet*, by subscribing to them, even though they did not understand the language, he said. For Yücel, it was surprising that Turkish readers did not show the same solidarity: 'Journalism cannot be done for free. In Turkey, people should realise this very fact before asking for help from the outside world.' In contrast to Germany, people in Turkey are not willing to pay for news. The award-winning independent journalism initiative *Medyascope*, a YouTube-based news portal with dozens of reporters and editors that produces news reports as well as commentary programmes and that is followed by almost 200,000 subscribers, has only 670 regular supporters, from both inside and outside Turkey (Patreon n.d.). People in Turkey do not support *Redaktör*, *NewsOnly* and *Voice in Exile* as much as they consume them. In this case, most of the financial support comes from abroad.

Redaktör began as an impromptu project aiming to support unemployed journalists in Turkey by paying copyright

fees for their articles published on the platform. However, for the funding bodies, this did not serve as a motivation to sustain the project after the initially planned time was up, or when another 'hot' topic became more interesting to channel financial support to. A quick look at history shows that the problem of sustainability may also be a result of the lack of a clearly defined objective and audience. Already in 1998, the rather leftist *Die Tageszeitung* (or *taz*, as abbreviation) of Panter Stiftung had a similar initiative. Back then, *taz* published a Turkish newspaper entitled *Perşembe*. This weekly supplement failed and closed down within a year. According to Semiran Kaya, who worked for the supplement, its failure was the result of confusion in concept. She writes:

> In order to be able to hold its own in the media in the longer term, not only finances would have to be right. It takes a well-thought-out concept with 'lifestyle' themes and professional management that does not dictate the line of influential Turkish entrepreneurs. Because keeping a newspaper alive with commitment and ideational work is suicide on instalments (Kaya 2002).

Then, why launch a similar project that has already failed? Why produce content that is not in high demand in the market? As an experienced journalist and postdoctoral researcher, Leyla from *NewsOnly* interprets the support of European journalists and the public in general as a sign of the recognition of the political claims that journalists make against authorities in Turkey. Yet, being politically recognized overshadowed the ongoing violations. She explains her problems with 'over-recognition' as follows:

> I think we are overly recognised both by the AKP and the West. And this over-recognition started to claim our voice! We are here not because we signed a petition or made news criticising the government's political approach towards the Kurdish Question in Turkey. I am here not because of something that I did. I am here because of something that Erdoğan and his government did, and they keep doing it. Me being here is not the matter. Once they [colleagues in Europe] recognise this fact, then they will understand what a big problem they have to deal with. They should stop dealing with us because they are dealing with us exactly in the same way that he [President Erdoğan] does. They pat me on the back, but there is a burning issue over there, they should instead deal with it – it keeps burning.

Although the relation between civil society and media platforms has a long history, I propose to understand the case of journalists in exile in this specific context in relation to humanitarian responsibility, similar to the way in which neoliberal academia receives humanitarian support in the case of academics in exile (Özdemir, Mutluer, and Özyürek 2019). Compared with the limited support provided by audiences in Turkey, who are at the same time the targets for the news they produce, the German public accepts their support as their moral responsibility. Accordingly, criminalised journalists such as Deniz Yücel, among many others,[11] represent innocent and recognisa-

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10 Solidarity Academies emerged as a form of resistance and alternative spaces for collective action to share academic knowledge production and circulation when the academics were dismissed from universities, academic freedoms were restricted and some higher education institutions were closed down or restructured under the AKP governments after the declaration of the state of emergency in July 2016, see Biner 2019; E. Erdem and Akın 2019.

11 There are countless journalists who were criminalised in Turkey. Considering the relations between Turkey and Germany, however, German-Kurdish journalist Meşale Tolu and Turkish journalist Can Dündar are other emblematic figures.

ble victims who are turned into political symbols (Ticktin 2017). On the one hand, journalists in exile do not accommodate this positioning, as Leyla's quote suggests. Those who benefit from the moral response of the European donors in the form of short-term project-based journalism opportunities, on the other hand, question the 'reality' of their practices in the name of journalism. Although they remain uneasy with the kind of journalism defined by the conditions of exile, they keep doing research and interviews, writing and editing texts, and therefore producing content to inform their audience.

Unintended audiences of impossible solidarities

News is not contained within the borders of the nation-state, and today the new media platforms have a global audience (Bernal 2005). Academic literature on transnational media representations emphasises audience reception and shows the role of communities in mediating conflicts in their homelands (Christiansen 2004; Alonso and Oiarzabal 2010). However, only a few of my interlocutors think there is a need for the kind of journalism in Germany offered by migrant journalists who arrived especially after the coup attempt in Turkey. Instead, they say, what is needed is community journalism in Turkish, which would report news and cover stories that are relevant to the everyday life of Turkish-speaking people in Germany. The mismatch between what it is possible to offer and what is actually demanded by the audience is observable in both the production and the reception of news – especially in the case of bilingual news.

Yaz works at *Redaktör*, making news for the German-Turkish audience for the first time in her career. Accustomed to writing for readers living in Turkey, she finds addressing readers in the Turkish-German context challenging. She says bilingual readers extend their disappointment with the German media to *Redaktör* as well:

> The same news is published both in Turkish and in German. We almost always receive comments to the German edition from Turks living in Germany. They say, 'Deal with your own business, you nasty Germans!' I mean, I want to say on behalf of a group of people who migrated from Turkey, I swear to God I am Turkish [laughs]. Believe me, it is us [Turks] who make the news, not 'nasty Germans.' You know, it is complicated to please both sides.

Journalists covering news on Turkey may also receive complicated critiques. In a commentary, Elisabeth Kimmerle from *Die Tageszeitung* shared her opinion about the investigations that the Turkish government started against 347 social media accounts that spread hate speech about a deadly attack in Istanbul in 2017 (BBC News 2017). The attack was targeting civilians attending a New Year's party at a nightclub. For her, starting investigations against social media accounts that spread hate speech in this particular case was the right decision because of intense victim blaming after the unfortunate event. However, she was criticised for backing Erdoğan's authoritarianism. When I asked her about the reaction her commentary received, she said:

> The common sense in Germany agrees that in Turkey, the government is very harsh against journalists and violates press freedom. When it started investigations against hate speech comments about the nightclub attack, people thought: Again? But the same ban would be the case in Germany too. I just said, 'Look, there is a hate speech issue here, so investigations are good.' I guess they just got me wrong.

Although their readers/viewers are very active and consume news interactively, online publications in which journalists report on news about Turkey from abroad are not widely read in Turkey. Nor are the German public highly curious about articles covering the latest developments, lifestyle or cultural events in Turkey. However, there is a group that these online news sources attract, and it is young Germans, most of whom come from families with a background of migration from Turkey.

Bülent is a young German in his mid-twenties, a Berliner social scientist occasionally writing news articles in German and English for various media outlets, including a bilingual blog he co-founded with his friends. Focusing on lifestyle, culture and art – therefore, mostly material culture – they celebrate their 'restlessness' and 'hybridity' in novel ways, as their predecessors did with music and graffiti in the 1990s (Soysal 2004). Bülent studied for a couple of semesters in Turkey and came back to Germany right before the Gezi Park protests in 2013, which inspired him and his friends to claim Turkishness via their blog, even though they do not always speak Turkish comfortably in public. They speak to people like themselves and not to monolinguals. Turkish natives, especially middle-class professionals, or the 'new wave',[12] who emigrated from Turkey within the last five years, do not understand them. Bülent says:

> What we do is to celebrate Turkish culture in the diaspora by working with our culture, doing something creative for our culture. But some new migrants, I mean, they do not deny their Turkish culture, but they want to maybe adapt to the culture here [...] It is very very difficult to work within the Turkish diaspora context and make all the diaspora happy. It is almost impossible. We try to reach the entire diaspora, let's say, we are not pro-left wing, Kurdish or religious whatever. We are trying to be general, and our team is mixed, we have different opinions. But people find us not very consequent.

Bülent and his friends closely follow media offered by Turkish journalists in exile and support them by promoting them on their blog. For Bülent, journalists in exile are 'doing a great job'. I find his interest surprising considering the low numbers of followers I could identify.[13]

Similar to Bülent, Gonca also started to claim her Turkishness, as a person born and raised in Germany, by speaking more Turkish at the workplace after the Gezi uprising. 'I realised how good my journalist friend's Turkish was and I was receiving compliments too', she told me happily. It is ironic, considering she was unable to get work

12 'New Wave in Berlin', as the title of an online solidarity group established on Facebook in 2016 among the Turkish diaspora in Berlin, is also used in colloquial language to refer to young and highly educated migrants.

13 I regularly follow likes and comments on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube accounts of the media organisations formed by exiled journalists, though I did not make a structured analysis of analytics.

as a speaker in media organisations targeting Turkish audiences because of her broken Turkish. Still, as a journalism graduate, she had considerable work experience in the migrant media scene in Berlin. This is how she joined *Redaktör* right after it was established. Although she believes there is increasing solidarity among journalists, she also thinks there are differences in professional practices, and this creates problems in the workplace. As a German reporter, Gonca explained the difficulties of working with reporters from Turkey as such:

> I trust the validity of what they send me. I do not know Turkey because it is not my country. I only know Turks in Germany. When I receive a report from Turkey in its raw form, I have to make the fact-checking as an editor. We should be careful because our readers are informed well. If we make a mistake, our trustworthiness would be ruined. Here we did not make such a mistake, thank God, because we are cautious. However, we had troubles with some reporters in Turkey. They are used to write news and get published as it is. I mean without editing or general context. They refuse to have edited.

Next to fact-checking, giving the story from different angles is another issue on which journalists in Germany and Turkey do not agree. When I looked at *Redaktör*, I noticed something that I am not familiar with from Turkish newspapers. When reporters criticise state practices, they end the story by stating that they tried to reach officials to get a comment, but they could not reach them. Burak, an experienced journalist in exile who contributes to *Redaktör*, *NewsOnly* and *Voice in Exile* as a freelancer, tells the story from the other perspective:

> You might get arrested. But above all, you cannot ask all the questions. You cannot get answers even if you ask the question. We do not have a system in Turkey as they have here. You cannot get answers from the Police. You just write the news if you have the file of the case. Or if you have a case about the Minister of Interior, you cannot ask a question.

Indeed, Gonca also learned by doing that some questions could not be asked to some people while she was on a work trip in Ankara. When she addressed an advisor of President Erdoğan with a question that was not related to the topics list given to the press, government officers lashed out at her and asked her to leave the room. She said she decided not to return to Turkey after this unfortunate event, as she still feels 'ashamed'.

Turkish journalists in exile and their work inevitably attract the attention of Turkish-German audiences and of other journalists working in the same context. Therefore, collaborations often occur. However, there is no strong connection between journalists in exile, and therefore reporters rarely contribute to all media organisations, as Burak mentioned. In fact, in contrast to academics, journalists have not established outspoken solidarity networks or political groups. Although they appear in public to make their case known, they do not do so as a collective. I observed that journalists openly refrain from cooperating with each other. According to one journalist who, as an exception, works with almost all exiled journalists, this disconnect is due to ideological differences. Bülent, as a supporter and

audience, thinks that exiled journalists should deal with the challenges of working with the diverse interests of the Turkish diaspora, starting from their internal diversity and biases towards each other: 'They started competing. Furthermore, as soon as there is an argument, the group split off and it cannot be successful. This is also the problem with the Turkish diaspora. It is not really effective in this way.'

Another reason for the lack of contact between journalists is limited job opportunities. The director of a Turkish-language news channel told me that after the coup attempt in 2016, he received hundreds of job applications every month. It was so severe that many organisations I approached for my research refused to talk to me at first, thinking that I was looking for a job. People find jobs with their relations, and they usually do not get involved in a relationship if they receive no benefit from it. Besides, work conditions are not always favourable. Artun, an experienced radio programmer who used to work at the *Voice in Exile*, talked about how helpless he felt because of the indifference of the funding body in the case of a work accident:

> [The representative of the funding body] did not show up in the hospital. I don't speak German; I had neither money nor credit card with me [...] If this accident would happen in Turkey, and if the directors would behave irresponsibly as such, we would act harshly and mobilise the public via Twitter. I mean, we have more tools there. And none of the German newspapers covered this story. There are sensitivities, we heard.

Suat is a Kurdish man in his mid-twenties, born and raised in Istanbul. He studied journalism in Turkey, then moved to Germany both to pursue a master's degree and to escape from the threat of imprisonment based on his political activities at the university. When I met him, he had been working for over a year as a newsman at *NewsOnly*, and this was his first experience as a journalist. During my visit to the channel while technical staff and other journalists were discussing the Turkish military's latest operations in Syria, I asked Suat whether he wants to go back to Turkey. He said:

> I want to go back to Turkey because I like journalism. I like to produce contents and discuss them. I like to be in this environment and work with political ideas. However, it is unbearable to think that I have to pay the price in return, such as imprisonment, killing, offence, or insult [...] When I compare myself with those in Turkey, I am happy that I have the chance to make news about there. But in the long term, it is not sustainable [...] Doing this job from Europe does not only mean being distant from the country, the source of news, but it also means being away from the collective you work together, your colleagues, platforms, networks, laws [...] Simply everything that makes you a journalist. We don't have the conditions of 'room temperature'. It damages our self-esteem and career development. Although I work really hard and already have visibility on the screen, I do not know [...] Maybe it is only a psychological thing, but this is how I feel right now.

Like others in exile, Suat thinks that long-distance journalism is not sustainable in the long run. As he explained

in more detail in our earlier conversations, this is because it mostly relies on devotion to the profession and the political ideals it stands for with minimal funding. However, more than financial means, he finds collectives and networks essential for journalists to have a feeling of belonging and solidarity. They make journalism what it is as they ensure the independence of journalists and news from the interests of those holding power – be it economic, political or coercive forms (Thompson 1995). However, not all journalists in exile are as isolated as Suat. Perhaps Burak's case is exceptional. Yet, as Bülent's and Emel's interest and support suggest, alternative solidarity groups and professional networks are available, mainly born within the unintended audience in the Turkish-German context. However, these networks are not always accessible for several reasons, including physical distance, lack of German-language skills, long working hours and ideological differences. Moreover, the migrant journalism scene in Germany mimics conditions at 'home'. The Journalists' Union of Turkey and the Turkish Journalists' Association are the only organisations for advocacy. Accordingly, as Christian Christensen (2007) argues, together with the concentration of media ownership and government control, aggressive anti-union strategies by newspaper and television owners, which intensified starting from the 1990s, should be taken into consideration when studying the problems that journalists and the institutions of journalism in Turkey face.[14] Journalists in exile are away from 'home' but not from all of its problems. In addition, being migrants makes them more vulnerable to unfavourable working conditions.

Journalism suspended in long-distance resistance?

According to Yasemin, who works for the public broadcasting service based in Berlin, Turkish journalists are not as disciplined and advanced as German journalists, and therefore, she agrees with Gonca's critique. However, journalists in Turkey are stronger in another department, Yasemin thinks: 'They have an urge, an impulse to tell their story, and they always have a good story to tell. Moreover, of course, they earn less than we do here. I mean, I think they work with passion.' For her, Latife is an excellent example of what she means.

Journalism was Latife's childhood dream. Born in Turkey's Kurdistan, she said she experienced injustices and violence first-hand. She believes in the power of journalism. However, similar to many other journalists who claim to practise rights-based journalism, she does not define herself as an activist. Still, she suddenly found herself in exile. I met her when she had recently arrived in Berlin from Istanbul, where she had feared for her life. While she was living in Istanbul and working as a reporter for an online news portal based in Germany, she started to receive death threats from unknown phone numbers. She decided to disappear for a short time and travelled to Berlin, but because of the ongoing risk, she had to extend her stay.

'This is *not journalism* what I do here', she says, because she is entirely dependent on her colleagues working on the ground. As Yasemin notes, Latife used to travel all around Istanbul to follow court cases and protests and stream them online via Periscope. Although she is learning to report news in new formats and still covers stories that cannot be heard in depth from other media organisations, she feels useless in Germany as a journalist. This is why she wants to go back as soon as possible and refuses to be a migrant.

Especially during the Syrian civil war, activism and reporting have become one (Saleh 2017). Accordingly, recent literature on diaspora media focuses mostly on its function as a platform to offer a voice to activists who fight for social and political rights in their country of origin (Ogunyemi 2017; Ogenga 2014). In the context of media produced in Europe and targeting audiences in Turkey, Kurdish satellite TV channels set the first example. These TV channels were not solely focused on people in Turkey. Instead, as people who used to work in these channels assert, they had viewers all around the world. However, I learned that Kurdish media existed in Europe long before satellite technology did. Tamer, a veteran journalist, started working in journalism in the 1980s while he was a university student in Germany and a member of the Kurdish Students Union. Later he worked for the Kurdish daily, *Yeni Ülke* (New Land), which was being prepared and sent to Frankfurt via air. When all Kurdish newspapers were closed down in 1995, a small group in Germany started their journal with limited resources. He says:

> I can publish a newspaper on my own as a single person with today's technology. Now you can do a quick search on the Internet and find all the information, including news already made, from which you can just copy and paste [laughs].

While talking about the old days, another veteran Kurdish journalist I will call Haluk said: 'It was not journalism what we used to do. It was militancy.' Still, the Kurdish satellite TV channels cultivated political awareness and ethnic belonging among Kurdish people in Turkey. Haluk told me stories about the unconventional responses of state actors to prevent his broadcasts. For instance, TRT, the public broadcasting service in Turkey, would transmit signals with the exact frequency of the satellite that Haluk was using to prevent his broadcast. Another strategy was to pressure countries which provided a broadcasting licence to Kurdish TVs. Haluk's knowledge about the state's tactics to prevent broadcasting abroad was useful for newly exiled journalists.

In contrast to Kurdish broadcasting, however, newly exiled journalists from Turkey, regardless of their ethnicity, are careful not to criticise too harshly, which would damage their credibility in Turkey, where they hope eventually to return. For Haluk, this hope prevents journalist who have recently migrated from breaking the chains of traditional journalism in Turkey, which adopts the state's perspective. Metin, who covered human rights violations in Kurdish cities of Turkey throughout his whole career, sounds like confirming what Haluk says as follows: 'In all organisations where I worked as a journalist, I worked for increasing leftist tendencies of news. However, it is the first time, here

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14 The most recent example of anti-unionist actions is the dismissal of 45 journalists from Hürriyet, the biggest newspaper in Turkey. Since most of these journalists were members of the union, the management of Hürriyet was accused of targeting unionised workers, which is against the Constitution, see The European Federation of Journalists 2019; Tuna and Turhal 2019.

in *NewsOnly*, I step on brakes and also ask my colleagues to be more mainstream.' This is only partially accurate, because he does not 'step on the brakes' in the sense of self-censorship. Instead, Metin imagines *NewsOnly* to meet the need for a mainstream TV channel which addresses all citizens of the country in times of political polarisation.

Many of the practices of Kurdish broadcasting have informed how *NewsOnly* operates, mostly because the TV channel has received a great deal of support from the veteran journalists I quoted above. For instance, *NewsOnly* insists on broadcasting via satellite rather than online, because the authorities in Turkey have closed down many media outlets in the past. 'It is easy to ban a website or shut down an online stream but cancelling the license of a satellite broadcasting is more difficult and much more expensive', Metin, as an experienced journalist and the executive producer of *NewsOnly*, told me many times.

While listening to Metin, I remembered my conversations with other journalists, and that bans did not stop other initiatives in exile. For instance, the website of *Voice in Exile* was banned even before it uploaded content. However, journalists from *Voice in Exile* utilise other media tools to remain online, sometimes even without having technical knowledge or equipment. 'I streamed online by connecting cables with brown packaging tape', says Artun sarcastically, to emphasise the shortcut and amateur solutions he invented to overcome difficulties while broadcasting. Still, *Voice in Exile* was so successful in attracting a high number of viewers that a social media platform offered them professional support. Metin's insistence on using old technology also reminded me of Yasemin, who works for a public broadcasting service in Germany. She was late for our meeting because she was attending a teleconference with her colleagues in Istanbul and Ankara about producing videos in smartphone vertical video format, which would have better completion rates for YouTube videos.

Journalists in exile were confronted with the dilemma of staying in Turkey and facing sanctions or leaving for a place with more freedoms but being away from the source of the news. This was a dilemma that Kurdish activists had encountered earlier. Although their experience informs today's practice (especially in the case of *News-Only*), there are differences. First of all, journalists in exile want to be recognised solely as 'journalists' both in Turkey and in Germany – not as politicians, terrorists, migrants, victims and so forth – despite the fact that doing ethical journalism is a political statement today in Turkey (Sözeri 2016). Secondly, communication technology offers multiple opportunities for journalism at a distance. Therefore, as Tamer's quote suggests, a large group of people or satellite TV may not be a necessity today. Impartiality and being up to date in terms of technology, however, is not enough for them to be transnational journalists, because there are still other barriers such as the lack of formal education and language skills. This is why they address only Turkish-speaking audiences and report news about Turkey even when they do not choose to do so. And this is why Latife feels disconnected from the place where she lives and works, although she has continued to produce professional programmes by building upon her existing skills as a journalist.

Conclusion

As I stated at the beginning of the article, many journalists were not happy to be the topic of research. One famous journalist was proud of her invisibility on the Internet when I apologetically told her that I could not find much about her biography. She said:

> As a matter of fact, I am against journalists themselves to become the object of news. But the political process turned us into objects. Lately, journalists were only making news from the courthouse about trials of their colleagues – if not their own. Journalism changed so much that we became the element of news. It is weird. Our job is to inform the public. However, the definition of journalism changed when authorities decided to silence media: now, journalism became the object of news.

The definition of journalism changed, and this made the journalists I spoke to feel alienated from their own profession while practising it from a distance. In this article, I shared the preliminary findings of my research on the transformation of journalism as a profession under the conditions of migration or exile and with the advancement of technological possibilities of digitalisation processes. I proposed to read today's experiences of journalism at a distance in the Turkish language in exile in Germany in the light of the migration history between Germany and Turkey and the related post-migration context. First, emphasising project-based support mechanisms offered in Germany, I suggested thinking about new migrant journalism as an extension of moral responsibility and humanitarian aid. I showed that project-based employment patterns and victimisation clearly discourage journalists from practising their craft. An untouched aspect of this new media ownership system would be its implications for the transparency and accountability of news-making processes. Second, I discussed the reception of news by identifying an unexpected group's interest in news produced in exile and discussed solidarities concerning the diversity within diasporic experiences and interests. This audience behaviour reminds us that journalism is inherently bound to a particular locality and language. Finally, I described how journalists make a differentiation between the ethics of their profession and the inherent political activism in their journalism in today's conditions in connection with their hope to return to Turkey. While postponing their return 'home' to an unknown date in the future, journalists in exile gradually settle in Europe, dedicated to practising their profession in the best way possible under the conditions available by developing their ability to produce and circulate political discourses – even without them noticing it.

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