
Integration and/or Transnationalism? The Case of Turkish-German Transnational Space

Deniz SERT*

Abstract

This article is derived from the findings of an empirical study based on semi-structured and life course qualitative interviews conducted with Turkish-German migrants and their significant others in both countries.¹ As the interviews involved different migrant categories, migrants' life courses and different areas of action, the findings show a large variety of transnational contacts, activities and orientations. After explaining the methodology and the data, the article introduces a typology of transnationalism reflecting these varieties, which is followed by the argument that there is a positive, concurrent and mutually beneficial, relationship between transnationalism and integration.

Keywords

Turkey, Germany, migration, transnationalism, integration.

Introduction

Writing in 2003, Morawska² argued that transnational activities of immigrants and their children and their integration into the host society could typically coexist where different collections of macro- and micro-level conditions produce different varieties of transnationalism-integration combinations. Along these lines, Morawska put forward a three-stage scheme for modelling the relationship between transnationalism and integration. In the first phase, she envisions an active research agenda for gathering empirical information on different features of transnationalism-integration coexistence. This stage has already been passed by the increasing number of publications on the subject. The second stage involves discovering patterns in the various relevant empirical contexts. The data used here were the result of a three-year research project with

* Dr. Deniz Ş. Sert is a senior research associate at the Migration Research Centre at Koç University. Her areas of interest include international migration, transnationalism, internal displacement, civil society, and citizenship. She has been actively involved in the TRANSNET project as the field researcher in Turkey. Besides her articles in journals such as *International Migration*, *ILWCH*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, *Middle East Critique*, *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, and *Journal of Refugee Studies*, her PhD dissertation has been published as a book, entitled "Property Rights of Internally Displaced Persons: Ideals and Realities", Lambert Academic Publishing, 2009.

the objective of clarifying and comparing the complex processes of transnationalism in different spaces, the focus being on the transnational networks and political, economic, and socio-cultural activities. Great importance was attributed to considerations of sending and receiving country contexts, distinctions between external and intra-group conditions, individual migrants' characteristics, and factors specific to the so-called second generation. All of these were essential parts of Morawska's basis for a typology of the factors affecting transnationalism-integration interactions, constituting a useful tool in comparing different contexts. Thus, this contribution is an attempt to accomplish the third stage of Morawska's strategy: the construction of theoretical models of the engendering, maintaining, and changing apparatus of the transnationalism-integration phenomenon, which is yet to be achieved in the literature regarding the subject.

This contribution is derived from the findings of an empirical study based on semi-structured and life course qualitative interviews conducted with Turkish-German migrants and their significant others in both countries.³ As the interviews involved different migrant categories, migrants' life courses and different areas of action, the findings show a large variety of transnational contacts, activities and orientations. Thus, the paper introduces a typology of transnationalism where these varieties are reflected. An important finding

of the research is that the more cross-border activities and orientations that the migrants had, termed here as transnational practices, the stronger the intercultural and integration-related practices they maintained towards their respective resident states, i.e., they were better integrated into their host societies. The article shows a positive relationship between transnationalism and integration where these are not only concurrent, but are seen as mutually supportive processes.

The more cross-border activities and orientations that the migrants had, the stronger the intercultural and integration-related practices they maintained towards their respective resident states.

The paper is divided into three main parts. The first part presents the empirical discussion within the context of Turkish-German transnational space. Here the methodology followed during the research as well as the main findings will be presented along with the typology of transnationalism where the great variety of transnational contacts, activities and orientations with respect to different migrant categories, migrants' life courses and different areas of action are evaluated. Second, there is a theoretical discussion looking at the relationship between

transnationalism and integration as presented in the literature on the subject. This part is largely inspired by Oeppen's typology, which presents not only the interdisciplinary debate developed around the subject, but also encompasses the gap in the literature.⁴ The final part is the conclusion, which is also suggesting avenues for further research.

Empirical Discussion: The Case of Turkish-German Transnational Space

One would see a Turk on every step in Germany. One person went, became a family of eleven. (Returned migrant, Male, 77)

The empirical research that inspired this contribution entailed a total of 173 semi-structure and life course interviews, conducted in the Turkish-German context between 2008 and 2011. During the semi-structured interviews, we addressed experiences and views of transnational activities on an individual level, where the main topics and the main questions for the country-specific interviews were largely the same, but the selection of the respondents varied. In the case of Turkey, the respondents were selected through snowball sampling, but due to the changing nature of migration in Turkey (from being a country of emigration to becoming a country of transit and immigration), we chose to focus on three distinct groups of respondents:

- (1) Return migrants: those who worked, studied, and/or lived in Germany for more than a year but are currently residing in Turkey. This category also included those who were born in Germany but are currently living in Turkey, i.e., the so-called second-generation migrants.
- (2) Relatives and friends: this includes relatives and/or friends in Turkey of those migrants still residing in Germany. The intention here was to collect information on the migrants and observe whether and how they were maintaining their ties with the home country.
- (3) Ethnic Germans: Germans living, working, and/or studying in Turkey. In the case of Germany, interviews were conducted with:
 - (1) Turkish citizens living in Germany,
 - (2) German citizens who were once Turkish citizens, and
 - (3) German citizens with at least one (former) Turkish citizen as parent.

Overall, the investigation in Germany included people with a 'Turkish migration background', who make up the largest group of immigrants in Germany.

The interviewees were engaged through gatekeepers, such as associations (operating especially in the political, economic, socio-cultural and educational domains), internet platforms, but also

through the social networks of the interviewers. After the first interviews, snowball sampling was also used to recruit additional respondents.

For the life-course interviews, which were also conducted using the abovementioned methodology and again in the categories stated above for the two countries, the original aim was to choose interesting cases from the semi-structured interviews for follow-up interviews. This methodology was unsuccessful, as many of the respondents for the semi-structured interviews rejected our requests for a second interview, based on the claim that they did not have any further information to provide. Thus, we had to recruit new respondents for the life-course interviews.

As the subject, both in Turkey and Germany, is very diverse, a pre-defined sampling plan was not suitable. As proposed by Seipel and Rieker, we chose to select rather different cases with a wide variation.⁵ Thus, we looked for interviewees who were diverse concerning their personal characteristics, such as gender, age, education, marital status or place of residence. We also considered diversity concerning the type of migration. Both in Germany and Turkey the cases include former 'guest-workers,' labour migrants, international students, refugees, marriage migrants and family reunification migrants. The diversity of interviewees ensured the contemplation of combinations of

characteristics, but also of contrasts, despite the commonalities of migration and transnationality. The gender distribution of our interviews was balanced, with 34 female and 39 male respondents in Germany, and 56 female and 47 males in Turkey (Please see Table 1 for details on the data). In the German context, 60 % of the interviewees were between 30 and 50 years old; 18 % were younger than 30, and 22 % were older than 50. In Turkey, 52 % of the interviewees were between 30 and 50 years old, 17 % were younger than 30, and 31 % were older than 50. In both cases, more than half of the interviewees were married. Migrants' education levels varied from primary school to PhD degrees. As for their current occupations, 55 interviewees in Germany and 53 in Turkey indicated they were employed; the number of retirees and housewives was much higher in Turkey. In Germany the place of birth of 51 out of 73 interviewees was Turkey; 19 were born in Germany and three in other countries. In Turkey, the place of birth of 60 out of 103 interviewees was Turkey; 40 were born in Germany and three in other countries. While 97 out of a total of 176 interviewees had Turkish citizenship, 46 had German and 32 had dual citizenship with one person in Turkey not willing to share this information.

Table 1: Description of data

		Germany	Turkey
Number of interviews		73	103
Gender	Female	34	56
	Male	39	47
Year of birth	1920-1929	0	1
	1930-1939	2	7
	1940-1949	4	24
	1950-1959	10	16
	1960-1969	17	15
	1970-1979	27	22
	1980-1989	10	17
	1990-1999	3	1
Place of birth	Turkey	51	60
	Germany	19	40
	Others	3	3
Marital status	Single	27	27
	Married	40	62
	Divorced	6	12
	Widowed	0	2
Number of Children	0	30	31
	1	8	18
	2	25	17
	3	5	25
	4	4	6
	5	1	3
	6	0	3
	7	0	3
Education (last graduation)	None	0	3
	Primary School	5	22
	Middle School ¹	20	5
	High School	18	32
	University Degree	30	41

Current Employment	Employed	55	53
	Student	8	8
	Housewife	0	10
	Unemployed	5	3
	Retired	5	29
Citizenship status	Turkish	29	68
	German	30	16
	Dual Citizenship	14	18
	N/A	0	1

ⁱ In the German case, this includes both Secondary General School (Hauptschule) and Intermediate School (Realschule).

It is important to note that on the whole the interviews are not representative either of Turkish migrants and children of Turkish migrants living in Germany, or of return migrants, relatives of migrants, and ethnic Germans in Turkey. The most obvious reason is that we did not have any access to closed communities of Islamic groups in either country. Thus, the findings of this research only reveal the social reality of the 176 respondents in Turkey and Germany in order to provide a better understanding of typical patterns in people's transnational activities, relationships and orientations in the political, socio-cultural, economic, and educational domains of life.

The depth and diversity of the data received from these interviews have necessitated adding a new axis to these diverse domains of life, based on the extent and intensity of the transnational practices of migrants, combining the distinctions of four domains with variations at different levels of strength of transnational activities (Please see Table 2 for the details of our typology). As our typology and the overall findings of the research are extensively elaborated elsewhere,⁶ only an overview of the general findings is presented here, to be followed by a theoretical discussion of the transnationalism and integration linkage empirically supported by the research described.

Table 2: Typology of transnational activities in the Turkish-German context

	TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVITIES			MULTICULTURAL ACTIVITIES
	Strong	Moderate	Weak	
POLITICAL	membership and/or participation in non-resident state or transnational political associations or organisations; occasional or regular voting in another country	communication and/or cooperation with parties and organisations abroad as a member of resident state based political actors or organizations; participation in migrant organizations regularly discussing political events in other countries	interest in and observance of political events in other countries or special attention toward transnational political actors (e.g., Greenpeace, human rights associations) or institutions (e.g., on the EU level)	political participation or exercising political functions in the context of events pertaining to issues related to migration, integration or inter-cultural relations within one's residence country
ECONOMIC	transnational entrepreneurship or occupational functions based on cross-border exchange of goods, capital, services, know-how or cross-border deployment of workforce circular migration	incidental occupational involvement with import/export of goods, capital, services, know-how or cross-border deployment of workforce concrete plans to establish a transnational enterprise, to take a related employment, or to migrate for work-related reasons	use of certain transnational competencies or resources within occupational activities vague plans to establish a transnational enterprise or take a related employment	ethnic entrepreneurship occupational use of ethnic competencies or opportunities without actual relations to other countries
SOCIO-CULTURAL Contacts	regular and intensive private cross-border contacts (communication and visits), because several significant others live abroad	less intensive but continuous private cross-border contacts (communication and visits), because few significant others live abroad	sporadic private cross-border contacts (communication and visits), while all significant others live in one's resident state	continuous inter-ethnic private contacts within the resident country

<p>SOCIO-CULTURAL</p> <p>Social engagement</p>	<p>membership and participation in a non-resident state or transnational associations, organisations or networks continuous participation in organised forms of cross-border help and support</p>	<p>occasional participation in organisations abroad, transnational networks or migrant organisations cooperating regularly with organisations in other countries continuous informal activities of cross-border help and support (including transnational family care)</p>	<p>concrete plans to participate in organisations abroad or transnational networks; participation in migrant organisations cooperating occasionally with organisations in other countries sporadic informal activities of cross-border help and support (including transnational family care)</p>	<p>initiatives (individually or within associations or organisations) of support of migrant integration and inter-ethnic relations within one's resident state (including family care)</p>
<p>SOCIO-CULTURAL</p> <p>Identity</p>	<p>self-description of a bi-national Turkish-German identity, or of a European or cosmopolitan belonging, or of one beyond ethnic and national identifications (e.g., class, political ideology, bi-regional, bi-local)</p>	<p>discrepancy between self-description of identity and long-term residence or future migration (or return) plans</p>	<p>concomitance of transnational contacts and a commitment to a life perspective in one's resident state</p>	<p>self-description of a bi-cultural identity without actual relations to other countries; commitment to a life perspective in one's resident state</p>
<p>EDUCATIONAL</p>	<p>strong transnational impacts on educational careers: correspondence or contradiction of migration-related socialisation processes, attendance at educational institutions in different countries, and educational ambitions</p>	<p>attendance at educational institutions in different countries without corresponding explicit educational ambitions targeted acquirement or successive unlearning of particular transnational competencies as a consequence of migration-related socialisation experiences</p>	<p>maintenance and transmission of knowledge and competencies suitable for border-crossing contacts, communication and activities without explicit educational ambitions and primarily without actual use outside family relations</p>	<p>advancement of bi- and multilingual and -cultural competencies in the context of increasing factual pluralism and diversity within one's resident state</p>

Thus, within the political domain of transnationalism, we came across scant transnational orientations on the Turkish side, and mainly weak ones on the German side. Transnationally active migrants were usually better-educated and often so-called second generation. Despite the conventional wisdom, we saw no direct correlation between citizenship and/or residence status and the extent of political participation. Usually, strong transnational political activities coincided with participation in the resident state's politics, and in Germany they were often a by-product of political engagement with immigration and integration policies. A return migrant explains his indifference to politics:

I wasn't interested in politics, I didn't vote in Germany, because I did not become a citizen, I didn't vote in Turkey in years, because I missed the elections. (Returned migrant, Male, 77)

Within our economic domain of transnationalism, we observed rather weak or more multicultural orientations on the Turkish side, and generally strong transnational economic activities on the German side. Better-educated migrants usually had more cross-border economic activities. They were often self-employed or working free-lance. However, transnationally active migrants had a clear residential focal point in one country. Here, we saw no generational difference, as transnational economic activities were performed by both first and second generation migrants. On the German side, transnational and multicultural

activities were simultaneously taking place.

Transnationally active migrants were usually better-educated and often so-called second generation.

The main findings of the socio-cultural domain of transnationalism revealed the area where nearly all respondents maintained private cross-border contacts. While we came across only a few mobile livelihoods, we saw a great number of transnational relations and practices. Although there were no cases of strong transnationalism, many respondents showed moderate to weak transnationalism in social engagement and security practices. Many respondents showed strong bi-national and transnational orientations, but also made different and ambivalent statements concerning their sense of belonging. It was interesting to see that the more educated the respondent, the more undecided they were about their identity.

The research results in the educational domain were more or less as expected: The second generation was more engaged in educational transnationalism than the first-generation "guest-worker" migrants, and highly skilled migrants had strong transnational orientations. However, we heard of many cases where parental return orientations had adverse consequences on children's educational careers. Maybe

the most policy-related outcome of our research was that almost all respondents underlined the importance of knowing different languages as a resource of social and spatial mobility. When the respondents were asked what skills were needed to live in more than one country, language was among the first responses.

Overall, our findings showed that there are considerable variations of transnationalism in different life domains, among individual migrants, and in life courses. We also saw that the more durable state border-crossing activities and orientations, i.e., transnational practices that the migrants had, the stronger the intercultural and integration-related practices they maintained towards their respective resident states. Thus, the research findings show that there is a positive relationship between transnationalism and integration. As stated above, the empirical findings were a result of three years of research, which had left us with extensive data to elaborate on for theoretical discussion. The next section will specifically look at this relationship between transnationalism and integration, presenting a theoretical debate that is embedded in empirical findings of this research.

Theoretical Discussion: Transnationalism and/or Integration?

Oeppen⁷ describes four hypotheses regarding the theoretical discussion of

the linkage between transnationalism and integration (Please see Figure 1).

The second generation was more engaged in educational transnationalism than the first-generation “guest-worker” migrants, and highly skilled migrants had strong transnational orientations.

The first hypothesis, while mostly discredited by migration scholars of the time, is still present in some popular media claiming that transnationalism and integration are mutually exclusive processes and that migrants cannot both maintain ties to their old country and become part of their new society.

The second hypothesis takes into consideration empirical research showing that migrants can both keep transnational ties and be incorporated into the destination country’s society, as long as the level of discrimination and racism allows that integration. However, as this condition is rarely met, migrants are marginalised and pushed towards transnational activities and ties due to a lack of alternatives. This hypothesis evokes the ideas about ethnic enclaves and ghettoisation.

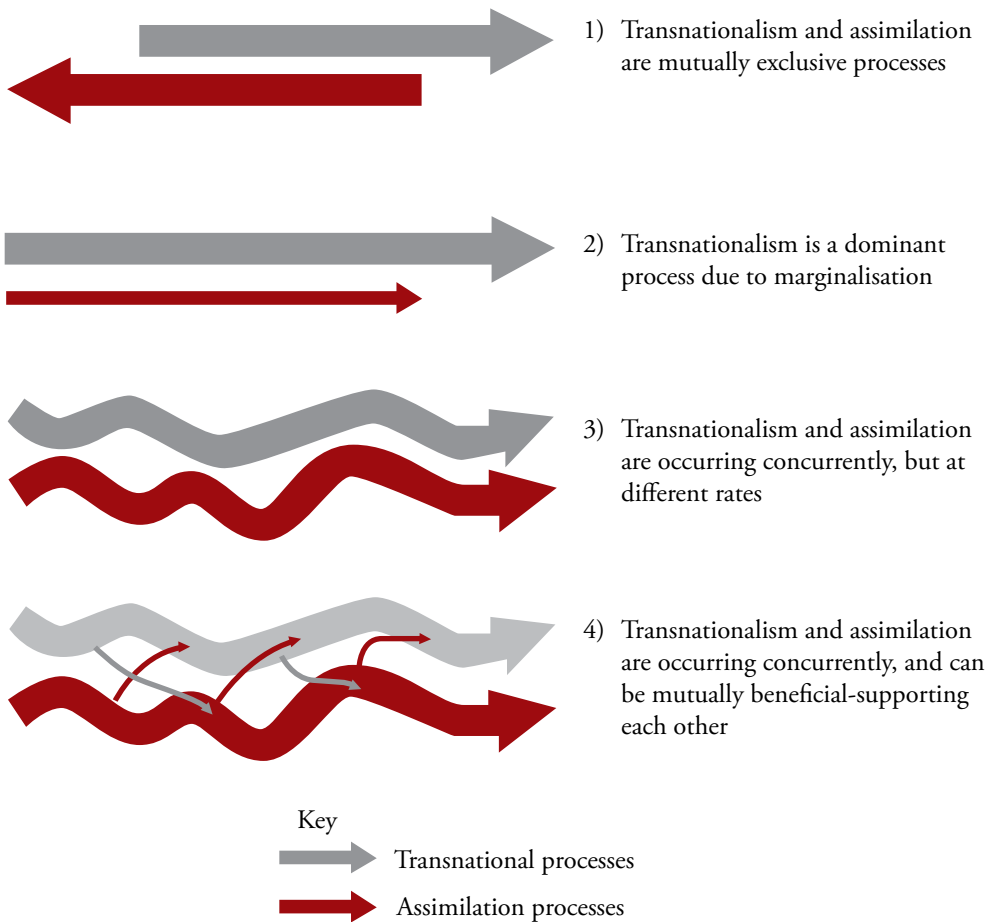
The third scenario is that migrants can be carrying out both transnational activities and transnational ties at the same time as being part of a process of

integration, stating in short that the two are not mutually exclusive.

The fourth hypothesis further develops this approach by suggesting that the two processes may be mutually supportive. To

illustrate, while transnational activities that provide an income may assist economic integration, naturalisation and the related travel documents may assist transnational activities by easing travel restrictions.

Figure 1: Transnationalism and integration-four approaches



Source: (Ceri Oeppen, *A Stranger at Home: Integration, Transnationalism and the Afghan Elite*, DPhil thesis, Brighton, University of Sussex, 2009.)

While hypothesis two and three are most commonly accepted within literature on migrant integration, hypothesis four has only been highlighted by some. The fourth hypothesis, which implies some form of interactive relationship between transnationalism and integration, is the theoretical model that would be prescribed here by utilizing the findings of an empirical research. While some empirical studies indicate a positive quantitative relationship between transnational engagement and integration,⁸ not much is known about the nature of the interaction between the two.⁹

Both, Vertovec¹⁰ and Kivisto,¹¹ theorize that any positive relationships might be related to a person's level of confidence, i.e., that increased confidence associated with strong social capital, whether local or transnational, facilitates integration. While building this theory, Kivisto overtly builds on Lal's idea of the "Ethnicity Paradox",¹² which suggests that the support of local ethnic communities facilitates immigrants' adaptation to host societies and that confidence and social capital can be built through the support of transnational communities and networks, as well as by local ones. Still, the transnational theorists have rarely seen transnationalism and integration as mutually accommodating practices.

Oeppen¹³ proposes three reasons why transnational theorists appear to have missed the potential for transnationalism

and integration to be seen as mutually supportive processes.

First, as human geographers have indicated,¹⁴ there is a residual predisposition among social scientists to see a dichotomy between the everyday experiences of migrants that occur at the local level, such as integration, and those that occur at the global or international level, such as transnational activities.

Second, as Gielis puts forward, those studying migrant transnationalism have tended to focus on the "internal complexity" of particular migrant social networks, rather than studying their "external complexity", which would take into account ways in which migrants' multiple social networks "both cross-border and within the new country of residence" operate and impact each other in migrants' lives.¹⁵

Third, Oeppen argues, there are the practical issues associated with researching a topic that takes in multiple scales and places, as well as differing understandings of both transnationalism and integration.¹⁶ Following her research of the Afghan elite in the Bay Area, she shows that there is an important difference between the way in which integration affects transnationalism, which were largely a result of structural integration, and the way in which transnationalism affects integration, which were more symbolic or emotional and more related to socio-cultural integration; making it hard to test the relationships between

such differing types of examples, and requiring a further study that is arguably relying on additional in-depth, ideally long-term, research.¹⁷

How can the findings of our empirical research be embedded into this theoretical discussion? Following Oeppen's framework, our research provides data for an impact analysis that shows transnationalism and integration as mutually supportive processes (Please see Table 3). To begin with, what we see in the Turkish-German transnational migration space is that while citizenship acquisition does not

materialize into a strong transnational political activism, it is at least acting as a means for easier travel arrangements. Many respondents in the Turkish sample mentioned having German citizenship or permanent residency in Germany as a tool for entering and re-entering that country. Thus, many of these people were physically spending at least two or three months of the year in Germany, despite the fact that they considered themselves as return migrants to Turkey. Moreover, many of such migrants were economically better integrated into the German market, thus could afford such physical travel.

Table 3: Impact analysis

Impacts of integration on transnational activities	Impacts of transnational activities on integration
Citizenship acquisition or acquiring permanent residence means ease of travel between Germany and Turkey	Renting of property in Turkey serves as a means to be spent in Germany
Economic integration allows greater resources available for transnational activities	Returning to Turkey for a temporary time allows migrants to appreciate their niche cross-cultural skills
Language knowledge becomes a valuable social capital enhancing mobility (e.g., among exchange students), as well as for transnational economic activities	Return (especially, "root search" returns of second generation) encourages them to reassess their life and solve their identity crises
Interaction with non-Turkish people serves as a resource for transnationally oriented businesses	
Niche cross-cultural skills learned in Germany serves as a means for employment in Turkey	

On a different level, we see not only that people considered language skills to be an important resource to live in more than one country, but that language knowledge really acts as a valuable social capital enhancing mobility. The importance of language is stated by a respondent as:

Living conditions were not good for the Turks, but our standards of living were better than others. I think language was the most important factor for such an improvement. We still have children in Germany. And friends. We decided to come back after retirement. I was missing Turkey. I want to live in Turkey, but my husband prefers Germany. Therefore we spend a lot of time in Germany -6 months here, 6 months there. (Returned migrant, female, 69)

Besides transnational educational activities, language was also important for transnational economic activities.

Language skills were especially important for exchange students, even though their migration is considered to be only temporary. While knowledge of Turkish was an important factor affecting the choice of Turkey for such a temporary educational arrangement by the ethnic Turkish German citizens, familiarity with the German language was also important for the Turkish students to choose Germany for their exchange semester. Besides transnational educational activities, language was also

important for transnational economic activities. Many return migrants, especially the better educated and the second generation, –presumably better integrated into German society, were using their language skills as an important asset in their businesses and/or employment. As a return migrant states:

One social capital that I gained in Germany is language. I used it to become a translator later on. (Returned migrant, male, 74)

Similarly, for such people their interaction with non-Turkish people in Germany helped them to acquire niche cross-cultural skills, which served as a resource for setting transnationally oriented businesses. As a successful entrepreneur who is also a return migrant states:

My entire business model is ninety percent German; for example, order! Also, my multi-national orientation is an advantage in business. I feel more comfortable with foreigners: the ‘us and them’ difference is avoided. (Male, 57)

Another respondent states:

I think living in Turkey as a German is an advantage because people think my educational background is stronger and trust my professional skills more. (Returned migrant, Male, 42)

Yet the evidence so far shows only the impacts of integration on transnational activities. What about the reverse action? Do transnational activities impact integration? The answer is positive. For example, the renting of property in Turkey serves as a means of income to be

spent in Germany. Many migrants have properties in both Germany and Turkey, as one respondent states:

Mom and dad met in Germany, got married, had two kids, and began living there. My sibling and I went to a private art school. We were the first Turkish students, and there were not many foreigners. Later on, my parents started a tourism company, beginning to bring tours to Turkey and other countries. We have an apartment in Turkey and a house in Germany. (Female, 34)

Those migrants who had invested in Turkey for some time but who cannot return – mostly because their children were very settled in Germany with their grand children – are utilizing their investments as extra income to be spent in Germany, i.e., in the form of reverse-remittances. Also, returning to Turkey for a temporary time allows migrants to appreciate their niche cross-cultural skills. Return, especially the root search returns of the second-generation Turkish migrants, encourages them to reassess their lives and solve their identity crises. As stated by a second-generation Turkish migrant who returned to Turkey, and who had also lived in countries other than Germany and Turkey:

I seem to see living in more than one country as a given situation. I am able to live and work in many places, but having a base, knowing one's roots is very important. (Female, 40)

Conclusion

The examples that are drawn from the empirical research show how

transnationalism and integration are mutually supportive processes, suggesting an interactive relationship rather than a mere co-existence. As presented earlier, there is a range of empirical studies that have shown transnationalism and integration to be concurrent, but following Oeppen, findings from our research suggest that there is not only a connection between the two but a mutually supportive relationship. What differentiates this empirical study from previous research on transnationalism is that it takes into account multiple scales of activity and connections from local to international and recognizes the ability of these activities and connections to change between scales during the life course of migrants. Moreover, it underlines different types of transnationalism, i.e., both transnational activities and transnational consciousness, while allowing for comparisons across different contexts.

As underlined by Oeppen, in order to move forward with Morawska's strategy towards theorising relationships between transnationalism and integration, further work is still needed. Research would also have to consider the impact of different types of integration, i.e., both structural and socio-cultural, which was not explicitly done in the earlier research. Furthermore, research on the subject should also take into consideration the societies and places that migrations

are taking place, and needs to address what kinds of transnational activities at what stage in migrants' lives reinforce their adaptation to their country of residence. It is also important to see if this relationship alters within other cases of transnational spaces in different parts of the world, especially in the South and the East; and analyse transnational networks on a more general level.

This research does not examine transnationalism, nor integration to a certain extent, as natural outcomes of globalization where everybody, not only the migrants, is becoming more transnational, which might be the case. However, what is attempted

here is to analyse how different kinds of transnational activities at different stages in people's lives emphasize their adaptation to their host countries. The research is also important in the sense that it is not only tackling the issue from a North and West perspective, but uses a comparative and very much linked context of a country of the South and the East, i.e., Turkey, with that of the West, i.e., Germany. Moreover, despite the fact that transnational networks are analyzed here within a detailed typology, the study makes the argument that transnational networks on a general level not only do not impede migrants' integration in the host country, but reinforce it.

Endnotes

- 1 The empirical research was conducted within the framework of the European Commission FP 7 Project entitled “Transnationalisation, Migration and Transformation: Multi-Level Analysis of Migrant Transnationalism”, *TRANS-NET*, at <http://www.uta.fi/projects/transnet/> [last visited 28 April 2012].
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