Ageing, identity and place: the experience of Turkish migrants in the United Kingdom

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About the Research

- Qualitative Interviews
- In London
- From Dec 2011 to Feb 2012
- 66 interviews of Turkish people aged 55 or more
  - 34 Women and 32 Men
- Conducted in Turkish
- Covered topics around migration journeys, ageing, networks, care needs, identity
Theoretical Framework

- Hierarchical networks’ mapping
- Role of different networks in relation to
  1. Migration journey and ageing
  2. Perception of care responsibility
  3. Actual role in long term care
- Barriers and challenges
  - And implications on met/unmet needs
Web of networks

- Self
- Community - Kin group
- Family & Friends
- Welfare state
- Host Country
- Country of origin

30/05/2014  Turkish Migration Conference- London
Migration journey

- Highly influenced (initiated) by self and closest networks → Family
  - ‘I had heard from my friend that the tailors earn good money in London.’ (Woman 72)

- Maintained by community
  - ‘Safety net’ of earlier migrant groups in the host country
  - ‘I began to work in a [Turkish] garment workshop. I did not have to speak English because everyone here [in the UK] spoke Turkish’
Post migration – settlement

- Continued support network
- Isolated from wider community
- Facilitating certain economic activities
- Forming further barriers within host country
  - “We lived here [UK] for a long time but we had worked entirely with Turkish people as tailors. We do not know much about the English community” (Woman, 75)
Ageing process

- ‘Silent’ ageing
- Continued reliance on a closed network
- Little awareness of ‘outside’ facilities and activities
- More influenced by country of origin (through cable TV and community associations) than by wider society of actual place of ageing
- Sudden realization of age with onset of disease or self-dictated cease of employment
Perception of care responsibilities

- The family unit is a key player
- However, most are realistic of expectations from offspring
  - Especially in relation to geographical proximity
  - They are perceived to be ‘around’ and support ‘when they can’
  - Equally – older people are expected to provide care for grandchildren
  - Clear gender differences in responsibilities and expectations
- Community (culture) associations are pivotal in receiving support and exchanging information on entitlements
The majority of older people perceived the ‘UK Government’ as main player in long term care provision

- *I am so grateful to the English government for providing me with care*

- **However, there are clear barriers**
  - *They [the Government] think that our elderly people stay with us, but this is not always possible (Turkish Care Co-ordinator)*
The ‘state’ might be responsible – yet actual experience differ

- Belonging and perceiving needs through a different lens
- Isolation at old age – feelings of exclusion and misunderstanding
  - ‘since I came to this care home (3 years ago) I have been insulted and mistreated especially by Russian and Bulgarian care workers. I don’t have any family here in London and I would really prefer Turkish workers’ (Man, 84)
Barriers to access and receiving care

- Language barriers
  - ‘We don’t know what are our benefits or rights due to language barriers’ (Woman, 74)
  - ‘I don’t know English and I can not explain my problem’ (Woman, 63)

- Cultural preferences; especially if they do not require long term care
  - I feel more comfortable, safe and secure with Turkish people (woman, 60)
Ageing journey

- Close networks play a crucial role in migrants’ journeys through ageing for a prolonged period of time
- Many older people remained living in London (original arrival point), however, offspring usually move out for economic reasons
- Continuous intergenerational exchanges
- Kinship norms and expectations remain strong – however – they do not necessarily materialize
Old age

- Ceasing economic engagement
  - Start of break down of comfort safety net
- Onset of disease
  - Sudden need to communicate with outside agencies
  - Limited language and societal understanding
- The state is perceived as ‘mysterious’ but powerful and ‘responsible’
- Cultural preferences possibly as a strategy to overcome years of cumulative social isolation
Conclusion

- The difference between ‘social location’ and wider ‘geographical location’
- Older Turkish people impacted the most with limited opportunities at younger age to gain host language skills and wider societal understanding
- Generational ‘solidarity’ is manifested through family expectations and a strong role of cultural centres
- Old age identity influenced by country of origin more than host country despite decades of residency
- Yet the welfare state is assumed ‘actual’ responsibility for care provision
- Conflicts and dilemmas
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