
The Turkish Version of the American Dream: The Representation of Social Mobility and Class in *Medcezir* (Tide)

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Résumé

Biography

Asli Tunc is a Professor and Head of the Media School at Istanbul Bilgi University, Turkey. She has a BA in communication sciences from Istanbul University and an MA in film and television studies from Anadolu University. She received her Ph.D. in mass communications at Temple University in Philadelphia in 2000. She has given lectures and seminars at universities in the USA, the UK and Greece on the freedom of expression and the media's changing role in Turkey and around the world. She is the author of numerous publications and country reports on the issues of democracy and media, the social impact of new media technologies, and media ownership structure in Turkey. Most recently, she is the co-author of a book in Turkish (*Blogdan Al Haberi, Haber Bloglari, Demokrasi ve Gazeteciliğin Geleceği Üzerine*) on the impact of political news blogs on the future of journalism.

Abstract

In the Turkish drama, *Medcezir* (Tide), Yaman, a young man from the wrong side of the tracks finds himself in a wealthy suburb of Istanbul. *Medcezir* as the loose adaptation of the American series, *The OC*, revolves around the issues of social mobility and class. Yaman with his personal struggle against his delinquent past is instantly perceived as a threat to an extravagant life style and conspicuous consumption. The overtone of the American dream where given the chance every honest and hard-working person can excel in life regardless of his start in life can also be ironically traced in this Turkish series. Social mobility in *Medcezir* is portrayed as merely leaving one class station for another, more desirable place in life. In this context, the way in which *Medcezir* presents the winners and losers in the class hierarchy, is worth investigating.

In this paper German sociologist Ulrich Beck's analysis of contemporary society where social problems formerly attributed to class inequality are now "transformed into ... personal failure" and "are perceived as social only indirectly and to a limited extent" [1][1] will be used. This creates a tendency to understand social problems in terms of personal inadequacies and failures. There are also resonances between the broader global social trends Beck identifies and the American dream.

*Intervenant

Class is not simply a socio-economic ranking based on material assets, and social mobility cannot be guaranteed by equal access to them. The representation of class in television texts creates prejudices for and against certain class cultures and shapes viewers' perceptions about communities relative to their class.

In this paper, also Bourdieu's *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* will be used to analyze Medcezir from the aspect of the term, 'symbolic capital' where it refers to one's social status and reputation. Symbolic capital plays a role in facilitating or hindering one's access to social spaces since it functions "to keep undesirable persons and things at a distance"^{[1][2]} both physically and symbolically. Since social mobility is also spatial mobility, the way setting is used in the serial will also be analyzed.

^{[1][1]} Beck, Ulrich. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. pp. 89, London: Sage, 1992.

^{[1][2]} Bourdieu, Pierre et al. *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Trans. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson. pp. 127, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999

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