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Acts of Belonging:

Perceptions of Citizenship Among Queer Turkish Women in Germany

Ilgin Yorukoglu

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York
2014

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

Acts of Belonging:

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Ilgin Yorukoglu

Advisor: Professor Lynn Chancer

This thesis examines how people who have multiple identifications develop a sense of belonging. It focuses on those with politicized, romanticized, and stigmatized identifications which are assumed to be in conflict with one another. My particular case is that of “queer” women of Turkish descent in Germany with Berlin as my main study site.

These people embody what is considered to be an oxymoron: being queer yet also Turkish, being a lesbian yet having a Muslim background, being of immigrant origin yet also German. In short, they are between all worlds and thus, seemingly, do not belong anywhere. Their ambiguous position allows my thesis to offer a critique of mainstream ideas about cohesion and social capital, noting that in this case, cohesion is not needed for my informants to develop a sense of belonging. From here, it develops the concept of what I call “acts of belonging.” This concept directs our attention away from the question of where belonging happens to the question of how: how do migrants belong to contexts, communities, societies to which the mainstream does not consider them to belong? What relieves them from the burdens their conflicting identifications might otherwise cause? Acts of belonging are the tools, the means, through which they relieve

this anxiety, even momentarily, and satisfy their individual need for belonging. Acts of belonging also points at the ways in which legal acceptance, in the form of citizenship or naturalization, differs from lived experiences of belonging. Finally, these acts reveal the ways in which people engage with diversity in various ways which are not always obvious to the reveal the ways in which people

By looking simultaneously at psycho-social and emotional factors on the one hand and sexuality on the other, my research bridges various gaps in the literatures of queer studies, migration and citizenship, and social psychology. My work presents an alternative way to look through the lens of belonging at the relationship between cohesion and conflict.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis scratches a very personal wound in the sense that these past few years meant a feeling of disorientation and anxiety. I was fortunate, however, to have those to remind me that the ground is still there, beneath my feet; and that sometimes one just needs to stop, take a breath, feel the ground, in order to get back to the journey.

I sincerely think that I would never have been able to finish my dissertation without my advisor, Lynn Chancer. She has been my own rock in this rocky path! She has not only been an inspiration, a true example of “sociological imagination”- with her thoughtful, kind and generous personality, she has also been a role model, someone whom I could only aspire to be like.

I have been so fortunate that the other two members of my committee have been Bill Kornblum and Patricia Clough- what else could I ask for? I am truly grateful to the Graduate Center of CUNY for giving me this opportunity to take classes and then work with these brilliant minds. Both Bill and Patricia have shown me “alternative” ways to be a sociologist. That there is not one way, and that one can, and must, be caring, thoughtful, and kind, while always staying critical.

I was privileged for getting to know Engin Isin, whose works on citizenship, as can be seen in the following pages, have been very influential. I have learnt much from his scholarship, but the little time spent in New York with him was an inspiration that I will never forget.

It was thanks to John Mollenkopf and his summer exchange program that I went to Berlin and was able to have introductory courses on urban and political developments of the city. John has always been very helpful throughout my fieldwork and afterwards- I am truly grateful. I am also thankful to DAAD, the German American Exchange Service, which partly financed my fieldwork in Berlin.

I would also like to thank my biological and my chosen family (they know who they are) for reminding me that we need to embrace anxiety, conflict, vulnerability, and accept that life is “more complex than that”. I am thankful to them for their love. My chosen family also includes Mati, my cat, who likes to pretend that it was I who rescued him, although we both know the truth.

Last but definitely not least, I am thankful to those beautiful people I have gotten to know while I was in Berlin, Germany. Some I interviewed, some friended me during cold Berlin days. I will be forever grateful not only for their friendship, but also for all I have learnt from them. I cherish every single moment spent with those who make their own belongings.

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Introduction

*"Depending on which part of Berlin I go to,
in one I get punched in the mouth because I'm a foreigner;
and in the other because I'm a queen" 1*

"Europe's soul is tolerance. Europe is the continent of tolerance" 2

How does a person with multiple identifications that are often politicized, romanticized and stigmatized, and which are assumed to be in conflict with one another, perceive the idea of belonging? What does belonging mean for an individual in a situation where resistance against one type of oppression such as sexism and heterosexism is transferred and transformed into essentializing statements about the characteristics of particular ethnic and national communities? Does the meaning of citizenship differ from lived experiences of belonging and, if so, in what ways?

Taking "queer" women of Turkish descent as my main focus and using Berlin as my main site of sociological study, this thesis investigates the meaning of citizenship and belonging for an individual holding multiple identifications. I suggest that in considering a multi-dimension subject, conventional understandings of terms like citizenship, migration and integration are called into question. The subjects of this study pose a challenge to traditional understandings of citizenship and belonging because of the complexity of their situations. With multiple

1 Fatma Souad, quoted in Nicholas Kulish, "Gay Muslims party in Berlin, nervously", 1/1/2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/01/world/europe/01iht-berlin.1.8969268.html> access date: October 10, 2010

2 Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, to the European Parliament in Strasbourg on Wednesday, Germany 2007- Presidency of the European Union, 17 January 2007 http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Speeches_Interviews/January/Rede_Bundeskanzlerin2.html access date: September 2, 2008

identifications that are treated by the larger society as in conflict with one another – and, for this reason, not necessarily internally ‘coherent’ – the women I study often defy stereotypes due to their overlapping and combined national, religious, sexual and legal identities. This complexity provides entrée into studying both particular case studies and developing general insights within this thesis about how coherence, belonging and the meaning of citizenship relate to each other.

Historical, Political and Theoretical Background: European Ideas of Freedom and Multi-Culturalism

In 1999 Germany, after long term reactions from the Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union parties³, the German Parliament accepted that the principle of *jus sanguinis* (citizenship by descent) would be supplemented by *jus soli* (by birthplace) in the acquisition of citizenship (Hogwood 2000; Häussermann et. al 2005; Green 2001). With this change, the legal definition of Germanness shifted from a concept connected by blood (Blutverbundenheit). However, an understanding of the fluidity and heterogeneity of the notion has not yet been acknowledged since one has to give up the citizenship of his/her parents’ native country between the ages of 18 and 23 to maintain their German nationality. One might also argue that migration law, along with other legal frameworks such as social security law and labour law, has become more important than citizenship law in determining who belongs and who does not, and hiding the discriminatory practices (Dauvergne 2007).

Indeed, the immigration law of 2005 “made it easier to expel ‘foreigners’, including those of Turkish background born and raised in Germany” (Ewing 2008: 208). With this Immigration Act, it now became possible in Germany to deport people on the authority of a panel within the

³ See Cooper (2002), Hansen and Weil (2001)

Federal Administrative Court with no further appeal – if, that is, officials had evidence to support fears that the suspects might commit a terrorist act in the future (Deggerich and Stark 2005, cited in Ewing 2008: 208). Moreover, legal reforms by themselves cannot be used as measures of belonging, recognition, and acceptance. “[T]he access to resources, privileges, and spaces/ places” (Muller 2004: 291) might appear more important in affecting the conceptualization of citizenship than the law itself. Such “invisible boundaries” shaped not only by social and human capital but also by ethnic and racial discrimination persist even in the case of legal acceptance of belonging to a state. In the French context, French citizens of Algerian ethnicity, for instance, have three times less wages than Italian immigrants who do not hold French citizenship⁴. A recent presentation of a Brussels based conference on migration and diversity within Europe suggests that

[t]he ‘others’ in Europe are no longer merely those who do not have state citizenship of one of the member states of the Union. In the new European migration context, ‘otherness’ increasingly refers to ethno-cultural minority groups, regardless of their EU citizenship status.”⁵

In the case of France, and using indicators such as access to employment, occupational status and access to jobs in civil service, Dominique Meurs , Ariane Pailhé and Patrick Simon show that French nationals with immigration background are also still severely disadvantaged in the labor market. As a matter of fact, discrimination against descendants of immigrants of sub-Saharan

4 Patrick Simon, talk given at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, November 23, 2010

5 Migration, Ethnicisation and the Challenge of Diversity: The “Others” in Europe and Beyond
Université Libre de Bruxelles, 28-29 April 2011 <http://is.ulb.ac.be/uploads/pdf/Séminaires/presentation.pdf> access date 25 January 2011

African, North African, and Turkish origin appears to be prevalent⁶. It is estimated that “while 27 percent of *beur* university graduates are unemployed in France, the overall unemployment rate for university graduates is just 5 percent” (Lalami 2009).

Returning to Germany in 2000, the same year when the new citizenship law went into effect, an explicit debate about the concept of “Germanness” was triggered in reaction to efforts by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) to introduce *Leitkultur* as a guiding principle for immigrant integration. Although the term can be translated into English in various ways depending on one’s political perspective (Ewing 2008: 212), the *leitkultur* is generally understood defining (German) culture, and it has a strong historical connection with the Nazi ideology. The leader of the CDU/CSU (the sister party of the CDU) sought to justify the use of the term by arguing that “the liberal German *leitkultur*” signifies the values and norms of the German Constitution which keep the society together and which one is required to embrace in order to be accepted as “German”. In other words, the idea of culture appears yet again at the foreground in deciding who does and who does not belong.

Among values claimed to belong to the “European” value system in general, “freedom” appears to take a special place; this often takes the form of discussing lack of “freedom of expression” in “Muslim societies,” and unevenly focuses on certain populations as against others. For example, threats made by Muslim zealots against literary writers⁷) have often

6 Talk at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, 23 November 2010. Also see Meurs, Dominique , Ariane Pailhé and Patrick Simon (2006) “The Persistence of Intergenerational Inequalities Linked to Immigration: Labor Market Outcomes for Immigrants and their Descendants in France” , Population (English Edition, 2002-) Vol. 61, No. 5/6, pp. 645-682

7 See Talal Asad’s “Europe Against Islam: Islam in Europe” for a critique of Western liberal discourse which privileges “the fate of literary authors as against other victims of cruelty”. in *The Muslim World*”, Vol. LXXXVII, No. 2 April, 1997

appeared in Western media and public discourse even before September 11. In an academic context, historical sociologist Orlando Patterson (1991) has called attention to the connection between “the history of freedom and its handmaiden, slavery”. Patterson’s brilliant work on the “Western” history of the concept of freedom reveals how “the fact that people considered freedom the most important thing in life is in no way inconsistent with a tolerance for the institution of slavery ” (321). First of all, a connection with slavery can be seen as part of “the Christian self” who surrenders to God “as a perfect slave does to his [sic.] master: in our surrender we are relieved of our slave-like spiritual impotence.” (303). As Patterson suggests, important to note is that this religious attitude -- attitudes of all religions of salvation -- makes “not equality but freedom its central dogma” (Ibid.).

One is reminded here of scholarship on “governance through freedom”. As Nikolas Rose argues, “freedom” as we have come to understand it in modern liberal societies does not stand in opposition to “the government”; on the contrary, the idea of freedom is a key invention and one of the most significant resources of modern liberal government, deriving from “more or less rationalized techniques of relation to ourselves” (Rose 1999: 54). Rose claims that “in our own times ideas of freedom have come to define the ground of our ethical systems, our practice of politics and our habits of criticism” (Ibid.: 10).

But what is wrong about taking freedom as a ground for anything? Doing so would not be a problem if the idea of freedom was not abused for justification of strategic deployment of coercion of certain populations. In other words, a narrative of freedom coexists with discourses of suspicion, risk, threat and fear, characterizing modern societies under specific socio-economic conditions that exacerbate “estrangement, difference, discontinuity, and distance” (Chow 2006:

7). Thus freedom is conveniently situated against “others” who supposedly constitute a threat to the security of “our” freedom. This, in turn, helps to legitimize a hierarchy of types of freedom. As Tony Blair, then British prime minister, said in 2005, opponents of the government’s criminal justice measures at that time failed “to understand that the most important freedom is that of harm from others” and that the British government’s argument is “an argument about the types of liberties that need to be protected.”⁸ In other words, to defend freedom necessitates preventing “the harmful other”.

Germany, France, Britain and in the Netherlands, too, a related historical, political and theoretical backdrop -- especially with regard to ideas about dominant European values including concepts of ‘freedom’ -- has prevailed. For example Geert Wilders, the Dutch politician who leads the “Freedom Party” (PVV, literally “Party for Freedom”) and who caused a stir when he called for an annual €1,000 “head rag tax” on women who wear headscarves, explicitly stated when interviewed in November 2010 that “our [European] culture is better than Islamic culture”. As he continued, “Islam threatens our freedom” yet neither he nor those who supported Wilders were racists; they “have no problems with other skin colors, nor with Muslims...My problem is with the growing influence of an ideology that will cost us our freedom”. But why does Islam threaten freedoms enjoyed in the West which “people have given their lives for”? By way of reply, Wilders coined a question/accusation that is now often repeated: “Do you know of a country in the Middle East where Islamic culture prevails and ...[w]here non-believers, women

⁸ “Our citizens should not live in fear”, The Observer, Sunday 11 December 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2005/dec/11/labour.prisonsandprobation> access date: 10 January 2011

and gays, can do what they want?”⁹ Wilders’ statement confuses the Middle East with Islam, and ignores the fact that followers of Islam are a diverse group of people from many ethnicities and countries – all in the name of “freedom.”

It is not only Wilders’ party, though, that explicitly circulates the word “freedom” via its name and ideology. A group that Wilders established in July 2010 was named “the International Freedom Alliance,” and has sought to both “defend freedom” and “stop Islam.”¹⁰ And evidencing the interrelatedness of European politics, in October 2010, Wilders was again invited to Berlin to meet there with a newly found German political party -- Die Freiheit [Freedom] -- led by former Christian Democratic Union politician René Stadtkewitz. Only one month before Wilders’ appearance in Berlin Thilo Sarrazin, a member of the Social Democratic Party and then the German Central Bank board member, published a book named *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (“Germany does away with itself”). Sarrazin’s widely publicized remarks were compared with those of Wilders as the former claimed that responsibility for failures of German education, migration and welfare policies “lies not with ethnic descent but with those descended from the Islamic culture¹¹”. In his book, Sarrazin asserts that “Germany's economic strength as well as intelligence were undermined by immigration from Muslim countries and the higher fertility rate of such immigrants”¹². According to Sarrazin, Muslim immigrants were not only unwilling but

9 Spiegel Interview with Geert Wilders, “Merkel is Afraid”

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,727978,00.html> Access date 10 November 2010

10 <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,719842-3,00.html> access date 1 November 2010

11 “German Wilders' sees Islam submerging his country” Radio Netherlands Worldwide, 31 August 2010, <http://www.rnw.nl/english/article/german-wilders-sees-islam-submerging-his-country>, access date 10 January 2011

12 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/sep/02/germany-central-bank-decide-sack-thilo-sarrazin> access date 20 October 2010

unsuitable to integrate¹³. Soon thereafter, his book and remarks triggered a heated debate on integration, provoking other German leading political figures to enter the fray¹⁴. For instance, in response, Horst Seehofer, a leading German politician as well as the premier of Bavaria and a member of the Christian Social Union (part of Merkel's ruling coalition), stressed “the urgent need to stem the flow of immigrants from Turkish and Arab lands, and focus instead on cultures more similar to Germany’s”¹⁵. Indeed, shortly after Seehofer’s remarks, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared that “[t]his [multicultural] approach has failed, utterly failed”¹⁶.

However, Merkel was not the first to declare the end of multiculturalism. In 2005 the President of the CDU Fraction in the Berlin Parliament, Nicolas Zimmer, had likewise argued that “[t]he concept of so-called multicultural society failed. It supported the establishment of parallel societies and the segmentation of cultural groups with their value systems.”¹⁷. Zimmer then pushed the corollary argument that the problem of both societies, and problems of violence

13 Sarrazin also made a careless reference in an interview to “a certain gene” shared by the Jews, for which he later apologized.

14 I should include also that after this controversy and the heated debate, Thilo Sarrazin agreed in September 2010 to quit as a Bundesbank (the Central Bank) board member after the bank said it would ask German President Christian Wulff to dismiss him, and, according to Die Spiegel, a well known newspaper in Germany, in return for an increase in his pension by €1,000 (\$1,280) a month. See <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,717251,00.html> access date 2 January, 2011 When I write this introduction, it is still not clear whether SPD will expel Sarrazin. See <http://www.ip-global.org/2010/12/20/no-escape-from-integration/>, access date 2 January 2011

15 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/11/germany-immigration-horst-seehofer> access date 20 October 2010

16 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/17/angela-merkel-german-multiculturalism-failed> access date 20 October 2010

17 (CDU Fraktion, Berlin, 14 September 2005 cited in Korteweg and Yurdakul 2010: 16-17)

(such as so-called “honour killings”¹⁸) would be solved if only immigrants adopted German values. As Zimmer put it, “Whoever wants to live in Germany must respect our constitution, and accept and tolerate the liberal values of our society. Those who cannot do this, must go back. We will never tolerate an import of religious fanaticism.”

Multiple Belongings Including Sexualities

Thus, one could argue that current mainstream discourse on integration and multiculturalism in Germany operates on an imagined “clash of civilizations”. This is so because the so-called ‘Islamic culture’ is indeed imagined -- particularly in the aftermath of 9/11 -- as redolent of violence, intolerance and also homophobia¹⁹ -- whereas, by contrast, European culture appears as tolerant, gay and women friendly, linked with a ‘European tradition’ assumed to cherish diversity and freedom of expression as its core values. Specifically, sexuality has come to be mentioned very frequently in Germany within discussions of integration. It has been suggested by some politicians and journalists that many Muslims do not respect sexual diversity: they do not intend to integrate into German society; they do not and cannot belong to ‘us’.

On this basis, claims that might otherwise have been considered racist have been made against certain populations in Europe resulting in a backlash in migration and citizenship policies, and in effect legitimizing discrimination, surveillance and criminalization of minority

18 “Honor killing’ is a term used for the murder of [usually-I.Y.] a woman suspected of having transgressed the limits on sexual behaviour as imposed by tradition, specifically engaging in a pre-marital relationship with a man or suspected extra-marital affairs” Ilkcaracan, Pinar (1998) “Exploring the Context of Women’s Sexuality in Eastern Turkey”, *Women for Women’s Human Rights Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 6, No. 12, Sexuality, 66-75, 71) In newspaper reportings and public debates, honor-related crimes in immigrant communities have been jumping off points for descriptions of Muslim communities as backward, patriarchal, and as having values which are incompatible with the fundamental values of liberal societies.

19 See Haritaworn (2008) for a closer analysis of the coincidence between the disenfranchisement of racialized populations in the “war on terror” and the enfranchisement of a new sexual citizen. One should also note the almost complete absence of transgender identity in mainstream discussions.

groups in a number of countries. This is how a major gay and lesbian organization in Germany, having identified integration as a sexual problem, could promote the “Muslim test” (Haritaworn and Petzen, forthcoming). This is a controversial list of thirty questions implemented in 2006 by the government of Baden-Württemberg as “discussion guidelines” to be used in questioning applicants for German citizenship (Ewing 2008:181). As Chapter II explains, this “test” singles out applicants whose background is from a “Muslim” country in order to measure their views not only on terrorism and democracy but on women’s and gay rights. Moreover, it is through this stigmatization of “Muslim” communities that increased surveillance and policing in specific neighborhoods -- particularly gentrifying neighborhoods in Berlin where people of color and queers share space -- has lately been justified. Indeed, as Jin Haritaworn notes, there is an irony in the fact that “[t]he move of LGBT activism into the penal state enables the police to reinvent themselves as protector, patron and sponsor of minorities at the very moment that their targeting of racialized populations and areas is assuming new levels” (Haritaworn 2011).

It seems perfectly reasonable to argue here not only that all of us have multiple belongings but also that the conflictual situations in the everyday life depend on multiple belongings and identifications. Nothing about this is new or special to cases later on presented here. Rather, as Nira Yuval-Davis suggests, citizenship needs to be seen as an embodied category “involving concrete people who are differentially situated in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, state in the life cycle etc.” These situations vary not only among people, creating differences on various levels between individuals, but within a single individual who embodies various orientations within herself with “rights and obligations in local, ethnic, religious, national, regional, transnational and international political communities” (Yuval-Davis 2008: 106

also see Yuval-Davis 1997). If this is valid for all of us, i.e. if we all have more than one identification and are “multi-layered citizens” with rights and obligations in various communities, what is special about the group I explore in this study?

First of all, the lives of migrants, refugees and people of ethnic minority origins are probably affected by the ‘given’ of multiplicity of citizenships even more than are people who belong to hegemonic majorities²⁰. This is mostly because cultural discourse in many contemporary European societies, as in the US, often tend to become “partialized” (to use Lynn Chancer’s vocabulary). Another way of putting this is that multiple identifications tend to become extremely politicized and even abused especially within mainstream media when ethnic, racial, religion and/or sexual differences are involved. Chancer defines partialization as a process through which

participants start to think and feel about an incident in ways ‘partial’ to the side with which they are inclined to sympathize. But precisely because partializing tends to classify and assimilate most commentary to one or the other side, alternative perspectives may go unnoticed...Thus partialization tends to produce oversimplified frameworks for debating complex issues (Chancer :13).

Take, for example, public debates and media representations of so-called “honor-related crimes” in Germany. As Anna C. Korteweg and Gokce Yurdakul have shown in their recent work comparing different policy approaches to the issue in Netherlands, Britain, Canada and Germany, specifically German discourse on this subject has tended to exacerbate the stigmatization of entire immigrant community by linking honor crimes to Islam and/or the “backwardness” of

²⁰ What is “hegemonic” does not have to be the actual individuals, nor the actual groups of individuals, but the discourse and the categories which claim to represent these individuals as populations.

particular religious communities. The relation is built on differences and conflict between basic values and norms, i.e., between strictly defined cultural differences.

Within this “partialized” framework, two important and very real social problems are generally situated almost in opposition to each other: gender-related violence on the one hand, and ethnicity (and religion) based discrimination on the other. Quite often it becomes almost impossible for the parties not to “take a side” (Chancer 2005) in discussions: one often ends up arguing for “the oppressed migrant woman” or, on the opposite side, for embracing cultural diversity and multiculturalism. More nuanced arguments rarely appear within the mainstream media nor surface within public debates. In the case at hand, and as later chapters elucidate, such partialization has created two-sided modes of argumentation that end up underemphasizing if not completely ignoring specific social and historical conditions in Germany that shape domestic violence in stigmatized communities. Moreover, the deep divide between political parties as well as among participants in debates about the issue bequeath a fractured political process with mobilizations around different approaches to integration and further policies that generally restrict immigration instead of necessarily providing protection to the victims (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2010: 18).

The main aim of this work is to forward a discussion on several taken-for-granted assumptions, definitions and interpretations within citizenship studies, urban studies as well as migration studies. These contributions will be explained in greater detail in the following chapters. Suffice it to say in advance, though, that a goal here is to show the actual complexity of concepts like “(social) cohesion” and “(social) conflict” -- ideas that, in social practice, have often been over-simplified and/or partialized. As the following chapters show, failure to achieve

a more radically egalitarian understanding of citizenship is partly due to an overemphasis on, and an abuse of, the idea of “social cohesion” -- an idea that is itself strongly related to the politics of belonging. Situating these discussions in the wider context of “belonging” will be helpful for ongoing debates over citizenship as follows: I stress that the relationship between citizenship and belonging, and that between belonging and cohesion, is not direct and simple but itself very complex. Moreover, using “belonging” as an idea through which other concepts can be discussed can illuminate both the intimately ‘micro’ and globally ‘macro’ dimensions of the “immigrant crisis”. In turn, this approach may assist in pointing beyond moralistic narratives that often surface in and around mainstream understandings of the term “coherence”; these narratives have effects, and can themselves go on to valorize social policies and inequalities which materialize in everyday life.

In addition to conceptual innovations this thesis suggests to the idea of ‘belonging,’ I also define and explain a related idea in this thesis’ ensuing Chapter II: what I call “acts of belonging.” This concept is closely related to “coherence” in the sense that “acts of belonging” reveal what has been concealed behind the celebration or romanticization of the idea of coherence: how individuals can and actually do live in a world of complexity, replete with multiple identifications and conflicting worlds of meaning. I argue that individuals manage to survive within this complexity through what I call “acts of belonging.” This refers to situations in which we may find incoherence along with claims to belong, and to moments when regardless of their status, subjects claim their belonging to a particular entity through “acts of belonging” later illustrated through specific case studies.

In culling the term acts of belonging, I benefit here from the work of Engin Isin and Greg Nielsen who define “acts of citizenship” which transform ways of being political by creating new sites and scales of struggle. As Isin suggests, “the question of how subjects become claimants under surprising conditions or within a relatively short period of time has remained unexplored” (Isin and Nielsen 2008: 17). What I call “acts of belonging” though, and as different from “acts of citizenship,” refers to acts not only directed toward the state or state institutions but formed through and directed toward more ‘intimate’ relations. Such “acts of belonging” may not even claim to be “political” but, rather, reference times when an individual “acts” on the need to affirm strongly and emotionally how in spite of the lack of “coherence” between her multiple identifications she claims to “belong” to an entity in question. Through these acts, individuals can momentarily feel relieved from existential tensions and anxieties derived from their multiple and conflicting identifications.

Conceptual Notes about the Terms “Queer,” “Turkish” and “Migrant Background”

To speak of citizenship, integration, sexuality, belonging, Germanness, Turkishness and so on, already presumes not only that speakers and listeners know what these concepts mean but that there is some kind of consensus on the meaning of these terms. Indeed it often appears as if what is examined by studies is usually only two-dimensional connections between, let’s say, Turkishness and sexuality, or sexuality and integration, within something called “Germanness”. However the fieldwork described here -- i.e., participant observation and interviews I have conducted in Berlin around which this thesis was built -- has repeatedly reminded me of the fact that this supposed consensus might not exist. Interviews and meetings I attended, in addition to discussions and casual parties, provided clear warnings to me against imposing on people a

language system built around binary distinctions (homo/heterosexuality) and against presuming that particular concepts (as those in this title's study) are consistently or 'coherently' held.

Rather, I conceive concepts examined here as products of particular histories. For example "queerness" might not even have been produced by certain epistemologies whereas other cases reveal definitions of the term different than that generally used in the US. Throughout my stay in Berlin, I was reminded of the limitations of the very title of my project which expresses the particularities of the subject through 'the West' as though a measure of universality (Asad 1993: 36). Writing at the juncture of multiple disciplines certainly does not make it easier to use terms that more often than not are used and studied in irreconcilable ways within diverse disciplines. For instance, while the very term "queer" is often used as a kind of a shorthand for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered individuals (or, indeed, populations) in history, political science or sociology, "[f]or scholars influenced by queer theory, "queer" names or describes identities and practices that foreground the instability inherent in the supposedly stable relationship between anatomical sex, gender, and sexual desire."(Corber and Valocchi 2003:1) ²¹ Indeed, even though the political and academic appropriation of the term queer over the last several years has marked a shift to more fluid notions of sexual identity, it is still usual in mainstream discussions to use the term "queer" to refer simply to "sexual minorities".

Here then, by way of introduction, is my explication of how I am using terms important to this thesis:

²¹ As authors recognize, of course, much work dealing with gender and sexuality in mentioned disciplines "routinely draws on queer theoretical insights".

“Queer”

While in my study "queer" certainly takes on a similar meaning insofar as referring to those who practice non-normative sexualities (Jagose 1996, cited in Ahmed 2006: 161), it also refers to temporality, “otherness”, “out of liness” (Ahmed Ibid.), and the interrelation between categories situated as opposed to each other dichotomously. Therefore, let me clarify what I understand from, and what I would like to accomplish by adopting, this term.

i. “Queer”, first and foremost, and as mentioned above, is an opposition to heteronormativity.

This non-heterosexual space does not embrace only historically specific identities such as “lesbian”, “gay” or “bisexual” but it is also open to a wide range of belongings and identifications. In other words, “queer”, in my understanding, is against taking both heterosexuality as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities for granted.

ii. The term “queer” is about questioning not only the ways in which various sexual orientations are situated towards each other, but also the very notion of orientation itself. Why does orientation matter, especially in naming differences? What does it mean to be oriented towards something? (See Ahmed Ibid.) What is more, the key here is to constantly remember the relationship between different concepts as well as different fields. A queer theory influenced (for instance) by poststructuralist theory or critical race theory reveals more easily the violence and discrimination constantly recreated through productions and abuse of knowledge, (re)producing various categories of “others” in relation to assumed sexual, racial, ethnic, and class differences.

iii. The term “queer” is also used here as an adjective to define the subjects of this study. This is because most, if not all, of my respondents self-identified themselves as “queer” during

interview sessions. For many, “queer” was a way to claim belonging to (or *orientation toward*, to follow Sarah Ahmed’s usage) something that is not strictly defined and specific. In some cases, it was a way to claim belonging to more than one entity at the same time. In some situations, however, I remember having felt that to self-identify as queer pointed at something further than providing me, the interviewer, with a “transgressive” or “blurry” reply about their orientation. More than rejecting to respond, it was almost about refusing the question itself.

iv. All these being said, I would like to underline the importance of resisting any presumption that the categories lesbian and queer are mutually exclusive. They are not necessarily the undoing of each other, and individuals might identify with multiple categories simultaneously, or emphasize one category depending on the context.

However, there were cases in which my respondents openly identified themselves with “lesbianism” instead of the term “queer”. One activist woman, for example, talked about her identifying with “lesbian” as she thought the latter had more of a political meaning. For her, identifying with lesbianism was part of her activism as this act of identifying with lesbianism brought various reactions from the public which would not occur with the term “queer”.

Although this is a study focusing on “women”, among my respondents there also was a transgender man who openly separated themselves from the term “queer”. When writing about case studies, I have paid attention to make sure that my wording goes along with the respondents’ own use of terminologies, pronouns, and definitions. When necessary, I have made it clear as to the respondents’ identifications. Furthermore, Turkish is a gender neutral language: there is no she/he differentiation. However, transcribing and analyzing the interviews, I have used pronouns in accordance with the respondents’ preference. This is another example of the importance of

participant observation along with interviews: during the interviews there was no need for pronouns. Over time, though, I have developed knowledge of pronouns they use for themselves (hence the use of the pronoun “they” for the mentioned case).

“Migrant Background”

When do migrants and “those with migrant background” stop being migrants? Do we, as scholars, not contribute to the reproduction of arbitrary or careless (if not ignorant) categorizations of people?

Christopher Caldwell, a regular contributor to the Financial Times, stresses in his work on Muslims in Europe that he will use the term “native” for those of European blood and “immigrant” to refer to those who are from outside Europe (even when they have been citizens of European countries for two or three generations) (Lalami 2009). I gave much consideration to the question of how to employ language in such a way that it does not reiterate what some of my respondents complained about: namely that whatever they do, and regardless how they identify themselves, they are always categorized as “die Frau mit türkischem Migrationshintergrund” [the woman with Turkish [migration] background.” As exclusion and inclusion are not only imposed but also perceived, the following chapters show that sometimes those with German citizenship may still perceive themselves as migrants. Or they may turn more toward subnational and transnational categories such as belonging to Berlin (as in being a Berliner instead of claiming “Germanness” and European citizenship).

It is difficult for a researcher to escape terminologies and generalizations since the assumption of the relevance of a category like 'being Turkish' (for example) is what practically

guides our choice of interview partners, of events we go to, and so on. It was again a respondent, Didem, who unknowingly helped me with my decision to use the term “migration background” in this work. One day, we were at the non-profit organization she was working for and she was telling me about the importance of the language we use in everyday life. Realizing she was referring to the Turkish community as “we” and “us,” I asked her if it was at all possible to talk without making any generalizations. Casually, she pointed to two significant lessons: at least we have to try, she suggested, and when we cannot find another way, at least we will be aware of what we are doing.

In this thesis, I have tried to limit assumptions, generalizations and attributions (for example, of persons to a certain background). But by being aware of and acknowledging the limits to the language I share with the academic literature, and by being cognizant of the time and culture I breathe, I hope to have also limited my own possible contribution to the reification of individuals as whole separate units of populations.

“Turkishness and “Turkiveli”

Throughout this study, I use the word “Turkiyeli” from time to time. This is a Turkish word meaning “a person from Turkey” rather than “Turk”. My reason for this usage is two-fold. First, there are many ethnic groups both in Turkey and within the “Turkish” community in Berlin. These group members do not always identify with the word “Turk” which, in Turkish, can have

more of an ethnic meaning to it²². Secondly, some Turks have geographical backgrounds that do not include Turkey. For instance, one of my respondents is a Bulgarian Turk. Although she did stay in Turkey for a while before migrating to Germany, I had to differentiate her situation from that of other respondents. Therefore, although the title of the study does not make this difference apparent, I tried to switch between terminologies wherever I can so as to be clear and to be attentive to such nuances.

Methodology

It is essential to underscore here that rather than beginning with a hypothesis, I started this study data collection. The methods I employed, detailed below, were very central to this study. As the theoretical discussion of coherence which is at the heart of Chapter II was shaped, I can easily say that it is thanks to my respondents that I was able to realize that ‘one has to belong...*somehow*’. Thus was formed my ideas about ‘acts of belonging’. From the data collected, I came to realize similarities and differences that led to further insights about how types of acts could be categorized.

My main method of study was participant observation and interviews. I am interested both in laws and policies which define citizenship and in belonging per se; just as importantly, I have been committed to exploring how human beings who rely on and are affected by citizenship laws and policies interpret and (re)conceptualize these definitions. I have used

²² Due to this ethnicity connotation, in Cypriot Turkish language, for example, everyone who resides in Turkey is called “Türkiyeli” whereas any ethnic Turk, regardless of their residence is “Türk”. This nuance disappears in English language. It might also be important to note the recent heated discussions in Turkey around this difference between the use of two terms. One side arguing for the official employment of Türkiyeli, so that other ethnic groups would not be isolated from the definition of who the country belongs to. The other side, on the other hand, claims that the official republican definition of Turk (as was employed by the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Kemal Ataturk) does not refer to ethnicity and therefore does not in itself contribute to discrimination based on ethnicity.

qualitative methods aimed at exploring both dimensions through a set of open ended questions and a dynamic model that allows data collection and analysis to occur in simultaneous stages (Oxford 2007). Two types of qualitative methods were employed together, namely, participant observation and in-depth interviews not only with those who self-identify themselves as belonging to the *Türkiyeli* LGBTQ community, but also with two women who have been actively engaged in the Turkish community politically (either as the manager of a leading women's education organization or as an activist figure) to develop a sense of the socio-political context within which this community lives.

The extended period of time required by a participant observation approach have facilitated obtaining more detailed information about the subjects of this study. Individuals express themselves even with their supposedly insignificant behaviors, when silence can be as revealing as a vocal response. Noticing these nonverbal expressions of feelings, checking definitions of terms that participants used and claims that they made in interviews were only possible over an extended period of time. On the other hand other methods like survey analysis would have been limited, especially when used alone, for understanding variations between behaviors and accounts. I hope that the methodology of this study has best managed to explore complex conflicts and changes given the multi-dimensional subject matter at hand.

I also used the 'problem-centered interview' (Witzel 2000) approach that suggests arranging questions around a main theme, namely, citizenship and belonging, without necessarily mentioning the terms themselves. This protected the interview process from an overload of information and facilitated focusing on the importance and the role of the German state while also exploring the meaning of Turkish identities in my interviewees' everyday lives. This

method also helped with exploring how people define the very notion of citizenship. Can we take it as a symbolic instrument to appropriate the abstract figure of Germanness and the German state? And do these ('Germanness' and the German state) have different connotations? How do these terms relate to questions of sexual orientation and identification?

Sociologists often violate the primary narratives they record. Jean Roughgarden mentions a researcher who, though a respondent repeatedly said she was "born that way", wrote that "[t]his is... contrary to my constructivist approach." In my study, though, narratives are a central analytic starting point. As already mentioned, I strove to be extremely careful to respect respondents' narratives, and rarely did I face a situation where my ideology and reading of sexuality, citizenship and belonging clashed with my respondents' narratives. This being said, my aim in this study was less to question experiences than to reveal how experiences were being remembered and narrated. Besides silence as a type of non-verbal response, exaggeration, aggressive or defensive tone, or inaccurate statement, can also be taken as meaningful ways of communication. We must pay attention to where an individual fabricates what kind of information or position, and in what ways.

Indeed, in some cases, participant observation has been helpful to me in the sense of witnessing situations of contrasting narratives. For instance one of my interviewees, after having suggested repeatedly that "there is no racism in Germany" and having criticized members of the Turkish community for not integrating into German society, at another point expressed her desire to move to New York. She wanted to move to New York because admittedly, in Germany, she would be treated as and called an immigrant whatever else she achieved and however "German" she felt and lived her life. Thus both participant observation and problem-centered interviews

helped me listen to my respondents while being able to intuit what was not always being put into words.

Questions of Access

In recent literature, immigrant associations have tended to be neglected or studied only in the form of religious (and, in the German case, mostly Islamic) associations (Schiffauer 1997, Jonker 2000)²³. Moreover, attention has been limited largely to questions of minority representation in local politics and decision making (Rex and Samad 1996). None of the extant studies have paid serious attention to people's claims about sexualities as part of their identification processes in a 'host' society. Over the last years, however, a number of organizations for gays and lesbians of Turkish origin have sprung up within the Berlin gay community to assist queer Turkish migrants to discover the self-confidence and sense of belonging needed to embrace their sexuality. Group participants were chosen through one of these organizations: GLADT (Gays and Lesbians of Turkish Backgrounds), founded in 1997 as a subsection of, secondly, LSVD (The Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany), which later broke away in order to become more independent in representing the interests of migrants. In time, through a "snowball" technique, I interviewed others who were within the network and yet not necessarily actively involved with the organization's activities.

I interviewed 19 queer women of Turkish background²⁴. I also interviewed one transgender of Kurdish origin and two queer women of non-Turkish origin (one American and

23 Some studies have underlined "consultative bodies" as links with the local governments (Miller 1989); some focus on transnational community formations that are able to negotiate rights in the name of a national group (Smith 2006; Yurdakul 2006).

24 This number includes one woman of Turkish ethnic background who is not Türkiyeli.

the other one Slovenian). The Kurdish transgender, as someone experiencing reactions to his “non-white, male-looking body,” presented a window to realize gender and ethnicity related differences not only within the larger society but also within the *Türkiyeli* LGBTQ community. The American respondent made it easier for me to grasp institutional discriminations from the perspective of a “western” migrant. The interview with the Slovenian respondent was also informative for similar reasons, i.e., this facilitated exploring similarities as well as differences.

Interviewees came from varied socio-economic backgrounds, and lived in different parts of Berlin. Some are first generation migrants, having gone to Germany to study and not returning since; others belong to second or third generation migrants. I have interviewed those who have experienced internal migration, i.e., having been born and raised in another state in Germany and then moving to Berlin years later.

I attended panels and talks where community members got together with non-immigrant and non-Turkish immigrant gay communities. These allowed me not only to see the level and quality of encounters between people of these different backgrounds but also to analyze the relationship between the structure of these organizations and the (class, economic, and gendered) statuses of their members. I come from a Muslim family of Turkish origin whose native language is Turkish. I benefited from these factors during the interviews and gatherings. I expect they also enhanced the willingness of my respondents to participate more openly. As a matter of fact, one respondent openly said “I would not let you interview me if you yourself were not a person of color.” Moreover, my background enabled me to interpret their expressions and other “cultural codes” being used.

This said, I accepted as data not only interviews and observations but everything that “got into my way.” I took field notes which came from conversations with friends, took walks in the city, looked at television shows and magazine covers, and attended interviews as well as lectures. Interviews themselves had multiple parts: the first part focused on a respondent’s background including childhood, migration history and family. The second part covered sexuality, both in terms of its significance for relationship with families and outside communities and within everyday life. The last part involved openly political matters such as voting and state institutions, and how these were experienced.

Finally, all respondents were asked to “map out” Berlin, the city they live in, in a way to show what and where mattered to them. I did not direct the respondent as to what could be included in their map. I simply asked to draw a map of Berlin in a way to show what this city meant to them. The assumption was that the response would have to do with sensory and emotional connections to place and perhaps the people in that place. This assumption partly came out to be verified but respondents’ future plans *in* that city (Berlin) appeared more often on their map. An art project, for instance, could be drawn on the map as if it was a place; a plan for the near future, or an activity they regularly do. This was quite unexpected as it is not quite common to imagine maps in this way! However, it was yet another factor which proved the importance of “acts” for senses of belonging.

All interviews were fully transcribed (in Turkish) myself. Quotations have been translated into English also myself after completion of the data analysis. Note that throughout the text, all names of respondents have been changed.

Structure of Dissertation

In the following chapter, I suggest that a particular understanding of ‘cohesion’ dominates social and political discourse. I argue that social cohesion, as understood today, does not and cannot exist; that is to say, “we have never been coherent”. What is more, the constant emphasis on social cohesion in citizenship and immigration discussions is leading us a wrong direction especially because “cohesion” is not necessary for a feeling of belonging in the first place. I then summarize critical perspectives which not only remind us that politics inevitably involves conflict but also reveal “the enemy within” -- that is, conflicts, pluralities, and, simply, incoherences “within” groups that are presumed to be coherent. Finally, I suggest that these more critical theories create opportunities for questioning the romanticization of the idea of cohesion. However, unless we look at everyday life and how individuals indeed experience and deal with incoherences, the literature will not be refined so as to question whether coherence is needed for feelings of belonging at all.

Chapter III begins with a detailed analysis of the social and cultural meanings of home and belonging, as well as a review academic scholarship about the need for belonging. Some define this need to belong as universal and related to the ontological anxiety derived from the individual’s “failure” in front of inescapable realities of our existence in this world like death. Other scholars prefer to emphasize the influence of (post)modern ways of living that exacerbate “estrangement, difference, discontinuity, and distance”(Chow: 7). I embrace both of these sets of theories about “belonging” which are only crudely categorized here. I also suggest that individuals use “acts of belonging” as a tool to live through these “anxieties”. Finally, Chapter

III provides a definition of this concept, along with a classification of “types” of acts of belonging.

These two chapters are very much related to each other. Even though this study aims to call attention to other ways of looking at “cohesion,” and to suggest that the notion of coherence is theoretically problematic, I do not wish -- on the other hand -- to romanticize conflict, incoherence, ambiguity, or any other term one might substitute for the idea of coherence. Conflict itself could very well come in destructive forms. Rather, to render more complex how concepts like multiculturalism, immigration, citizenship, and belonging are discussed, we should be able to pay attention to those “acts” of everyday life that actually reveal both this complexity and the very possibility of embracing and accepting our conflictual situations. This happens when, if only momentarily, an individual is relieved from the burden this conflict might otherwise cause. It is in the very spaces and places where people live that they make sense of their complex universes.

To conclude that we are all in need of belonging, and that we are all in conflict even within ourselves, should also not prevent realization that socio-political and economic processes affect some bodies more than others. Case studies in Chapters IV, V, and VI show in greater detail the need to look at citizenship in relation to the idea of belonging by drawing attention to the distance between the legal-normative level and conditions ‘on the ground’. Chapter IV is based on an interview with Fahriye, a Bulgarian- Turkish woman in her early 30s. As a Bulgarian Turk claiming to have been discriminated against by “Turkish Turks more than white Germans,” Fahriye’s case helps us to look at ethnicity in a more nuanced way. Chapter V is based on Fatma. Fatma comes from a religious Muslim family and studied at religious schools before migrating to

Berlin with her then-husband. She has had an impressive life story which calls into question taken-for-granted ideas about the relation between religion, gender, and sexuality. Finally, Chapter VI focuses on two people, one a “native informer” and well-known figure in debates surrounding Islam and sexuality, and the other a long-time activist whose aggressive and determined tone may cover disappointment likely to be experienced amidst inconsistencies and complexities of actually existing communities.

These case studies show in different ways the similar themes of this dissertation: the incoherence of “imagined communities,” the existence and persistence of acts of belonging, and the complexity of “the self” with multiple psycho-social dimensions. Also case studies will elaborate in detail what I am only briefly suggesting here, namely, how acts of belonging may aim to reduce anxieties people are experiencing. At the same time, these cases differ with regard to these acts of belonging and the means being pursued. The psycho-social aim, on the other hand, is two-fold as Table 1 below briefly summarizes: one aim is the manifest aim people use as their justification; the other is “latent” in the sense of what people hope will result from the act of belonging. These acts of belonging, means and psychosocial aims will be explained in detail within each of this dissertation’s case studies.

Table 1. Case study chapters

Case study	The act of belonging	Means	Psycho-social Aim
1 (Chapter IV)	Getting legal papers	Obtain legality	Manifest: Obtain legality Latent: avoid ethnic stigma and gain trust
2 (Chapter V)	Taking off (and on again) the headscarf	Obtain secular acceptance	Manifest: Avoid religious stigma Latent: Gain existential freedom
3 (Chapter VI)	Distancing oneself	Obtain new residence	Manifest: eschewing structural hardship Latent: avoid social incoherence and disappointment; re-gain fantasy of coherence

Chapter IV focuses on getting legal papers as an act of belonging. The Bulgarian-Turkish subject aims to reduce the anxiety which is exacerbated by ethnic stigma and the need for trust. Through obtaining legality, she satisfies this “latent” aim.

Chapter V is the case of Fatma, of a religious background, who decides to take off her headscarf after a life-threatening accident. Through obtaining secular acceptance, she gains existential freedom.

Chapter VI includes two individuals yet one act of belonging. They (aim to) distance themselves from the community they claim belonging to by obtaining new residence. This *act* will help avoid conflict with and disappointment from the said community and therefore the fantasy of coherence will be maintained.

Chapter II

Cohesion: critique of a concept which has never been

In 1996, the Canadian federal government set up a “Social Cohesion Research Network” that has since then become one of the most active cohesion research groups in the world (Stanley 2003). The Council of Europe and the European Union called for more attention to the issue in setting public policy. In fact, EU Cohesion Funds are now now one of the major items featured in the Union annual budget (Jeannotte, 2000 cited in Chan et. al. 2006: 1). At another level, the idea of social cohesion is also used by international organizations like the OECD and the World Bank, both of which have recently come to realize the importance of socio-cultural factors in economic development and growth (Ritzen et al., 2000 cited in Chan et. al. Ibid.)²⁵. What is more, “social cohesion” is used for political benefits in a hypocritical manner: in the Spring of 2012, then-French President Nicolas Sarkozy threatened to pull France out of the European Union’s visa-free Schengen zone while at the same time calling for the signature of the austerity treaty in the name of European cohesion²⁶. In Britain, the proposal to double the time a foreign spouse must spend in the country before being granted settlement rights was backed by officials suggesting this move would help promote community cohesion²⁷.

²⁵ Another approach to the relation between economic prosperity and social cohesion is to argue that economic prosperity increases the cohesion between members of the group. The “sozialestadt” (literally, the “social city” or as it is frequently translated into English, “socially integrative city”) is a territorially oriented program which began to be implemented in the end of 1990s with the stated goal to improve the living conditions of residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods and thus to enhance the social cohesion of the city. See Mayer, Margit (2009) “Combating Social Exclusion with “activating” Policies”, The Urban Reinventors Online Journal, Issue 3/09, The Right to the City: the Entitled and the Excluded, available at <http://www.urbanreinventors.net/paper.php?issue=3&author=mayer>, access date February 2, 2011. For the focus on local economies of the program, see “The newsletter devoted to the federal-Land Socially Integrative City programme”, August 2006, available at <http://www.sozialestadt.de/veroeffentlichungen/newsletter/DF5804-info19.pdf>, access date January 30, 2011

²⁶ “Sarkozy’s threat to pull France from visa-free zone”, The New Zealand Herald, March 12, 2012

²⁷ “Foreigners who marry Britons must wait for rights as visa rules get tighter” The Daily Telegraph, July 13, 2011, pf. 13

The term social cohesion belongs to concepts which have started to enjoy popularity both in Western social sciences and amidst policy discourse in recent years. As Margit Mayer argued already in 2003, “exclusion” increasingly displaced traditional categories of (anti)poverty research and politics; instead of social ‘equality’ one talks of ‘inclusion’; and more than ‘integration’, the goal seems to have become ‘social cohesion’ (Mayer 2003: 112). These new categories similarly direct the focus onto non-economic conditions for economic performance: urban problems appear less as symptoms of urban decline, but as barriers to competitiveness and as reducing social cohesion, which in turn leads to social and economic exclusion. I suggest that even in cases when “older terminology” such as “integration” is used, it is introduced along with this new terminology in a way that concepts such as security, integration and cohesion are all lumped together within a causal relationship. In this explanation, integration is needed for security which appears as a necessity for cohesion- “non-integration, in turn, is feared to have an unfavourable effect on societal cohesion” (Vasta 2009: 3).

Admittedly, it is hard to define coherence without thinking of a diffuse array of other terms such as social order, stability, equilibrium, integration (Holton 2001), and, yes, security -terms that are not always clearly defined or distinguished from one another. As a matter of fact, it is in terms of proxies “such as generalized social trust, trust in institutions, political participation, the degree of involvement in associations and outsider-group hostility” that social cohesion is measured (Lægaard :455). However, unthoughtful and sloppy ways in which these various concepts are linked together in a causal relation might have and have had dangerous results for the sake of “living together” that public policies claim to seek.

In the first part of this chapter, I explain changes in social sciences and, especially, in political discourse in approaches and meanings attributed to the concept of cohesion. I suggest that the primary focus has shifted from the maintenance of group relations. The focus is now mostly on what meanings and values should be the ones to be shared by group members- at the expense of relations with those who might not share these values and meanings.

The second part of this chapter explains the reasons why I criticize the mainstream understanding of this concept. I provide reasons to why cohesion, as understood today, is not only nonexistent but unfeasible. Moreover, the abuse of this loaded idea results in unjust social policy measures targeting certain classes of populations. In this chapter's third and final section, I look at alternative ways to think about cohesion. I suggest we keep in mind that coherence is not the sine qua non of feelings of belonging, and that political unity can still be actualized without cultural uniformity. Because cohesion is nonetheless used so widely with regard to the subject matters discussed throughout this thesis, I consider this chapter both a critique and a literature review.

(i) Using the concept

In spite of the enormous popularity the term “social cohesion” has gained among both academics and the policymakers, virtually every contemporary academic work directly concerned with cohesion mentions the lack of a widely accepted theoretical definition. Even decades before the concept gained popularity, ambiguity around its definition was so great that scholars working on the relation between external conflict and internal cohesion saw the effects of wartime governmental repression as cohesion, while others suggested that the repression itself is yet another form of internal conflict (Stein 1976: 146). As Bollen and Hoyle suggest (1990),

some studies attempt to synthesize the plethora of existing definitions; others simply avoid an explicit definition. In the absence of a widely accepted theoretical definition, operationalization and measurement are inconsistent across studies. As a result, the rather large literature on group and social cohesion was recently dubbed “a legacy of confusion” (Mudrack 1989, cited in Bollen and Hoyle 1990: 496- 497). Beauvis and Jenson (2002: 30), just like Bernard before them (2000), refer to cohesion as a ‘quasi-concept’ and argue that it will be ‘judged not only by its analytical rigor but also by its utility’ and this will be ‘challenged, rejected and dismissed by those who have other ideas how the future should be designed”.

We can say that the importance of cohesion, however one defines it, is derived from its instrumental value for the given society. Chan et al. (2006) might be right in arguing against the position which suggests that how social cohesion is to be defined depends, to a large extent, on the substantial problems the researcher focuses on. By asking “why bother talking about social cohesion if it is simply another word for talking about familiar problems of poverty, exclusion and so on?” (p. 288), they actually point at the process through which the term has become a “catchword” both within the academic and policy discussions. The definition and operationalization of cohesion are inseparable from the context of its invocation and not least from the crises it is seen to respond to (Dobbernack 2010: 148). Before moving to a brief discussion on the evolution of the term “social cohesion”, I would like to briefly touch on the context which led me to address this concept. Most examples below focus on Germany, my main area of study, but I believe they nonetheless provide the basis of a more generalizable critique.

According to the Open Society Institute's report entitled "Muslims in Europe: A Report on 11 EU Cities", released in January 2010, unemployment is twice the national average for

Turkish nationals in Germany, and 28 percent of Turks reported discrimination when looking for work. Twenty-three percent said they encountered discrimination at work²⁸. Then, too, children of immigrant families born in Germany are not automatically granted citizenship, and, although German laws do allow immigrant children born in Germany to apply for citizenship, the society as a whole may not consider them German (Mandel 2008). On another note related to “coherence” between the Islamic and Christian faiths, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung published two opinion polls in late 2004 showing the following: 29% stated that “peaceful co-existence of the Christian and Islamic faith” is possible, while 55% stated that these religions are too different and that severe conflicts will continue. Another poll asked respondents what they associated with “Islam.” The most common concepts were “suppression of women” (93%) and “terror” (83%). Only 6% of the respondents described the Islamic faith as “likeable.”²⁹ Two years later, a 2006 study conducted by the Pew Research Centre showed that even more than most Europeans, Germans were wary of Muslims: 82% of Germans were “very” or “somewhat” concerned by the rise of Islamic extremism, compared with 77% in Britain and 76% in France. On the other hand, 51% of Muslims in Germany thought “many” or “most” Europeans were hostile to them; in France 39% of Muslims had that feeling and in Britain 42%.³⁰

28 Cited in “We Are Not Really Germans’: New Study Looks at Challenges Faced by Germany’s Muslims” Spiegel Online International, 1/26/2010 available at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,674140,00.html> access date February 2, 2011

29 Renate Köcher, “Die Mehrheit erwartet immer wieder Konflikte”, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung December 15, 2004, 5 cited in “Muslims in the European Union Discrimination and Islamophobia”, European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), 2006, 2006eumc.europa.eu/eumc/material/pub/muslim/Manifestations_EN.pdf, 37 (accessed August 10, 2008)

30 “Turks in Germany: Two Unamalgamated Worlds”, The Economist, http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10958534, April 3, 2008. (Accessed September 2, 2008).

It was within this environment that Thilo Sarrazin, then Germany's Central Bank (Bundesbank) official and a member of the Social Democrats, talked about Muslims' genetically lower intelligence. Sarrazin wrote a best seller warning about the creeping Islamization of Germany, triggering a national debate about (again) social cohesion. On 18 January 2011, Sarrazin appeared on BBC's "World Have Your Say"³¹ discussing his book with listeners who called from various countries. Earlier in the program, Sarrazin denied that discrimination is much of a problem for Muslims. "In Germany, Turkish and Arab people are not more discriminated against than Italians or Polish," he said. Later on, a woman journalist of Turkish background called from Hamburg and told Sarrazin that she had been insulted on the streets because she wears a headscarf; she asked him what she should do. Sarrazin responded by saying

Well, I want you to integrate...If you wear the headscarf it's your own choice but if you wear the headscarf you should not be surprised if you are regarded by your environment as something separate. Those who wear the headscarf in Germany separate themselves on their own account from the mainstream of society of their own choice. It is your own choice to wear a headscarf and to live in Germany. You could as well live in the US or Turkey.³²

This response is telling for various reasons. First, the response clearly suggests that a headscarf defines the woman who wears it as "something separate" from "the mainstream society". It points at the "incompatible" character, symbolized by the headscarf, of the Islamic faith with the social and cultural "mainstream". Second, the response appears to favor "free choice" or "free will" as characteristics Sarrazin understood and appreciated. At the same time,

31 The program can be found here : <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00d0fbj>
Access date February 2, 2011

32 See Volkery, Carsten (2011) "Well, I Want You to Integrate' Germany's Integration Provocateur Goes English" Spiegel Online International, 1/20/2011, available at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,740524,00.html> access date February 2, 2011

this freedom comes with responsibilities. Since the “freedom to wear headscarf” does not “cohere” with the mainstream German culture, the individual is indeed “free to leave” Germany where she has grown up and has come to call her “home”.

A third point is that Sarrazin seems to completely ignore the fact that individuals he sees as “separate” from the mainstream have grown up in Germany. Whatever “choice” they might be making “freely” has inevitably been influenced by the so-called mainstream, i.e., by the very institutions of German society and “environment” which, as Sarrazin admits, regards them as separate. It is as if these people, since they are outside, do not get “infused” with or affected by institutions and the general socio-economic structure of the society they live in.

Fourth and finally, Sarrazin, by arguing that anyone who would choose to wear the headscarf is “free” to live in United States or in Turkey, suggests that these latter countries and their “values” also are not in coherence with German (and perhaps European) values. There are comparative studies on differing approaches to cultural diversity and multiculturalism of United States (and, to a certain extent, Great Britain) and Germany: Many have claimed that the US appears to be distinct as it has made the immigrant experience part of its national identity³³. In

33 Although United States does differ with its dedication to ethnic diversities and religious liberties, this surely does not mean that there is no discrimination, essentialization or categorization in US. It would probably not be an exaggeration to claim that especially after 9/11, there is an increasing public and political paranoia regarding not only self-identified Muslims, but also Sikhs (See Jasbir Puar 2007) We recently witnessed an example showing how these populations live in the shadow of 9/11, often being mentioned through a terrorism-related discourse, in the debate in 2010 over a proposed Islamic center in Lower Manhattan, New York. A group called Stop Islamization of America was behind many of the protests in lower Manhattan and has been participating in similar anti-Muslim rallies across the country. It is also telling that Stop Islamization of America is actually an affiliate of a European organization called Stop Islamization of Europe, an anti-Muslim hate group whose motto is "Racism is the lowest form of human stupidity, but Islamophobia is the height of common sense.". The organizers of this American affiliate were Robert Spencer, the proprietor of Jihadwatch.org. and Pamela Geller of Atlas Shrugs, a Web site that attacks Islam with a rhetoric venomous enough that PayPal at one point branded it a hate site. Before Stop Islamization of America became what it is now, the pair had “populated the 2009 Conservative Political Action Conference with anti-Islam sympathizers by renting a room in the same hotel and hosting a talk by Geert Wilders”, the leader of the Dutch “Freedom Party”. See Anne Barnard and Alan Feuer, “Outraged and Outrageous”, October 8, 2010, the New York Times, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/10/nyregion/10geller.html?pagewanted=all> access date February 2, 2011

relation to the “Turkish case”, studies show assumed cultural differences acting as the determining factor in defining what is not European. According to the results of a recent cross-country qualitative study on European identity carried out on behalf of the European Commission involving more than 5000 respondents in France, Germany, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom, Europeans draw a clear line between countries they believe form an “integral part” of Europe and those which do not. The study shows that “though the European publics see ‘economic welfare’ and ‘democracy’, two seemingly non-cultural factors, as the major components of European identity, cultural norms and values come to the fore when they form their opinions regarding Turkey”³⁴.

On one hand we have a visualization, or imagination, of solid wholes called ‘cultures’. The members of these cultures are represented in such a generalized way that one might assume that there is complete coherence among their individual members. On the other hand, the visualization of these ‘wholes’- these meaning systems- as separate entities suggests that they are incompatible with each other or that these different cultures are incoherent; ostensibly incoherence comes along with difference as though of necessity. It is important to remember that this classification and stratifying of seemingly separate “values” and meaning systems might be, and has been, utilized for political goals. However, for my purposes here, I will briefly trace the evolution of the concept of cohesion itself.

Coherence inevitably refers to a coexistence of multiple elements. This ‘togetherness’ might at first glance presuppose a minimum shared understanding and common assumptions

34 “Problems of Europeanization and European Perceptions of Turkey as a Future Member State” , Promotion of the Civil Society Dialogue Between EU and Turkey Universities Grant Scheme, 2009. available at http://hakanyilmaz.info/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/BUCEs-AID-UAM-OpinionPoll-Comments-English-v01.356161846.pdf access date March 9, 2011

across these elements. The tendency to exaggerate the ‘coherence’ of elements composing the cultural system “usually results in suggesting that “a particular element...or a dominant characteristic...tends to imply, and thus explain, the others.”” (Boudon and Bourricaud 2003: 98). Indeed, it might seem that when ‘society’ is understood as a unity based on a set of shared beliefs and perceptions through which “reality” is defined, even mundane assumptions or practices are expected to be able to explain and refer to each other.

For instance we might imagine a situation in which an observer, based on another’s religious identification, makes assumptions about the latter’s political stance. Therefore, religious identification, as one characteristic of that individual, is expected to come with a certain baggage of other elements and characteristics- assumed political stance being one of these characteristics. However, defined this way i.e., that one element implies, necessitates, and explains the others, the celebration or romanticization of the idea of coherence can prevent us from acknowledging how individuals can and actually do live in a world of complexity, replete with multiple identifications and conflicting worlds of meaning³⁵.

If we look more closely at how “cohesion” has been defined with regard to “the social”, a contrast within sociological theory appears between the functionalist and the conflict traditions: the former, prominently associated with Durkheim pays more attention to the commonalities between people, whereas the latter, associated with Marx, among others, questions if solidarity actually reproduces systematic inequalities (Vasta 2010: 506). At first glance it might seem as if current use of social cohesion correlates with the functionalist perspective’s orientation toward valorizing and conserving common identities. Although admittedly mainstream understandings

³⁵ As I explain in the following chapter, individuals manage to survive within this complexity through what I call “acts of belonging”.

of cohesion come close to this “commonalities” perspective, I categorize these perspectives differently, therefore coming to a different conclusion. I believe it is possible to not jettison either of these traditions and reach to a more nuanced critique.

Until recently social scientists tended to put emphasis on the duration of a person's membership. Moreno & Jennings (1937: 371 cited in Friedkin 2004: 411) defined cohesion as "the forces holding the individuals within the groupings in which they are," and Festinger et al. (1950, p. 164) defined it as "the total field of forces which act on members to remain in the group." So here we are directed to the causes of cohesion as a way to define the term. Although this way of defining any concept is both tautological³⁶ and problematic³⁷, nonetheless important is the focus on the continuity of group membership. What keeps the society together seems to have less of an importance than the fact that these individuals do stay together. Thus, investigators have emphasized the extent of positive interpersonal ties among persons as a basis of social cohesion (Cartwright 1968, Gross & Martin 1952, Lott & Lott 1965, cited in Friedkin 2004: 417).

Along these same lines, Gross & Martin (1952: 553-54) defined cohesiveness as "the resistance of a group to disruptive forces" and proposed that such cohesiveness is associated with the strength of the relational bonds among group members. Regardless of what tied the members of a society together, what really mattered was that these members stayed tied. In a sense, this is

36 Later, Festinger (1950, p. 274 cited in Friedkin 2004: 411) came to describe cohesion by referring to the result of these causes; as "the resultant of all forces acting on the members of a group to remain in the group". But this definition is also rather tautological since cohesion, as a consequence of certain forces, is defined almost as "the result of those forces which cause cohesion"!

37 Since these causes/forces are undefined -whatever keep individuals together within a group- this undefined status is often used in public and political discussions in order to stress the so-called "shared values" which are celebrated by "us" but are threatened by "them"- I will come back to this point below.

reminiscent of Georg Simmel's micro sociology which also follows this line, accepting conflict as an inevitable part of being in a group yet emphasizing the simple but indispensable characteristic of any group formation: until the members dissolve the group, the group continues to exist. When, Simmel says, the social coherence is also lost with the loss of the standard which is thought to keep the members together, "it is safe to say that it must have suffered serious internal disorder before" (Simmel 1898: 675). Regardless of that standard value, the members were to dissolve the group sooner or later anyway, so to speak.

Therefore, we have a social science focusing on the persistence of the relationship, on the ways to keep the members of a given society together. I suggest that we can separate the more recent shift in both the socio-political discourse as well as in social sciences in three categories: First, we have the seemingly "Durkheimian" approach which in fact differs from Durkheim's own stance; second, we have an emphasis on "social capital", a term with a long history yet unfortunately I will be able to mention only very briefly here. Finally, we have the camp of multicultural and cosmopolitan models. The treatment of these models in this work is by no means exhaustive, for the purpose here is to explore the evolution of (the politics of) "social cohesion".

The seemingly "Durkheimian" approach looks at a consensus on social norms, values, and beliefs as crucial factor for the reproduction of social order. It is this "consensual perspective" which is said to be rooted in a long-standing tradition starting with Durkheim (Jansen et al. 2006: 190) and emphasizing factors that are supposed to keep "us" together as a solid and unanimous whole. Indeed, central to the Durkheimian notion of social solidarity is the concept of "collective conscience"; within this perspective, society is composed of individuals

who 'cohere' because they share common values and rules, ones which have partly been transmitted by the education system. Ostensibly, society can subsist "only if there is sufficient homogeneity among its members". This homogeneity is, however, only relative: in societies characterized by a division of labour, the greater the differentiation and solidarity between various types of occupation, the more a certain degree of heterogeneity is necessary (Filloux 1993). Another way of putting this is that while a traditional society, with higher collective conscience (i.e. shared beliefs and moral attitudes) operates as a unifying force to create what Durkheim called mechanical solidarity, modern society with its division of labor is both heterogenous and yet held together in organic solidarity by an interdependency between individuals as well as institutions.

The key to these distinct types of societies, then, is that each one develops its own value and belief system. Thus, even though individualism in modern societies seems to suggest a weakened value system and lack of social integration, individualism itself has become a central value in these societies. Indeed, Durkheim talks about "the cult of the individual" (1938: 172, orig. pub. 1893), celebrating individual freedom as a defining feature of modernity. And, consequently, when Judith Maxwell refers to "shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity...based on a sense of hope, trust, and reciprocity" (Jeannotte 1997, cited in Stanley 2003), this definition comes close to the Durkheimian understanding of cohesion in modern societies. According to this Durkheimian view, "[f]or a society to have a continuing existence over time, its specialized institutions... must work in harmony with one another. The continuation of a society thus depends on cooperation, which in turn presumes a general consensus, or agreement, among its members over basic values." (Giddens 2006: 109). This is not to suggest,

as Paolo Ceri notes, that Durkheim overlooked plural values altogether. More precise to say might be that the Durkheimian tradition inadequately acknowledges the phenomenon of multi-membership. According to Ceri, this failure occurs because once the function of forming and articulating the collective conscience has been assigned to various groups to ensure the moral integration of their members into society at large, Durkheim prioritizes the unifying aspects of membership (Ceri 1993 :154).

One might suggest that the Simmelian concept of social cohesion is more fluid than the Durkheimian and accepts the inevitability of conflict, bracketing the core values that people are agreeing on just so long as they stay together as a society. The “Durkheimian” conception, however, appears to be focusing on the shared values more than the society itself! I suggest that this current understanding of cohesion is not in tandem with Durkheim’s own writings.

Durkheim’s work differs from the “Durkheimian” interpretation for two reasons: The first relates to Durkheim’s understanding of “conflict”. For Durkheim, conflict is functional for society in the sense that it either reinforces its shared values or leads the way for social institutions to change and accommodate to changing values. What is more, and more important here, is that for Durkheim, consensus on values is important only because it enables society to continue. In other words, the current emphasis on shared values and norms might not strictly be a “Durkheimian” turn. We should differentiate “Durkheimianism” from Durkheim himself in the sense that the latter was more “open” to change and conflict than Durkheimianism is. This recent “turn” seems to ignore the very reason for insisting on shared values in the first place. While for Durkheim this “function” of shared values would be the continued existence of society, and while therefore the “standard” is supposed to accommodate itself to social change, for the

contemporary mainstream discourse, it is almost “the social” which should adjust itself to the standard, for the sake of the standard!

“An action which wants to serve man [sic.]”, said Simone de Beauvoir, “ought to be careful not to forget him [sic.] on the way; if it chooses to fulfill itself blindly, it will lose its meaning or will take on an unforeseen meaning; for the goal is not fixed once and for all; it is defined all along the road which leads to it” (de Beauvoir 2000: 153). The current situation seems to me unfortunate mainly because it is as if an abstract wisdom is pressuring the very existence of societies with an overemphasis on cohesion as a set of certain common values and norms as well as taken- for- granted interpretations of the relationship between various elements forming society. This ‘wisdom’ whose role should actually protect the very ‘being’, is turning itself away from being, while the main aim becomes this abstract idea of cohesion and the so-called shared values.

Another path the debate which has come to present social cohesion as negatively related to various forms of diversity is based on Robert Putnam’s use of “social capital”. According to this, the more diverse a society is, the less cohesive it is (Hooghe, 2007; Putnam, 2007). Indeed, the term “social capital” has gained such popularity that a study focusing on social cohesion would probably be incomplete without mentioning the term. Putnam found that in areas with a lack of homogeneity, some individuals neither participated in bonding (links between “like-minded” people, reinforcing homogeneity within groups) nor bridging (social networks between socially heterogeneous groups) social capital. In societies where immigration or ethnic heterogeneity is high, it was found that citizens lacked “social capital” and were overall far less trusting of others than members of homogenous communities were found to be. Therefore, his

study argued that “the more ethnically diverse the people we live around, the less we trust them” (2007: 147)” (cited in Holtug 2010 a: 438)

This framework, and arguments suggesting that diversity threatens social cohesion (or social capital) however, lacks some basic explanations as to, first of all, what kind of diversity we are talking about. Putnam’s study does clearly focus on ethnic diversity, however, a critical study first and foremost should question why ethnic, and not another kind of, diversity should reduce the feeling of trust among people, and weaken social cohesion. Yes, we can also talk about racial, religious, sexual, linguistic heterogeneity, but we can as well categorize people according to the colour of their hair! It is crucial to question the very methods we, as scholars, use in our studies which might actually stiffen the taken-for-granted classification which, in turn, reinforce social inequalities. It is not a coincidence that within the mainstream debate on social cohesion, these inequalities are seen mostly as a result of ‘the failure’ of individuals classified within these categories. Therefore, scholars must question whether it is the socio-economic and political conditions, from the high levels of unequal distribution of power found in these “heterogeneous” areas with high ethnic diversity that leads to the weakening of social cohesion.

At this point it is only fair to mention two models which are in favor of (ethnic) diversity and heterogeneity: Multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. The understanding and definition of “social coherence” have been altered by transformations felt in the everyday life of late modernity. Post-Cold War debates over inclusion and exclusion along with the new social movements organized around identity politics surely affected the discourse. Although neither multiculturalism, nor cosmopolitanism is a new philosophical viewpoint, I take them here in relation to discussions in the last few decade around cultural diversity, immigration, social

coherence, and integration. And although I find both of these theories well-meaning as well as inspiring and thoughtful, I have concerns which I should briefly mention here.

Multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism are, obviously, “models”. Yet, once these models come to life, ideal-types inevitably have to experience conflict resulting from unequal distribution of power and resources, from aggressive competition between “minorities” for economic and socio-political equality, or various types of abuse of identity politics. However, main questions asked by these camps remain to be around who belongs and who does not, who am I and who they are- questions which assume cohesive categories (and populations).

One might argue that cosmopolitanism is based on the fluidity of identification, and idealizes a rights system which eschews national democracies as well as stiff categories of cultures and populations. Cosmopolitanism’s understanding of persons as embodying various cultures simultaneously is partly the reason why I appreciate this model. What is more, there are more than one type of cosmopolitanisms, from “liberal cosmopolitanism” to “political cosmopolitanism”. Being against one type should not necessarily mean being against the other types. However, all these types seem to assume that the Western-liberal democracy is both the only way to experience democracy and the best framework for the welfare of people. Cosmopolitanism seems to be against or beyond nationalisms but I am afraid, if employed, it might bring us a structure of nationalism writ large - think about other transnational organizations (or beyond-national identifications): European Union, have “open borders” policy only for Europeans, and it is again the European Union itself which defines what a European is. Therefore, the global inclusion of “the people” is, to say the least, very limited.

Following Chantal Mouffe, I will suggest below that alternatives are possible. We should not have to choose between an abstract idea of a democracy of “humanity” and traditional nation states. Not only is it possible to have alternative readings of democracy and citizenship, but it is also possible to imagine alternative associations. I believe “acts of belonging”, in the following chapter, might contribute to this development through an alternative look at belongings.

(ii). Abusing the concept

Let me now clarify my reasons for criticizing the concept of “social cohesion”, especially the current mainstream understanding of the concept. These critiques are especially directed against the “consensual perspective”, rather than the cosmopolitan and the multicultural camp. They also comprise as a stance against taking for granted the very existence of “cohesion” for a feeling of belonging as well as against the idea that from cohesion all members of society benefit, and benefit equally.

1- The concept of social cohesion itself is problematic.

First of all, how is it possible to somehow “measure” the level of coherence in a society? Public figures talk about “lack of cohesion” or “weakening of cohesion”, and develop their politics around these criteria- but how does one measure cohesion in the first place? Cohesion seems to be an idea whose influence will be visible only when there seems to be a lack of it- i.e., like integration, the existence of cohesion is not as visible as the lack of it.

Visibility aside, it should be noted that other dimensions are often mentioned alongside of definitions of social cohesion, such as concepts of equality, freedom, “life satisfaction”, respect and tolerance. One of the attempts to “measure” social cohesion has been vis-a-vis “the Valcos index of social cohesion”. This term developed from a research project focusing on the

relationship between “values and social cohesion” and has been conducted in Luxembourg with the financial support of the National Research Fund (FNR)³⁸. The dimensions the scholars studied were integration and solidarity, political participation, sociocultural participation (related to employment, poverty levels and “life satisfaction”), participation in social and civic associations, and formal relations, the latter correlated with the happiness indicator of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD). The study found that

1. countries with higher social cohesion show lower levels of unemployment and higher levels of other forms of employment such as part-time jobs. Similarly, these countries are characterized by higher levels of people investing in education over the life course;

2. more cohesive societies also report better economic performances in terms of higher GDP, higher employment and social expenditures, lower levels of inflation, less unequal societies and lower risk of poverty;

3. those societies are not only richer but safer: countries with higher levels of social cohesion correlate with lower levels of mortality due to car accidents and lower rates of suicides and infant mortality. On the contrary, these countries are characterized by higher fertility rates and life expectancies;

4. higher social cohesion is positively correlated with a higher participation of women and young people in the political and working life of their countries, more intense social participation and greater confidence in new technologies.

These findings point to a correlation rather than to a causal relationship. But as the following critique suggests, the recurrent emphasis on “coherence” and on studies that measure and ‘reveal’ a relationship between a country’s social coherence and economic prosperity have led to ineffective if not harmful policies. An important reason for this is because what are

38 Acket, Sylvain, Monique Borsenberger, Paul Dickes and Francesco Sarracino (2011) “Measuring and validating social cohesion: a bottom-up approach” (working paper) available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/33/46839973.pdf> access date 11/30/2011

actually just correlations become presented in a way which contributes to the mainstream definition of coherence as the cause of a “better life” directing social attention onto non-economic conditions as a link to economic performance.

Moreover, even if common understandings exist on matters that supposedly constitute social cohesion, consensus on one matter does not necessarily imply consensus on the others. This goes back to my earlier critique of “one element implying, necessitating, and explaining the other”. Returning to a previous example (and at the risk of appearing to simplify the relationship between political and religious identifications), subjects who identify with the same religion and practice the same religious requirements may not identify with the same political group or party. One might indeed vote for a secular party while others support a group with a more religious tendency. In that case, is it ever possible to talk about the “cohesiveness” of all the elements within a society or should we underline the complex relationship between these diverse institutions, relationships, and/or aspects?

Finally, I see an enormous need for empirical studies to ground claims about the weakening or strengthening of social cohesion. Here, one can use an example from integration-related studies. This is a good example for at least two reasons: First, put simply, the mainstream understanding suggests that without integration, one cannot talk about a society living in cohesion: members are expected to ‘integrate’ into a sum of core values and norms. Integration and social cohesion are increasingly used interchangeably so that lack of one signifies lack of the other. Secondly most of the time, if not always, what is visible and therefore discussed is not the existence or level of integration/cohesion but the lack of it.

Let us look more specifically at an instance involving the Turkish community in Germany. As has been pointed out by several scholars, despite vocal public concern about the failure of integration of the Turkish community within Germany, little research has been done on the empirical referents of integration- even less on the second generation, that is, those born in Germany (Fertig 2004; Ewing 2008:233). Furthermore, virtually no research has been done on the third generation,- a group still quite young. Yet, to continue with this example, if language is generally seen as an important aspect of integration and if 55% of immigrants from Turkey and 93% of the second generation speak German well (Heckmann 1997:3 cited in Ewing 2008: 18)³⁹, to what extent should language be cited as a measure of integration of these groups? This same analysis can be applied to studies of cohesion in the sense that consensus by one empirical criterion may not go along with consensus on others: is there a threshold above or beyond which would determine the degree of cohesion, then, or lack thereof?

2-Confusing possible blessings with the concept itself

Again, various empirical criteria are often alluded to definitions of social cohesion. These criteria include respect for diversity, inclusion, recognition, equality of opportunity and so on (For example, Jenson 1998). Such attempts to include “liberal values” within definitions of cohesion brings not much more than a beautification and romanticization of the concept. Cohesion does not necessarily bring along “liberal” values. Chan et al. draw our attention to social cohesion in an 18th century agricultural society which may depend more on values like “hierarchy” and “respect for tradition.” (Chan et al 2006: 292) The authors describe social status

³⁹ Or, take this example: Research indicates (Hamaz and Vasta, 2009) that many people of immigrant back- ground insist they are integrated into their communities in London, even if they don't speak English and don't know any British people. They engage with diversity on a daily basis in their neighbourhood, at work, at the shops, at their place of prayer. (cited in Vasta 2010: 519)

and life chances of men and women in medieval Europe as well as within imperial China: in both cases, substantial gender inequality persisted even though social cohesion seems also to have been maintained over long periods of time (Ibid.: 287). It might be tempting to incorporate liberal values into the definition of social cohesion; however, blessings that might be experienced in a so-called cohesive society do not necessarily come along with, or experienced as a result of, cohesion⁴⁰. Rather, intense inequality and stratification may be just as or even more blatant within such “cohesive” contexts.

3- Mainstream interpretations of cohesion lead to ineffective, or harmful, policies:

The concept of cohesion has drawn the attention of power holders and policy makers from the Canadian federal government to the Council of Europe, and of organizations such as the the World Bank or the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. At a dinner party with European leaders on March 8, 2007, German Chancellor Angela Merkel outlined a ‘road map’ for the European Union Constitution including “competitiveness and social coherence” among the Union’s “future tasks”⁴¹. Then, too, in Britain of post 9/11, “making communities cohesive” has been a prime public policy focus, along with domestic security. According to Tahir Abbas, “[t]he civil unrests in the northern cities of Britain during the late summer of 2001 shifted the focus away from a celebration of multicultural diversity towards an idea of a “communities lacking cohesion”” (Abbas 2005: 162). In Latin America, Soletto Martin states, social cohesion

40 This perspective also assumes European (Western) liberal ideals as best way of living.

41 “Merkel drops 'Constitution' label at EU summit” <http://www.euractiv.com/future-eu/merkel-drops-constitution-label-eu-summit/article-162389>
access date 11/30/2011

“has become a conceptual frame of reference increasingly used in policy making and in the political discourse” (Ignacio Soletó Martín 2011).

Troubling about this focus is that studies concerned with social cohesion may come to function as part of justifications of restrictive naturalization, immigration and citizenship requirements. How and why might this be so? For one thing, as we have seen in relation to Putnam’s work on “social capital”, there seems to be a general consensus on a negative relationship between social cohesion and diversity⁴². As Ellie Vasta posits, with some exceptions (e.g. Modood, 2007; Parekh, 2008), many scholars believe social cohesion is best achieved by abandoning multiculturalism as a model not only for policy but also for how countries of immigration should engage with diversity (e.g. Joppke, 2004; Koopmans, 2006). This negative relationship has also been used politically in policy discourses that have a tendency to eschew diversity by introducing ‘integration and social cohesion’ as assets that should be obtained, and maintained, for the welfare of all members all the while fragile and threatened by those who either fail or refuse to integrate (Vasta, 2007a). In other words, due to abstract nature of presumed general values and norms⁴³ emphasized in the very definition of the notion of social cohesion, when conflicts prevail, they are seen as a result of people who do not realize these common values in their lives: therefore, these groups should be identified. This “selection”

42 Although social capital does not carry the same meaning as social cohesion, he does suggest that “In societies where immigration or ethnic heterogeneity is high, it was found that citizens lacked “social capital” and were overall far less trusting of others than members of homogenous communities were found to be (Holtug 2010: 438).

43 So when the Oxford English Dictionary (1989: 450 cited in Dobernack 2010 :148) suggests as definitions of cohesion the “action or condition of cohering; cleaving or sticking together”, or “union of like organs”, it is not explained what characteristics exactly are supposed to constitute this “likeness”.

process is engineered through citizenship tests, integration contracts and sanctions in some countries. (Vasta 2010:504).

The above mentioned “communities lacking cohesion” idea in Britain, for instance, resulted with the incumbent Home Secretary David Blunkett pointing at “the need for immigrants to learn English as a test for citizenship; [denouncing] “forced marriages” and “female circumcision” [associating two very different practices with one community] and [insisting] that South Asian Muslim communities organise marriages between brides and grooms already resident in the UK” (Abbas 2005:159). Another example to these methods is the so-called “Muslim test”. This citizenship test, as is employed in some states of Germany, singles out applicants whose background is from a “Muslim” country. It was implemented in 2006 by the government of Baden-Württemberg as “discussion guidelines” to be used in questioning applicants for citizenship (Ewing 2008:181) in an attempt to determine their attitude to the German constitution and to 'western values'. The “test” is composed of thirty questions some of which are related to either gender and sexuality or are linked to the issue of terrorism:

-Your legally adult daughter/ wife would like to dress like other German girls and women. Would you try to prevent that? If yes, by what means?

-For female naturalization candidates: Your daughter would like to dress like other German girls and women, but her husband is against it. What do you do?

-Imagine that your legally adult son comes to you and declares that he is homosexual and would like to live with another man. How do you react?

-In Germany various politicians have made it publicly known that they are homosexual. What do you think about the fact that homosexuals are in public office in Germany?

-You learn that people from your neighborhood or from among friends or acquaintances have carried out or are planning a terrorist attack- what do you do?

-Some people hold the Jews responsible for all the evil in the world, and even claim they were behind the attacks 11 September 2001 in New York. What is your view of this claim? (Petzen 2008: 147-148)

Although these are only a few examples, they represent categories of questions which target the applicants' attitude on women's rights, homosexuality, Jewish identity, and "Islamic terrorism". The presence of questions which supposedly measure the tolerance level of the citizenship applicant toward, for instance, gays and lesbians indicates that acceptance of homosexuality is a part of being German. This ignored the homosexual victims of the national socialist regime, ignored that it was not until the end of 1960 when homosexual acts between males were decriminalized in the country⁴⁴, ignored also that the age of consent remained higher for male-male activities than it was for heterosexual acts until as late as 1994 (Yorukoglu 2010). On the other hand, though, the test, being applied exclusively to those from so-called Muslim countries, claim that the "Muslim" population is a potential threat against these values supposedly traditionally cherished by the German society. The "Muslim test" was implemented by a conservative member, Heribert Rech, the Interior Minister of the state of Baden-Württemberg, but it has been defended by those of various social and political stances. Haritaworn et al. take attention to opinion makers such as journalist Jan Feddersen, a publicly known gay man, of the daily Tageszeitung, and who defended the Test by pointing to a German 'tradition' of gay friendliness which needed to be defended from the Muslim migrants (Haritaworn et al. 2008: 80). A sociologist of Turkish descent, Necla Kelek, was actually the

⁴⁴ The Nazi-era law persecuting homosexuals, the infamous Paragraph 175, remained on Germany's books until then.

consultant who helped the regional government in Baden- Württemberg devise the ‘Muslim Test’. Both Kelek and a lawyer of Turkish descent, Seyran Ates, supported the questionnaire, arguing that it underlines gender equality as a fundamental value pertaining to German citizens (Am Orde and Bax 2006, Kelek 2006 cited in Haritaworn et al 2008: 84). Therefore, they claimed, people of migrant descent should not be granted German citizenship unless they demonstrate their adherence to such ‘German’ values (Ibid.). The test was also supported by the Berlin branch of the LSVD, Lesbian and Gay Alliance of Germany. The head of the Alliance, Alexander Zinn “welcomes the motion and calls on the Berlin Senate to follow Baden-Württemberg’s example: “Whoever wants to become a German citizen must recognize democracy and rights to freedom. This includes banning discrimination against homosexuals.”” (cited in Haritaworn and Petzen 2010).

The continuing deployment of queerness as a symbol of "freedom" to rationalize the continuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as to rationalize restrictive and racist immigration policies in "Western" or "liberal" nations have already been documented by some (see, for example, Puar 2007 and Haritaworn at al. 2008). As gay rights become articulated to the nation and used as markers of European, Western or ‘civilizational’ superiority, they are simultaneously becoming detached from their historical relation to a left-wing politics (Günkel and Pitcher 2008). For space constraint here, I cannot focus on the need to redefine citizenship in a way to encompass sexuality; suffice it to say that the mainstream definition of cohesion is used as a justification of unequal use of legal and citizenship policies against certain populations .

4- We have never been coherent

Ted Cantle, who chaired the official inquiry into the disturbances in various towns in northern England that occurred in the spring and summer of 2001, argues that community cohesion can be distinguished from social cohesion mainly in terms of its focus on ethnic or religious difference (Cantle, 2008). However, in many discussions ‘social cohesion’ and ‘community cohesion’ seem to be used interchangeably (Holtug 2010: 413 n.1). Defined on the grounds of “shared values” and “one characteristic implying, explaining, and necessitating the others” (and thus, for instance, seeing Muslim identity as incompatible with secularism⁴⁵; or incompatible with queer identity), cohesion, I suggest, has never been, and will never be- neither in societies nor in communities.

“[H]owever much Europe imagines its Turkish migrants to be cohering around a homogeneous conception of Turkishness, behaving like a close-knit group” write Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins in another context, “this proves to be far from what is actually taking place” (Aksoy and Robins 2000:356). Regarding the meaning for Turkish migrants of consuming transnational media from Turkey, the writers claim that

“what they are experiencing is never straightforwardly and unproblematically the sense of being ‘at home’ or of ‘keeping in touch with their roots’...quite other cultural possibilities are there to be discerned, possibilities that are not at all to do with belonging, but, far more interestingly, we suggest, with cultural ambivalence”.

45 Jørgen S. Nielsen takes attention to opinion polls conducted among European Muslims which have indicated that the feared “Islamist agenda” is not actually shared by the majority. “A Gallup poll published in 2009 showed that Muslims in Germany and Britain were more supportive of government, the judiciary, financial institutions and the honesty of elections than were the overall population. The Muslims of France, however, appeared to be more hesitant. The same survey also sought to discover Muslims' sense of national identity compared to their religious identity. Remarkably, British Muslims identified almost equally with Islam and with Britain at levels in the top 70% range, French Muslims were slightly more uncertain with 58% identifying strongly with Islam and 52% with France while German Muslims reported 59% identifying with Islam and only 40% with Germany. This does not suggest an environment in which the view that religion and politics are one has much traction.”

Twelve years ago, Aksu and Robins were already writing about Turks in Europe being involved in “[a] complex process of negotiation, having to position themselves in relation to both their changing sense of Turkishness and their experiences of the European societies in which they live” (Ibid.). The transnational media, rather than bridging their emotional distance from Turkish everyday life and making it more “comfortable” for them to identify with the Turkish community, appears as a context which drives them to

“feelings of ambivalence, discomfort and frustration...To watch the news can be to realize things that previously seemed impossible about one’s country. For many Turks, then, to become synchronized with Turkish realities can be to put themselves in a very unsettling position – to become removed, and even alienated, from the thing that they thought was theirs” (361).

This cultural distancing makes these individuals become aware of the “constructed” nature of Turkish realities (363)- what is imagined becomes more “concrete” from a sense of distance.

On the one hand, the “imagined” character of human groups has been well documented. Benedict Anderson, for instance, claims that “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined.” Nations (and I think we can take this argument to talk about cultural groups) are imagined because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson: 6). What is more, that members of groups are not identical with each other, and that migrant communities will be affected by their experience of moving to and living in a different country is known as well. As Abu- Lughod (2000) argues, “We know that everyone is different, that people are confused, that life is complicated, emotional and uncertain.” However, first of all, this awareness does not

usually exist with regard to “distant” communities “where all we might have is the social–scientific analysis, the ethnographic description, the timeless ethno-graphic photograph, not to mention popular racism and political domination...[T]his absence of a counter-discourse produces and reinforces a sense of difference and distance.” (Ibid. 263) Second of all, the continuing use of a discourse on “populations”- “the Muslim population”, “the queer community”, “the Turkish migrant woman”- is making it easy to forget that the subjects of discussion are human beings. Human beings with individualities, with their unequally positioned social statuses, different experiences with unequally distributed opportunities to capital, and with their differences in emotions and desires.

Admittedly, treating relationships and institutions as compact and unified elements may be out of a need for a methodological device to talk, produce knowledge, and develop policies about unified elements- instead of referring to more nuanced discussions each time, and keeping in mind the complex and inconsistent relationships and structures. Along the same line, Georg Simmel writes in 1898 that “[t]he relations of human beings to each other are so complex, so ramified, and so compact that it would be a wholly hopeless task to resolve them into their elements, and we are consequently compelled to treat them as unities rather than as self-existing structures. It is, therefore, only a methodological device to speak of the essence and the development of the state, of law, of institutions, of fashion, etc., as if each of these were a unified entity” (Simmel 1898: 666). However, this imagined unity with its clearly defined boundaries and the conceptualization of a “coherent” co-existence has profound (and very real) impacts on the unease we feel with the everyday realities. By revealing the ways in which certain characteristics are seen as “incompatible” with other identifications, some scholars have

criticized the “incommensurability” (Petzen) or “impossibility” thesis. My use of ‘incoherence’, however, points at a broader question which is more of a direct attack against the engrained idea that presupposes coherence for not only claiming citizenship and rights in front of the law, but even the feeling of belonging to the society one grows up in or moves into. I argue that even if these identifications are not indeed in coherence, this tension does not prevent feelings of belonging. Instead of advocating for medications which will numb our societies, what we need is to get to know, feel, and live through our pain.

(iii). Conclusion

If I claim that we have never been coherent, this does not suggest that our everyday lives are removed from any coherence or identifications. Rather, these identifications are fluid and open because of the complex “assemblage” of various aspects of one’s identifications including those which seemingly contradict one another. However, a casual look at the media and overall discussions about how to maintain cohesion within the ethnic and cultural diversity of Western societies as well as public responses in general (e.g. comments sections of online news media) are revealing in several ways. On the one hand there is a political “other” who is imagined to be excluded from the borders of the sovereign unity of “us”. On the other hand, one finds a cultural uniformity which appears crucial for political unity “within”: there are those “like us” who can be “included within”, and those toward whom we are antagonistic. As a matter of fact, it is broadly accepted that democracy always requires relations of inclusion and exclusion due to the creation of a specific group of citizens. Here one might recall, for instance, Carl Schmitt's assertion of the importance of the friend-enemy antagonism to political thought and action (Schmitt [1932] (2007)). This antagonism is needed for properly political relations. In this

understanding, the outside actually constitutes the inside by being what the latter is not (or so it claims). However, the friend-enemy opposition (the “enemy” excluded from “us”) might not be the only form that antagonism can take.

In *Democratic Paradox*, Chantal Mouffe proposes to distinguish between two forms of antagonism: antagonism proper, which takes place between persons who have no common symbolic space; and what she calls ‘agonism’ “which is a different mode of manifestation of antagonism because it involves a relationship not between enemies but between ‘adversaries’, adversaries being defined in a paradoxical way as ‘friendly enemies’” (13). These “friendly enemies” share a common symbolic space but wish to organize it in a different way. Mouffe’s position sees agonistic confrontation as democracy’s very condition of existence (103); this is different however from “extreme pluralism” that ends up failing to recognize “how certain differences are constructed as relations of subordination and should therefore be challenged by a radical democratic politics” (20).

I am not entirely satisfied with Mouffe’s stance as it does not question whether it is because of our understanding of sovereignty, of political identities and collectivities, that we have come to take for granted that any political identity would necessitate an “other”. However, I do think Mouffe, by pointing at the possibility of talking about an “other” who is not necessarily antagonistic, is helpful in filling a gap in political science and related social sciences that often overlook detailed analysis of various meanings attributed to the “other”. In other words, while we tend to think that this relationship with the political other will be a completely negative relationship, one might feel desire, longing, empathy, and indeed trust as well as resentment, envy, or disgust- or, surely even a combination of all these feelings. Mouffe’s argument is

thoughtful and nuanced in a way which acknowledges multiple identifications and claims that are also experienced “within” the group, and which might indeed conflict with each other. This understanding goes along well with one of the main arguments of this paper: i.e. “cohesion” as used today is not necessary to produce feelings of belonging.

But this seemingly simple assumption gets lost within the mainstream definition of and calls for cohesion. Mouffe’s suggestion neither ignores nor denies the need for a “common denominator” that would keep politics from being blind to the relationships of power. Rather, cohesion must ideally include acceptance of, respect for and engagement with difference (all kinds of “differences”) and dealing with inequality simultaneously, which incorporates the social justice theme.

My own view is that democracy, radical democracy, cannot be positioned in a box or a set of steady qualities. It is not a condition, but a constant struggle and process, perhaps similar to Lefebvre’s “autogestion” which reveals contradictions in society rather than trying to accommodate/adapt/appropriate differences. It is this “nature” of politics that Western democracies increasingly forget. Indeed what is the purpose of talking about cohesion within a totally homogeneous entity? Not only is such a society non-existent, but there is no point of talking about “coherence” in such an imaginary group when no opportunity to be otherwise is available in that society in the first place! The result is simply counterfeit, trying to imitate an existence that is only imaginary.

Following Robert Park, then, conflict is actually a symptom of being alive. I use the term “symptom” to purposely keep in mind the uncomfortable effects of conflict on a given society and the everyday life on its members. Therefore, my intention is surely not to ignore the

terrifying possibilities that come along with conflict- whatever the resulting condition will be; life-changing situations can be terrifying for individuals at least through the beginning of this process of 'becoming'. They can be very violent indeed, affecting one's relation to 'home', to one's own being, to 'here', possibly making 'here' become strange (Ahmed 2006:160). However the process is a process of becoming; such moments do not stop one from getting somewhere but may approximate what ancient writers called "auto-poiesis"; i.e., an ever changing political self-creation (Sennett 1996.).

Western civilization, writes Richard Sennett, has refused to accept and 'naturalize' suffering and pain as inevitable experiences. "Wholeness, oneness, coherence: these are key words in the vocabulary of power" (Sennett Ibid: 25). The denial of conflict, ambiguity, antagonism and anxiety in favor of idealized characteristics such as coherence, wholeness and consistency has affected not only our sense of being with others but also the sense of our being among others. I suggest that a society fears impurity only when it is uncertain of itself- only when it actually fears that this society lacks powers of resistance to live through its own self-creations. However, as Mouffe suggests, "to negate the ineradicable character of antagonism and to aim at a universal rational consensus- this is the real threat to democracy" (Mouffe: 22). It is only when we refute the idea that we have ever been coherent that we can reclaim our sense of being ordinary, thereby expressing our solidarity with those whose experiences are in conflict with ours.

Chapter III

“One has to belong, somehow”:

Acts of belonging at the intersection of ethnicity, sexuality and citizenship

*“One’s feet learn to walk on both banks of the river at the same time.”
Zafer Senocak*

I am in Zeynep’s apartment in Shoeneberg, Berlin. Zeynep, mother of three young boys, has not had an easy life: She attempted to commit suicide in her teens and suffered years of domestic violence. She talks about the improvement in recent years in her relationship with her parents. Almost in tears, she says that she forgives her family. She accepts them as the way they are⁴⁶. Forgiveness appears as a way to claim her belonging to her family without discarding her other identifications, as she says “one has to belong...somehow”.

What Zeynep gets at (belonging somehow) signifies the importance of “acts of belonging” for communities of migration background. Following what Fiona Allon suggests in another context, I believe that instead of asking “where do these people belong”, scholars of migration and citizenship studies should ask “how?”(Allon 2000). How do those with migrant background belong? How do they claim rights in different contexts from various groups and power holders they face in their everyday lives?

In order to be able to talk about “how” to belong, I look at what I call “acts of belonging”. I benefit here from the wonderful work of Engin Isin and Greg Nielsen who define “acts of citizenship” as the acts transforming the ways of being political by creating new sites and scales of struggle. This area which has unfortunately remained unexplored is **the** area of

⁴⁶ Engin Isin et. al. also mention “acts of forgiveness” as one type of an act of citizenship and give the example of Greek aristocrats in 594 BCE who “committed an act of forgiveness when they cancelled all debts owed by peasants” (Isin and Nielsen 2008: 25).

politics! Politics, said Jacques Rancière once in an interview ,“means precisely this, that you speak at a time and in a place you’re not expected to speak”⁴⁷.

“Acts of belonging”, however, different from “acts of citizenship”, refer to acts which are not only directed towards the state or state institutions, but are also formed through and directed towards more ‘intimate’ relations- “the acts of belonging” might not even claim to be “political”. Rather, they refer to those times when the individual “acts” on the need to affirm strongly and emotionally that in spite of the lack of “coherence”, or, in spite of the conflict between her multiple identifications the individual “belongs” to the entity in question. Through these acts, individuals can momentarily relieve from the existential tension derived from their multiple and conflicting identifications. However, even when they do not claim to be political and are not with a fixed political ground, they do present vast political possibilities.

“Belonging” does not mean a simple membership or a plain attachment or an interest towards a group and/or a group identity; rather, it is that strong feeling beyond a simple membership. Moreover, I suggest that the act of belonging both reproduces the identification and belonging to the group, and it appears as an evidence of the individual’s belonging. In other words, I neither agree with, nor reject the idea of, an identification and a subject position which has already been produced before the materialization of this act. The act itself is capable of (re)producing this belonging (to the group, to the identity which is identified with the group and so on). Additionally, what I call “acts of belonging” do not always necessitate a conscious, intentional, rational decision-making, nor do they require an audience to ‘confirm’ the meaning

47 “Our Police Order - What can be Said, Seen, and Done: An Interview with Jacques Rancière” originally published in *Le Monde diplomatique*, (Oslo) 8 November 2006 available at <http://anselmocarranco.tripod.com/id58.html> access date 7/7/2011

behind the act. Finally, *acts of belonging* refers to a subject who is “reclaimed ...for its being-
such, for belonging itself” (Agamben 2003). In this sense, the subject that acts reminds us of
Giorgio Agamben’s “whatever being” whose community is mediated “not by any condition of
belonging (being red, being Italian, being Communist) nor by the simple absence of
conditions...but by belonging itself” (Ibid.: 85) This does not mean a lack of identity, or a refusal
of an identity; what this does suggest is to emphasize the virtue of belonging itself.

Citizenship, regardless of different interpretations derived from typologies of states (from
social democratic to liberal to corporatist states) as a legal and political notion, differentiates
those who belong to the entity in question (be it a nation-state in the traditional sense or, say, the
European Union) from those who are not entitled to belong. The rules and criteria for
‘naturalization’, granting of citizenship to those who were not born within the entity’s territories,
might often be challenged, and the language of these discussions might have been transformed to
become more “inclusive” and “human rights” oriented. However, these debates do not change
the main idea of modern citizenship which makes certain groups strangers and outsiders. What is
more, in contrast to the lack of enough attention in the literature on socio-psychological scale and
the intersection of gender, race and sexuality, the populist political discourse around migration,
integration and citizenship abuses the emotional aspect such as fear of ‘the other’.

I suggest, therefore, that the migration and citizenship literature will benefit from looking
at the psychosocial aspects and remembering the importance and the use of emotions in not only
expressing but also re-creating identifications. Identifications, the sense of whiteness,
Turkishness, femininity or religiousness and so on, are surely contested culturally and politically.
They are also shaped and reshaped by an emotional self (Chodorow 1999:72) . Therefore,

focusing on issues of citizenship in the contemporary political context will be misleading without situating citizenship in the wider context of contemporary politics as well as the feelings of belonging.

Before focusing on belonging and the ways individuals establish their belonging, however, I will first look at another question: The question of “why”- why do we have this need to belong in the first place? Benefiting from readings in psychoanalysis, the first part of this chapter will discuss *anxiety* at the root of this need. The second part will define further what I call “acts of belonging”. Remembering these acts which ensure an intimacy, an identification, a belonging brings a new perspective to discussions on integration, migration and citizenship. This is because these acts reveal the ways in which people engage with diversity in various ways which are not always obvious to the “us” versus “them” perspective. In the final section, I will give some examples from my fieldwork, hoping they will help us better understand and envision these acts.

Why do we need to belong?

I suggest that at the root of this need lies anxiety which is both an innate character (something that we carry within us from the moment we are born) and also is potentially shaped and exacerbated by our environment. This “being” anxiety, by transgressing the duality between “natural” versus “cultural” qualities we embody, also challenges distinctions between psychic and social, between internal and external, between the “I” and the “me”.

On the one hand, anxiety seems universal; an innate characteristic in the organism. Sigmund Freud is among those who tie this innate character to the separation from the mother, calling this the birth trauma (May 1977:140) . According to this, “[t]he child’s having anxiety at

the appearance of strange people and its fears of darkness and loneliness...have their origin in dread lest the child separated from his[sic.] mother” (Ibid.: 141). Otto Rank, following Freud but moving further⁴⁸, conceives of the life history as an “endless series of experiences of separation” (Ibid.: 149), birth being the first and most dramatic experience but followed by the same psychological experience throughout life. Another psychoanalytic work based on Freud but presenting new elements has been by Karen Horney who places anxiety even prior to the instinctual drives. “What Freud terms instinctual drives, far from being basic, she holds, are themselves a product of anxiety”. In other words, “impulses and desires do not become “drives” except as they are motivated by anxiety” (Horney 1945:12-13 cited in Ibid.: 161). In this case, drives are ways of coping with anxiety and their actual aim is not satisfaction, as Freud believed, but safety! Safety from what?

Human beings are aware of their existence only with an awareness of temporality, that is, the limit of this existence. This awareness brings anxiety- my existence is full of potentialities, I am consisted of potentialities, and am free to make all these happen, and yet, these potentialities are limited, I am limited, and there is nothing I can do about this. In a way this is also the separation Otto Rank talks about- being finite separates me from life, from my loved ones, as well as from my many potentialities. Talking about this paradox between freedom and finiteness (May 1977:16), one is reminded of Jan Paul Sartre who suggests that we are “condemned to be free”. I, and all my loved ones, are here on this earth for a limited time, and at any moment we might cease to be (See Paul Tillich’s views in May 1977:15). Similarly, Søren Kierkegaard

48 Rank also criticizes Freud for overemphasizing castration and the “libido problem” with regards to the matter of separation from the mother See “Otto Rank answers Freud on Anxiety, 1926, available at <http://www.ottorank.com/essays/rank-answers-freud-on-anxiety> access date 11/30/2011

defines freedom as possibility, and talks about “the alarming possibility of being able” (Ibid.: 37 and 40 italics original). He describes anxiety as “not a fear of a specific threat, but a fear of nothingness” (See Voegelin 2003: 405).

Therefore, certain attitudes, feelings, and mechanisms are developed as ways of coping with anxiety borne out of *awareness*. The need to belong, from this perspective, appears as one way to alleviate this anxiety; it is not plain membership, it is about looking for “something potent and secure”⁴⁹- something that is more ‘concrete’ than I am. In other words, we sense our own finitude; we are aware of the ever-present possibility of non-existence, and we are aware not only of death, but also of the fact that we can’t bend everything and everyone to our will⁵⁰, and we long for what transcends the limits of our own finite and contingent existence⁵¹.

On the other hand, however, there is the explanation of anxiety as “an experience of a catastrophic condition” (citing Goldstein, May 1977: 58). In this explanation, the occasions of anxiety are conditioned by standards and values of any given culture, mainly because threats which cue off anxiety themselves are largely defined by the culture. That is, we learn what is a threat to our values which themselves are largely learned.

49 Douglas A. Marshall “Behavior, Belonging, and Belief: a Theory of Ritual Practice”, *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 20 No. 3, 2002, 360-380, 360.

50 Bart Van Leeuwen “The Affective Ambivalence of Cultural Diversity” *Ethnicities*, 8 (2), 2008, 147-176, 156. Anxiety does not necessarily suggest a negative feeling. As Van Leeuwen suggests, this sense of our own limitedness is an opportunity to wonder. To put it poetically, one might always say, “what does freedom mean if there is no limit? Doesn’t even the Creator, by creating, limit the limitlessness? By picking what will be among what can be” (Bilge Karasu, my translation). What is more, only those who feel anxiety because of the awareness of death can be aware of their existence.

51 For example, Spinoza suggests that “the intellectual love of God”, a religious attitude toward one’s life as a whole would help one to overcome fear and anxiety (May 1977:29 fn.17). Pascal also feels that “great bulk of diversions...were actually endeavors of people to avoid “thoughts of themselves”, for if they should pause for self-contemplation, they would be miserable and anxious” (Ibid.: 30).

Some scholars take attention the competitive structure of the capitalist system in which self-esteem depends on conditions beyond one's control. Ann Cvetkovich describes how Karl Marx, besides insisting on the need for a theoretical and conceptual analysis of commodity production, is also drawn to "sensational representation and to capitalism as felt experience" (Cvetkovich 2003: 43). She points at the "significant tradition of "sensational" Marxism, one that includes Walter Benjamin and Georg Simmel, and more recently, cultural theorists such as Michael Taussig and Fredric Jameson. These recent scholars emphasize shock and sensation as markers of shifting economic modes of production because of capitalism's ability to reshape the very structure of everyday experience" (Ibid.)

There are also those, from Goldstein to Kierkegaard and Spinoza, who underline the most important trend in any organism, namely, self-actualization. Spinoza calls this "blessedness" as the purpose of life. Kierkegaard's uses the concept of "self realization" and Goldstein looks at the organism's "nature". The attack in this case comes from any threat to the organism, but not only to its physical life but also to core values that the organism cherishes and "identifies with its existence" (May 1977:59)⁵². In other words, the threat of nonbeing might also lie in the psychological and spiritual realms in the threat of meaninglessness, "experienced... as a threat to the existence of the self (the experience of the "dissolution of the self" in Goldstein's term)" (May 1977:15). The explanation of anxiety as a modern phenomena therefore tied to the perspective which sees anxiety as a universal and an innate character. This is because, in the end,

⁵² Indeed, Rollo May defines anxiety as "the apprehension cued off by a threat to some value that the individual holds essential to his[sic.] existence as a personality" (May 1977:205)

anxiety threatens the basis of selfhood, it is still described on the philosophical level as the realization that one may cease to exist as a self (May 1977:208).

One important name who places anxiety in a socio-psychological setting is Erich Fromm who suggests that “certain factors in the modern industrial system in general and in its monopolistic phase in particular make for the development of a personality which feels powerless and alone, anxious and insecure” (Fromm 1960 :207). Talking about two aspects of freedom, that is, freedom from (restraints or authority) and freedom for new relatedness, Fromm claims that modern societies have only reached to the former, and this limited freedom only results in the isolation of the individual as the freedom from without being supported by a freedom for has only severed those ties which had afforded security and the sense of belonging (May 1977: 193). What is more, especially with the positive medicine and the development of human sciences the anxiety associated with death and the general experience of individuality increased⁵³. From 1945 and the birth of the atom bomb, writes Rollo May in 1977, “anxiety shifted from a covert to an overt problem” (May 1977:3), following Auden and Camus, he suggests the 20th century be termed the “age of overt anxiety” (Ibid.: 4), along with a feeling of “homelessness” (5). This is so because of “[t]he weight placed upon the value of competitive success ...in our culture...[which is] both the dominant goal in our culture and the most pervasive occasion for anxiety” (May 1977:173). With our futures threatened by, from the ongoing economic insecurity and diminishing social welfare to global warming, and also, of course, considering the constant “security alerts”, one can suggest this situation persists in our century as

53 Barry Smart, on Michel Foucault’s understanding of the notion of finitude. In Barry Smart, Michel Foucault, London: Routledge, 2002, 31, cited in Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work*, Duke University Press , 2006, 93, n.2

well. As a matter of fact, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, anxiety disorders (not “the relatively mild, brief anxiety caused by a stressful event(such as speaking in public or a first date”)) affect about 40 million adults in United States in a given year⁵⁴.

For those who emphasize the ‘modern anxiety’, the awareness of our temporality has not only sharpened with modernity, but this need to belong, the longing for safety has been increasingly exploited by the politics of exclusion. Thus, the terms “for grasping the modern world have to do with estrangement, difference, discontinuity, and distance”(Chow Ibid.: 7). Modern life is full of uncertainties, the more we know, the more we doubt, and the more threats there are to be cautious of. In *Liquid Modernity*, Zygmunt Baumann writes that liquidity is what characterizes the contemporary world, where everything is short-lived, and nothing stands still. It is ironic that while human life expectancy increases, so is anxiety and existential insecurity (Bauman 2000).

What we search for in this insecure world, therefore, is safety (See Bauman 2001). We exclude as much as we can from our lives all those who or what might cause threat to our existence, and our “way of life”, while at the same time romanticizing ideas such as “the community feeling”. Therefore, multiple categories are reinforced as separate entities which cannot “belong” together. This paradox was noted by Freud who argued that it is “always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, as long as there are ‘other’ people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness” (Freud 1969:51). Therefore, belonging, which alleviates anxiety, and exclusion seem to go along with each other.

54 National Institute of Mental Health publication on anxiety disorders, available <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/anxiety-disorders/introduction.shtml> access date 11/29/2011

At this point, Rollo May warns about the relation between anxiety and political totalitarianism, for, in contrast to fear, anxiety is increased “by the fact that there is no clear-cut villain, no “devil” on which to project our fears” (May 1977:15)⁵⁵. To find the “devil” somewhere becomes to be a part of a defense mechanism. This “devil” is a “pseudo-object” which is often found for the anxiety. “Anxiety is often displaced on these objects as there is generally relief from the pain of anxiety if the sufferer can attach it to some thing. The presence of pseudo-objects in anxiety ought not to be confused with the real sources of the anxiety” (May Ibid.: 61 fn.19)

This attempt to briefly situate the concept of belonging should only come across as related to a concern with conflicts and crises of living human beings, not with a set of abstract terminologies. The aim of this study is to convince the reader to start recognizing, acknowledging and embracing anxiety instead of repressing this experience or rationalizing it in terms of “fears” and finding “demons”. If, instead of insisting on an imagined coherence within ourselves and between the members of societies or communities we belong to, we rather accept the possibility of the feeling of belonging in spite of conflict, doubt and anxiety, both the individual lives and the well-beings of societies will be positively altered. We have to acknowledge anxiety and try to learn how to live through it as anxiety is omnipresent. As Rollo May says beautifully, “[W]hen all is said and done, anxiety is our human awareness of the fact that each of us is a being confronted with nonbeing” (May 1977: 363).

55 Scholars often emphasize this difference between fear and anxiety. It might be helpful to keep in mind, as a side note, May’s argument on patterns, or types, rather, of response to danger: first, the startle pattern, a pre-emotional, innate reflective reaction; second anxiety, the undifferentiated emotional response; and third, fear, a differentiated emotional response. (May 1977.: 220) Fear is defined as differentiated emotional response, because the object is defined, whereas for persons in anxiety, as we say above, there is no clear-cut object of this feeling.

For this reason, I consider very important the studies which pay attention to feelings in construction and redefinition of communities and identifications. I have in mind Anne Anlin Cheng who suggests that racialized communities in the United States (her research area) are bound not by ethnicity but by grief; Lynn Chancer's study which demonstrates how sadomasochism is embedded in group dynamics and distributions of power; David Eng and David Kazanjian's study which questions the standard political interpretations of mourning as a claim to political discourse; Lily Cho who takes attention to "the perpetual losses exacted upon diasporic subjects in the name of citizenship", and John Torpey's study which points at identifications with past injuries as touchstones of group belonging "even for the descendants of those injured"⁵⁶. These studies are very important as they, by reminding us that what seems to be a private feeling is in fact "a social experience which is still in process", help us remember that citizens and non-citizens are human beings with feelings that affect and are affected by the social life. These studies bring material meaning to the abstract ideas of citizenship, integration, assimilation, generational difference and so on in citizenship literature. Keeping the socio-psychological aspect in mind will be helpful in re-thinking the very notion of citizenship by starting to reveal, recognize, and accept conflict and complexity instead of ignoring the latter and holding on to a fixed and closed idea of citizenship.

⁵⁶ Cheng, Anne Anlin (2001) *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation and Hidden Grief*. Oxford: Oxford UP. Eng, David and David Kazanjian (2003) "Between Genocide and Catastrophe" in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 125-147, p. 137. Lily Cho (2007) "Affecting Citizenship: the Materiality of Melancholia", Paper presented at *Narratives of Citizenship*: University of Alberta, March 2007, http://www.nofcit.com/papers/Essay_L.%20Cho.pdf access date November 12, 2010 T John Torpey (2006) *Making Whole What Has Been Smashed : On Reparations Politics*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 21.

Acts of Belonging: A Definition

Scholars differentiate between “normal anxiety” and “neurotic anxiety” where the former

- i. is not disproportionate to the objective threat
- ii. does not involve repression or other mechanisms of intrapsychic conflict
- iii. does not require neurotic defense mechanisms.
- iv. can be confronted constructively on the level of conscious awareness or can be relieved if the objective situation is altered. (May 1977: 210)

Indeed, Freud talked about “objective anxiety”. Alfred Adler and Otto Rank, especially due to the continuing separation throughout individuals’ life as we mentioned earlier, demonstrated the importance of “normal anxiety” in everyday life. This “normal anxiety” does not imply hostility, scholars suggest, and does not even lead to defense mechanisms. I disagree. I disagree, because, first of all, I do not think it is at all possible to name the anxiety an individual feels **without** looking at the defense mechanism they employ in order to alleviate this anxiety. What is more, Rollo May himself accepts that “[i]n most persons the two kinds of anxiety are intermingled” (Ibid.: 211) and that “if...anxiety-creating experiences are negotiated successfully...the anxiety in such cases should then be described as “normal” rather than “neurotic” (May Ibid.:212). Therefore, what might be differentiated, I suggest, is not the anxiety itself, but the way in which the individual tries to cope with it.

There might be innumerable ways of reacting in front of, or as a response to, anxiety. What makes *acts of belonging* important for the sake of group maintenance is that they point at the very issue of belonging as the main force behind attachment. In other words, more than the possible causes/factors which are supposed to keep the individual within a group, *acts* reveal the

importance of belonging itself as the main factor which affects the identification with the group. This should not be confused with what Erich Fromm calls “automation conformity” which describes times when the individual “adopts entirely the kind of personality offered to him by cultural patterns; and he [sic.] therefore becomes exactly as all others are and as they expect him [sic.] to be” (Fromm 1941:185 cited in May Ibid.: 196). Here, the individual becomes identical with millions of other individuals and thus need not feel alone and anxious anymore. Acts of belonging do *not* necessarily aim to copy the cultural norms and forms of behavior most commonly found within the close environment. They have the individual claim belonging *in spite of* possible differences. The individual does not claim that she is just like the others, nor does she suggest that she is different; often she acts on or through those differences in order to claim belonging.

Acts should also not be confused with other means of allaying anxiety such as frantic activity. Rollo May argues that “[t]he anxiety arising out of the dilemma of powerlessness in the face of supra-personal economic forces on one hand, but theoretical belief in the efficacy of individual effort on the other” has been, in the 16th and subsequent centuries in the Western world, symptomized by excessive activism (May 1977:194). One surely is reminded of Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic* which, with regards to Calvinism, demonstrates how successful work became a sign that one is among the chosen. Indeed, frantic activity is quite familiar especially to western urbanites. “Free” time, after all, “is problematic because it thrusts freedom upon us” (Yalom 1980:448)

Other mechanisms of escape from anxiety might be sado-masochism and destructiveness, as both of these are “forms of symbiosis in which an individual endeavors to overcome isolation

by becoming absorbed in the existence of another person or persons” (May 1977:197). It might be easier to read sado-masochism as a form of a strong tie, to say the least, to another person or persons, but how does one explain the relation of destructive behavior to anxiety? The tie here is the feeling of hostility. In the individual, writes May, who is characterized by independence without corresponding relatedness, will develop hostility toward those whom she believes to be the occasion of their isolation. On the other end of the spectrum, if the individual feels completely dependent to others, there might develop hostility toward those who are instrumental in the suppression of her capacities and freedom (see May 1977: 229). May also talks about repression as another means through which the individual tries to ignore unfulfilled needs or unutilized capacities. In this case the aim might be to avoid conflict but it actually results in greater conflict, which May calls “neurotic conflict” and “neurotic anxiety” (Ibid.) These last two points are a crucial warning and a reminder of the fact that repressed hostility and ignoring conflict might create further anxiety which, in turn, results with destructiveness as one of the overt forms of hostility.

There are other concepts whose definitions come close to the notion of “acts of belonging”. Michel de Certeau, for instance, calls “tactics” the ways in which individuals try to enhance their agency without overturning the structural circumstances of their conditions, but by using them as an opportunity (1984: 34). Similarly, John W. Bennett talks about “coping” mechanisms which refer to situations when an individual “simply deals with circumstances in order to obtain what he [sic.] needs and/or wants, or to come to terms with the situation...When his coping behavior takes on patterned and sequential character, and therefore is communicable to others, one may speak of strategies, or adaptive strategies...ways of making means appropriate

to ends sought” (251, italics in the original). What I call acts of belonging, however, although coming close to these two concepts (tactics and strategies) at times, are different in many sense. First of all, tactics and strategies seem to be in line with a more of a rational, or a resource utilization process. Acts of belonging, as I said earlier, are not necessarily conscious, nor are they necessarily ‘rational’⁵⁷. Second of all, especially Bennett’s strategies stretch through time, they are made up in time by techniques used by the individual or group to satisfy their wants. Acts of belonging especially refer to temporalities- repetition is not always necessary . Finally, and this is important, acts of belonging refers to a subject who is “reclaimed ...for its being-such, for belonging itself” (Agamben 2003). In this sense, the subject that acts reminds us of Giorgio Agamben’s “whatever being” whose community is mediated “not by any condition of belonging (being red, being Italian, being Communist) nor by the simple absence of conditions...but by belonging itself” (Ibid.: 85) This does not mean a lack of identity, or a refusal of an identity; what this does suggest is to emphasize the virtue of belonging itself.

Not all bodies are affected by what Sara Ahmed calls disorientation, and touched by this need to emphasize and/or “prove” one’s belonging equally. Discourses on migration, citizenship, sexualities, religion, integration and so on, frequently politicize identifications especially when these come along with a migrant background which already suggests a disorientation: the subjects of this study remind us that all these are unevenly distributed.

Therefore, it is not surprising that responses or “coping mechanisms” will be various. Below, I develop categories of these *acts* - categories which surely are ideal types only. They are

⁵⁷ If we define “rational” as “the comparison of two or more goals in order to choose among them, and to effect a compromise of some kind”. (Altman et. al 1980:254)

not mutually exclusive, each is always hyphenated with the other. In other words, individuals do not necessarily employ only one of these acts, they might employ most, or all of them throughout their lives, or they might employ some simultaneously.

making home

After having talked about her past years of physical and emotional violence, Zeynep says:

“I have this feeling of..that I have now come home. I have found home..”

What do we mean by this word, home? Do we use “home” as a broad term, in the sense of a psychological status or being; do we specifically mean the place we live in, do we have in our mind our loved ones, or the very house we have? Is it a physical or a geographical space? “If I ever said I was German in front of white Germans”, many of my respondents say, “they would just laugh at me” [more literally, “they would laugh their asses off at me”]. Most of the people I have talked with, however, have been enthusiastic either about the city of Berlin, saying they feel like “home” in the city; if not the city, they feel the same way about their neighborhoods. This feeling does not arrive without labor, though: Many put a special emphasis on building, sometimes literally constructing, making a safe and an ideal home out of their city, their neighborhoods, their apartments.

For example, “home” is the term Berrin uses for the city she adores: She says she wants “to stay in Berlin. To live in Berlin. To be a citizen of Berlin [she laughs and continues in English]. I mean it conceptually of course.” Then she pauses and goes back to Turkish, her native language, to explain what she means by being a Berlin citizen: “I mean, it is not something like ‘I want to become a German citizen’. It is like ‘I am a Berliner’...This is how I feel, yes. Until I

came here to Berlin the first time ever in the year of 2000, [again in English] I never thought I belonged anywhere”. She loves Berlin so much that this city is not only where she wants to live in, but also where she wants “to be buried”. ““The sun or whatever else in Barcelona, oh let me go there’. No, there is no such thing. I am not interested at all.”

Her German, when she first came to Berlin, was “null” [using the German pronunciation]. “But” she continues, “although I couldn’t have many relationships... the smell of this city makes me a native”. I must have looked curious and interested that she continues:

“I landed in Tegel [the airport in Berlin]. I remember, the moment I arrived there, there was this smell of croissants. And I didn’t know back then that it was the smell of croissants. [In English] Instinctively [Turkish again] you are like..this is probably the smell of this city. A strange smell. Something chemical but still..I still don’t forget that smell. I still don’t forget it, you know! Still...I have goosebumps [thinking of that moment].”⁵⁸

Surely it is not only the smell of the city that she appreciates in Berlin! She likes what she calls the “system in general”. “The [in English] transport [Turkish again] system, for example. I can use my bike or something, for example- a big freedom for me, something I can’t do in Ankara [the capital city of Turkey, the city she is from]”. “Spending” a day without leaving the house to “get out to” Berlin, is a “waste”, for her: “I’d at least have a tour with the bike. I’ll go to the [in English] bakery [Turkish again] and have a cup of coffee, at least, you know.” These tours in the city, her biking, her letting herself out “to the city” connect her to Berlin while also

⁵⁸ Indeed, there is a need in sociology for further research and projects on the relationships between smell and the city. There has been much stronger focus on vision and audition for social communication (verbal communication and the importance and interpretation of body language, for instance), and recent years have brought important studies demonstrating the utility of visual sociology for urban sociology and sociology of migration and globalization. See Krase (2004; 2007; 2009). However, especially when it comes to the affect of smell on individuals, it seems that psychology, neuroscience and cognitive science have been more productive. See, for example, among others, Rouby et. al (2002) *Olfaction, Taste and Cognition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press among. There are some exceptions, however. See Paul Rodaway (1994) *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place*, London: Routledge; Porteous (1985) “Smellscape” in *Progress in Human Geography*, 9 (3) : 356-378.

reminding her of where she is; i.e. that she is living her dream. What about other cities in Germany? “Those places” she says, “are Germany. Not [like] Berlin.” It feels to her as if she moves outside of the country itself, when she goes to Munich, for instance, or visit a friend living in the West, which is, she claims, “like a nightmare”. She then remembers her days in Glasgow, Scotland, where she had lived for a while to work, and where she didn’t put a step outside for days: “When I’m out of Berlin”, she says, “I’m out of myself”.

Berrin lives in Neukolln, with K., whom she

“found online, saying ‘i am looking for a [in English] queer household...We have built ...like...everything in the house together. This is the first time in my life, in this house, I feel I am home. Think about it, since I was 17! Since I left mom’s house, I w a s like a turtle carrying my home on my back...Here is the first place I feel home. I have two bicycles that belong to me, my CDs, my books, I never had before. I could not spend money on anything stationary, knowing I would leave again soon. Here I built everything myself, the balcony and so on. Yes, it’s a very different feeling, and I am not letting this go. It is mine, man, and I deserve this, I am here, I’m not leaving.”

Two years after I talked with Berrin, I have Ida in front of me, at a Kreuzberg café. Ida is a friend of mine, from Slovenia and is talking about her own experience of “building” her home. She knows I like to bake, so does she, and she gives baking as an example of making, building, creating her home. I smile, so she laughs and then explains:

“No. I mean, it can be really physical, I mean I actually make the home with the wood, with the painting, everything...Most of the apartment is mine, most of the furniture- that’s also important. You have to be surrounded with objects that you chose. And it also depends on whom I invite to my home. I really like dinners with people...it’s also like what I do at home, it’s about cooking, knitting together, laughter, music whatever that’s home for me. Very physical things. Psychologically the home is where I can move to, that’s what they say...when something happens I need my peace and I need to be able to close my doors.”

Closing her doors? Indeed. Talking with these women is a reminder that past is really not past. Time and time again, they go back in time to their childhood or adolescence, sometimes to make sense of, sometimes to explain more easily, their current acts in Berlin. “I don’t have any curtains in my home” my friend says,

“never in my life will I ever have curtains because I was told constantly as a child, as a teenager that I should put the rollers down so nobody can ever see me. It won’t happen again in my life. I also figured out that there was not a time when I could close the doors to be with myself...I tried to do that once and my father broke the doors. It will not happen again [that] when I want to I cannot close the doors. No, you cannot enter. You know it’s very physical but also psychological...It’s the safe place where I can move to.”

coming out (or not) as an act of belonging

Can not-acting be an act in itself? Is not the individual actually doing something by not “coming out” to her family or friends for whatever reason? Is a body able to say what is not being said? Furthermore, does that “common language” which is supposed to be one of the main elements of maintaining social communities have to be verbal?

“Coming out” as a term, does not exist in Turkish language; i.e. there is no direct translation. Turkish speakers talk about whether one’s family “knows or not”, whether the person “has told them”; or they sometimes simply use the English terminology as “coming out”. Moreover, the “telling” is experienced and practiced in different ways. Talking to my respondents led me question myself in the sense that to what extent am I, as a “westernized” researcher, carrying a limited understanding as to what it means to “come out” in the first place? What does it mean, why does it matter, and what does it do to actors involved?

Zeynep tried to commit suicide by cutting her wrists when she was only a teenager. She did not talk much about this attempt, nor did her parents. She did do one thing, however, which

she remembers very well: “Whenever dad wanted something, like water or anything else, I was giving it to him like this [she stretches her arm out in front of her in a way that her sleeve moves upwards, showing her bare wrists]. I was doing this always, always. And how many times he hit my arm saying ‘take this away, go away...’. I was always doing that, because [now as if talking to her father] ‘look, look at what happened to me..’”

Berrin also has not “talked” about her sexual orientation with her parents. She did, however, “come out” to her aunt who lives back in Turkey. Her aunt, “a sensible individual...just 10 years or so older than I am. Elderly people cannot.. like..but..my aunt took it natural...”.

I do not want this study (and thus my interpretations of these exchanges) to put the words in my respondents’ mouth. I do not appreciate social science which does not take seriously, or which does not respect, what the “subject of the study” tries to communicate. However, I have to admit that I have come to question whether in some cases this attempt to find excuses might be an attempt to normalize conflict. It is to my experience that we usually make excuses as to why we prefer not to talk to our (otherwise very “sensible”) families; or why we prefer they not “know”. “Even if my lover was a man” some of my respondents would say for example, “I would still not find it necessary to tell my parents”; or, “I have not yet met anyone whom I would like to introduce to my family anyway”. This constant attempt to convince ourselves that this matter in fact does not matter might actually be an important clue showing its importance. If this normalization or legitimization process does not prove the importance of our coming out to our families, it definitely shows that we are aware of the importance of “coming out” for the individual we are communicating with. In other words, if the weight of ‘coming out’ was not felt by the individual, the lack of this process would not require a reasoning or legitimization.

I should also note here that this normalization process does not only occur in relation to coming out to families. Similar reasoning is employed regarding the individual's sense of acceptance by the ethnic community or the larger society. For example, Ayben talks about how she used to deal with her feeling like an outsider of the Turkish community and the larger society. Her appearance, the ways in which she talked, used her body language, the ways in which she dressed, or even her piercings, "all these" she says, "I was consciously doing in order to create an image of difference while I also wanted to be accepted by those people [the Turkish communities]. I mean, I was marginalizing myself, so that when I was not accepted I could react by saying 'well, I did this myself anyway'".

Berrin claims that her parents and the aunt she talked about her sexuality with "have the same mentality, actually." She pauses and seems to be thinking over what she has just said. "Definitely so". Why does she not talk with the parents, then, instead of talking with the aunt?

"They shouldn't know in the sense that they will feel like they have to lie to everybody else. They can't tell relatives, it will be too complex. Since they wouldn't want that to happen, they will have to lie to the others because of me, they will have to hide. I don't want to put them in that situation...they love me unconditionally. But I mean I don't want to put them into that complex situation, it just doesn't make sense."

It is still a relief, however, to have the aunt know. Why is this a relief to talk to the aunt-how is it any different than talking to a friend, for instance?

"Because my aunt is like my family. Not like telling any person whatsoever... I just thought she deserved to know. I mean towards her I feel like..I have a reason to not tell my mom, but my aunt doesn't have that responsibility, so... I said to her 'I would like to talk with you about something'. I said 'I am gay'. She said 'you can't be gay you are a girl', I said 'then I am homosexual'. She said 'oh okay then'. Then she said 'Oh, I thought you were going to say 'I became vegetarian'!"- she's a very funny lady. If you become a vegetarian,

my family excommunicates you!”

The extended family, with aunts, cousins or grandparents, seems to be playing a significant role in these coming out stories. It is sometimes the family members themselves who open the subject. Ayben, currently in her late 30s, recalls a time from years ago when she visited her grandparents in a small Turkish town, with her then girlfriend. Her grandfather tells her they “need to talk”.

“‘Yes father?’ and so on. ‘So when it’s love between two girls, they call them lesbians, right?’ I said yes. Wow the man actually uses the word. ‘When it is women-to-women are they again called lesbians?’ ‘Yes, father, they are called lesbians also’. ‘You also make love, right?’ Yes, we do’. He said ‘Hmm’ and then started to stare into the abyss in a quite ostentatious way! He said ‘this, Ayben, does not go along with our religion, doesn’t go along with our culture’ - ‘Yes, father’. ‘But you are our grandchild⁵⁹ and we love you’. This is how they accepted it. His last word, however, was, he said ‘but if your brother⁶⁰ comes here with a man, I’d chase him away all the way to hell’. ‘Oh come on father, he’s not like that’ [she laughs]. This is how he accepted it.”

Elvan, a social worker and a university instructor, thinks that more ‘educated’ parents find it harder to ‘accept’ the daughter’s “situation” as these parents are “know-it-alls”.

“They see it [queerness/homosexuality] as a disease. She is ill, let’s do a therapy, let’s do something, where did we go wrong..I mean they correlate homosexuality with disease, or she has had a psychological challenge, or something happened when she was little. Like we can fix this.”

59 Turkish is a gender neutral language. The grandfather uses a gender neutral term (“torun”) which can only be translated as “grandchild” .

60 again a gender neutral term, “kardes”, which actually means sibling. I do know, however, from her previous comments, that Ayben talks about her “erkek kardes”, which literally means “male sibling”, hence the translation to “brother”.

“My family” says Elvan, “they are so simple...mom is illiterate, had 9 children, raised them all and so on... Who loves what [moves her hand as if to say it does not matter]. What matters [for her mother, and thus for people like her mother] is that the daughter is happy.”. Does this mean they would ‘accept’ Elvan with her girlfriend had she visited the family- and if so, how would the reaction be? They would treat the girlfriend “as a friend”, Elvan says.

“They wouldn’t judge like who is this or what is this. Oh I can’t know what it would be like if they had a son, if my feudal family had a gay son. But with women... For example I have these friends who’re living together, dad is very happy about this. He says to me ‘you shouldn’t live on your own either. Look how they are being comrades to each other.’ I mean if I tell them today that I’m moving in with another woman, nobody would question me like ‘do you have a relationship with this woman or not’. ‘Oh, it’s good, see, she’s not being lonely’”.

Dervise, on the other hand, who lives with her partner in the same neighborhood as Elvan, is among those who claim this right for their sexual orientation to be known by their families. “It is my right for them to know” she says.

Sometimes, sexuality and sexual orientation-based identifications and terminologies are used in order to “punch them in the face”: Ida talks about “certain spaces when politics is completely private. So like sometimes I choose [when being asked about her sexual orientation] lesbian”. Her “labeling” herself as lesbian, especially in Slovenia, where older “lesbians” accept younger “queers” as not political enough, is doing exactly this: being political, doing politics through and through, as she “knows” that “if an outsider calls me a lesbian..I know that they mean it in a bad way.”

It was not before Ida moved to Berlin, a city which is “like a bubble. like it’s so warm, so accepting” that she “learned” that “it [living as a lesbian] could be possible, like a lifestyle. That

you can imagine a future together. So I told them”. “Telling them”, meaning, coming out to her parents when she went back to visit Slovenia: Her father looks away, her mother looks confused. What she tells them is that she has a girlfriend “...and I’m telling you because she is coming to pick me up and i needed a car to go...yeah so they did somethings that i would never accept now, but then...” Her relation with the parents who, according to the then girlfriend, are “homophobic”, affect her relation with the latter whose parents “never had problems with her sexuality...”. “For me” Ida says, continuing only along with many pauses in between, “my parents... they are clearly working class, now they are middle class, like...they started as a working class, and they also grew up in a working class and never came to something like this...it was like a long process...”. When at one point her mother “blames” feminism and suggests her relationship with another woman is “like a political relationship, or based on our political fight”, Ida uses the S-word: “I said that’s partly true, but I also want to have sex with her, it’s like desire, I want to have her in my bed.”

Her deliberate use of desire and sex is also political, being part of her aim to “get rid of this picture of ignorance”. On the other hand, though, Ida presents a somehow altered image of herself: Her sexual desire is actually oriented towards all genders, not specifically and only towards women; but she does not want to create doubt in her parents. By staying silent about her sexual involvement with men, Ida tries to prevent her parents from thinking that she “would change my mind, you know?...i’m not going to change my mind because of what you say, even though I am attracted to any gender.”

Her lesbian identity, therefore, is political, and is “because of the society...when it comes to society I say okay, that’s when I do politics”.

claim making as an act of belonging:

Integration, as long as it involves the feeling of belonging to the society one lives in, is not about “being” or “appearing” like everyone else. One might compare the ways in which one acts as a guest in a household and the ways in which one acts as a member of one’s household. The feeling of belonging to that household allows one to make claims: as a member, a participant, an actor of this house, I *deserve* what I claim.

Berrin has been living alone in Berlin for only a few years on a student visa which has recently expired. In Turkish, the young woman explains to me that in order to be able to continue living in Berlin, she is currently looking for a “professional job”. She says she would sue “them” if she ends up losing her legal status. I ask her whom she refers to, and she says (in English) “the government”. As a matter of fact she is supposed to have a meeting with an attorney right after our talk, to discuss legal possibilities in front of her. I am intrigued by her determination and curious about the ways in which she legitimizes herself- what is the basis on which she plans to sue the government?

“I have been living here..have built my life here, I do not ask for money...I think I deserve to reside here. Everybody is like, “go get married”, but I don’t want to put myself from a rightful position to a wrongful position, you know, I mean, I don’t want to do something in pretense. I seriously think that I need to stay here.”

Conflict is actually a “symptom” of integration, in the sense that the individual sees herself as having the right to make claims *just like any other member, although she is different in whatever particular ways*. In this vein, claim-making appears as an act of belonging: Just like other acts of belonging, claim-making too both reinforces the sense of belonging, and validates the subject’s status as one who belongs.

In this vein, one might argue that in contrast to populist discourses on the welfare state, making claims to and demanding from the state does not prove one's estrangement from the state. The conversation between a claimant and the party who is expected to take responsibility is surely not always an easy one: Parties involved do not necessarily understand or empathize with each other; problems arise especially due to the ways in which responsibilities and power are distributed. However, demanding from (or conferring responsibilities to) an institution, (be it one's family, one's school or the unemployment office) will necessitate a degree of comfort in using the same "language" (in the broad sense of the term) and a certain amount of trust.

A couple of years after she moved to Berlin as a young woman in her twenties, Evrim got married to a cross-dresser friend of hers "for papers"- that is, in order to be able to legally reside and work in Germany. She has already passed the period of time which is necessary before she can get a divorce without losing this right. "But", she says, "I don't want a divorce.". She pauses, laughs, and continues: "Openly speaking, I love my husband a lot". The love between them is not what one might call a "romantic love". "His house is right here also, if anything happens..I have his house keys also..I mean, I don't want to get a divorce because if something happens to me, the party who will make a decision about me will otherwise be my family. Rather than my family, I trust his decisions...And also H. [the legal husband] is not only H: [she lists some of their close friends] they would all come together and make a decision. That is why I do not want to divorce. There's no need. I also love my marriage to say the truth [laughs]".

She uses the word "trust" repeatedly. She trusts her friends' would- be decision more than those of her birth-family. She trusts the person she is legally married to. She claims that her

attachment and the sense of belonging to Germany are also related to what she considers to be her trust towards the state:

I: “how do you mean?”

E: “I mean...now that the more papers I receive, like my tax payer ID number, I have this or that, the more I receive these papers, the more I have felt belonging. My social identity, the retirement insurance, the health insurance number, the tax payer number...all these get you closer to citizenship”.

Therefore, there is something beyond the legal acceptance or recognition of citizenship. Gokce, for example, is not legally a citizen but does not see this as an obstacle to claiming citizenship in the everyday life. If anyone points at her “lack of papers”, she would tell them “what can I do about that. It is what it is for me. It’s just paper, that is so at least for me. I can always be German, but you can’t be Turkish.”

Dervise also has not yet applied for citizenship. “Why not?” I ask. “Do you think it unnecessary, or is there another reason?”

“To be German...this also I sense as something that is forced upon me, and I am allergic to this type of enforcements! I mean I live in this country, I do everything for this country, I work, I save people in my job if necessary...Why do I have to be German? ...If, for example, they said ‘we give you the right to vote and all anyway, because you have been a member of this society for a long time, so you are free to be German or not, then I would want to be German. To be German is wrong: I would want to get the German passport, I don’t otherwise want to be anything- I am what I am.”

What about claims related to or based on, or embracing sexual identifications? Ayben, a well-known figure not only in the Berlin-Turkish community but by the society overall, talks about her decision to be politically active as a lesbian Turkish-German. Having seen the support from her family as a “luxus” (a luxury, an advantage), and having experienced what she calls a

“migrant coming out”, when she embraced her migrant identity along with her sexual orientation, Ayben started to become more politically active.

“I didn’t have much to lose...and so I’m one of those who’ve chosen to act...Türkiyeliler⁶¹ used to say ‘we don’t have lesbians or gays, you must have taken this [being a lesbian] from Germans’. So I also had this feeling like ‘but this is not true, of course it exists, and I will prove this to myself and the others’”. The Turkey that you perceive is much different, and sexual and social identity are not necessarily completely related to one’s cultural identity anyway”.

Ayben calls herself an “applied German”[her words]- *antrag [application] Deutsche*: She had to submit an application in her early 20s, after already having been raised in Germany. “I mean, this is not in my blood. I did this to be able to act politically and socially however I wanted to act.” This status, having been achieved before the the policy change in 2000, allows her hold on to her Turkish citizenship also. This is a dual citizen status which she “plays with”, by using one or the other, depending on the act she would like to perform. For instance, she says “coming to Germany from Turkey, if a Turkish citizen has a problem, I will surely be able to be helpful. And I can even be ehm.. ehm... rude, since I have this German citizenship, which has brought a kind of self-confidence to me.” She benefits from this dual status during the election times also: she votes both in Germany and in Turkey, both at local, and at national elections, her schedule permitting.

Another “advantage” she benefits from is Germans’ acceptance of her, thanks to her language skills as well as her appearance which “does not fit the image of a Turkish migrant woman”.

⁶¹ As explained in the introduction, Türkiyeli is a Turkish word meaning “a person from Turkey”. Ayben is using this word instead of the ethnically loaded term “Türk”.

“Okay, go on thinking that I am the integrated one, but I will continue my politics all the same. Because I can use these opportunities that I have, I can get their [“white” Germans] trust. I can play with their own language, so I can explain to them certain things: I can tell them ‘look, this is racist what you just said’ and so on.”

nurturing

“It is not important where you were born” goes one Turkish adage, “what is important is where you get full”. Here, “getting full” surely refers to making ends meet, living a satisfactory life and so on. But I realized that so many of my respondents mentioned food, either as an allegory or in the literal sense of the term. Evrim, for instance, uses “buffet” as a metaphor when praising a close friend, a second generation Turkish Berliner: “Think of a buffet... [the friend] has put some from everything she likes, from Turkishness, from Islam, from the Germans..and she’s presenting this to you.” And when talking about a German friend who is “more Turkish than I am”, she again refers to the food culture: “For example she likes Turkish tea more than I do, I don’t like it. Other friends too like Turkish food more than I do”. She laughs, and says she prefers pork. “But also those German cakes...I love those...But again, this was what I liked about here the most: the buffet thing where you pick according to your [taste]. Add some from Turkishness...[she laughs].”

The emphasis, however, is not on what one picks, but on what one *does*. Evrim talks about her friends “doing Turkish culture”, for instance, by liking Turkish food more than she does. In migrant literature, rituals around and preferences of certain food are connected to preserving national and cultural identity (Petö 2007). Furthermore, resisting the food of “the other” might be a form of resistance in a broader sense. Kutsal talks about her Turkish group of friends in Cologne, where she lived before moving to Berlin, explaining how they would do certain things

that “Germans do not know”: going to a Turkish restaurant in order to have soup after a long night out. There is a specific kind that is generally preferred by Turkish people after having been drinking. This specific kind does not exist in the German cuisine. What is more, due to different ways of preparing the soup, the German kind is thicker, that is, more concentrated than the Turkish type soup. Therefore, she says, “Germans do not ‘drink’ the soup, they ‘eat’ it.”⁶² “It turns out that these things somehow connect you to each other”.

On the other hand, however, one of the first levels of experiencing “the other” is by preparing or experiencing the other’s food. I ask Kutsal if she had ever tried to “eat” soup, or whether she could remember an experience related to food. She doesn’t try hard to remember the “pleasure” of having cakes with her German friends. “This you can’t really do with Turks. Turks don’t have much of that culture, like going to a café and asking for hours what this cake is made of, what that one tastes like, and so on, and then picking one and ordering a cup of coffee with it...this is apparently something my German lesbian friends used to do with their grandmothers, in their culture”.

I use the word “nurture” in two ways: In a specific sense, pointing at the food, the preparation, sharing and the rituals surrounding it; and secondly, in a broader sense signifying the taking care of, caring for, or supporting, something or someone. One example which might combine both of these senses is Melike’s example. Melike ran away from her parents’ house, from a town of Stuttgart to the big city, when she was 15 years old. She met the father of her only child, whom she died only a few months before they were supposed to get married. A few years later, she moved to Berlin with her child and although she had quite an uneasy life, both

⁶² Directly translated from Turkish, which uses the verb “to drink” while referring to soup.

financially and and psychologically, she devoted a part of her time to caring for and feeding the homeless in one Berlin neighborhood.

Elvan, when asked why she has chosen the café we meet which is owned by a person with Turkish background, tells me that this is her way of supporting those members of migrant communities- not only those with Turkish background, but others also.

Another example is Ayben, who talks about what she calls the “trust in advance” [Vertrauen voraus] that she “automatically” gives to a person if they are “from Turkey and gay or lesbian”. That a person is from Turkey, for her, is already a “plus point”, she says, that they are also “LGBT is even better”.

Evrin experienced Ayben’s “trust in advance” from the first hand. On the very day Evrin moved to Berlin and met “the maternal” Ayben the very first time, the latter opened her house to her.

“You know how they praise Turkish hospitality? You won’t see it this much in Turkey. You won’t feel it this much. The first time I saw that Turkish hospitality was in here [in Berlin] with Ayben...It was just ten minutes ago when we met, maybe half an hour...it was such a shock to me, right when I arrived. I said ‘how do you trust me this much, what if I steal your stuff and just go away? She said, she said this the first time to me, which struck me the most..the ‘confidence in advance’...You give an advantage to somebody, and if the person uses this advantage in a good way, there begins a friendship. If the person loses the advantage, you just lose the advance payment, and that’s all. It was very logical. I don’t know, it just affected me a lot. ”

She wrote a short story once, she says, on “Turkishness”. “Those here claim they are Turkish. Those who are there also claim they are Turkish, but there are enormous differences between them. I wrote a story based on this. Which one is more Turkish- what does it mean to be Turkish.”

Evrım compares the “warmth” she has been feeling in Berlin, not only within the Turkish community but also that coming from “Germans” as well, to what she had experienced back in Turkey.

“Turkey is a strange country...It’s all words in Turkey. They say we’re hospitable, and they greet you well, but they talk behind your back. For show, it’s all for show. I got used to that being fake back in Turkey that when I saw the real thing here I got shocked. Really, they say Germans are cold, but I have never met a cold German. I’m sure there are...For sure...Or they maintain their distance for example but they are at least honest”

organizing

“In München [Munich]”, says Dervise, “I realized that migrants are more ehmm..timid..that arrogance they have in Berlin, they didn’t have it there.. Perhaps their organizing in Berlin is more powerful. I mean, everybody, even if they don’t go regularly to their meetings, have their organizations. Especially in the last 15-20 years, with politicians going to specific neighborhoods and all..Many developments.”

As a matter of fact, I know Dervise from one of these organizations, GLADT (Gays and Lesbians of Turkish Backgrounds) which was founded in 1997 as a subsection of LSVD (The Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany) and later broke away in order to become more independent in representing the interests of those with migrant background. Although their name underlines the identity of *Türkiyeli*, there are those among their members coming from other countries and regions.

Dervise uses the term “to slide into” organizations such as GLADT. When she first got engaged in GLADT’s activities, she met a lot of people “very quickly. Either those who’ve been

living here for a long time, or those who were worn and raised here. When you meet this and that person, you slide into this, and then you can't get out!"

Ayben is among those who have helped form GLADT. But she was active even before that:

"This organization thing is so important. I was like 'I have to be able to talk in Turkish' and I also did not feel German, I felt strange in the German scene [her word], like I couldn't feel warm with people there. But also like, how do they do the coming out thing, what is the relation between lesbianness and *Türkiyelilik*, how do they deal with racisms, intimate relationships, are there racisms in these intimate relations, what about the ways in which you can have a status in German society...and also let's dance, belly dance and all [laughing]. Talk Turkish, have fun, make Turkish food, you know, have a good time...All these I wanted. so I went to *Lesbenberatung*⁶³ [Lesbian Counseling Centre], I left there papers with contact information, went to all gay cafés, lesbian cafés, announced my intentions...took my straight brother with me to the gay parade because I don't know, I'm afraid [laughing]...and I was to strangers like 'oh so are you *Türkiyeli*? are you a lesbian? let's have a group together' and so I was writing down my number...Finally we created a group of 8-10 women, everyone with their own reasons to join. Like, some want to improve their Turkish, some said what is the relation with my being a lesbian and the Turkishness, some said they missed to have fun Turkish style, lets dance together and so on.."

Apparently this group lasted 2,5 years and dissolved as some of the women wanted to act more politically, emphasized the importance of visibility and have a political fight against racism and sexism. There was another group of women, however, who were "already burdened by sexism and racisms and heterosexisms, and, rightly, did not want to write on their foreheads that they were lesbians". Ayben was among the former group. She wanted to prove, to the Turkish community as well as to Germans, she says, "that we exist. The Turkey that you have in mind is very different than mine. That a Muslim cannot be an LGBT or a *Türkiyeli* cannot be an LGBT, is what you keep saying, but this, to me, is not incompatible."

63 *Lesbenberatung* does not only give services to lesbian women but also to bisexual and transgender women in conflict situations.

Several different attempts and a few years later, GLADT was formed. Organizing, uniting under one roof, claiming ones' space, Ayben says, are also about having a safety net. "Are you looking for a job? Okay, send to GLADT, perhaps you can find a job. Or, 'I had a row with my girlfriend about racism, what do I do?'" kind of things. Because you are not the first person experiencing these. Others have their own experiences which might help you. It is a cultural-political space but also where friendships can form, and one can get social support. That is why I love these groupings."

There is something else which organizing and grouping (re)create: traditions. "Berlin Turks" says Ilkay, have created some traditions on their own. "Cracking seeds, I mean this much of it probably doesn't exist in Turkey, this intensity of it! There used to be a seed-cracking competition also, who can crack how much in a given amount of time. I have never joined, I can't do it anyway, but it was fun."

"What other traditions have been created by Berlin Turks?" I ask Ilkay.

"These barbecue events, when the weather gets a little warmer, it is a must to go outside. Germans did not have that before, but they kind of got used to it in recent years...For us, life is outside, on the street. You know how it is like here? It was much worse when I was little: Kids could only play in the garden between 12 and 4pm, rules everywhere. I hate that part, see? Going to Istanbul I say wow, this is beautiful. You go to the hairdresser, if it fits their schedule it is okay, if not, you wait for ten minutes, then they take care of you. But in here, you get termin [appointment] two weeks before! You go waxing, get the termin two weeks before. Everything is with termin."

To conclude

Ilkay is one of many of my respondents who say they are 'a Berliner'. I ask her, then, to draw a map of 'her Berlin'- whatever makes her identify with this city. She explains me the

spots/points she is marking on the map. “Here is the film..the script” she says, “I want to make my film within a year”. I want to make sure that I do not misunderstand her:

“Do you mean this is where you work at?”

She replies:

No, it’s not about the place I work at, it’s something that I do. And there’s the “cinema seed” [a movie screening project she is organizing.] ⁶⁴ And there’s another project of mine...”

And she continues to explain to me her ideas and projects she is planning to accomplish in the near future. Even facebook is marked on the map of ‘her Berlin’. Laughing, she explains that she has more than one facebook profiles in order to “fight”; that is, do online activism without necessarily being recognized with her ‘true’ identity. “An Austrian fascist page” she claims recently has been closed down thanks to those who joined her fight.

This chapter started with the suggestion that the need to belong derives from the feeling of anxiety. This feeling is both universal, that is, individuals embody anxiety from birth, and it is also exacerbated in this “liquid modernity” of our time. The aim here is to convince the reader to start recognizing, acknowledging and embracing this anxiety and to keep reminding ourselves that belonging **is** possible in spite of conflict, doubt and anxiety. It is very crucial not to repress the experience of anxiety or to rationalize it in terms of “fears” and finding “demons”. I think that the denial of conflict, ambiguity, antagonism and anxiety in favor of idealized characteristics such as coherence, wholeness and consistency in our modern societies has affected not only our sense of being with others but also the sense of our being among others. If, instead of insisting on

⁶⁴ A brilliant idea and a very creative name, I remember having thought to myself. Following the “intense seed cracking tradition” Ilkay talked about earlier, the “cinema seed” mostly shows old Turkish films at a well known bar/club in Kottbusser Tor in Kreuzberg, Berlin.

an imagined coherence within ourselves and between the members of societies or communities we belong to, we rather accept the possibility of the feeling of belonging in spite of conflict, doubt and anxiety, both the individual lives and the well-beings of societies will be positively altered.

There is not one way to belong. Not one way to integrate. Our multiple identifications might really be in conflict with one another. And conflict might very well come in destructive forms; but not always, not necessarily. What we *do* reveal both this complexity and the very possibility to embrace and accept our conflictual situations while alleviating possible burdens. The real life, the daily life, is complex, therefore we need to “complexify” the theoretical discussions on citizenship and migration also. Doing this will be possible by attaching importance to those “acts” in the everyday.

Chapter IV

Fahriye's Story: Ethnicity, Trust, Belonging

*Even the conditions of his[sic.] uprooting could be understood
only if the roots are known.*

Zafer Senocak, Atlas of a Tropical Germany

It is one of those rare warm Berlin days in July. At a café in Kreuzberg, I am waiting for Fahriye, a Bulgarian Turkish migrant in her 30s. Waiting, I think about ethnicities, origins, roots. Belonging, I argued in previous chapters, has usually been thought of as belonging somewhere. As in, being rooted in a place. Our ethnic, national, sometimes religious and racial identities being defined through and based on this rootedness. “The root foundation”, say Deleuze and Guattari, “grund, racine, fondement. The West has a special relation to the forest, and deforestation...” (1987: 18) But roots in nature are different than the weak nature we attribute to them in relation to ethnic origins and identities. In nature, roots have “a more multiple, lateral, and circular system of ramification rather than a dichotomous one. Thought lags behind nature.” (Ibid: 5)

Not only nature, but the actual experiences of migration also seem to be ahead of thought. In her work on the return-migration of the Bulgarian Turks, Ayse Parla argues that “the earlier, classic migration paradigm took for granted the world order of nation- states and its territorial definition” (2005: 7). Migration seemed to end with the settlement- with forming roots in the country of destination. Indeed, “[t]he Turks of Bulgaria” says Parla, “who fled their lived homeland as a result of the repressive measures of the falling communist government in

Bulgaria, arrived in what Turkish nationalism designates as their true, ancestral homeland.” She continues:

[P]ress accounts were replete with the trope of the arriving immigrant kissing the earth, while the return of almost half of the 300,000 migrants back to Bulgaria after the fall of Jivkov’s regime went virtually unreported. To complicate the pattern of this particular migration wave even further, movement in both directions has continued since the nineties, with seasonal labor migration to Turkey in response to the local demand for domestic work, as well as from Turkey since Bulgaria’s prospects of EU candidacy. The multiple departures and arrivals in both directions, and the meanings attached to them, render the location of homeland among Bulgarian Turkish immigrants ambiguous at best... (Ibid: 2)

Was the migration of Bulgarian Turks to Turkey a “return” to their homeland? If so, what are we to call the wave of those migrating “back” to Bulgaria? According to Parla, analytically rigorous definitions of homeland and return “have to take into account the tensions between, on the one hand, a political geography dictated by national borders, and on the other hand, individual experiences of dislocation that often result in split attachments. Furthermore, the location of homeland shifts not only within individual itineraries, but across migrants who belong to the same migration wave and thus often are mistakenly viewed as a monolithic entity.” (Ibid: 7)

This first case study looks at the role of ethnic identification, trust, and legal acceptance for developing a sense of belonging. This case is at the intersection of these experiences, since, as a Bulgarian Turk who has developed more trust in the German society than in Turkish community, Fahriye presents a case for us to start questioning to what extent individuals can manipulate their own feelings: Trust for “you can’t live” without it? After a focus on ethnicity

and gaining legal acceptance, then, the chapter will introduce three main qualities of trust as they are related to the sense of belonging.

“Gaining papers” as an act of belonging

I am excited to talk with Fahriye. When I met her at a mutual friend’s house a year ago in Berlin, she was happily married to a woman of Turkish origin. I do know that they have since been separated, but I do not know more about how she is handling the situation, where she is working, what her plans are for the future. I am also excited to learn more about her migration story. One of the most recurrent sentiments expressed among Bulgarian Turkish immigrants is that after having been persecuted by the government in Bulgaria because they were “Turkish” they were marginalized in Turkey by the local population because they were “Bulgarian” (Parla Ibid: 5). I wonder if Fahriye’s experience so far confirms this with regards to her encounters with the Turkish community in Berlin.

Fahriye arrives as her usual warm self. Having ordered something to drink, she starts telling me her story. She was not born in Berlin. It was only when she graduated high-school in 2001 she, along with her mother, joined her father who had already migrated to Berlin a few years before. Her father was “smuggled”, Fahriye says, through the Bulgarian border. “We are from Bulgaria. But, I mean, we are Turkish” she says. “When I was coming with mom there was this new thing, and you were able to come for three months, leave the country after that and come back again for three more months. Bulgaria was not in the European Union then, but there were the first agreements and so on. So we came.”

Theirs is quite a ‘success story’ - especially if one defines success as making home out of a foreign land, using foreign tools! “It was painful” Fahriye says. Mostly since their status was

not permanent, and the father had no legal status. Each of them worked here and there, says she, “illegally, of course, at restaurants, hotels. All those typical stories.” She laughs. She did not have an opportunity to have a university degree. Her brother, who was studying “international something” in Turkey back then joined the family afterwards.

Before Bulgaria entered into the European Union allowing its citizens reside and work in other European countries legally, Fahriye and her family were able to gain their legal status. Being able to show a place of residence in Germany helped them to get a work permit. It was the mother of the family who formed a cleaning business and then showed other family members as the employees of the company. Even when the mother had to close the business after a while and thus leaving the former employees unemployed, it was not uneasy for them to get the necessary documents from the unemployment office to be able to reside and look for another job. “Then we could do what we wanted to do...but up until that point it was quite painful”.

All this bureaucracy, the set of legal requirements, seems complicated to me. I plan to ask her how they found out about all these requirements- what steps one needs to take, the paperwork one has to get from and to various departments and offices in order to start a new life. Before asking this, however, I am thinking about what it might mean to “get the papers”.

I remember Damla, Fahriye’s ex-wife who found a job in Germany when the former was still back in Turkey. Damla had moved to Berlin not long before I met her and had told me about the feeling of “safety”⁶⁵ it had given to her to obtain legal status and rights. “For example”, she had said, “the more papers I receive, like my tax ID number, or this or that...The more I receive these papers the more belonged I felt. My social ID, my retirement insurance, health insurance

⁶⁵ It is curious to note that the Turkish word “güven” means both “safety” as well as “trust”, while “güvenlik” means “security”

number and so on...All these carry one towards citizenship". Damla had seemed an aspiring woman, treating each of her accomplishments as another step towards what she considered to be belonging.

Each time I develop a nice memory, I feel that I belong. Like, if I have spent a fine day with Fahriye, I especially feel belonging. Or, for example, if I have tied a good business deal with a German, I say to myself that I have done this, and so the sense of belonging shows itself once again.

Damla wanted to "integrate", she said. She wanted to better her language skills, get informed about what was happening in state politics and especially in Berlin. What is more, and although she accepted her "difference" and was not bothered by the "fact" that she would "never truly belong", she observed "Germans" in order to weigh their reactions in the everyday life so that she would behave accordingly. All these steps were *acts of belonging*- these, for her, were steps toward integration, integration meant belonging, and that, she wanted.

I do want that, yes. I mean, I understand everything, I watch the news in German, I read... I talked with a lot of German companies before I decided on this one...I teach Turkish to a German woman, that woman, for example, is now able to compose sentences and talk with me, asking me questions about our culture and so on. Just like I have been integrated, I inform others about our own culture. All these are nice, of course.

It is important to remember, however, that she she was already fluent in the language before having moved to Germany, and that she was married to a legal resident. Fahriye, on the other hand, had no knowledge of the language nor of the bureaucratic system in Germany when she arrived. I ask her about how she found out about what steps to take in order to start their new life. How did she find out about the paperwork they needed to get from and to various departments and offices? "From here and there, from this person and that person." says Fahriye.

You know, I improved my German skills. I myself did not go to school but I used my head. From [a mutual friend], from her circle of friends..from the streets. I was never shy to speak, and I am now able to speak quite well. I mean, there are people who've been here for such a long time, and I'm much better than they are. And I feel very comfortable in that language. When I think of 3-4 years ago, yes, I was having a hard time, but now I can express myself at one swoop.

Someone told me once that it was not until one started dreaming in the language of one's "host" land that one started to feel connected to the new home. I think of my own story of movement. I remember the joy and excitement in realizing that I have started to dream in English. But I also remember the days and nights of dreaming of the land I had left behind. The scent of rain on dry earth, the rainbow I used to see frequently in the spring, so many days I skipped school in order to jump into the Mediterranean. I ask Fahriye if she ever missed Bulgaria. "Not at all" says she, to my surprise. "I do not feel I belong there". But why?

How should I put this...I have never...Or perhaps when I was living there I did feel belonging, but after I have seen here, when I saw the freedom in life here, I have never felt belonging to there. But I also don't feel I belong to Turkey, I feel that I belong here, to Germany

Fahriye is able to make comparisons, because she also lived in Turkey for two years, between 2003 and 2005. She went there leaving her family back in Germany, following her then girlfriend. At first they were in Izmir, a "progressive" city in the Western part of Anatolia, and then in Ankara, the capital city. It was apparently quite an uneasy period as she "came out" to her family over the phone once she landed in Turkey with her girlfriend. They did not speak to each other for two years, until Fahriye came back to Germany "supposedly to visit, but did not go back". Turkey was

good, it was beautiful...I do like Turkey as a country, but I like it to have a vacation there. But if you ask me if I would live there- no, I wouldn't. Because with this identity...Leave this identity aside, I wouldn't want to live there even if I had a hetero-identity. Because life is hard there. There, even if you have loads of money, you go out and...take the traffic for example, i mean the ways in which people behave...I don't judge people based on their schooling and so on, but the bigots are so many that...why would I waste all my nerves with them? Now, recently, you see where Turkey is heading towards anyway. You won't live a thorough life there. You can't just stay in Cihangir⁶⁶, you know? You can't just stay there without going outside. Turkey does not only consist of Cihangir. So, I mean, I won't live there. Even if I had loads of means I wouldn't live. I really...legally, or if something happens to me...I know...I can trust this country. I can't trust in Turkey.

Trust is mentioned frequently during my fieldwork. Gokce, a young woman who was born and raised in Berlin, for instance, ponders for a while before she tells me she would trust the German state more than the Turkish authorities. Although she has not experienced much of Turkish "state affairs", she thinks that "it is as if you can buy everyone there [in Turkey]. For example I saw this at the customs. My father went and came back with his car, and there were some car appliances in the car, some things which were not allowed to bring in or something, but he gave money and [he could bring them in]. In Germany this cannot happen." Is it really impossible to experience anything like this in Germany? Gokce says it would be very rare. "I have never seen it. But also, as a woman, as a lesbian, I feel more comfortable here. I don't know how it would be in Turkey, I mean, you're not married, can you do all that you do here? I don't know. I wouldn't feel safe [in Turkish] there, I think."

Trust is a complex word. I ask Ayben about it during the interview we had in Berlin. She talks about relying on a "social network" in regards to the feeling of trust.

⁶⁶ Cihangir is a trendy neighborhood located in the Beyoglu district of Istanbul, close to Taksim Square. During the 19th century, the neighborhood became popular among the non-Ottoman Europeans of Istanbul. This influx of Europeans brought in high-end real estate, much of what exists today. Although in time the residence was replaced first by Turkish Muslims from other parts of Turkey, the Greek and European influences are still apparent in the architecture of the houses and apartment buildings. The neighborhood today is home to trendy art galleries and cafes.

I mean, are you looking for work? Okay, send them to GLADT⁶⁷, perhaps you can find a job. Or, the issue of ‘I have had a row with my lover about the issue of racism’. Because you are not the first person doing all this, others also have experiences. Besides this being sociocultural-political space, it also is where friendships can form. And people who can give social support. This is why I like this grouping thing...

Each time trust is mentioned in an interview, the respondent, like Ayben, uses it along with other terms such as safety, fairness or reliability [of institutions as well as individuals]. Indeed, what is trust? What is the relationship between trust and belonging? What role might ethnic identification play in trusting others? Remembering Ayben’s “trust in advance” (see chapter III) is it possible that we trust *before/in advance of* belonging? Or, is it possible to say that trust *acts*, if not as a cause, as a stimulating factor of belonging? In order to be clear about what I understand from “trust” let me first turn to a few points which have come to my attention during my fieldwork. These “moments” have caused me to think about the relationship between trust and belonging. Then we will turn to the mentioned relationship.

i. When conceptualizing trust, I benefit from Eric Uslaner’s explanation which separates trust in three categories: strategic trust, generalized trust, and particularized trust. Strategic trust, according to Uslaner, points at a relationship between particular persons about something specific- it means to be able to know that what you expect from a specific person will be done. My fieldwork made me realize, however, that strategic trust is not only about people doing things *for* us when we are conscious and alive. That is, we want to have people around us whom we can trust that would make the right decision on our behalf, or following our death. Evrim, for instance, talks about trust when explaining why she is not divorcing her friend

⁶⁷ Gays and lesbians aus der Türkei- Gays and lesbians from Turkey. The organization represents the interests of queer migrants and those with migrant background.

whom she married “for papers”. She has since received her work and residence permits, and would be able to have a divorce without losing these rights. She does not want to, however,

because if something happens to me, it would otherwise [if she gets a divorce] be my family that will make a decision about me. I would rather trust him [her legal husband] and his decision more than my family...And he is not just him- ‘he’ means [their mutual friends], they would all get together and come to a decision, and I trust them making this decision much more, really. So I don’t want to divorce.

ii. Talking about marriage and divorce brings to mind a wonderful sentence in Margaret Brinig’s study (2011) on “divorce and social capital”: “Trust [among married couples] is more difficult to maintain without trust in the institution of marriage itself” (Brinig 2011:5). Although political trust between individuals and institutions does not have to be related to social trust which is that between citizens (Newton 2001), during my fieldwork, I have come to believe that trust in institutional settings positively shapes individuals’ sense of belonging to that community/society. Indeed, definitions of “good government” might change from one context/country to another. However, perceptions as to whether or not state institutions are trustworthy, that is, whether or not they will be fair, competent, and bring about desirable outcomes (Levi 1998 cited in Letki 2006: 309) will likely assist the development of social solidarity and collective identity (Huysseune 2003) regardless the country. Among my respondents, those who showed trust in German institutions also showed trust in the larger society.

Fatma, for example, does not show any hesitation as to whom she would turn in case of an emergency: “The Germans” she says; “I would go to the police. First I would go to the police. I mean I trust the German police 100%. I know that they would not behave arbitrarily.” What if

this emergency occurs while she happens to be in Turkey? “I would not trust”. Or take Berrin, who talks about a brief period during which she lived in Istanbul. “I hate Istanbul” she says. I am surprised to hear this- who would not fall in love with Istanbul? Well, she says, “Istanbul is too chaotic. Like... no trust and all..I always feel under some kind of [in English] threat. [Continuing in English] Everybody’s trying to fuck each other you know?”. Trusting in institutions, for her, goes along with a feeling of safety (“like..about the issue of violence and so on”) which leads her dissociating herself from the city itself as well as from Istanbulites.

iii. Trust is “like an emotional inoculation against existential anxieties” (Kinnvall 2004: 746). It is what keeps us hopeful, what lets us sustain courage, what helps us go on. It is what gives stability to our insecure and unpredictable lives. Probably a more intriguing quality of its relationship with a sense of belonging, however, is that trust in larger society (“generalized trust”) does not only seem to affect one’s sense of belonging to that said society. It also strengthens the individual’s ties to [ethnic or religious] community one might be identifying with (“particularized trust”). To quote Brinig again: “Generalized trust that others in your neighborhood will “be there for you” affects one’s sense of belonging -even to a spouse- as well. Or, take Håkansson and Sjoeholm’s study which found that the more individuals trust people from their own nationality, the more likely is it that they would trust people from other nationalities as well. Moreover, people who do not trust people of other nationalities do not trust people of their own nationality (outside of their family) either! (Håkansson and Sjoeholm 2007: 973)

Therefore, the relationship between ethnicity and trust is not straightforward; as a matter of fact, this relationship is extremely complex. Individual experiences of inequalities and discrimination, family and network based differences as well as different ways of interpreting all this matter in building, maintaining or losing trust. To go back to Fahriye, for instance, she uses the pronoun “they” both for the Turkish community in Germany, and the “Germans”. “We” refers to those with Bulgarian-Turks. She complains about the Turkish community due to the discrimination she faced from “them” because of her Bulgarian background. It was the Turkish employers who would employ Fahriye and her family although they had no work permit. “They were the ones who...abused our situation, let me tell you that. Nowadays this is less so because we are not bound to them, now we can work wherever we want to work at...”

Trust: For “You can’t live like this!”

In contrast to her experience with the Turkish community, her relationship with the members of the larger society has been very positive.

I have not seen [discrimination] from the Germans. Never. It’s all been the opposite, all positive things, like ‘wow you’ve learned German [the language] so well..All in the sense of motivation. I tell them that there are mistakes I make and that I should correct, and they say “you have enough time, you’ll manage”. I have always experienced positive things like this.”

I remind her of discussions around these “positive” or “motivating” attitudes which some consider to be discriminatory and racist. In *European Others*, for example, Fatima el-Tayeb looks at what she calls “identity policing” in the everyday life. “How do you speak German so fluently?” is a question raised at the assumed “inconsistency if not an invincible contradiction”

between an aural truth, the sound of a fluent German, and a visual truth, the sight of an ethnic “other”. Indeed, some of my respondents, especially those who were born and raised in Germany, also take offense when praised for their language skills. This praise, to them, signifies that they are not accepted as Germans living in Germany and thus not so surprisingly have developed German language skills. Fahriye claims this sensitivity is “too much. *Why do I not get offended? Because I have nothing to take offense at.*” She pauses, and thinks for a moment. Then she goes on to say that she does not mean that “it [racism] doesn’t exist, of course there is racism. But you can’t take everything everybody says as racism! You can’t live like this!”

“*You can’t live like this*”. I remember Secil, another of my respondents in her 40s, who rejected openly the idea of a predominant racism in Germany. “Germany is not a racist country like Turks show it to be. Definitely not.” As we will see in Chapter VI, after the interview during which she sounded very defensive against the “nationalist” and “conceited” Turks, she was explaining to me how “Germans” would never accept her as German. “Regardless of how good I feel, regardless of the fact that I have a German identity, a German character...”

I wonder if this negation of racism, this insistence on claiming trust in larger society and in its institutions might actually be a way to live- because, otherwise, “you can’t live like this”. Freud tells us that after recounting a dream the patient says to the analyst: “You ask who this person in the dream can be. It’s *not* my mother.” (Catherine Malabou, 76). The patient, expecting what the analyst has in mind, is negating that possibility right away. Can this negation, however, actually be a “yes”, as Malabou suggests? Is it not understandable, then, negating the sense of a constant movement of emotions-of trust; constant detours, in other words, instead of a point of stability, of security?

Indeed, detours: Fahriye does not at first seem to be interested in discussing topics around integration be it the fluency in language, or cultural differences, and, more generally, racism. “Germany”, she responds with no hesitation nor a sense of doubt on her face, to my question about what she would say if asked where she felt she belonged. But then she pauses to think for a while to say “but not as a German, but a migrant living in Germany.” A few moments later, however, she corrects herself once more: *“I said it wrong. I feel like I belong to Berlin, not to Germany. I identify myself with this city.”*

Fahriye might seem like a more complex example than majority of my respondents, due to her Bulgarian-Turkish background. Most of the other respondents do not complain much about the Turkish community. Yet, they all say that they trust the Turkish community in Berlin much more than the population (not only state institutions) in Turkey. Fatma, for instance, says that in Turkey

“it’s all about the money now. There’s no humanity. They don’t accept us; I really don’t feel accepted in Turkey. When I go to Turkey they take me as a source for money. Because I’m from Germany...Whatever we do, it is still obvious that we are outsiders, however we behave. I don’t know how, but they always tell [that she is from Germany]. “What can I do to get more money from this person?” But why? Why don’t they accept us like this? They really don’t. Well, one day there was a man squeezing a child on a bus. I said “why are you squeezing the child? You have enough space”. And he said to me: “Get out you dirty Almancilar! [a derogatory Turkish word used for German Turks].” He said: “We don’t want you here”. I promise!”

Besides this complex relationship with the population in Turkey, it is not uncommon to hear respondents talk about Turks in general as being “untrustworthy”. This, I believe, signifies another complex relationship: the one between institutions, ethnicity, trust, and belonging. This complaint about, or rather, acknowledging of, what is interpreted as “untrustworthiness” points at

a sense of belonging (to the Turkish ‘people’) which can still be maintained even though the sense of trust seems to be missing. It also suggests an *awareness* that in another context, in another institutional setting, trust in “us” might be restored. Because of detours! For life is not a straight path we take from one point to another. We take detours even while we are negating them- one can neither negate nor ignore what one is not aware of.

Chapter V

Fatma's story: Redefining One's Self

Around three million of the Muslims living in Germany (between 3.8 and 4.3 million) have Turkish roots. However, “[n]o aspect of Turkish everyday life and culture” say Horrocks and Kolinsky (1996) “has been misunderstood more often, and given rise to a more monochrome and negative image of the Turkish minority than that of Islam.”. Both in the “homeland” Turkey, and within the Turkish community in Germany, there are various strands of identification with Islam, which “has not remained unchallenged by secularization” (xxv); but these diversities seem to be ignored in dominant discussions in Germany.

On the one hand we see a shift in the role of religion in defining, representing and talking about “the Turk” in the mainstream media and society- from the face of a Gastarbeiter to that of “the Muslim”. This is obviously partly related to the post 9/11 discourse of threat which uses “Islam” as a generic term “ascribing a combination of naturalized cultural attributes to “Muslims” that has little to do with religious beliefs or even with being a believer” (Horrocks and Kolinsky 1996: xxx). What is more, although Islam seems to have assumed in recent decades a more prominent role for the Turkish community to define values, behavior codes and culture in general, “fundamentalism has gained very little ground among Turks of all ages.” (Ibid.)⁶⁸ After all, as Fatima El-Tayeb reminds, “the majority of Muslims in Europe, if they were not born there, emigrated from a secular nation. Turks, no matter how religious they are, have as much experience living in a secular society as do Germans, Finns, or Italians.” (El-Tayeb 2011: 91)

⁶⁸ Critique of how one defines “fundamentalism” aside.

In this chapter, my aim is three-folds. First, I would like to suggest that even a “dissociation” from Islam, as we will see below, is a reminder that this “dissociation” is still in touch with the previous identification. This is so because the previous identification has to act as a frame of reference to be able to dissociate one’s self.⁶⁹ In other words, withdrawal cannot be thought of without the group we are withdrawing from. Therefore, even though Fatma, the subject of this chapter, separates herself from Islam and obviously challenges its principles as she sees them, she cannot help feeling “like a representative” of Turkish Muslims. Appreciating this makes it easier to realize not only diverse orientations within groups, but also the various meanings in rejection, doubt, withdrawal, conflict and dissociation have. This appreciation necessitates to state the obvious: that Muslims in general and Turkish Muslims (or Muslim Turks) in particular are composed of various experiences, backgrounds, and interpretations of Islam. As Fatima El-Tayeb suggests, “a diverse group of Eastern and Southern European, Middle Eastern, South Asian, North and West African background, with different religious practices and different degrees of religiosity (including a large group of “secular Muslims”) is homogenized along the lines of the dominant discourse.” (El-Tayeb 2011: 104) Although there sure are cultural codes shared among members of the Turkish Muslim community, these members do not “embody” Turkish national and religious culture, “as if they had swallowed it whole” (Adelson 2005: 85 quoted in Ibid.: 145).

Following this first point above, the second aim is to show that dissociation from “us”, rejecting the visible codes of “us” (in this case, the headscarf) does not always mean recognition/

⁶⁹ Similar suggestion can be raised regarding identifications. Identification itself necessitates two separate subjects- one can only identify with another who is separate than one’s self, as one cannot “identify” with oneself.

acceptance by “them”. Taking off her headscarf, what might be thought of as the most visible sign of Islam (the “East”), does not prevent Fatma from being seen and treated as the other. To put it in another way, “liberating” herself from what is frequently seen as her repressive religion is not enough for Fatma to be seen liberated enough. El-Tayeb argues that when religion is the issue, “race is never far in Europe” (91). One might suggest that a particular “look” is equated with a particular national identity (Turkishness) which also has come to suggest a particular religion (Islam). Can one not divorce from her assigned religion, then? Can one not even “pass” as a member of the majority?

Finally, I would like to look at Fatma’s self-transformation after a life threatening accident and coma. This transformation, although it brought her “withdrawal” from religion and her religious community, is not necessarily about religion, nor is it about rejecting spirituality. I suggest that this transformation is about claiming her belonging to her “new life”. Therefore, I will also suggest her taking off her headscarf which was catalyzed by her accident as an act of belonging (to life. To the everyday. To the here and now.) This is not because I see religions and religious practices as repressive and simply other-worldly, cutting the tie which connects the individual to the everyday realities and life. I merely see this “divorce” as her own particular way to claim her belonging to the new life she has started to shape.

*“Muslim Europeans are created as a
coherent community only
by the discourse about them”.*
Fatima El-Tayeb

Fatma is a German citizen. So are her children- a daughter and a son. When she applied to German citizenship in 1997 and had to withdraw from the Turkish citizenship, she says, she

did not hesitate at all. She thought it crucial to get a German citizenship so that her son would not have to “deal with” the obligatory military service in Turkey. “I would never want him to go to the army”, she says. “I would not want him to serve the Turkish state. I am no Kurdish or anything, by the way- I am not Kurdish, nor am I an Alevi⁷⁰. Kurds sometimes don’t want to go to the army..”. She asks herself “what Turkishness has given us”. She remembers one of her older brothers back in Turkey, warning her before she leaves for Germany:

“Although he is the more modern one [among her brothers], he is so very conservative, so conservative. I divorced my husband, and on the way back to Germany he [the brother] said this to me: “Our Turkishness...We are Turkish. Don’t bring shame [literally, ‘stain’] onto us.” Whoa. He’s **that** nationalist. That nationalist.”

Withdrawing from one’s legal ties does not necessarily bring one a simpler identification or a ‘lighter’ baggage. “I sometimes think that we are so miserable here, you know?” says Fatma. I wonder if she will repeat the old “stuck between two cultures” argument. She does start with that phrase, but what she explains afterwards points at a much more nuanced daily life.

“Sometimes I think that we are between two cultures...for example: Like, at work they say this or that about foreigners, and I become such a Turk, I feel so much like a Turk, I defend Turks so much. Like, when they degrade the young foreigners, when they say that it is only the Turks and Arabs who sell drugs I always defend the Turks. Why do I have to defend? That I don’t know. Like “you know their life conditions” and so on. I start defending them like they didn’t have opportunities, they couldn’t learn etc etc. I defend them, but then when I leave the place, I say to myself: “But why? Why can they not pull through?” Then I start getting angry at the foreigners. I say “I cannot identify myself with you”. In fact, for example at the U-Bahns [subway trains] or at S-Bahns [above ground trains] I get afraid when I see the youth selling drugs. For a while I lived in Wedding⁷¹ and on the way home I really was getting afraid. You get afraid because they could do something for money. You hear them speak, but they don’t know that

⁷⁰ Alevites, composing the country’s biggest religious minority, are members of an unorthodox offshoot of Shiite Islam.

⁷¹ with 25.7 %, Wedding has one of the highest unemployment rates among Berlin districts. 27% of its residents live in poverty. See <http://www.bmgev.de/mieterecho/305/08-sozialstruktur.html> (in German) access date June 28, 2013.

I am Turkish...They speak in Turkish, they sell stuff. Among themselves. You see it all...I cannot identify [she means identify] myself with them”

I mentioned in the previous chapter that trust and belonging matter not only in relation to what one expects from their conscious life, but also in relation to their thoughts as to what should happen in case they lose consciousness or in case of their demise. Fatma has made her will. So, she says, she is not to be buried “in order of Turkish [she means Muslim!] rituals, but in order of German rituals, like, women and men, my daughter and son and daughter in law...they should bury me all together.”

I: So you would not want to be buried in the Muslim cemetery, then?

F: Nope. I would **never** want the hodja⁷² to bring me to my grave, **never**. Idiots.

Her wish to not be buried “according to Turkish rituals” is so strong that if she happens to pass away in Turkey, she has added in her will that she is to be brought back to Germany.

“I want to be buried in Berlin. Berlin gave me life. I want to stay in Berlin.”

I know that Fatma had a religious background: She comes from a religious family, was “covered” all her life until she was in her 30s and went to a “Qur’an school” in her youth where she memorized all verses of Qur’an. I want us to go back further in time, then, to when she was a schoolgirl, studying the Qur’an in girls-only classrooms, when she was “13-14-15 years of age”. What was that like? How does she remember those times, looking from her post-accident self?

“Hah, let me tell you about that” says she. “At the Qur’an school, well...That’s where I started to have this...lesbian friendships...[she laughs] well, so...How pretty those girls were! [she laughs] My first girlfriend, S., she was very sweet.” Although they were able to talk openly with

⁷² person who leads the funeral.

each other, “nothing happened, except holding hands and so on”. She had relationships with others too, before she got married, relationships which she “never questioned. Those relationships, for me, were pleasure...I never questioned them [in relation to her belief].”

In her youth, she says, she did not question the “compatibility” of her belief and her desire towards women. Now, however, she does “not understand how lesbian women can live Islam.” I tell her about groups organized by and for members of Muslim LGBTQ communities. Indeed, Islam’s positions on women’s rights and homosexuality are already vigorously debated in Muslim communities, “often invisible to a dominant society still not ready to enter an open dialogue- and to a gay and lesbian community not ready to include Muslim queers”. Yet, homophobia among Muslims is still defined as inevitably produced by their culture/religion, Islam itself representing the threat, which in turn, is present in every Muslim (el-Tayeb :119. See also Habib 2009). Fatma also is skeptical:

“But how so?...[Islam] does not accept this anyway...Allah created women and men so they would get together and make children. I already made mine, have done my turn! [she laughs, and then gets serious again]. But no, it cannot be, cannot be accepted in Islam, I mean. It is against morals, it is an abnormality [according to Islam], I mean, for a woman to be with a woman.”

In her youth, however, she did not have to question her religious beliefs as she did not “taken her desire so seriously”. “What offended me” says she, “was that I was made to marry. I was around 17, and all of a sudden I am getting married. Why am I getting married? Why with this man? Why with this? Is there nobody else to marry?”

She married her cousin- the son of her uncle whom she “hates”. “He beat me up on my engagement day, that idiot...And I ended up having to marry his son.”

It was still fortunate, says Fatma, that the divorce, after having moved to Germany with the husband and had two kids, was relatively easy as her family “realized that...this man can’t be a husband for me. They let me come back to Berlin to raise my kids while the husband went to Hamburg.”

A study conducted by the Federal Office of Migration and Refugees puts the current number of Muslims living in Germany between 3.8 and 4.3 million (5 percent of the total population), most of whom are of Turkish descent (almost 3 million) and predominantly Sunni (approximately 80 percent)⁷³. Fatma is one of them, except that she is not. That is, she is not identifying herself with Islam (or with another religion) anymore. Listening to her, I realize once more the various realities within a category of people which we call “Muslims”. My own Turkish identity card identifies my religion as “Islam”. My secular, “social democrat” family might call this “Turkish Islam”. This term, in the daily life, usually means a more “modern” or “westernized”, or even a “practical” interpretation and practice of religion. It is also used, however, within nationalist circles, to emphasize Turkishness and thus separate themselves from the Arab Muslims. A phrase like *Turkish Islam*, say Katzenstein and Byrnes, “came to denote more than geographical classifications. It also came to mean that the Islamic religion, and highly dispersed communities of Muslims became closely associated with individual national identities and with specific iterations of state identity” (687).

Even a specific state identity which I share with Fatma, in this case our citizenship tie with the Turkish state (although she had to give it up to get her German citizenship) does not mean

⁷³ Aslan, Ali “New Approaches to Muslim Engagement: A View from Germany” http://www.gmfus.org/galleries/ct_publication_attachments/Aslan_MuslimIntegration_Feb11.pdf access date September 30, 2013.

that we have experienced a similar religious socialization. As Ayse Saktanber notes, there are various orientations in Turkey around Islam, its practices and role in the everyday life. This is not a space to get into detail about Sunni Islam (and its interactions with other denominations as well as religions) in Turkey, but I think it should be noted that Kemalism, the ideology which dates back to the founder of the modern republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, promotes a Turkish nationalism, secularism and modernism (Saktanber 2006:24). This ideology has been a very strong and established guideline for the state, military personnel and many among the intelligentsia. However, the reflection, interpretation, and experience of this official ideology has not always been the same among millions. Although large sections of the population approved of the secular Kemalist ideology, and promoted a “Turkish Islam”, there have always been Islamic circles which are quite diverse in themselves, and liberal democrats who opposed the strict definition of secularism of some Kemalists. One example to this established understanding of the “Turkish secularism” is the fact that until very recently, wearing a headscarf in public institutions was banned in Turkey. This long term ban has just been lifted in October 2013 by the governing Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (Justice and Development Party) which was founded in 2001 by a group of well known Islamist politicians together with some neoconservatives. They have since then vocalized their opposition to the exclusion of religious symbolism from public life⁷⁴.

This religious symbol, the headscarf, with various forms it takes, is also a symbol of diverse orientations and identifications surrounding religion: There is the veil (*çarsaf*, in Turkish) which covers all of the body from top to toe, except for the eyes, and is usually black in colour.

⁷⁴ Many of these members of the ruling party had wives who cover their heads. Again, until very recently, these women, including the wife of the party leader and the prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, were not able to attend ceremonies of state protocol. The party's handful female members were selected among women who did not wear an Islamic headscarf in their private lives.

The headscarf covers the head, neck, and sometimes the shoulders. It can be both patterned and colorful, although, as Saktanber notes, pale colors are favored.

“This headscarf is also accompanied by either a long, loose overcoat, a jacket or a chic tunic. In the Turkish context, the term *headscarf* is used to denote the modern to help attribute a much more modernized meaning to the Islamic headscarf and cleanse it from its religious connotations. But the term *turban* is not accepted and used instead of *headscarf* by the women who cover their heads for religious purposes. However, how the Islamic headscarf is tied is different from how the headscarf traditionally has been worn in public places in Turkey. The traditional Turkish headscarf is tied with a knot under the chin, which may allow hair to show in the front and back; it can be in any color or pattern, and it is usually smaller in size than the Islamic one. The Islamic headscarf in Turkey has also been modified over time and has become much smaller and stylish”. (Saktanber 2006: 22-23 fn1)

Fatma was not wearing the traditional version. It was what the secular discourse would call the *turban* which she decided to take off around the time she celebrated her 30th birthday. Probably one of the most visible symbols of Islam, she started not to wear anymore.

Can a lack of a symbol signify integration?

This most visible symbol would carry various meanings depending on the beholder. Above, very briefly, I mentioned its various meanings in Turkey; but what meanings does it carry in Berlin, and more generally in Europe?

Scholars have been showing many ways in which Western European countries use the “treatment of women” as “the primary litmus test to determine whether foreigners -and especially Turks- possessed the capacity to function effectively within a Western liberal-democratic society” (Chin 2007: 143 See Yegenoglu 1998 and Ahmed 1992). Findings indicate that there are differences both between Muslims from different regions of origin and between Muslims and non-Muslims from the same country of origin with regard to religiosity as well as

practices of religion⁷⁵. However, as Fatima el-Tayeb argues, these differences are ignored due to homogenization along the lines of the dominant discourse. “[A] diverse group of Eastern and Southern European, Middle Eastern, South Asian, North and West African background, with different religious practices and different degrees of religiosity (including a large group of “secular Muslims”)” come to be homogenized in one category (el Tayeb :104). Then, this “outwardly coherent, homogenous community is discovered to be fundamentally divided along gender lines: Muslim identity is shaped exclusively by men, according to their own interests, which are directly opposed to the interests of Muslim women”⁷⁶ (93)

In regard to the significance of religion for wearing a headscarf, a complex picture emerges. While the analyses show that a pronounced positive link exists between devoutness and the wearing of the headscarf, it is also apparent that strong religiousness does not automatically lead to the wearing of the headscarf. One in two highly religious Muslim women does not wear a headscarf⁷⁷. What is more, difficulties tend to come to light among Muslim interviewees in the area of linguistic and structural integration whereas the picture of social integration appears more positive than often assumed (Ibid.). Indeed, more than half of the Muslims in Germany are

75 <http://www.npdata.be/Data/Godsdiens/Duitsland/fb6-muslimisches-leben-englisch.pdf> access date November 1, 2013

76 What is more, this process takes place within an official discourse which refuses its own religiosity. Take the European Union expansion: “At one and the same time” says Grace Davie, a British sociologist of religion, “they perceive themselves as increasingly secular and draw the boundaries of their continent- known sometimes as “fortress Europe” - along Christian lines...Nations dominated by Western (Catholic) Christianity will...find it easier than their Orthodox equivalents to enter the European Union: Muslim states will find it harder still (if not impossible) despite the existence of significant Muslim communities within most, if not all, Western European nations”. Grace, Davie (2001) “The Persistence of Institutional Religion in Modern Europe”, in Heelas, P. and Woodhead, L. (eds.), *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion*, London: Routledge, 101-111

77 “Muslim Life in Germany: A study conducted on behalf of the German Conference on Islam”

Research report 6 Deutsche Islam Konferenz

<http://www.npdata.be/Data/Godsdiens/Duitsland/fb6-muslimisches-leben-englisch.pdf> access date August 30, 2013

members of a German association; only 4 per cent restrict their membership to associations connected with their country of origin, many of which were started in Germany (16). The number of Muslims from all contexts of origin who do not have, and do not wish to have, any day-to-day contact with Germans is not greater than 1 per cent.

In the German context, there is a crucial turn in language which occurred in recent years. While it used to be the Turkish subject which was at the center of discussion on integration, culture and gender, in the post September 11 world this subject has become to be interpellated as “Muslim”. This shift in discourse matters because, as Yasemin Yildiz suggests, it creates a new network of discursive association invoked by this latter category. Associations such as September 11, the Taliban, the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, and so on, would not have been possible if these subjects were simply “Turks”. As Muslims, Yildiz says, “they can be imagined as being part of a much larger and much more globally extended community than before. Without a change in actual numbers, this indexical function alone multiplies their size in the dominant social imaginary” (Yildiz 2009: 475). Within this discourse, the headscarf has frequently taken the center stage, or played the role of a signifier of changing demographics.

Ayşe Saktanber (2006) talks about a *Time Europe* issue published in February 2005. The headline on the cover reads “Europe’s Identity Crisis”⁷⁸.

“On that cover, Mona Lisa, the illustrious symbol of the Renaissance and the birth of Western civilization was portrayed with her head covered like that of a Muslim woman, connotatively inviting readers to imagine what it would be like if Europe were Islamized.

⁷⁸ One consequence of this shift is found in opinion polls. Despite the official view that Turkish Muslims are “moderate” communities and are considered to have a “low risk” of radicalization, public opinion polls reveal an increasing concern with the threat of Islamic radicalism at home. 82 percent of Germans polled were worried (very concerned/somewhat concerned) about Islamic radicalism in Germany. See Michael Humphrey “Securitization and Domestication of Diaspora Muslims and Islam: Turkish Immigrants in Germany and Australia.

This picture not only denotes Muslim women as associated with veiling but also perpetuates the fear of Islam both in the face of the growing Muslim population in Europe, which has made Islam the second largest religion after Christianity, and in the face of terrorist attacks committed in the name of Islam, which have targeted Western societies” (21)

I remember Damla, quoted in the previous chapter, using the metaphor of a perfect outfit to talk about integration. She is not religious, and does not wear a headscarf. “It is not only the language” she had said.

“Think about all the culture, the social identity, life style as an outfit; integration is wearing this outfit. And that it fits you. If you wear size small and you try to wear an extra large social identity, it would be too loose on you...For example I’m size Large, and here is large also, it fits me [like this]. Which means I have digested this, in this way, I feel like I have been integrated.”

Crucial point here is that she compares this perfect fit to that of “those aunts and uncles on the street trying to wear a size XL on their small body”. I realize it might be a comforting feeling to compare one’s self to whom one sees less “integrated”. I decide to move this discussion a little further. Is it possible to ever have that perfect fit? Could I completely change myself (my body) to fit in this perfect outfit, even if I wanted to?

“I don’t feel that I belong 100%, of course. I came from a different culture, that’s a reality. I didn’t study here, I don’t know its education system...The sense of humor here, for example, is very different in Germany. Very different. For example, I can’t laugh at things people die laughing. It doesn’t feel funny, even though I understand it. I mean, these are all steps towards integration. In fact we are kidding ourselves, because the fact of the matter is that if one is not born and raised in a country, they can’t be integrated 100 percent. They get close to integration. If they could, it wouldn’t be called integration, it would be something else.”

There have been many enlightening and thought provoking works on the “headscarf issue”. The two main “camps” have been located as “headscarf as liberation” debate on one side,

and “headscarf as repression” or “as a tool of male oppression” on the other side. I am more interested in what becomes to the person who redefines herself by/and taking off her headscarf. Can she “pass” as German now, or is her ethnic background visible enough on her body- an ethnic background which has increasingly been equated with Islam? El-Tayeb argues that “race is never far in Europe when religion is the issue”. Is there not a sign to “prove” integration- a sign as visible as the headscarf? Language skills seem to be important for preventing or responding to everyday life discrimination, for example.

When you can speak German you can defend yourself in a better way. For example, when somebody tells me “are you thinking about going back to Turkey?”, I tell them “do you think I should go back? Don’t I fit in here?” Then they shuts up.

“Who tells you this?” I ask.

Anyone. You meet somebody new, at a party, dancing and all..I am in a Balkan dance group, for example, and when we attend seminars and all, when we meet somebody new, they are like “wow you speak German so well”. I tell them they speak it well also. They just stare at me. They should think a little bit, shouldn’t they- I mean, why wouldn’t I speak German well? When you pay attention to discriminations we face in the everyday life, there are so many instances that you start to get very sensitive about this issue. It used to be different problems which used to make me upset. When I separated from my husband, trying to live on my own, all those problems state offices create- the living permit, the work permit, or about any support you try to get from the state...It just takes too long until you understand the system...I used to go to these offices with a dictionary in my hands, “look here” I used to say, “show me what you are trying to say”. I got to understand this back then, so did they-they know to whom they could do what. Seeing that you know German and you know your rights, they sit down on their asses.

Is language enough in order to be accepted as “German”?

“Look here” she says.

There’s this thing: the thing we bring with ourselves. Let me give you a simple example. Being prompt in business life. This being prompt is a very important thing. For Germans it is a very important thing. I cannot be prompt. Because of this not being prompt I get excluded a lot. This is a cultural thing. Not related to language- certain things we don’t

take seriously. If we did, we would internalize it and whatever we did, we would be on time. So by not being on time, we leave the door open for them to attack us. being prompt...I very rarely look at my organizer to see what I need to do the following day. Last night I did, to see this morning's termin [appointment] but I was late again anyway! And I had an accident not to stay late!

Indeed, it is cultural differences which we come back and forth during our talk. At some point, she tells me about her "biggest love affair" with a woman, after she divorces her husband. After having been together for more than four years, she says, they had to separate "for cultural reasons". I first assume that her "Turkishness" along with her lack of organization skills and her inability to be prompt might have been a challenge for the German lover. I realize, however, that the girlfriend was from *the Ost* - the East Germany- and the cultural difference she refers to was mostly that between the Eastern German "way of life" and the West Berlin culture which Fatma identified herself with :

My girlfriend comes from the Ost, from the East. They were raised within a very different culture...everything seems strange to her, she cannot accept, and is...judgmental, very judgmental.

Even the girlfriend's comments on Turkey after a vacation together, signifies "the Ost".

This cultural difference was very bad, she was not open to us, she would not accept...That orientalische and that romanticism of the first times just go away [in time] [she laughs].

Orientalische? It is usually the "Westerners" who are assumed to "exoticize" those coming from East. In this case, I am surprised to realize that it is not only the girlfriend who thought the relationship was exotic. "It was [exotic], to her" she says. "And it was exotic to me also". "What do you mean? Was the German culture..." She interrupts me quickly to say that it

was “not the German culture! It was the Ost culture. Ja, ja, it was the East culture” which is “very different, you know?”.

In an essay entitled “Wir sind auch das Volk!” [we are the people too!], Sanem Kleff shares the response of a West Berlin migrant to post-1989 unification of the West and the East- and thus the Western and the Eastern Germans united under the ethnic definition of “one people”. Katrin Sieg argues that this essay does not only argue for the inclusion of resident migrants as part of “the people”. It also “aims to discredit them [East German newcomers] in the competition for recognition as citizens of a modern, capitalist, urbane, and multicultural world...in effect claiming that Turks are more (Western) European than East Germans.” (Sieg :235) Fatma also sees herself closer than the East German girlfriend to the West German culture. However, I remember again many of my respondents saying : “If I ever said I was German in front of white Germans, they would just laugh at me...I would never be able to say that [being German or belonging to Germany]”.

Taking off the headscarf as an act of belonging

I do not think that Fatma’s dissociation from Islam is merely an attempt to “integrate” into a non-Muslim world. I suggest that it is not necessarily a turn away from religion, but a turn towards life. It is an act of belonging- to her new life. To the here and now.

We know that people often turn to religion in times of trouble, including, and especially, during crises of serious illness (Idler 1995). Wuthnow, Christiano, and Kuzlowski (1980: 416 cited in Kwilecki 2004: 480) briefly propose that religious experiences may play an “important role” in adjusting to bereavement”. Indeed “a significant correlation was found between the

depth of the NDE [near death experience] and a subsequent increase both in the importance of religion and in religious activity” (McLaughlin and Malony 1984) But coping is an intricate personal process over time (Kwilecki 2004: 485)⁷⁹. Therefore, religious coping also is neither universal nor uniform (Ibid.) In other words, coping choices and results are determined by various variables from age to class; from sexual orientation to, not surprisingly, religious upbringing. But also timing: “the unpredictable coincidence of need and opportunity” is also critical. For instance, pre-accident Fatma had already started to question the headscarf. Then came the accident. She was 30 years old.

“My skull fractured. I was in a coma for one day or so and when I got back my consciousness, it took a long time to get better. I wasn’t able to do anything for a year. I had no balance...drowsiness, dizziness all the time...and I was having really bad headaches. I suffered a lot for a year. So around that time, when I was still at the hospital...I wanted to have water, okay? one drop of water, but they wouldn’t give any. Even if they did I would throw up anyway. You can’t have anything to drink...Really, I was lying in a room located in the brain surgery section, there were all those people with their heads bandaged and all..Then I said to myself, if I ever get out of this bed, I will enjoy life to the full. I was 30 years old. I had been hesitant about the headscarf until then...I said “I won’t wear my headscarf anymore. I am starting my life all over again, it’s done.” I had never celebrated my birthday until then. I had the accident in January, and celebrated my birthday in march. I had champagne the first time! [laughs] I had champagne on my 30th birthday! My kids came to visit, so did my friends...And then I took off my headscarf. I started my life all over again, after my 30th birthday, after that accident”.

Fatma’s body: A young migrant woman with a headscarf and two kids. A young woman’s body in a hospital room. A young woman’s body as a site of desire as well as physical vulnerability. Was it the fear of death which caused her to celebrate her birthday the first time in

⁷⁹ In an almost poetic essay, Laurel Richardson explains how writing helped her to “constitute the world” and “reconstitute myself...I had bought a “personal” computer, for my person, personality, persona: a second self.” Laurel Richardson (1999) “Paradigms Lost” in *Symbolic Interaction*, 79-91

her life? Was it anxiety which caused her to take off her headscarf? Was it regret? Kwilecki complains about studies taking for granted the negative aspects of near death experience. Instead of constant or increased levels of anxiety or fear, Kwilecki suggests there are reported positive effects of near death experience which include “reduced anxiety, enhanced capacity of love, and a new sense of life’s meaning and purpose (Atwater 1994: 129-131 cited in Kwilecki 2004: 480)⁸⁰. I do not want to romanticize this experience, but I do think that this “event” in Fatma’s life is quite significant for the purposes of this thesis. Let me briefly explain.

In previous chapters, I suggested that there is a strong tie between anxiety and the need to belong. Anxiety, I argued along with scholars I quoted in detail, can be imagined as an almost existential discomfort- possibly leading to an inability to orient ourselves in our lifeworlds. What is more, (post)modern uncertainties, ambiguities, instabilities and so on are only exacerbating this situation. Acts of belonging, in this context, appear as a way to cope with this disorientation. Indeed, as Dewey says, “the world is a scene of risk”- “[t]he world of empirical things includes the uncertain, unpredictable, uncontrollable and hazardous.” What is more, these are not to be explained away by magical formulae or the blind hope of scientific advance. They are empirical realities that form an essential, and inescapable, aspect of our lives.” (Donald 2001: 561). Among these hazardous sides to life, death might be the only thing certain! Following O. H. Green, I will suggest that if we fear, we do not fear death. Death is, although certain, more abstract, and thus

80 Wren-Lewis also tells his own experience as having reached to an “eternity consciousness (92) “eternity consciousness” (92) He claims this experience “disproves the common religious assumption that such consciousness is a very high state to be achieved only by a long struggle of spiritual practice and purification. In fact, my experience and research suggests that this assumption is part of the very mindset that has kept humanity in general locked into the petty pace of time (with very low life satisfaction) for most of its history” John Wren- Lewis (2004) “The Implications of Near-Death Experiences for Understanding Posttraumatic Growth” *Psychological Inquiry*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 90-92.

might be easier to accept. We fear dying; a process which shows our injurability. We fear not living anymore, that our lives will not continue. If we do fear, it is “because of the desirability of continued life, not the undesirability of death” (Green 1982: 105).

Her accident catalyzed Fatma’s decision to take off her headscarf. When asked to compare her experiences before and after the [removal of] the headscarf, she admits: “I mostly lived through discrimination when I was wearing the headscarf”. Taking off the headscarf, then, might have at least two meanings: On one hand this act brings to life her doubts about her religion which already existed before the accident; on the other hand, it brings Fatma closer to the visibly secular German society which she has developed an intimacy towards. We might actually say that, similar to the previous case study which suggests an act of belonging around the feeling of trust, this case study presents an act which shapes (and is shaped by) the feeling of doubt. In both cases, however, the main orientation is towards the satisfaction of the need to belong.

I say this, that the main aim again is to belong, as she tells me that she still wears her headscarf when she visits her family in Turkey. “What if you stayed in Turkey, went to school [she is in an undergraduate program at a 4 year university in Berlin] in Turkey?” I ask her.

F: I wouldn’t be able to [go to university]

I: If you did?

F: They are still trying to interfere, although we have 3000km between us! No, I wouldn’t be able to change, if I stayed in Turkey. I would be depressed, I’d become ill...No, I wouldn’t be able to change, there wouldn’t be a chance to change. I’d be depressed.

A very crucial point should be raised here: What I am suggesting does not mean that I see religions as necessarily repressive and other-worldly systems which separate us from what is empirical. In this chapter I am not actually even interested in that. What interests me more is the

productive capacities of the need to belong. In Fatma's case, her doubts are catalyzed by an accident- an "event"- which leads her to redefine one's self, to change her life altogether. Again, this does not have to mean a rational, conscious decision with planned consequences: Judith Butler, in relation to mourning, talks about "submitting" to a transformation the full result of which one cannot know in advance (Butler 2004: 21). What is at stake here is the apprehension of the precariousness of life. The apprehension which makes it easier to suggest that it is possible to leave the door open while leaving the room behind.

Fatma's rejection of religion is different than the rejections we will see in the following chapter. Fatma's audience is still the community she withdraws from. She talks to Muslims, she talks to Turks, to those migrants who "are miserable here". In this sense, she talks to the self she is reshaping, constructing and embracing. Fatma's case shows examples which both construct and destabilize binary notions of progress and stagnation, West and the East, Muslim Turks and (Christian) (secular) Europeans.

Indeed, Fatma, by staying within Berlin yet being constantly "mobile" challenges the binary notions of movement and immobility as well (el-Tayeb xliv). I ask Fatma to draw the map of "your Berlin":

"I love Berlin so much. First off, there isn't a border in Berlin, okay? Well, the borders on the map, you know? My map doesn't have them. Because I move everywhere...Here's the river...the water...and then, there's the stage. Either a concert or a theater or the movies, where I feel like home..."

What is this one?

"That's the train...Because I am mobile, remember, I can go anywhere. This is the bicycle...I learned how to swim and how to ride a bicycle in here [in Berlin]...and this is my books. That's all...Berlin has it all. Honestly."

Chapter VI

“The native informer” and the “Agro Migrant” : Distancing oneself as an act of belonging

“The problem of writing”, say Deleuze and Guattari, is that “in order to designate something exactly, exact expressions are unavoidable...We invoke one dualism only in order to challenge another” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 22). This chapter includes two cases yet one act of belonging. These two cases seemingly differ from each other, however, they should be taken as a warning against dualities, or, to use Lynn Chancer’s vocabulary again, “partialization”. On the one hand we have Secil. Successful, secular and a lesbian of Turkish background, Secil is a well known name in the public discourse on women’s and LGBTQ rights within minority communities. Talking *about* these communities and not *to* them, I suggest Secil acts as Hamid Debashi’s “native informers”.

The second part of the chapter will focus on the other end of the spectrum: Sefa, a transgender who strongly identifies with “persons of color” in Germany, is also refusing to talk to the “Other”. What ties these two cases is that both individuals distance themselves from whom they identify themselves with. It is through distancing that they are able to maintain the fantasy image and avoid disappointment which comes along with complexity and conflict the community.

Secil's case

Why are we always more incensed and troubled by someone who looks and sounds like us than by any other? Is it because we identify with them, or because the world - the white world- identifies us with them?
Hamid Dabashi, Brown Skin, White Masks

In *Brown Skin, White Masks*, Hamid Dabashi writes about *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, the best-seller written by the Iranian- American author and professor of English Azar Nafisi. The book, Dabashi says, is a “titillating tale of a Persian harem with the women waiting for the US marines to rescue them from their own menfolk” (Dabashi : 12). Dabashi refers to Nafisi as “a native informer”, a term which he suggests “best comprehends the services that Nafisi and others like her have provided the US imperial project under George W. Bush’s administration”. Many of these emigrates are “a potent component of neoconservative ideology”. They were either “adopted by the US military (Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr and Ray Takeyh), or by key figures in the military establishment (Azar Nafisi and Fouad Ajami), or by neoconservative think-tanks (Ayaan Hirsi Ali), or in a few cases by no one in particular (Salman Rushdie and Ibn Warraq) because they provided a cover of legitimacy to American imperial designs on the Islamic world. They have undertaken their activities in the honorable name of defending the human rights, women’s rights, and civil rights of Muslims themselves- and the relative lack of those rights in Muslim countries gave them the space and legitimacy they required.” (17)

One inevitably remembers Gayatri Spivak’s (1999) “native informant”, who is needed by the colonizer (and the “Western” ethnographer) to provide information. Spivak’s “informant”,

however, seems to differ from Dabashi's "informer" in the sense that the latter "suggests the moral degeneration specific to the act of betrayal". In other words, Dabashi's use of the term sounds more accusatory. Indeed, Fatima El-Tayeb refers to Dabashi's version when she powerfully talks about

Women like Hirsi Ali, German Necla Kelek, or Fadela Amara in France, who... are among the first minority women ever to be granted a public voice in European affairs albeit only when speaking about the threat of Islam...[they] contribute to and depend on this segregation by presenting themselves as brave travelers between incompatible worlds, as necessarily separate from the mass of the women in whose name they speak- and on whose silence they depend in order to continue to fulfill this function for a white (neo)liberal audience. Muslim women as independent actors have no place in this conversation, in particular if they are critical of it. (El-Tayeb : 101-103)⁸¹

Secil can be considered a native informer. I first met her in New York a few years before. Such youthful presence, such happiness, such lightness while walking on the streets of New York. When we talk in Berlin, however, there is a sense of seriousness, heaviness, stiffness in her voice when she insists that "Germany is not the racist country as Turks try to present it to be". During the first hour of our interview, I am under the impression that she sees Germany as "home"- although she dislikes "all kinds of nationalisms...regardless of the nation".

In order to protect her identity, I will not get into detail about Secil's position. Suffice it to say that she is a well-known figure in the German public. She frequently appears on the media on issues about integration, discussions on the so-called "honor-killings", the relationship between Islam and homosexuality and so on. In her apartment in an affluent neighborhood in Berlin, our talk is shadowed by these issues, since it feels as if this is another one of those interviews she is

⁸¹ In contrast to these well-known names we have activists, as El-Tayeb shows, who resist against being treated as native informers "while at the same time [try] to use the influence they gained to open up spaces for other queers of color..." (El-Tayeb 2011: 130)

accustomed to give. Shadows, however, can reveal nuances of a matter. I stay with her for a while to see her attitude change back and forth in regard to where she stands in German society.

Our interview starts with her telling me how Turkey had for years “deceived” Germany by helping Turkish emigrates keep their status when applying for German citizenship. The German state does not allow dual citizenship, she says, but “[t]he Turkish government [the state] never wants to lose its citizen because it is a very nationalist country, it is a country which values nationalism a lot. She does not question why the German state would not allow dual citizenship; instead, she focuses on Turkey: “It is a country which thinks like ‘if you’re a Turk once, you’re a Turk always’. Therefore, they act in a way that they do not care about other countries’ legal requirements.” She has managed to hold on to both of her passports however, as she re-applied to Turkish citizenship once she secured her German one. I ask her why she wanted to keep her legal tie to a country she does not seem to consider living in. “When the wall [the Berlin Wall] fell down” she explains, “the ways Germans reacted was a little strange, it was a little creepy.”

The Nazis started to shout on the streets saying “Germany is for Germans”. You know how the Hurriyet Newspaper⁸²title says that Turkey is for Turks? Just like that. Regardless how little nationalism is a subject here, especially after the wall tumbled down, the position of migrants fell down...It wasn’t clear as to what would happen. And my school was not finished yet, the university wasn’t finished back then, so I didn’t have a good employment and so on. And if there happens a situation in which I would urgently need to escape...so thinking this way, I said to myself, I better get back the Turkish citizenship as I would at least have a place to take a refuge to. You know that after the second world war many people took a refuge in Turkey also. So that’s why I have dual citizenship.

I ask her about dual language, this time. She maintains her public statement: “What is the healthiest for a society is that there is an official language. Language is tied to culture, if you try

⁸² Beneath the logo of one of the major newspapers in Turkey, Hurriyet, reads “Turkey belongs to Turks”.

to mix countries in Europe in regard to language also, then culture will not have any special characteristic.” Then she refers to the Turkish minority in the country: “Turks here want to speak their language, so be it. It’s not forbidden to speak their language anyway”.

What exactly does she think the Turkish community wants from the state?

Germany is not the racist country which Turks try to show it to be. Nowhere in Germany would either a language or a culture be restricted. To the contrary, it is one of the most free countries in the world. And no ban has ever been put against a Turkish family to say “you won’t be speaking in Turkish...So, they are like paranoids, since they [Turkish migrants] are so nationalist, and they think too highly of themselves, that they came here, they are high in numbers, they go “we are Turkish. This place is ours”. They’ve occupied some areas like Kreuzberg, Schoeneberg, Neukolln, so they hang around in these areas as like “this is our ‘hood now”.

In chapter V, we saw Fatma and her rejection of practices of Islam. By doing this, she was also rejecting what she saw as part of Turkish cultural practices and ideologies. Although Fatma was as straightforward in her rejection and criticism as Secil is, why do their position seem very different from each other? I realize the difference lies in the subject these accusations directed towards. Fatma’s focus is on the members of Turkish community; that is, she talks *to* them, even when she talks *about* them. The ambiguity one feels when listening to Fatma is therefore due to her “excusing” what she sees as their wrongdoings. She is aware of constant rejection, discrimination, the systematic and structural inequalities which contribute to these “wrongs”. She is also aware of her rejecting parts of what she simultaneously embraces.

Secil’s speech, on the other hand, is directed towards the German society when she talks *about* the Turkish community. She does not take the members of Turkish community as her partner-in-dialogue. Hamid Dabashi’s “native informer” also does not direct her position towards

whom she talks about. “The primary target of this propaganda”, Dabashi writes in the context of US, “is first and foremost the Americans themselves, who need to be assured that they are a good, noble, and superior people ordained by their creator to rescue the world from its evils.” (Dabashi 2011: 18) “[She] speaks for the white-identified, transnational bourgeoisie” which, in Dabashi’s example, calls her ““the voice of the modern Iranian woman”; here, as elsewhere, modernity is white.” (28)

“They will transfer hatred to you”, Secil says, warning me against the Turkish and Arab-majority neighborhoods. “One can’t walk hand-in-hand with one’s girlfriend there.” But what would the residents actually do? “Even if they don’t say anything, I mean, this is something they don’t accept”. But, since I don’t “look so Turkish”, I would be safe, she says.

But let them realize you are Turkish, then they’d throw stones after you. So you can deduct their double personality in these circumstances. If somebody goes to ask them if they’re homophobic and so on, they’d say “no, it’s all normal” and so on, but they’d curse at [a gay person].

I ask her about Turkish organizations, both LGBTQ oriented and not. She does not approve of any of them. Even the TBB, the Turkish Union in Berlin/Brandenburg⁸³, one of the most well known left-of-the-center Turkish organizations, “is directed towards extreme Turkishness. TBB never criticizes Turkey anyway, their politics is to protect Turkey...To protect and promote Turkish culture...Before the German language, comes the Turkish language for them. They are so nationalist that neither they nor their children can think internationally, globally”. She is also determined that majority of Turkish organizations “present extreme tolerance for the headscarf”.

⁸³ TBB is actually a federation of organizations, currently embracing 30 member organizations. Their official website is available at <http://tbb-berlin.de> (in German)

Minority complex...[Imitating the activists] “Those who wear headscarf are minorities, we will protect them. We are minorities also and we need to be protected. So let all minorities protect each other”. There is no logic in this. Your problem is separate than hers [the headscarf wearer].

Therefore, one way Secil legitimizes her position against the LGBTQ Turkish activist groups is through separating the headscarf “issue” from that of sexuality, although it is very often the case that these populations share members. What is more, the family members or friends of an LGBTQ person might be facing discrimination based on their headscarf.

I ask her about non-Turkish (and non-migrant) LGBTQ communities. In contrast to the Turkish LGBTQ organizations, she claims, German organizations are able to “look from a broader perspective”.

They use a serious and a broad perspective...You have to have a position. This multi-kulti thing [multiculturalism, as is referred to in everyday life German], let all cultures get acceptance let’s not oppress anybody, not criticize anybody... You cannot make politics this way. Germans are already doing this, they don’t need you for that!

Therefore, Secil claims that the discourse of the Turkish LGBTQ activism is merely repeating the political correctness of the German mainstream political discourse. ironically This claim reminds me of an interview I had with Yagmur, a member of the mentioned TBB- Turkish Union in Berlin/Brandenburg. While talking about the role of “native informers”, she had told me about her German boyfriend admitting how “it makes it much easier for us [Germans] when someone among you comes out to say such things”.

And he was so right. And now that everything has become so fundamentalized, politically speaking, that everyone dares everything, as long as we have such people...These are people who cut the throat of those who come from their own country...They make crazy amounts of money through making politics off our backs.

Yagmur identifies as straight- but her sexual orientation was not the reason why I met her at a Kreuzberg café. My aim was to find out about political alliance between TBB, as the largest Turkish organization in Berlin, and the Turkish LGBTQ community. She claimed there was an obvious change in TBB's stance regarding the issue. The hesitance of 2000s had left itself to a kind of safeguarding and sheltering. In contrast to Secil, it seemed as if the TBB did not separate spheres of discrimination:

Absolutely [there is alliance with the LGBTQ communities]. They [the TBB] saw that these organizations [Turkish LGBTQ organizations] are led by smart people, sensible people, who do effective work, and seeing that they actually fight the same fight...There are very serious works with them- we present a common position as the whole discourse has changed...I do know that they were hesitant 10 years or so ago...and it was like “what would our base think, what would the members say”. But somehow the mid-way [has got to be found].

Distancing one's self as an act of belonging

The interview at Secil's place is taking longer than I expected. It is only towards the end of our interview that I hear a change in her attitude about Germany, and more specifically, about her life in Berlin. It should probably surprise me to hear her say that she is seriously considering to move to New York. After all, I have been listening to her speaking highly of Germany. I do understand, on the other hand, the appeal of my beloved New York- the city which, I know, is Secil's beloved also. It turns out, however, that the magnetism of New York is hardly the reason for her to consider leaving Germany. I understand that Secil, similar to Spivak's *informant*, is suffering from “providing information yet [being] unable to obtain a subject position”:

As much as I feel good here, although I have a German identity, a German character, it is very hard for Germans to accept this- very, very hard. There is a word here you know, ‘migrationshintergrunde’, migration background [she says this in English]. They will never accept that I am Secil. Always, wherever it is, it always

says ‘Secil with Turkish migration background’. When you are invited somewhere in US, in New York, as a teacher, as a speaker, as a worker, they write down your occupation, they don’t write your background”

I: Do you think it is because of the topics you talk about? You are invited as a member of this community, after all.

S: Because of the topic, because it is always related to that topic, but there’s still such need, I mean, you are not a German.

I: And this is disturbing to you.

S: Yes...The first time I went to US, to New York, the first time I felt like...Just Secil. Nobody asked where I was from, where I was going to...this is why my parents went back to Turkey. They said ‘we want to live in our own country’. You will always be a stranger here, you are different, a stranger. But in New York, it’s a multicultural city. I can’t think of another city than New York. Everybody would accept it regardless of your skin color, the length of your nose, your eyes, your eyebrows, your hair!

I do not start a whole conversation about discrimination, segregation and racial profiling in New York. She is quite aware of it anyway. “...there, it is not much better than here” she says.

I mean...if I were black, I would have experienced the same thing there. But **my** life would be different [if she moves to New York]; and I would continue my political work to support them, I would have a contribution that way. I mean, what blacks live there, I am experiencing here as a Turk.

What she says afterwards, however, appears as a reminder of her affluent class:

There’s an au pair that I have here from Florida, she speaks only in American [English], she is black. From Miami. Such a sweet thing. Otherwise it tires me also, a typical white country. Who governs the world anyway? A few white men.

Her class does not prevent her from staying as one of the “permanent migrants”, or “eternal newcomers, forever suspended in time...defined by a static foreignness overriding both individual experience and historical facts” (El-Tayeb xxv). It should be emphasized that it is not uncommon to hear Turks presenting themselves as “the African-Americans of Germany”. This has been reflected through the appropriation of what has been seen as African American music

(rap and hip hop), or employing the creolized Turkish-German spoken by the disenfranchised youth⁸⁴

The African-American connection is not made only within the Turkish-German community, however. On one hand, throughout 1990s and 2000s, racialized discourse about emerging immigrant ghettos was shared by the news media and politicians alike with a focus on youth violence, while the figure of the disenfranchised neo-Nazi vanished almost completely (Caglar 2001 and Stehle 2012). On the other hand, scholars such as Christian Joppke have pointed at the similar social profiles of “poor and undereducated” Muslim immigrants in Europe (in contrast to US Muslims) and nonimmigrant African-Americans “who arrived involuntarily as slaves and some of whom have adopted a variant of politicized Islam, the Nation of Islam” (Joppke 2009). What is important to realize is that what ties these and other ethnic and racial minority groups together is not *their* blackness or brownness- it is *whiteness* which ties them together. Unfortunately, while there is a scarcity of theorizations of race in European migration studies, it is especially whiteness which remains as “the forever unexplored norm” (El-Tayeb 116).

Sefa’s Case

Sefa, a female-to-male transgender in his mid-20s and is of Kurdish background from Turkey, has been active in “queers of color” politics for years. He starts the interview saying he

⁸⁴Turkish-German writer Feridun Zaimoglu named this dialect “Kanak Sprak”, based on the German racist term “kanake” which would come close to the word “nigger” in the US context. Brown, Timothy S. “‘Keeping it Real’ in a Different ‘Hood: (African-) Americanization and Hip-hop in Germany.” In *The Vinyl Ain’t Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture*, ed. by Dipannita Basu and Sidney J. Lemelle, 139 London

would not have accepted to meet with me had I also not been a person of color. I ask him his definition of “person of color”. His tone is quite aggressive: Why? Would I not consider myself a person of color? Being of Muslim origin? I talk about my own (migrant) status first in Cyprus, then in Turkey, and finally in United States, thinking this might get him talk about his own family whom he left behind in a small town in Germany when he moved to Berlin on his own. In spite of his young age, his response points at exhaustion. “I don’t need everybody to accept me...I know this [Sefa’s life] is not a life they fully embrace. Perhaps, if we lived closer, they’d understand better, I’d try to explain more, but I don’t want to explain much anymore anyway”.

“But” he adds quickly

it is not because of the thing...you know..because they are from Turkey or something. It’s because they’ve got nothing to do with my life...If I was closer to mom or dad I’d tell them, and since they love me, after a while they’d understand. I think. But I don’t have such an attempt yet because they really are not in my life anyway. and why would I share this with the now, there’s no such closeness between us. And just because they brought me to life doesn’t mean that I have to tell them everything. I have here a family and an environment which I’ve chosen myself..

Until now, I have listened to such emotional stories by women- some had attempted suicide; some ran away from home, lost their loved ones, became homeless. Some of these women were whose presence was “usually only acknowledged as a sign of crisis and forgotten again in the ongoing construction of a new European identity” (El-Tayeb: 25). Although, politically speaking, I did not agree with some of the statements I heard, and some made me quite uncomfortable, this interview with Sefa might be the uneasiest one I have experienced so far. I have had chance to make observations after our interview, and I have to admit that my time with him made me remember of what an activist migrant friend refers to as “agro-migrant”:

Those who develop their identities through aggressively rejecting anything which might be even slightly relevant to the “white German” society. Indeed, it was impossible to notice Sefa’s continuously aggressive statements to others, besides his direct and defensive responses to me. When I realized however that what especially bothered me was what seemed to me as a constant identification with victimhood, I decided to try more to understand this young person. After all, I have in front of me somebody who has experienced not only being a lesbian woman of Kurdish background in Germany- he was now experiencing what it meant to be a “male person of color”.

I think of what he told me about growing up as a Kurd: School was not easy with children of Turkish migrants. He went to an “elitist school, mostly middle and upper middle class white German people...There was only one other poc [he means ‘person of color’] kid besides me in class. He was from a working class family also, the others were all white Germans”. I take note of how he uses ethnicity and race in relation to social class: white Germans versus working class people of color. He does, however, separate “white Turks” (those who are more educated, probably coming from an upper middle class background, and are of ethnic Turkish, rather than being Kurdish background. Where he grew up, he says, “there were usually Turkish people anyway. But most were white Turks and for us as a Kurdish family it was a little...[tough]”. When I ask him about the LGBTQ communities in Berlin, he responds with separating “white [queer] environments” from those of “people of color”. “Just because these people are queer doesn’t mean they can’t be racist. So when you get into white environments, yes you can make friends and all, but you do hear what they think about foreigners. You hear what they think about foreigners.” “What do they think?” I ask.

Well, they[“white” LGBTQs] are racists! I don’t know, they don’t have to say

‘they are all idiots, they don’t work’ and all. There can be cultural racisms, they say ‘I love the way Turks dance’ and all, and I count this as racism...

To conclude

I find Sefa’s aggressive rejection of “white environments” in favor of the indigenous populations, the brown and black people, in other words, the people of color quite dangerous. This is because I am afraid “the problem of the ideal of solidarity is precisely that it *can* solidify”. That a dogmatic rejection might get us forget the fact that “the oppressed whom we represent...are necessarily artifacts of our representational practices” (Wolfe 2002: 369). What ties Secil’s and Sefa’s position is that these two positions end up legitimizing each other. Just as the “western modernity” of Secil universalizes what she sees as German and European, so does the “people of color versus white Germans” formula tends to recreate *partialization* (Chancer 2005). Instead, we need to have what Spivak refers to as “critical intimacy” of affirmative deconstruction (Ibid: 425). This, “in contrast to the reflex repudiations of oppositionalism, incorporates and acknowledges the appeal of that which is being criticized...Willed ambivalence is central...” (Wolfe 2002: 370)

It is telling that similar to Secil, Sefa desires to distance himself from the community in Berlin which he identifies himself with. Although he is against “American imperialistic practices”, he justifies his attempts to migrate to US or Canada by referring to the German education system. Since he left school before when he was eligible to get the certificate which is required for College entrance in Germany, “it is almost impossible now to get into that education system.” Indeed, many of my respondents have complained about strict requirements of the

German system, although I do not have the space to get into its details here. What I do wish to underline, however, is his determinism to move outside of Berlin, which would mean a move not only from the racism he has suffered from, but also from “the family of people of color” he cherishes. I should also note that after our interview, he indeed managed to actualize his wish to move. He currently resides in Canada. As I hear, he is unemployed, and collects unemployment benefit, but happily married to a Canadian citizen.

In Secil’s case we saw an individual of an affluent social class, yet one “with a pigment to their complexion who could tell their tales with an accent” (Dabashi 2011:16). She has two impossible options: “The first, to identify as an Insider of the national community, is a position that inevitably clashes with the assigned status as Other (“[P]eople will keep on asking: ‘Where do you come from?...No, no, where do you really come from?’”). The second option is to accept the Outsider status, that is, the identification as migrant and foreigner.” (El-Tayeb 2011: 169) Secil’s ambiguity derives from the way she looks, the way she speaks, her Turkish name, the way in which “they” cannot pronounce this name, the ways in which “they” refer to her as “Secil with migration background”. All these, all at once, alienate, exoticize and authorize her (Dabashi 2011: 28)

In Sefa’s case, on the other hand, we saw an individual belonging to a lower class and positions himself against the political discourse which can be seen in Secil’s statements. One might suggest that Sefa wears what Yagmur refers to as “the victimhood jacket”. “If the person identifies with the victimhood position, you can never get out of it”, she says.

There is a ball that is thrown at you from the outside, we throw it back at them.
But what I say is that yes, tis might be needed but one should not be quick-tempered.

We need to think...Regardless of how long we have been living here, yes, we are still foreigners. But we ourselves should not be stiff, this is only how we can [make claims]. Instead of constantly objecting, or opposing, we should make claims. This is how we can take ourselves seriously, and how we can be taken seriously...Neither the coat of victimhood, nor positioning against the community which has been discriminated against. A position of your own, without rejecting your own identity...

Although these two cases might seem very different from each other, I suggest that in both cases, the move outside of whom one identifies with makes it possible to continue the identification regardless of changing positionalities, changing social realities and politics. Change happens within all circles (within communities of color as well as within the “white German” society). When the individual has developed their identity based on or as an opposition to a strictly defined “other”, it furthers the existential anxiety to see that other change in time. Distancing one’s self, however, lets the individual maintain their self-identity if only through an ideal image of the Other.

Chapter VII

Conclusion

In 1969 Theodor Adorno asks: “What is German?”. The question itself “presupposes an autonomous collective entity, 'German,' whose characteristics are then determined after the fact. The fabrication of national collectivities, however...is the mark of a reified consciousness hardly capable of experience” (121). I read Adorno’s piece at a café I have been a few times before, on Oranienstrasse, in Berlin. The street this time is decorated with pink flags by GLADT (*Gays and Lesbians from Turkey, Berlin Brandenburg*) reading, in German and Turkish, “You are not alone.../Together/ against homophobia/against racism/ against sexism/ against the fascists”. The gray wolves [the Turkish nationalist group] recently opened an office there, right next to the SO36. The “SO” is a performance space and a dance club well known for its Turkish-queer regulars and parties. It holds *Gayhane*, the monthly disco-event which can be translated from Turkish as “the gay space”.

In another neighborhood at another café owned by a Turkish German, I listen to Seyman, a Turkish German sociologist who teaches in Berlin. She says she would not even consider living anywhere else but Berlin, “but, still, we are the migrants here. Not those who might have just recently arrived from France or Canada or US. Because they are the Europeans, you see, not us...but what is integration anyway?”. I repeat her question, ‘what is integration?’, and she responds: “assimilation”. Assimilation into what, exactly? Supposed cultural differences on the issues of gender and sexuality, at this very point, appears in interviews. It is an ongoing complaint among queer people with Turkish background that ‘Germans’ refuse to imagine

‘Turkishness’ being compatible with queerness. That is, “you cannot be a lesbian and Turkish and Muslim at the same time. If you are, then you are assimilated.”⁸⁵

I wanted to work with these people who embody what is considered to be an oxymoron: Being queer and Turkish, being a lesbian and having a Muslim background, being in between all worlds and thus, seemingly, not belonging anywhere. As Orlando Patterson says in another context: “...the virtue of a vague idea is that everyone can safely read his or her own meaning to it...We have, however, a strong tendency in Western culture to rationalize our values, to explain them, and to demonstrate their internal coherence” (Patterson 1991: 1). Against this idea of cohesiveness I chose these possibly extreme cases of study, in order to reveal complexities within even the most specific cases. My aim was to be able to generalize these cases to answer questions such as:

Do we need coherence to belong? What does belonging mean for an individual whose various identifications are presented, for political purposes, as challenging each other? What is the role of sexual identities and identity politics in this picture? Does the meaning of citizenship differ from lived experiences of belonging and, if so, in what ways? Do we need trust to belong? Is it possible to lose trust and yet maintain the sense of belonging? Can there really be “singularities [which] form a community without affirming an identity?” What is more, is it possible to have “humans [that] co-belong without any representable condition of belonging” (Agamben : 86)?

⁸⁵ DJ Ipek Ipekcioglu, explaining why the gay community in Germany only partially accepts her. National Public Radio, Morning Edition, January 30, 2007

In order to better contribute to this discussion, I wanted my study to bridge the gap between the literature in queer studies, migration and citizenship studies, and social psychology. So I needed to look simultaneously at

(i) **Psychosocial and emotional factors:** After the events of 9/11, we read commentators suggesting that the hijackers were not motivated by politics: It was their anxiety to blame. They were anxious because of the loss of pre-modern societies in front of the aggressive Western modernity. Politics or economy had nothing to do with this.

Anxiety is not the sole affective force. But it is a permanent and a productive force. It sometimes produces belonging, stability, structure; other times, ambiguity, rejection or denial. As Corey Robin reminds us in *Fear*, from Montesquieu to Hobbes, Tocqueville to Arendt, intellectuals have realized the importance of emotional factors. Some thought that fear was aroused by the power holders in order to keep the masses down (Hobbes); some claimed it kept them apart from each other (Montesquieu). Tocqueville, however, claimed that anxiety did not have to be crafted by the power holders: It was already there, it was the automatic condition of lonely people. In this context, the repressive forces of the state, in fact, were demanded (perhaps unconsciously) by the mass. We needed to turn our attention inward, toward our psyches, as danger came from within, from ourselves, demanding our own repression.

Although more recent theories seem to be interested in the socio-psychological questions such as belonging, as I tried to show in Chapter II, these theories fail to move the psychic matter beyond identity politics. “Who belongs where” becomes the main question, assuming both metaphorical and literal borders between populations. This focus is also prone to ignoring the unequal distribution of power and resources. Therefore, I suggest that urban sociology and

migration studies, both sensitive to redistribution of power, can bring much to the table while benefiting from the psycho-social focus. On the other hand, a citizenship literature loses much if it ignores that identifications, the sense of whiteness, Turkishness, femininity or religiousness and so on, are contested not only culturally and politically, but also as they are shaped and reshaped by an emotional self (Chodorow 1999: 72). Women who hold identical positions in society and are situated in similar ways culturally can yet have very different psychological experiences of their positions (Ibid. 76). Focusing on issues of citizenship in the contemporary political context will be misleading without situating citizenship in the wider context of contemporary politics of belonging which encompass citizenships, identities and the emotions attached to them.

This is because, first of all, citizenship, regardless of different interpretations derived from typologies of states (from social democratic to liberal to corporatist states) as a legal and political notion, differentiates those who belong to the entity in question (be it a nation-state in the traditional sense or, say, the European Nation) from those who are not entitled to belong. The rules and criteria for ‘naturalization’, granting of citizenship to those who were not born within the entity’s territories, might often be challenged, and the language of these discussions might have been transformed to become more “inclusive” and “human rights” oriented. However, these debates do not change- or better, have not yet changed- the main idea of modern citizenship which makes certain groups strangers and outsiders. Indeed, in contrast to the lack of enough attention in the literature on socio-psychological scale and the intersection of gender, race and sexuality, the populist political discourse around migration, integration and citizenship abuses the

emotional aspect such as fear of ‘the other’. Therefore we need to encompass sexuality and feelings by looking at citizenship through the lens of belonging.

(ii) **Sexuality:** Berlin, with its sizable queer population, estimated between 5 to 10 percent of 3.7 million residents, is commonly regarded as the capital of queer Germany (Petzen 2008: 152). The city has been investing in consumers of diverse sexual orientations and marketing itself as one of the most ‘tolerant’ cities in the world. From building the first full-service nursing home in Europe for gays and lesbians⁸⁶ to launching (at the recent International Tourism Fair) a new lesbian and gay hotel brand⁸⁷ the city not only targets local gay residents, but also tries to attract gay and lesbian tourists from all around the world. There are official buildings of the municipality of Berlin displaying the rainbow flag⁸⁸. In the legal realm too there is major progress: since August 2001, lesbian and gay couples can enter into a civil union in Germany. Although this new institution of family law is not a marriage, especially when it comes to inheritance and tax treatment where gays and lesbians still face huge obstacles to have their

86 Gemma Pritchard, “Gay Nursing Home Opens in Germany”, Pink News, January 21, 2008, <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/news/articles/2005-6623.html> (accessed September 27, 2008)

87 Anon. “Lesbian and Gay Hotel Brand Launched”, Pink News, March 7, 2008, <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/news/articles/2005-7059.html> (“Community Marketing” which specializes in gay and lesbian marketing, estimates the value of the American Market alone as \$65 billion in 2007. The company’s name itself is meaningful if one thinks about the recent emphasis on the role of communities in strengthening the ‘Putnamian’ social capital. See Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000)

88 Personal interview with Ahmet Iyidirli, 15 June, 2008, Berlin. It is not only Berlin investing in LGBT tourism: The eight of quadrennial Gay Games, the world’s largest sporting and cultural event organized by and specifically for LGBT athletes, artists and musicians, will be hosted in 2010 in Cologne, known for its “tradition of cosmopolitan tolerance toward dissenters and different lifestyles”, according to Lord Mayor Fritz Schramma (see the official website of Cologne 2010 Gay Games, <http://www.games-cologne.de/en/cologne/> (accessed September 1, 2008). The Gay Games has become a sought-after international event by cities worldwide. The 2006 Gay Games VII in Chicago is expected to have contributed “\$50 to \$80 million to the local economy, with some estimating that another 10 years of positive LGBT tourism visibility will generate millions more dollars in the long term” See gay games Chicago official website <http://www.gaygameschicago.org/media/article.php?aid=175>, (accessed September 1, 2008).

rights guaranteed, there are many areas in which partners living in civil union have the same rights and obligations as married partners⁸⁹.

One must be cautious in applauding this process, however. For, the “tolerance” discourse towards some bodies are managed to legitimize categorization of and discrimination against certain populations. Within discussions of multiculturalism, the status of women in an immigrant community is often used as a measure of degree of integration into the host society, an argument which has recently been reinforced with policies such as the “gender-related integration policies” in Berlin (Häusserman et. al. 2005). The Commissioner for Integration and Migration of the Senate of Berlin has recently published a document on the essentials of the integration policy of Berlin, titled “Encouraging Diversity – Strengthening Cohesion”. According to this, the gender-related measure is one of the key issues of integration process, and the protection of immigrant women from domestic violence appears as one of the the essential strands of the integration policy in Berlin. The state is presented as responsible for protecting its people’s living and articulation of beliefs, interests and religion in the framework of the basic law; and regarding the gender-related discrimination, the emphasis is on the violence which comes from immigrant women’s “ethnic and religious community”: “[t]his protection has to be applied universally, also against individual harassment from members of the same ethnic- religious community.” Significantly, the document suggests that the anti-discrimination policy increases the legitimacy

89 Still, according to the Eurobarometer poll conducted in 2006, 48% of Germans do not agree with same-sex marriages and 58% do not back adoption opportunities for gay couples. “Eight EU Countries Back Same Sex Marriage” Angus Reid Global Monitor, December 24, 2006, http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/view/14203/eight_eu_countries_back_same_sex_marriage, (accessed August 28, 2008)

of the state “upon the exclusion of the affected groups and pursues a foresighted integration policy”(p.35)⁹⁰.

We saw in Chapter II that as tolerance, as a European value, being defined around sexuality and sexual dissidents, homosexuality appears also as a way to separate those who have managed to embody “Europeanness” from those who have not. Indeed, feminist demands and claims of (homo)sexual liberation have moved from the counter-cultural margins to the heart of many European countries’ national imaginations, and have become a central factor in the European Union’s production of itself as an imaginary community. Rhetorics of lesbian/gay and women’s rights have played important roles in discourses and policies redefining modernity in sexual terms, while sexual modernity comes to be defined in national, cultural and religious terms.

As recent as April 2010, there were debates over whether “sexual identity” should be included to the Equality laws within the German constitution. During these debates, “belief” and “integration” of Muslim population in Germany was once more placed against gay rights. For example, Winfried Kluth, one of nine experts the German Parliament asked to present their stance on the subject, argued that protecting LGBTs “would prevent Muslim immigrants from accepting our constitution”. This argument implies that it is first and foremost the Muslim population who do not “believe” that sexual minorities should be protected against

⁹⁰ There has also been a call by German feminists to require incoming migrants to sign an acceptance of Germany’s basic law, which proclaims equality of men and women. Petzen 2008: 200

discrimination⁹¹. These cultural differences which are taken for granted are presented as opposites in a hierarchical order, reinforcing the stereotypical assumptions that result with the justification and exacerbation of criminalization and surveillance of certain populations. As Volker Woltersdorff warns, queer communities get instrumentalised for different political goals. In Europe, queer communities and their demands on equality, for instance the demand for the legalization of same sex partnerships, are being utilized as a “national project of modernisation”. Furthermore, hegemonic discourse in the European Union emphasizes tolerance towards homosexuality as an allegedly European value. Thus, right wing liberal policies give anti-homophobic struggles a nationalist and racist standpoint by pointing at certain cultures as intolerant and homophobic and thus disarticulating possible alliances between sexuality, class, and migration activists (Haritaworn et al 2008: 71-95). Rather than help, these policies have worsened the situation for the majority of queer Muslims. It has become increasingly difficult for some groups “who are forced into the frontline of the artificially constructed gay v. Muslim divide, to contest sexual oppression in Muslim communities.” (Ibid.)

Another example to such policies is the now infamous questionnaire, the “Muslim Test” which was also mentioned in Chapter II. It is astonishing that Heribert Rech, Baden-Württemberg’s Innenminister (interior minister) who proposed the questionnaire, is a member of the CDU, a party that fought against the extension of marriage-like rights to gays and lesbians in 2001. Nevertheless, the presence of these questions indicates that acceptance of homosexuals is

91 However, the debate itself proved this argument wrong. In the parliamentary hearing, several of the appointed experts themselves warned against the proposed measure. Professor Bernd Grzeszick from the University of Heidelberg said the inclusion of “sexual identity” to the constitution’s Equality Laws would lead to the legalisation of polygamy; Klaus Gärditz of University from Bonn took attention to the possibility of “paedophilia, sodomy and sadomasochism”. <http://lianghh.blogspot.com/2010/04/would-protecting-sexual-minorities.html> access date May 20, 2010

now part of being a liberal and a German⁹². We have also seen that this attitude has actually been welcomed by local sections of major gay and lesbian lobby groups by pointing to a German ‘tradition’ of gay friendliness which needed to be defended from the Muslim migrants. In her examination of the Lesbian and Gay Association Germany (LSVD), Jennifer Petzen (2005) argues that the ‘integration of gay migrants’ is now a central goal of mainstream gay politics in Germany. In this process, white homosexuals assert their equality with white heterosexuals by claiming their expert status in the civilising of the ‘homophobic migrant’.

There is a certain kind of sexual politics at play here, a politics which is named by many, following Lisa Duggan, as “homonormativity”. “Homonormativity anesthetizes queer communities into passively accepting alternative forms of inequality in return for domestic privacy and the freedom to consume.” (Duggan 2002 and Manalansan 2005). Jasbir Puar also explains in detail “the rise of a global gay right wing anchored in Europe and attaining credibility very pointedly through Islamophobic rhetoric...normativizing gay and lesbian human rights frames, which produce (in tandem with gay tourism) gay-friendly and not-gay-friendly nations...” (Puar 2007: xiv). Similarly, Jin Haritaworn et. al. (2008) suggest that the main basis of this process is not a progress in gender and sexual politics but a regression in racial politics (79). Activist researchers working on homonationalisms and anti-racist queer solidarities, including Jin Haritaworn (Helsinki), Suhraiya Jivraj (Oxford), Adi Kuntsman (Manchester), and Jennifer Petzen (Berlin), challenge the ways in which gay rights are increasingly being used in

92 Gert Hekma draws attention to the similar attitude of the right-wing in the Netherlands: “The strong reaction by politicians also amazed queer activists who had rarely seen such an outpouring of support for gay men and lesbian women, from the prime minister, the general population and imams who declared their respect for sexual diversity” It is important to note that Hekma also argues that the “[a]nti-homosexual attitudes are probably nearly as prevalent among the white majority as among ethnic minority male youth” and that “[b]oth groups sometimes even strengthen each other’s homophobic attitudes” Hekma 2002: 244

nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric and ask what possibilities there are for an effective queer solidarity. I find Haritaworn and her co-writers' criticisms important as they claim that not only political events, but "academic research projects and media productions about gay Muslims are controlled by white people who determine which Muslims participate, what kind of questions they get to answer, and how their contributions are edited. Ironically, Muslim gays are invited to speak only when they give their voices up to white people, who can then appear to generously give it back to them."(Ibid.).

On the one hand, homonormative rhetoric creates an ahistorical context, ignoring that, especially in medieval Western literature, "Islam's allegedly tolerant and even encouraging attitude towards sexual practices between people of the same sex [used to be seen as] another indication of Islamic self-indulgence" (Daniel 1993: 164 cited in Schmidtke 1999: 260) . On the other hand, diverse and conflicting expressions, attitudes and ideologies supported by current Turkish LGBT groups in Berlin concerning the policies on sexuality and ethnicity might challenge these stereotypical assumptions and the expected homogeneity. The case studies included here presented personal and (therefore) political strategies that emerge in reaction to these essentialised and ethnicized discourses on gender and sexuality. These cases do not only tell us about themselves, however: The postcolonial feminists, such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, observed how white people become interested in Orientalised gender and sexual regimes at specific times, which have more to do with developments in their own culture than with the 'Other' (Haritaworn et al 2008: 79). This thoughtful argument reveals the need to reverse the traditional question focusing on minorities. I hope the reader can take these cases as a 'mirror' which will be crucial for looking at the seemingly coherent "us".

In spite of the brilliant scholarship mentioned above, however, and despite the political sphere which abuses sexual freedom in defining, governing, and surveilling populations, larger and more established fields of sociology of migration and citizenship seems to either ignore the importance of sexuality, or tend to homogenize the already gendered identities. This homogenization becomes apparent in the figure of “the immigrant woman”. Feminist studies have successfully raised voice against the “malestream” citizenship theory which has ignored women, and they thus revealed the fact that the concept of citizenship has never been gender-neutral (Ruth 1997). Not only the historical exclusion of women, but also the nature of their inclusion to the field has been imbued “with the stain of gender assumptions” (Ibid. 69).

What is more, when the literature does pay attention to gender, and recently to sexuality in general, the intersection of ethnicity, race, class and religion often tends to be ignored. As Yuval-Davis suggests, “[t]here is no meaning to the notion of ‘black’, for instance, which is not gendered and classed, no meaning for the notion of ‘woman’ which is not ethnicized and classed, etc.” (Yuval-Davis 2007: 565). To give one example from the citizenship literature which, in spite of some thoughtful arguments, still suffers from the lack of “intersectionality”: The term “sexual citizenship” has been developed by Evans (1993), Weeks (1998), Bell and Binnie (2000), and Richardson (2000) as a critique of dominant theories of citizenship that fail to recognize citizenship as gendered and sexualized. Yet, “sexual citizenship” discourse, I believe, stops short of confronting the structural inequalities faced everyday by queer people of color. In most cases it risks continuing the exclusionary potential within the very notion of citizenship

which it takes for granted⁹³. What is more, in this framework citizenship itself remains a positive and desired category, deeply rooted in ideas of liberal democracy⁹⁴. Yet, we do know that access to structural power is not distributed evenly. Therefore, I wanted a more careful discussion and reading of citizenship which does not only embrace sexuality, but also recognizes that not all bodies are affected in the same way by citizenship policies.

I suggested “acts of belonging” as acts embodying all these various dimensions. These are the acts which actually reveal both complexity and the very possibility to embrace and accept our conflictual situations while, if only momentarily, relieving from the burden this conflict might otherwise cause the individual. Rather than asking where the actor belongs (to Germany? to Turkey?), I hypothesized that belonging *is* in and through the act itself. What was essential in case studies I included here is the transformational movement- the movement which challenges the binary notions of movement and immobility; whiteness and non-whiteness; progress and backwardness. Fatma, for instance, in Chapter V, takes off her headscarf. This act, however, is experienced in a way which challenges the narrative that places the ex-Muslim in direct opposition to devout Muslims. Fatma does not only talk *about* Muslims, she talks *to* them. Her act might signify a longing to belong, but it also is a refusal to choose one identification instead of another.

93 Although see Carl Stychin (1998) *A Nation by Rights: National Cultures, Sexual Identity Politics, and the Discourse of Rights*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia. Stychin predicts that there will be further exclusion in the process of seeking the ideal of “respectability”, such as “good gays” and “bad gays” and that the east and the south will be further excluded as the “uncivilized other” (pg. 200)

94 Kuntsman, Adi (2010) “Necropolitical sexual citizenship : imprisonment, haunting, death” paper presented at *Beyond Citizenship: Feminism and Transformation of Belonging*, Birkbeck, London, 30 June- 2 July 2010.

The body can be a site of liberation as well as repression, and one act can have multiple meanings- so can the practices of clothing (or not) the body. As El-Tayeb says, “Muslim Europeans are created as a coherent community only by the discourse about them”. Individuals do not act based on one single emotion or logic. Act is much more complex; it is something that is beyond binary notions, and To quote el-Tayeb again: “[R]acialized Europeans use queer performative strategies in continuously rearranging the components of the supposedly stable identities assigned to them” (el-Tayeb :171). Acts of belonging show that we do not belong here or there- we just constantly belong, and belonging, we long for.

Therefore, acts of belonging also challenge the idea of coherence. After all, if, as psychoanalysis showed us decades ago, a single individual has forces in conflict within herself, why would we insist on homogeneity within a group of people? Indeed, Post-Lacanian psychoanalytic critics widely employ the idea of “the otherness within”- the unconscious which is nothing but the foreign, the other, the strange, and perhaps, one might say, the real. Jessica Benjamin (1995) for instance, reminds us how Lacan’s “critique of ego psychology...pointed to the problems of assuming a unitary, cohesive self” (15). Same is true for gender-based identifications: Even when identifications occur, this does not necessarily mean a unitary gender identity. Rather, it suggests the idea of recuperating through symbolic representations the multiplicity of the overinclusive phase (Ibid.)

Conflict, tension, flux and reflux are also apparent in our relations with others as in recognizing the other while trying to assert our “selves” at the same time. “At the very moment of realizing our own independent will we are dependent upon another to recognize it. At the very moment we come to understand the meaning of *I, myself*, we are forced to see the limitations of

that self.” (Benjamin 1995: 37). Paradoxically, what ties us together might be the incoherence within what is considered to be coherent.

If this is the case, if even a single individual is a site of incoherence, how do we expect coherence from societies? How can we justify creating and managing ideas of populations out of actually existing beings? Does the mainstream discourse about “Islam”, for example, not ignore that the relationship between culture, ethnicity, nation, sexuality and religion is as dynamic for Muslims as anybody else? Does this not fail to appreciate the various ways of *doing* Islam- various ways of living, based on differences of time and place and class and education, or region and gender? Does it not ignore the complex and various meanings which Fatma’s taking off (and on) of her headscarf has?

This means that we need to state the obvious: That conflict is inevitable within as well as between groups of people. Through this conflict is born, not only emotions, but also acts- including acts of belonging. In other words, this study suggests that we should embrace the productive capacity of conflict instead of focusing on coherence, which, as the way we understand it today, does not exist anyway. Labour should be put in studying what this conflict does, instead of trying to erase it from our lives.

I looked at two main perspectives on social cohesion: The Durkheimian perspective on the one hand, and what we might call the Simmelian perspective on the other. There were more recent, “alternative” voices also, which come closer to accepting the existence of “difference”. One might argue that multiculturalism, for instance, or cosmopolitanism, positively valorize difference. However, these perspectives either remain to assume minorities as groups of individuals belonging to an entity separate than the majority; or provide an idea of a democracy

of humanity while taking for granted the western-liberal interpretation of democracy and citizenship.

Instead, I benefit from the more practical suggestion of Chantal Mouffe whose radical democracy does not attempt to erase the adversary- it aims to transform *antagonism* into *agonism* (Mouffe 102). It does not aim to eliminate passions from the sphere of the public, in order to render a rational consensus possible, “but to mobilize those passions towards democratic designs”. (Mouffe 103)

I did not intend to romanticize conflict, incoherence or ambiguity, however. Some of the ethnographic notes I included show that conflict might very well come in destructive forms. Rather, I wanted to “complexify” (Chancer) discussions on multiculturalism, immigration, citizenship, and belonging. What this study argued is that this complexity is revealed through “acts of belonging”. It is in the everyday life that people make sense of their complex universe; it is the everyday life which shows that “it is more complex than that”.

I mentioned in the introductory chapter the use of the “freedom narrative” we increasingly see in last decades. “Freedom”, writes Richard Sennett in *Flesh and Stone*, arouses the body “by accepting impurity, difficulty, obstruction as part of the very experience of liberty...[R]esistance is a fundamental and necessary experience for the human body: through feeling resistance, the body is roused to take note of the world in which it lives...The body comes to life when coping with difficulty.” (Sennett: 310) Similarly, conflict and impurity are inherent within societies; they bring societies to life.

Let me turn back to Kreuzberg, the neighborhood with which I opened this chapter, as an example here: The alternativen, to use Mandel’s vocabulary, (i.e. punks and countercultural

“native” Germans) living in this so-called “Turkish ghetto” do not ‘happen to’ live in Kreuzberg. It is not only the state, and the city, and its ‘native’ inhabitants affecting those with migrant backgrounds. The latter, that is, those with migrant background, even when it is usually a stereotypical image of ‘the ethnic’, also define and shape, and reshape the meanings attributed to the space, to the city, and different levels of belonging. It has been argued for a while now that “the definitions of self and other, European and non-European, have always been codependent and mutually constitutive.”(Mandel 2008: 101) Therefore, why insist on the old question that has apparently been unhelpful at best? Why not abandon this “elitist version of cosmopolitanism” (Ibid.: 320) desperately refusing to see how inseparable the worlds that are codified hierarchically are? Why not question the taken for granted cohesiveness of these worlds, starting from the so-called “west”? What is more, and perhaps more importantly, why not question the very necessity of this cohesion for maintenance of identification and belonging?

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