

# Placing Identities: Transnational Practices and Local Attachments of Turkish Immigrants in Germany

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*This paper examines the ways that Turkish immigrants create places of belonging in a German city. I suggest that transnational ties enable immigrants to forge local attachments through the production of place. Drawing on a neighbourhood case-study of Duisburg–Marxloh, I show how immigrants’ transnational ties and practices visibly transform their current place of residence through transnational consumption, mass media, and the establishment of communal places such as mosques and teahouses that also contribute to conflicts between groups. Their placing of identities also forms an engagement with the receiving society, as immigrants are actively carving out belonging in the face of often hostile attitudes from German residents. Viewing immigrants’ attachments from the perspective of places they create teases out the complexities of multiple and sometimes conflicting attachments of contemporary migrants, and allows for an understanding of transnational ties and engagement with the host society as complementary rather than contradictory.*

*Keywords:* Turkish Immigrants; Germany; Place Identity; Transnational Belonging

## Introduction

The permanent settlement of former Turkish guestworkers in Germany has brought about changes to Germany’s social and cultural landscapes, but has also involved alterations of urban landscapes. Turkish cultural institutions, mosques, teahouses, restaurants, businesses and women wearing headscarves have become integral elements of German cities. Earlier plans and wishes of first-generation immigrants to return to their home country have faded as their children and grandchildren grew up in Germany and decided to stay. Changing saving and consumption patterns

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reflect these decisions. Instead of investing in Turkey and their hometowns, Turkish immigrants are building houses, opening businesses and acquiring real estate in Germany. They are establishing communities and changing neighbourhoods in German cities.

At the same time, Turkish immigrants<sup>1</sup> also maintain close ties with their home country, and/or the places where they used to live, leading to the 'transnationalisation of spaces' in German cities (Çağlar 2001). Turkish mass media are widely available, and most Turkish residents maintain familial ties to Turkey. The activities of numerous Turkish and Kurdish political groups in Germany show how much immigrants are involved in politics in Turkey, and in transnational political activities (Østergaard-Nielsen 2000). Large numbers of travel agencies specialising in travel to Turkey highlight the fact that Turkish immigrants are actively creating ties to Turkey, albeit not necessarily to their actual places of origin. Travel patterns of Turkish immigrants are changing as immigrants spend less time in their hometowns and travel instead to coastal tourist destinations (Ehrkamp 2002), demonstrating that the ways that immigrants enact ties to Turkey are neither fixed nor static.

Political activities, the presence of mosques, women wearing headscarves, and other 'traditional Turkish behavior' (White 1998) are in the daily news. Transnational practices and the influence of Islam on Turkish youth in particular seem threatening (Heitmeyer 1997). Discourses about Turkish immigrants and their neighbourhoods often portray transnational ties and visible markers of a Turkish presence in the landscape of German cities as expressions of immigrants' refusal to assimilate to German society (Çağlar 2001).

Similarly, the conceptual literature on transnationalism is far from reconciling recent conceptualisations of transnational migration and transnational communities with questions of immigrant incorporation or assimilation (Kivisto 2003; Nagel 2001). Scholars often emphasise dichotomies between transnational and local levels, arguing that transnational ties may prevent assimilation; they seem to suggest that the local and the transnational are mutually exclusive, or that identities are de-territorialised (Appadurai 1996; Smith 2001). Campbell (1996) notes that everyday life itself becomes transnational, but the question of how transnational ties and practices influence immigrants' local lives and identities in relation to the receiving society has not yet received much attention.

In this paper, I propose that transnational ties and practices enable immigrants to transform their current places of residence by 'placing' their identities, that is, by inserting their belonging into neighbourhoods in Germany and creating local ties. In what follows I begin with a discussion of the complexities of immigrants' transnational ties and multiple belongings. I propose that the geographic concept of place allows for an understanding of how immigrants' transnational practices create new places of belonging that allow them to engage the receiving society on their own terms. This is followed by a brief introduction of the study neighbourhood and the research methods. Drawing on a neighbourhood case-study of Duisburg–Marxloh in Germany, I show in the final section of this paper how immigrants' transnational

practices that visibly transform the material space of a neighbourhood need to be understood as immigrants' engagement with the receiving society.

### **Complex Belongings and (Multiple) Places of Attachment**

With the acceleration of globalisation and migration, transnational contacts and practices contribute heavily to constructions of immigrants' identities, leading some scholars to even question the notion of 'immigration'<sup>2</sup> (Glick Schiller and Basch 1995). Research on transnationalism finds that immigrants are increasingly able to maintain and forge new relationships with their home country (see for example Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992; Kivisto 2001; Vertovec 2001). By maintaining multiple ties to their countries of origin, immigrants create new transnational social and cultural spaces for themselves (Faist 2000); 'transnational communities' may emerge (Kennedy and Roudometof 2001). Many immigrants in Europe remain citizens of their country of origin (Bauböck 1994), but beyond formal citizenship immigrants engage multiple public spheres across national borders in their social practices (Ehrkamp and Leitner 2003).

Immigrants increasingly construct identities that 'cut across fixed notions of belonging' (Dwyer 2000: 475). To capture attachments and identifications that span across borders, scholars have resorted to describing transnational identities as diasporic (Anthias 1998, 2001; Cohen 1997). Others theorise the dispersal of migrants across the world as 'ethnoscapes' that allow for new forms of identification and start to replace nation-states as geographical areas of identification, arguing that identities and belonging become increasingly de-territorialised (Appadurai 1996).

New mass media such as satellite TV are instrumental in fostering newly emerging cultural identities (Aksoy and Robins 1997), and provide migrants with sources of identification that stretch beyond the national and local contexts of their old and new homes (Becker 1996). Mass media, in particular, may contribute to the creation of 'virtual neighbourhoods' (Appadurai 1996). TV as source of identity and information is important for Turkish expatriates, as Aksoy and Robins (2000, 2002) show for Great Britain, problematising the 'banal transnationalism' of watching TV as often frustrating for immigrants who become passive recipients rather than being actively engaged in processes and events in Turkey.

While scholars insist that concepts of diaspora or transnationalism move beyond simplistic notions of ethnicity as source for identity, some arguments fall back into rather normative approaches that promote essentialised and bounded notions of culture and identity (Anthias 1998, 2001). The transnational, often portrayed as challenging the nation-state (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992) or ethnicity as sources of identity, more or less comes to replace these concepts. To avoid essentialising identities and culture, other authors have promoted concepts of hybridity as the 'third space' between home and host society, or between ethnicity and assimilation (Bhabha 1994; Kaya 2002). However, the concept of hybridity is clearly problematic because it often celebrates newly emerging identities uncritically as inherently positive

and progressive (Mitchell 1997), and romanticises migrants' identities whilst failing to adequately consider uneven power relations (Morley 2000).

Scholars also often juxtapose transnational and local levels because relations to the place of origin form an important component in immigrants' everyday lives (Smith 2001; Vertovec 2001). While some argue that everyday life itself becomes transnational rather than being singularly located at the local level (Campbell 1996), others find that immigrants' transnational cultural and social fields (Faist 2000) prevent immigrants from adapting to their new places of residence, and therefore present transnational and local ties as mutually exclusive. For example, Smith (2001) posits that the transnational practices of some sending states, intended to foster attachment to the home country, for example granting dual citizenship to citizens abroad, prevent migrants from adapting or assimilating to the current place of residence.

Such dichotomies are problematic because they overly simplify complex processes of identity construction, assimilation and adaptation. Claims that assimilation is not even an option for contemporary migrants need to be questioned (Nagel 2001). Instead, Kivisto (2003: 19) argues that 'transnational immigration and assimilation/incorporation . . . need to be seen as interrelated'. While assimilation theories may not prove to be the most useful to analyse transnational immigrants' adaptation, these scholars rightly notice the necessity of considering transnational connections in the light of immigrants' lives in their new places of residence. What is needed is an analytical engagement with the ways that immigrants construct their identities in relation to their new *and* their old homes.

As Yeoh and Huang (2000) suggest '[e]ven as diasporic identity is shaped by engagement with constant manoeuvrings to reconnect (and disconnect) with home, it also undergoes complex negotiations as a result of interactions with the host society' (Yeoh and Huang 2000: 414). Similarly, Anthias (2001: 633) insists that immigrants' identities and belonging need to be considered as enactments that do 'not entail fixity or permanence'. Conceptualising migrants' identities as constantly negotiated in relation to multiple societies and places enables us to think beyond dichotomies and mutually exclusive notions of local and transnational ties, and to recognise immigrants as agents who are able to forge their belonging and multiple attachments.

The production of new places is a central theme in recent conceptualisations of transnational migration (Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Vertovec 1999). A 'focus on location (and translocation), recognizes the importance of context, the situated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales' (Anthias 2001: 634). Hence, identities need to be understood in relation to the ever-changing situations and contexts where they emerge. Too little attention, however, has been paid to the ways that immigrants create such new places in their transnational and local practices. Too often, scholars consider localities and places only as containers for subject formation and the construction of identities. So-called 'new places' (Guarnizo and Smith 1998) are taken for granted as external to identities and immigrants' belonging.

Places, however, are neither simply containers that serve as platforms for the construction of subject positions and identities; nor are places static. Being produced and reproduced in social processes and relations at different scales, place lies at the intersection of different spaces and moments in time. Objective and subjective realities cannot be separated when analysing place because 'place is both a center of meaning and the external context of our actions' (Entrikin 1991: 7). Social processes and relations do not only create a place in a material sense, but they also produce meaning that people attach to places, evoking a sense of place (Massey 1994). Place is further not limited to an immediate, bounded locality. It '... serves as a constantly re-energized repository of socially and politically relevant traditions and identity which serves to mediate between the everyday lives of individuals ... and the national and supra-national institutions which constrain and enable those lives' (Agnew and Duncan 1989: 7). Hence, place provides the tools for considering the multiple scales that impinge on immigrants' lives, while simultaneously enabling us to consider the ways in which immigrants use such ties in order to create places for themselves.

Identity construction is intricately linked to the social production of place(s) (Nagar 1997a; Pulido 1997). Communal places in particular foster both expressions of identities and reinforce them (Nagar 1997b; Nagar and Leitner 1998), but the expression of identities is not limited to such communal places, nor is the process of creating belonging. Expressions of identities also take place in public space, occasionally leading to the transformation of entire neighbourhoods (Ehrkamp 2002).

I take issue with the notion that transnationalisation of immigrants' lives leads to an increasing de-territorialisation of belonging and identification, and with such arguments that characterise transnational ties and practices as preventing immigrants from creating belonging in the receiving society. As immigrants are negotiating their belonging, they engage in creating places, transforming the urban landscape of contemporary cities. Urban space therefore becomes 'a negotiated reality' (Anderson 1991: 28), that involves both symbolic and material expressions of local and translocal connections that immigrants create, as well as their engagement with the receiving society—as I show below.

### **Case-Study Neighbourhood and Research Methods**

This paper draws on a neighbourhood case-study of Marxloh, a northern neighbourhood in the city of Duisburg. Located at the confluence of the Ruhr and Rhine rivers and with around 515,000 inhabitants, Duisburg is one of the major urban centres in the heavy industrial Ruhr conglomeration. The city has undergone drastic economic restructuring over the past few decades due to the decline of the steel industries. Until the early 1990s, Marxloh was a thriving industrial neighbourhood that housed many of the local workers from nearby steelworks and coalmines. These industries left their imprints on Marxloh's urban landscape in a variety of ways. Company housing dominates the residential streets, and two blast furnaces tower

above the neighbourhood. Economic restructuring and downscaling of the regional economy in the mid-1990s (despite new production facilities) brought thousands of job losses in local industries, contributing to a surging unemployment rate and high numbers of welfare recipients. Many retailers and residents have left the neighbourhood in search of better housing and economic prospects. At the end of 2000, Marxloh had 18,900 residents. The population has been decreasing for a number of years while the neighbourhood's foreign population share has been growing.<sup>3</sup> Former guestworkers who originally settled close to the steelmills and coalmines where they worked (and often their children and grandchildren) did not move far away from their initial homes. Since the 1970s, family members from Turkey have followed the original guestworkers, and in the 1980s and 1990s asylum-seekers of the political left and of Kurdish origin have contributed to the growth of the local immigrant population. In 2000, residents holding a Turkish passport accounted for some 26 per cent of the neighbourhood's population, a rather high number for a neighbourhood in a German city.<sup>4</sup> Duisburg's overall foreign population (which includes all residents without a German passport, not just Turks), by comparison, is only about 10 per cent, which reflects the spatial concentration of Turkish immigrants in specific neighbourhoods.

Duisburg–Marxloh was chosen as the case-study neighbourhood because of its high Turkish population share and the enormous diversity of the resident Turkish population that sometimes lead to conflicts, catapulting Marxloh into the national news in Germany. An in-depth case study of a place like Marxloh allows for considering immigrants' multiple and interconnected practices and attachments in order to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and complications of immigrants' negotiations with their current and past places of residence.

The ethnographic research for this study was conducted during ten months stretching between July 1998 and June 2000. From January to June 2000 I lived in Marxloh and was able to participate more fully in neighbourhood life as a resident, for example through volunteering in neighbourhood institutions, attending neighbourhood gatherings, and reciprocating interviewees' contributions to this study by providing homework tutoring.

Narratives in this article are those that Turkish neighbourhood residents<sup>5</sup> produced in 39 intensive, unstructured interviews that were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Quotes from interviews in this article are my translation. Interviewees chose the locations for these interviews, and often invited me to conduct the interview in their home, thus permitting insights into their home spaces and everyday private lives. In addition, participant observation and more than 200 informal conversations with local German and Turkish residents inform this article. Informal conversations were not tape-recorded, but careful notes were taken during and/or immediately after these conversations took place. The sample aimed to capture the diversity of the local Turkish population according to such axes of difference as age, generation, gender, class, regional origin, religious belonging and political persuasion.

## **Transnational Practices and Local Attachments**

Approaching the question of Turkish immigrants' identities and multiple attachments from the perspective of the place where they live makes it possible to consider the intricate linkages between material practices and cultural productions that shape local neighbourhood space and enable immigrants to negotiate their multiple belongings.

### *Consumption*

Research on transnationalism often highlights the importance of consumption for new cultural production, for example TV and music (see Aksoy and Robins 2000; Kaya 2002), but the impacts of such consumption on material space and on immigrants' relationship with the receiving society are usually neglected.

In Marxloh, transnational consumption is highly visible in the urban landscape through store signs and shop fronts. Marxloh's two main shopping streets convey the impression of a well-established Turkish economy that offers a variety of stores and services. Marxloh's Turkish residents have been taking advantage of the large number of empty stores in Marxloh to start their own businesses. Many of them have opened fast-food restaurants that serve simple meals (*Döner Kebab*) or greengroceries. Specialised businesses are importing jewellery, textiles and clothes, music CDs and videos, as well as household goods and satellite dishes from Turkey. A number of specialised Turkish physicians practice in Marxloh, allowing local residents to visit medical experts who speak Turkish. Two financial consulting agencies and lawyers of Turkish origin are present as well, and many of these services and businesses attract clients and customers from the entire northern part of the Ruhr region. Marxloh thus has grown into a regional Turkish centre that not only serves the local residents.

Turkish businesses provide a way for immigrants to maintain lifestyles that they or their families were either familiar with in Turkey or grew accustomed to in Germany. The success of local businesses that sell such mundane goods as yarn or teapots demonstrates the close links between economic and cultural practices. How important such mundane aspects are to immigrants from Turkey is shown by the example of three women who drove more than 30 km to Marxloh in order to buy a specific type of water kettle. The owner of the store shrugged his shoulders and said

They want that particular kind of kettle. That's what they've known forever, and that's what they stick with. I don't think they can get it where they live, so they come here. See, all the stuff I sell [pointing to the shelves], that comes from Turkey. Yarn, cups, glasses, tablecloths, coffee-makers, even coffee... (Mehmet, conversation, August 1999).

Mehmet's assortment of goods imported from Turkey is geared towards the needs and wants of his customers who appreciate these products because they create familiarity and comfort in the most mundane aspects of everyday life such as housekeeping and cooking.

Cultural commodities in particular contribute to the economic success of some local Turkish stores. Mehmet inherited his store from his father who had started an import business in the 1980s. He described how his father became successful as a retailer.

You know, the videos of Turkish movies, like the old ones that I have [in the back room of the store], that's why my dad was so successful with the store. He saw the opportunity in the 80s, and went for it. People couldn't watch any Turkish shows on TV then, and they wanted to see what was going on in Turkey, all the movies that were playing there. That's how he made his money. Now it's changed. I sell the satellite decoders [and dishes] (Mehmet, conversation, July 1998).

Movies, music, as well as satellite TV enable their customers to keep up with current events and developments in Turkey. Mehmet's family's business success has been built on importing goods from Turkey that local residents were looking for, thus bringing fragments of Turkey to Marxloh, one at a time. The presence of a store that has specialised exclusively on importing Turkish music CDs further speaks to the great demand for such pieces of Turkey. Mehmet's story also shows that important changes are taking place over time as technologies and demand change, which clearly demonstrates that ties to Turkey are constantly (re)negotiated rather than fixed.

But shopping in Turkish stores is not just about transnational ties and the consumption of Turkish goods. Even in immigrants' descriptions of their everyday shopping habits their engagement with the local German population becomes obvious. Most (Turkish) interviewees bought all fresh produce and specific foods such as yoghurt, cheese and olives exclusively in Turkish stores or from the Turkish farmers' market on Saturdays. Like many other interviewees who referred to local German residents when describing their shopping habits, Orhan reasoned:

It's cheaper. And they have everything we need. Plus, you get really good produce, ripe tomatoes, not that Holland stuff, it's so much better than what you get in the supermarket. I often go to the [farmers'] market and buy a large crate full of tomatoes, and then I give a couple of kilos to my parents, to my brothers, and then that's a really good deal. I don't understand why the Germans don't do that (Orhan, 32, interview, March 2000).

For him not only do Turkish stores offer produce that immigrants like to consume, but it is also economically more sound to buy there since they can purchase goods in bulk. In turn, he rationalises his shopping habits to depict German residents as not very rational because they do not take advantage of such opportunities to save money.

For Ferdane, a 31-year-old educator, it was no wonder that Turkish immigrants preferred to shop in Turkish stores. She pointed out that German stores ignored their Turkish customers:

None of the big chain stores carries any goods that we [Turks] like. I don't get it. There are so many immigrants here, wouldn't that make sense? They don't adapt to



new customers. I asked in *Aldi* [discount grocery store], and they just said they don't do that (Ferdane, 31, interview, August 1999).

For her, the chain stores' refusal proves that Germans ignore the needs of immigrants, and their unwillingness to acknowledge that the neighbourhood is changing. Her reference to German stores shows that Turkish immigrants are not simply looking to Turkey for goods, and that they are not just constructing their identities in relation to Turkey. They *also* refer to local German residents, which demonstrates that transnational practices such as the consumption of Turkish goods are only one aspect of the ways in which Turkish immigrants in Germany negotiate their everyday lives and identities in relation to German society and the local neighbourhood.

This is not to say that such belonging is free of conflict or creating a homogeneous community. Rather, immigrants negotiate multiple local and transnational attachments. This becomes particularly obvious in their establishment of communal places, which I discuss in the next two sections.

### *Complicating Belonging: Faith-Based Communities*

Turkish immigrants' involvement in communities of faith and their perceptions of other religious communities form some of the most clearly uniting and dividing factors in the construction of identities. Such communities are instrumental in establishing belonging in Marxloh and creating local attachments.

A variety of religious communities maintain mosques and other places of worship.<sup>6</sup> The local religious communities differ both in their interpretations of the Sunni faith, identities and practices, and in their organisation. Some are independent and local *Moscheevereine* (mosque associations), while others are linked to national German umbrella organisations and/or are part of transnational organisations that the Turkish Ministry for Religious Affairs maintains for its citizens abroad.<sup>7</sup>

Although some local religious communities maintain strong transnational connections, belonging to the communities is not simply transplanted from Turkey. Membership in a particular local community depends on a number of aspects, as Hanife elaborates:

P: Why is it that people go to a particular mosque? Is this still something from Turkey?

H: No, no, it's because of interpretations. . . . One is more strict about enforcing the rules/commandments, and then you think, yes, that's a good fit, I think like they do, so that will work for me. And then that's where I go. . . . That's how the different mosques and the different communities come about (Hanife, interview, August 1999).

Hanife chose her community because it strictly follows and enforces the rules of the Koran, which she prefers to other communities, but she emphasises that all the local mosque communities are essentially interpreting the Sunni faith.

Most often, immigrants establish their ties to the mosque through their families:

P: Which mosque do you go to?

O: Pollmann, Diyanet. Because, my father used to go to Pollmann, and my uncle goes. . . . It just turned out that way, that we became here, um, members. And I've gone there ever since (Osman, interview, April 2000).

Belonging to a particular mosque community is thus in part a way of connecting with other family members. Families actively construct such connections over several generations. Hanife, for example, was trying to bind her children to her mosque. At the time of the interview her youngest son was only six years old, but had been attending Koran school for a while already:

My son, he's been going to the mosque for one year, but not regularly for that year. He's still too young for the mosque. . . . even if he doesn't really learn anything. [I send him there so] that he gets the feeling that, um, that we are Muslims, and that 'this is where I belong!' (Hanife, interview, August 1999).

Hanife underscores the centrality of the mosque and its religious community for evoking in her son a sense of belonging that is not necessarily rooted in ties to Turkey. Instead, Hanife actively engages in shaping her son's identity and self-confidence as a Muslim in the local mosque.

Belonging and religious practice are often complicated by the organisational structure of mosque associations. While the mosque associations themselves are not necessarily transplanted from Turkey, their spiritual leader, the *hoça*, often is. He comes to Germany for a limited number of years, which poses particular problems for some members of local communities because the *hoça* lacks insights into life in Germany. When local Turkish immigrants ask for guidance in questions of everyday life and raising children in Germany, the *hoça* does not know enough about the circumstances of immigrants' local lives, and thus is not always able to provide members of the community with the guidance that they need.

Religious communities and the communal places they maintain are important aspects of placing Turkish identities in Marxloh. They contribute to religious identification, and they allow immigrants to feel a sense of belonging in the neighbourhood although religious leaders are not necessarily bound to or involved in the local place. Difficulties arising from the transnational organisational structure of religious communities thus highlight the complexities of immigrants' negotiations and practices beyond simple dichotomies of transnational and local ties. Religious practice, while sometimes connected to Turkey through institutional structures, is about expressing identities locally and creating local belonging to a community that is neither limited to national boundaries nor entirely fixed to a locally bounded place.

### *Teahouses*

Some 25 teahouses further define and divide Marxloh's landscape of communal places. As 'an extension of people's living rooms at home' (Osman, interview, April 2000), teahouses in Marxloh are important spaces for socialising and conversations.

They offer TV, games and Turkish newspapers to their customers. Teahouses in Marxloh are cafés that are for the most part geared towards the needs of the male immigrant population.<sup>8</sup> Customers often spend large portions of time, up to entire days, in the teahouses. During the weekends, some teahouses show the games of the Turkish soccer league that are limited to *Cine5*, a pay-TV channel that most immigrants cannot afford for their own households.

Each teahouse caters to a different group of immigrant men, reflecting the great heterogeneity of the local Turkish population. Several teahouses are closely associated with sports clubs or with fan clubs for a certain team in the Turkish soccer league. Others are organised around immigrants' regions and places of origin. For example, the teahouse '*Karadeniz*' (Black Sea) attracts men from the region of the Turkish Black Sea. Increasingly, the competition between teahouses is growing fiercer. When a new teahouse was about to open, Ahmet, a local social worker, commented:

Now they are already divided by the villages where people came from originally. These are simply marketing strategies. I have no idea how they [teahouses] manage to survive financially (Ahmet, 37, conversation, May 2000).

Teahouses, in Ahmet's opinion, evoke belonging on the basis of regional or village origin only to attract customers, and to remain competitive among the numerous teahouses in the neighbourhood. But the economic strategy of evoking such belonging can only be successful because their transnational and translocal ties matter to local Turkish residents. Teahouses then, in a sense, are visible expressions of the transformation of the local place through material insertion of transnational and translocal belongings.

Yet the region or place of origin is only one aspect of differentiation among the teahouses. Some teahouses only cater to older men, while in others 'you will never find anyone who is over thirty!' (Osman, conversation, March 2000). Mustafa, a member of the older generation, picked a teahouse where most other customers were also from his generation as the location for our interview. When his son Bozkurt arrived, Bozkurt asked to leave the place, because (as he told me later) he felt 'terribly uncomfortable and watched' in this teahouse (Bozkurt, interview, July 1999). He was eager to leave because he felt he did not belong there. Belonging to specific places thus is negotiated locally and across generations, an aspect that studies of transnational practices often neglect.

The diversity of teahouses reflects the multiple differences that exist in the Turkish population, and their large number shows both the need to establish local places of belonging, as well as the diversity of how such belonging is negotiated across scales and between different groups and places.

### **Conflicting Attachments**

The availability of mass media and communication technologies (cellular phones in particular) enables local immigrants to enact transnational ties with Turkey and with

friends and families there. Influences of Turkish mass media are widely visible in Marxloh. Turkish daily newspapers are available at kiosks, and satellite receivers enable Turkish residents to watch several private Turkish television stations in their homes. Numerous buildings and homes have satellite dishes attached to roofs or façades. While the satellite dishes themselves have nothing obviously Turkish about them, they transform the façades in the neighbourhood and have become a defining characteristic of its urban landscape. They illustrate that the neighbourhood is subject to impacts that originate at different geographic scales. The satellite dishes thus gain significance in the neighbourhood as symbols of a Turkish diaspora or 'ethnoscape' (Appadurai 1996: 33) that transcends boundaries of the nation-state, and intersects with Marxloh's local population and space.

Aksoy and Robins (1997) show how new media and TV stations have helped transform Turkish national identity. Outside of Turkey, new opportunities brought about by satellite TV create alternatives to the official Turkish TV channels available through cable. According to Konrad, a local journalist, only up to four of the available cable channels are designated for international TV. TRTint, the international version of official Turkish national TV, takes up the channel reserved for Turkish television. Many immigrants prefer to watch private satellite channels, however.

In almost all families that I visited the TV set was switched on at all times and tuned to Turkish channels, indicating that Turkey is present and plays a role throughout immigrants' everyday life in Marxloh. When I asked Ferdane whether she watched Turkish television at all, she started laughing and replied:

I mean, I have the [satellite] connection [she keeps laughing]. I have, I bought the satellite decoder. We bought that immediately after our vacation [laughs again]. I guess, then it was quite acute, our homesickness. . . . And since then we've been getting the Turkish channels. Well, that's a way of, so that we aren't all that isolated. So that we still know what's going on there. For example, what kind of music or what movie is 'in' at the moment. . . . But, it's simply like this, you always keep in touch [with Turkey], other than being on vacation. Other than actually being there (Ferdane, interview, August 1999).

Watching satellite TV allows Ferdane to 'be' in Turkey without physically being there. Television thus becomes a surrogate for travelling to Turkey, and a remedy for homesickness. By way of the TV screen, immigrants' everyday lives become transnational not only in thoughts or material possessions in Turkey, but also through participation in events that live TV programmes bring to their homes in real-time. The experienced or imagined 'home' country thus is no longer just a memory in immigrants' minds and narratives, it is present and part of their everyday lives. The transnational is inserted into and shapes the local place.

But watching TV is more than just the passive consumption of 'home', that Aksoy and Robins (2000) suggest it is. Transnational Turkish or Kurdish TV are intricately linked to political identities, and the multitude of news, information and commentaries that television conveys provoke differentiated reactions in viewers.

TV is not simply a good for (passive) consumption, but is one of the many complex negotiations of local and transnational lives and social relations that immigrants engage in, as the following episode shows.

I spent time at Osman's house to help him and his friend Kaya prepare for exams at school. While we sat in the living room, the TV was tuned to one of the Turkish channels, but muted. The news started. When Osman and Kaya noticed pictures about Kurdish demonstrators in Turkey erecting street barricades, burning car tyres, and shouting anti-government chants, the two young men jumped off their seats, turned up the volume and yelled at the TV set:

Osman: They should just kill them [Kurds] all. If I was there and had a gun, I would have done that a long time ago!

Patricia: Are you crazy? You can't just kill people!

Kaya: Why do they do that anyway, burn tyres, all that drama. They do that here too, in Marxloh. They [Kurds] claim that Newroz is their holiday. But Turkey has that too, even officially. It's the beginning of spring and is called Nevruz not Newroz. They just want to cause trouble. No one is oppressed there! (Osman, 20, and Kaya, 20, March 2000).

They kept swearing for a few more minutes, as long as the report continued, and then finally returned to their work. Their reaction to the news report underscores the immediacy of transnational influences, enhanced by technology, and how they reverberate with local expressions of identity.

Political provocations and struggles, and even open conflicts, are neither limited to news on the Turkish channel, nor solely directed at Turkey. In Marxloh, Kurdish demonstrations on the Kurdish New Year's Day have been occurring almost annually; hence neighbourhood residents are familiar with these demonstrations, both from direct local experience and from the images and reports that they watch on TV. Turkish politics thus have become integral elements of neighbourhood space through the expression of political animosities.

Local encounters and even disagreements between rival political factions appear much more toned down and less aggressive than the spontaneous out-breaks in front of the TV set (where the potential opponent is far away). When I interviewed Osman a few weeks after the incident described above, he talked about politics and how much easier international relations would be if nations kept their peace with one another, which prompted the following question and reply:

P: How about Kurdistan?

O: [started laughing] I know why you're asking me that! [Referring back to the incident described above.] I have no problem with the Kurds. In fact, I have Kurdish friends. The Kurds-Turks problem is because of the PKK people. Not every Kurd is immediately a member of the PKK! That's what most people don't differentiate and get mixed up. Because, Turk-Kurd, that's images of the enemy. That's not at all what it is. That's Turk-PKK, not Turk-Kurd. Because, I really have many Kurdish friends, and there are entire families, Kurdish families, that I'm in touch with and so on, although, um, I'd say I'm a bit of a fascist...

Here, Osman makes sure to differentiate between Kurds and members of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) that he deems too radical and out of control, while his outburst in front of the TV set seemed much less discriminating. Clearly, watching transnational TV and everyday life friendships and contacts are not the same, and political struggles are not simply transplanted from Turkey, even if they may be fuelled by TV.

In the interest of his own well-being, Osman takes a pragmatic approach to dealing with political opponents locally:

I don't really have a problem with these people from the [PKK] party. They know very well that I'm a Grey Wolf, and I still get along with them really well. . . . Because, if they don't attack me, they know really well, I won't attack them. Then we live together in tolerance.

Here, Osman's thoughts reveal the careful and complicated negotiations that take place between groups, and individual immigrants, about social relationships and everyday life in the neighbourhood, because of and despite transnational influences. Osman's personal political persuasion could hardly be more distant from the political goals the PKK pursues, and yet he describes himself as capable of tolerating PKK members. This points to the multiplicities of identity as Osman finds ways of relating to political opponents despite political animosities. Furthermore, this example shows that political conflicts in Turkey are not simply replicated at the local level; they are negotiated and mediated in the context of the local place of residence.

### **Making Marxloh Their Own**

If communal places and religious communities are means of creating local attachments, individual home-ownership is even more important for Turkish immigrants. The stories that interviewees told reveal that decisions to invest in the neighbourhood (financially and emotionally) are complex and ambiguous. A number of Turkish interviewees in this study already owned property in Marxloh, and others were in the process of buying houses in the neighbourhood. For Şükre and her husband, the question of whether to buy a house in Marxloh or elsewhere was very important. They were considering buying a home when I met her in 1998. She originally looked for houses outside of Marxloh, but explained that:

We looked at a house on the other side of the Rhine. It's pretty there. But I don't know anyone there. There aren't any Turks who live there. And although that may sound weird, then I get the feeling that, well, fear. Then I'll be lonely there, and who knows what might happen there (Şükre, interview, August 1998).

Her statement illustrates the strong feeling of safety that Marxloh provides for its Turkish residents. While she originally considered moving away from Marxloh, her own fears and desire for comfort and security led to the decision to buy a house in Marxloh in 2000. The local place rather than the larger German host society becomes

a point of attachment, and it is this particular neighbourhood with its other Turkish immigrants where she feels comfortable and wants to live.

Ferdane and her husband were also ambiguous about buying a house in Marxloh when I first talked to them in 1999. When we spoke again in early 2000, Ferdane was getting ready to move.

It is quite a decision. Do I really want to live here, forever? Buy a house here, in Marxloh? But my parents are here, and they can come visit us, walk here . . . and the houses are such a good deal (Ferdane, 31, conversation, April 2000).

Ferdane is neither sure about buying property in Marxloh, nor about living in Germany for an extended period of time. Her description of feeling uneasy about the commitment of buying a home illustrates how immigrants are constantly grappling with the idea of living and investing in the local neighbourhood, but buying a house is also a way of making Marxloh their own.

Even if some ambiguity remains about buying a home in Marxloh, immigrants' narratives reflect how much they are creating local attachments. While they pointed out problems of poverty, unemployment and language barriers, most interviewees feel at home in Marxloh:

Marxloh is my *village*. This is where I grew up, where I know everything and everyone (Murat, 36, interview, March 2000).

Murat considers the neighbourhood as his home, his village, which becomes a synonym for familiarity and belonging, as well as ownership of the local place: *my village*.

However, feelings of belonging are mixed with perceptions of rejection by the receiving society, for example for Nuray who had moved back to Marxloh in 1997 after her divorce:

Here in Marxloh, some Germans say, this is the Turkish quarter [*Türkenviertel*]. I like it here. There are many Turks here, many of my friends. I live here the same way as I live in Turkey (Nuray, 32, interview, March 2000).

Having friends in the neighbourhood is an important factor that makes Marxloh a good place to live, but it is equally important to note that Nuray refers to the ways that Germans perceive the neighbourhood as the 'Turkish quarter', a derogatory term. Clearly, immigrants are aware of and engage with attitudes of the host society. But rejection by German residents does not prevent Nuray from feeling comfortable or attached to the local place.

Even more drastically, Ferdane's decision to move back to Marxloh after having been harassed by right-wing parties in another neighbourhood of the city shows how much immigrants are confronted with hostilities of the receiving society:

At that time, I started. . . so, where do you move now? Well, and then there was the possibility, Neudorf. . . I have lots of acquaintances in Neudorf, and thought,

Neudorf is a place where I can move freely as foreigner. Well, or Marxloh. Well, Marxloh had a number of points where I thought yes. My work is here, my parents are here, and I basically grew up here in Marxloh. And in Marxloh those kinds of things that I experienced before didn't happen. . . . And this [Marxloh] is like a protective wall. Like it or not. It is a fact that in Marxloh, Nazis rarely ever dare to come here (Ferdane, 31, interview, August 1999).

Not only does Marxloh offer comfort, but in particular the aspect of feeling secure made Ferdane choose Marxloh as a safe place away from xenophobia and open racism and threats she encountered elsewhere. Most clearly, the hostility of the host society prompted her decision to move back to Marxloh. Her case illustrates that immigrants cannot exclusively draw on their transnational practices since they cannot always escape or avoid the host society, even if they might wish they could. Furthermore, Ferdane's experience also illustrates that assimilation might not be the best way of conceptualising immigrants' relationship with the receiving society since a prerequisite for assimilation is an openness of the host society to immigrants, which is clearly lacking here.

Other immigrants are highly critical of the host society. For Bahar, for example, a sense of local belonging is not enough. She feels that the built environment does not sufficiently reflect Turkish immigrants' impact on the neighbourhood. She is acutely aware of the positive contributions that immigrants have been making to the declining neighbourhood and would like to see more opportunities for Turkish immigrants to shape the neighbourhood visually through their way of life. During the interview, she commented on a local urban renewal programme that provides funds to local property-owners for restoring the façades of the buildings they own.

Why do they have to restore them to 'Germanness'? Couldn't they use some different colours? Why are they trying so hard to suppress anything Turkish here? In other countries, cultural differences are valued, just look at Chinatown in San Francisco. Here, they won't even paint the facades differently. They keep trying to deny that we're here! (Bahar, 34, interview, August 1999).

Bahar was adamant about changing the façades to better represent the tastes and the presence of Turkish immigrants. She wants them to be visible, to remind German and other residents that immigrants also belong to Marxloh, and call it their home. Her statement calls attention to the close links between material and symbolic space. It is not enough to symbolically create the neighbourhood as a place of belonging, as a home place that is narrated. The built environment needs to reflect immigrants' identities as well.

Hence, Marxloh becomes a place of local attachment in immigrants' narratives and the ways in which they express their identities. Immigrants feel at home in Marxloh because its Turkish character provides them with a feeling of comfort and security that is not limited to specific communal places or sites. The neighbourhood as a whole is turned into a place of belonging that is not tied to particular



communities or activities. In this sense, placing identities leads to place-based identity: attachment to Marxloh.

### **Conclusion**

In the stories that Marxloh's immigrants tell about Marxloh and their everyday lives, the intricate connections that exist between material practices and symbolic productions of belonging emerge. Turkish businesses, religious communities, and the establishment of communal places such as teahouses reflect transnational practices as well as local attachments through immigrants' investments in the local neighbourhood. Watching TV, for example, highlights the ways that immigrants create transnational ties as they consume Turkish pop culture. However, they do so in their homes in Marxloh, where they negotiate transnational ties and local belonging.

Transnational practices may provoke struggles among the neighbourhood's Turkish population, in particular as transnational political ties influence identities and social relations between immigrants in Marxloh. Osman's and Kaya's reactions to Kurdish demonstrations in Turkey and Osman's careful negotiation of political identities and difference at the local level, however, complicate simplistic notions of dichotomies between 'here' and 'there', or local versus transnational. Political persuasions and religious identities and belonging further demonstrate that transnational practices do not necessarily lead to the establishment of homogeneous or stable communities, as some suggest (Kennedy and Roudometof 2001). Rather, transnational practices contribute to heterogeneity and struggles between conflicting identities and groups that are (re-)negotiated in the local place.

Transnational ties and multiple attachments enable local attachment rather than preventing it. Beyond the material changes in the neighbourhood it is important to note how immigrants narrate Marxloh as the place where they belong, where they feel safe and comfortable. But creating a home in the city is neither limited to alterations of the material landscape, nor to communal places. Turkish immigrants narrate Marxloh as home, and enact the neighbourhood as 'Turkish' by placing their identities both in the public and private spaces of the neighbourhood. Rather than creating binary oppositions or contradictory attachments, Turkish immigrants negotiate different scales of belonging.

Turkish immigrants' transnational practices also engage the receiving society. Immigrants' narratives make clear how much the local context and relationships to members of the host society influence notions of belonging and home. Differential power relations between the receiving society and immigrants are negotiated through placing the latter's identities locally, sometimes in the face of open rejection and racism by the receiving society. As Turkish immigrants transform the neighbourhood into Turkish space, they take ownership and feel more comfortable being Turkish in the local place. Transnational ties and engagement with the receiving society are thus complementary rather than contradictory. Placing

their identities enables Marxloh's Turkish immigrants to create a new place of belonging. Placing identities, therefore, leads Turkish immigrants to construct a (new) place-based identity.

Immigrants' everyday lives are ongoing negotiations of both transnational belonging and local attachments as they construct their identities across national borders and across societies in their daily practices. A focus on place rather than on community does not gloss over existing differences and conflicts. Rather, conceptualising immigrants' attachments through the production of place teases out the complexities of multiple and sometimes conflicting attachments of contemporary migrants, and of their engagement with the receiving society.

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### Notes

- [1] For lack of a better term, I am using 'Turkish' as a shorthand for former guestworkers from Turkey, their children, grandchildren etc., as well as for Kurdish immigrants who left Turkey as refugees and entered Germany as asylum-seekers. I do not mean to simplify or neglect the differences that exist between immigrants from Turkey, of Turkish origin, and/or holding a Turkish passport.
- [2] Given the self-depiction of persons interviewed and the long struggle of immigrant groups and NGOs in Germany to make politicians and society accept and acknowledge that Germany is a country of immigration, I prefer to use the term immigrant.
- [3] Foreign (*ausländisch*) or foreigner (*Ausländer*) are legal terms used by the German state to describe and categorise residents in Germany without German citizenship that are subject to the Foreigners Law (*Ausländergesetz*).
- [4] By comparison, Berlin-Kreuzberg, one of the most widely-known 'Turkish' neighbourhoods in Germany, has a Turkish population share of only 15 per cent.
- [5] For the larger research project, narrative interviews were also conducted with local German residents, but this paper only draws on interviews with Turkish residents.
- [6] The majority of Turkish immigrants in Germany, and in Marxloh, are Muslims, and adhere to the Sunni faith. Among the Sunni Muslims, there are several strands of beliefs, and a variety of religious institutions that immigrants hold membership in. Six mosques in the neighbourhood are formally registered as so-called *Moscheevereine* (mosque associations), non-profit organisations of faith.
- [7] Different organisational structures and connections to national organisations and the Turkish state are important; these connections not only impinge on the interpretation of Islam that is practised and taught, but also on the financial situation of mosque communities, and perceptions of these communities as transnational extensions of the Turkish state or of extremist Turkish religious groups.

- [8] These teahouses are different from restaurants and bars described by Çağlar (2001) in that they are exclusively male spaces; women are not welcome. Other cafés like the ones Çağlar describes are located in the larger city of Duisburg, so that women need to leave the neighbourhood in order to frequent them.

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