

## TRANSCULTURALITY AS PRACTICE: TURKISH ENTREPRENEURS IN GERMANY

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### 1. *Introduction and Overview*

In 1961, Germany became an important destination for migrants from Turkey. At present approximately 1.95 million Turkish citizens live here. More than a third of these were born in Germany. Approximately 450,000 Germans with a Turkish migration background can be added to this figure. The employment structure of the migrants and their descendants has changed in the course of time. Particularly since the 1990s, increasing numbers of people of Turkish origin have become self-employed and have built entrepreneurial livelihoods.

After a review of Turkish immigration to Germany, three issues are examined based on the example of Berlin's contribution, the city with the most non-German citizen residents.

- What dynamics do business start-ups run by migrants from Turkey and/or their descendants have, and what macro analytical statements can be facilitated to explain them?
- How can the relationship of ethnicity and entrepreneurship be understood through theoretic concepts?
- What role does "ethnicity" play in the entrepreneur's action, i.e. how are boundaries, such as the nationally designated origin, established through signifying symbols and what function do these demarcations have in respect of, e.g., the accumulation of social capital?

### 2. *Migration from Turkey to Germany*

In the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s, open positions in some industries could not be filled. As a result, commerce and industry, with the federal government's support, began recruiting employees from foreign countries under the so-called 'recruiting agreement' (*Anwerberabkommen*), and from Turkey beginning in 1961. Through this, the

pressure on the job market was reduced in the countries of origin and furthermore, there was a stimulus for economic development when the skilled migrant workers returned home. After the building of the Berlin wall and the halt of migration from the then GDR, the employment of foreigners increased rapidly. The goal of the recruitment lay in the elimination of what was regarded as temporary bottlenecks in the job market—which more than clarifies the connotation of the term ‘guest worker’ (*Gastarbeiter*) which was coined at that time. For persons who were brought to the country to work, it mostly meant badly paid and unpleasant jobs for which no German applicants could be found. The immigrants therefore occupied the lowest positions in the social and occupational structure. Approximately two-thirds of the Turkish immigrants came from rural regions in which the mechanization of the agriculture, enforced by the Menderes government, as well as the simultaneously increasing population favored migration from the countryside. The Berlin senate first promoted recruitment of foreign workers in the mid-1960s. Since immigration from Italy, Spain and Greece was already abating at this time, employees from Turkey and Yugoslavia in particular were recruited for Berlin (Gesemann 2001). The growth of the number of Turkish nationals in Berlin was clearly stronger than in the rest of Germany (see Fig. 1).

As a result of the economic downturn primarily caused by the oil price shock, the German government imposed a recruitment moratorium in November 1973. In conjunction with the recession, this led to emigration and a decrease in the Turkish population in Germany. In 1978 the migration balance again turned positive. Many migrants made up their minds to stay for the long term and brought their families. The result was that the demographic structure changed: the proportion of children, parents and women increased the average length of stay increased and the employment proportion clearly decreased.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the migration movement changed and the reason for migrating and the social demographic structure of the immigrants were renewed. As a result of the military coup in Turkey, the number of political refugees grew at that time. In 1980 alone, almost 60,000 asylum seekers came from Turkey to Germany, most of whom were from Kurdish origin. Since the mid-1980s, the migration balance has no longer been determined by the procession of children following their parents, but by the influx of newly-wed spouses of those who are resident in Germany. Included are the asylum seekers from the Kurdish

territories. On the whole, Turkey has taken third place in Germany's immigration balance since the 1990s (Kapphan 2001).

In the course of time it has become increasingly clear that the migration movement is not a matter of 'guest worker' (*Gastarbeiter*) migrations, but of immigrations. This is also apparent from the increasing number of children born of migrants in Germany. In the year 2001, 707,000, therefore almost 40%, of the 1.9 million Turkish nationals living in Germany, were born in Germany ([www.statistik-bund.de](http://www.statistik-bund.de)). This fact is not always realized in the public discourse. Apart from the immigration, both the higher birth surplus and the demographic structure contribute to Germany's steadily increasing population of people of Turkish descent. The declining development since 1997 can be attributed to naturalizations, which are increasing rapidly as a result of citizenship becoming easier to obtain. In particular this applies to the liberal policy on foreigners of the city of Berlin. In 2001, in addition to the approximately 48,000 Germans with a Turkish-German migratory background, 126,000 Turks lived in Berlin.

As in other German cities, the immigration to Berlin was accompanied by a strict segregation, although with local-specific intensification: at the end of the 1960s it was planned to demolish great parts of Berlin's old buildings. In order to exploit the period between the departure of the first tenants and the demolition, the residences were rented to migrants because housing corporations and municipal politicians thought that the 'guest workers' (*Gastarbeiter*) would return to their countries of origin after a short term and the residences would automatically become available again.

Consequently, the foreign population was very soon concentrated in areas whose buildings were designated for demolition—although this plan was later abandoned. At present the Turkish population comprises more than 30% of the population in parts of the districts of Kreuzberg, Neukölln and Wedding. Spatial concentration thus corresponds to a concentration of poverty. The expected upswing through the reunification therefore failed to materialize. The disappearance of industry could not be stabilized by new jobs in the service industry sector, leading to an increase in unemployment. Neither did the upgrading through gentrification of districts situated within the inner city occur. On the contrary: the number of welfare recipients and unemployed persons in these districts is increasing and the proportion of foreign population has increased since the reunification of Germany. Consequently, a

cumulative intensification of the social-spatial marginalization occurs. Accordingly, the place in which the majority of migrants live becomes a source of social discrimination and stigmatization which becomes noticeable in many and diverse ways. This also affects the entrepreneurs of Turkish origin who have established themselves here. In a survey of entrepreneurs, almost 60% of them said that the main reason for their businesses' financially tense situation "was the bad socio-economic status of the district".

### 3. *Set-ups, trademarks and structural framework conditions*

Germany-wide statistical information on the self-employment of people of Turkish origin is almost entirely based on publications of the Centre for Studies on Turkey (CfST). In 2000, therefore, 258,000 foreign self-employed persons were counted in the Federal Republic (*Statistisches Bundesamt* 2001), for 1999, the number of entrepreneurs of Turkish origin was estimated by the CfT as 55,000 (*Zentrum für Türkeistudien* 2001). For 2005, a total of more than 60,000 businesses can be assumed.

In comparison to these estimates, Berlin has comparatively reliable databases. Here business reports have been broken down according to nationality since 1981, which enables differentiation of the set-up events (*Statistisches Landesamt* 1981, see Fig. 2): This indicates that the increase in businesses was especially concentrated in the first half of the 1990s. The balance of registrations and cancellations, which in the 1980s came to about 220 businesses annually, increased by more than 500 businesses between 1991 and 1995 and has, since 1997, not exceeded 200 businesses. At present, the business start-up percentage for Turkish nationals is double that of Germans—although twice as many undertakings are also abandoned. At this point it becomes clear that the Turkish entrepreneurs' businesses are highly unstable.

This ambivalent picture is confirmed with a detailed examination of the business structure (see Fig. 3), which is based on an empirical study by the author (Pütz 2004). Altogether there are about 5,200 businesses of self-employed persons of Turkish descent in Berlin in 2002. This sectoral structure moreover resembles the pattern found in other cities: Besides the retail and restaurant trade, industries that require a low capital layout and hardly any specialist or educational prerequisites are primarily chosen. Most undertakings are small businesses. Every

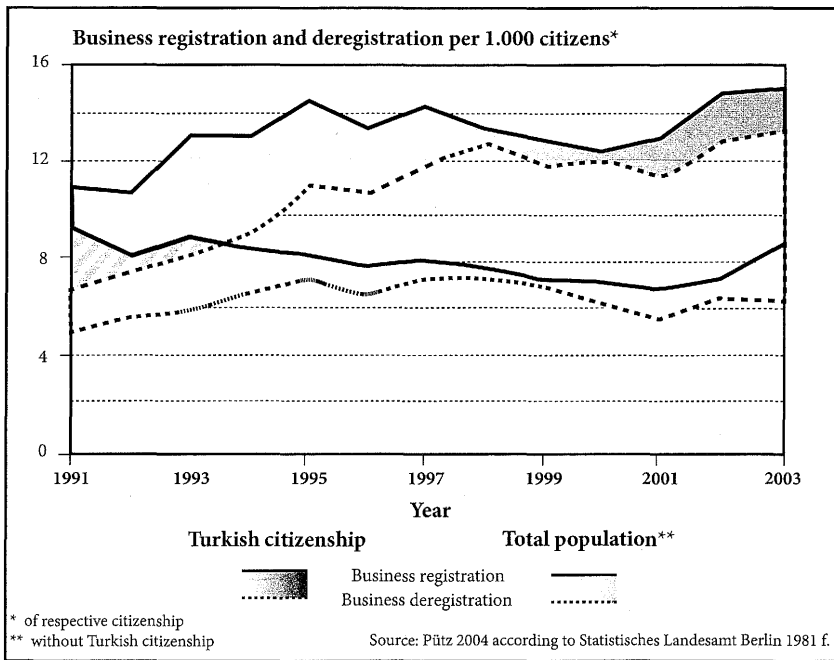


Figure 1: Entry and Exit of Enterprises in Berlin, According to the Business Register, 1991–2003.

seventh business is a one-man business and the average number of 2.4 employees is low. A good half exclusively or mainly employ family members, two-thirds of the businesses are in household-oriented and retail trade. The high rate of business fluctuation is confirmed in that more than a third of self-employed persons already own other enterprises that do, however, fail.

The widely held concepts of a Turkish entrepreneur as a “snack bar owner” or “greengrocer” must be abandoned. A fifth of businesses are multi-business enterprises and accordingly have successful expansion behind them. Some own branches or supply companies in Turkey and thus span a transnational economic space. And almost an eighth of businesses is by now active in sectors that either require a comparatively high capital investment (production) or in those in which high prerequisites are necessary (knowledge-intensive service providers). Especially the latter is typical of a 1990s’ development, in which members of the second or third generation, having attained a university degree in Germany, decided on an entrepreneurial self-employment.

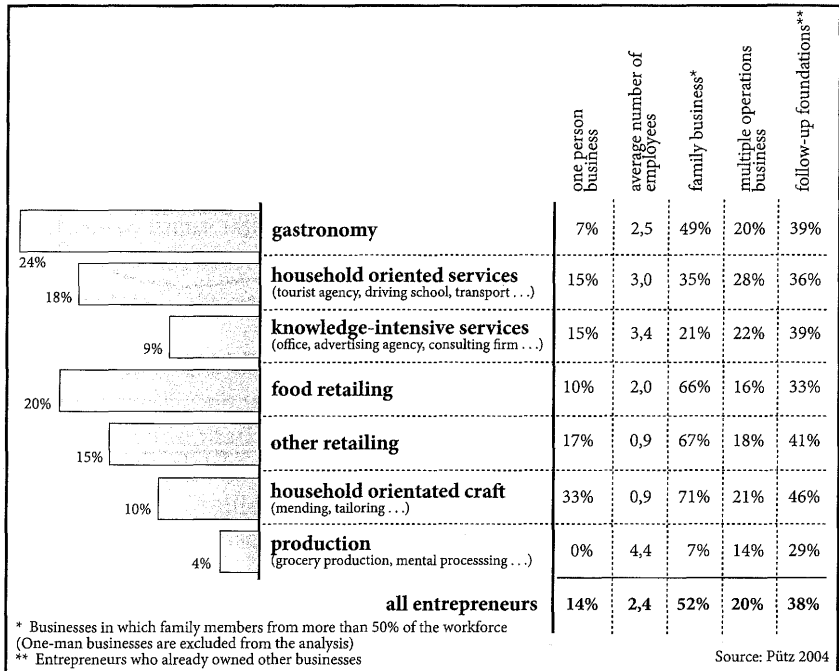


Figure 2: Businesses run by Entrepreneurs of Turkish Origin in Berlin: Sectoral Composition and Business Characteristics.

An unlocking of the enterprise founders according to their migration background explains this trend (see Fig. 4).

What explanatory stages on the macro-analytical level are available to plausibly reconstruct the dynamics of business set-ups? In the following paragraphs, three of the macro-analytical explanatory stages are forwarded that dominate the research of the topic “Immigrant Business” (for an overview, see especially the contributions in Waldinger, Aldrich und Ward 1990, Portes 1995 and Rath 2000): The influence of legal framework conditions, the significance of the job market and the existence of “niche markets” (see Pütz 2003a and 2003b).

### 3.1 Explanatory factor ‘legal framework conditions’

The legal framework has a considerable influence on the self-employment of foreign nationals in Germany. Since legally embodied norms limit the freedom of action of those without a German passport, they thus also restrict an entrepreneur’s possible strategies. Economic freedom thus only applies to Germans and citizens from EU countries. People of

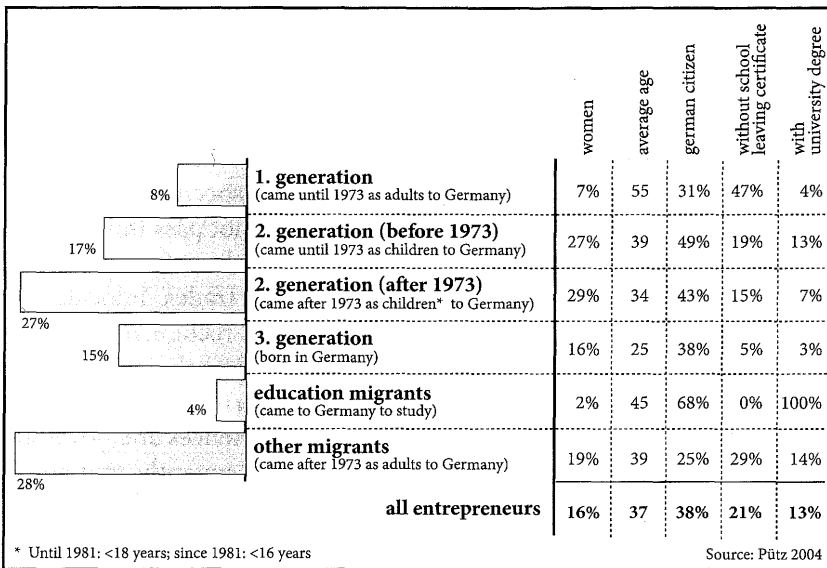


Figure 3: Entrepreneurs of Turkish Origin in Berlin: Generation and Personal Characteristics.

other nationalities are subject to the regulations of the laws pertaining to foreigners, which means that in the first place the freedom of entrepreneurial activities depends on their residence status. At the end of the 1960s, when the first migrants opened their own businesses, these regulations were decidedly restrictive. Almost all of the Turks living in Germany were subject to the ban on self-employment. The first pioneer entrepreneurs therefore had to establish their businesses illegally with German figureheads.

At the end of the 1980s, the legal situation of the majority of people of Turkish descent improved. On the one hand, the access to self-employment was eased; for example, the 1991 law pertaining to foreigners granted all foreigners with a right to residence the right to earn an independent living (Dienelt 2001). On the other hand, more people acquired an indefinite residence permit. Consequently, the number of those not subject to legal restrictions pertaining to foreigners wanting to start-up businesses increased, too. In 2001 they comprised approximately 56% of the Turks resident in Germany. This improved legal position considerably promoted the positive dynamics of enterprise set-ups in the 1990s.

On the other hand, one must assert that a third of the Turks residing in Germany still possess a residence permit according to which

self-employment is either forbidden or is prohibited by the local departments with authority over foreigners. Only in the past few years has an increasing economic and political interest in small businesses lead to individual applications for the removal of the ban on independent self-employment jobs being more often positively considered.

In addition, various career fields are regulated by specific legal regulations. These especially affect older people who did not pass through the German educational system. A master craftsman title is, for instance, a prerequisite for the independent practice of most trades. Educational qualifications acquired in Turkey are mostly not recognized. At the same time, formal educational aspects play a minor role in Turkey in any case. There, work-related skills are learnt informally through collaboration in a corresponding business. Such experiences are, however, not institutionally acknowledged in Germany. Consequently, numerous immigrants' biographical resources become devalued as a result of their migration. Thus, the sectoral structure of their enterprises was also influenced in the end, because the only option was to start up in an industry for which there were no preconditions, e.g., clothing alteration and shoe repair businesses.

### 3.2 *Explanatory factor 'job market'*

Beside the conditions imposed by the legal framework, the job market is, from a macro-analytical perspective, a decisive structural moment which influences the decision to become self-employed. As Bögenhold and Staber (1990) proved, the unemployment level has a significant influence on the self-employment percentage: The higher the unemployment, the higher the proportion of self-employment. Likewise, the increase and decrease in self-employment in most industrial nations move contra-cyclical to the growth of the economy. Enterprise set-ups thus more frequently follow an "economics of need" than an "economics of self-actualization".

A glance at Germany and Berlin's labor market data clarifies that this general macro-economical trend is also applicable to the people of Turkish descent in Germany (see. Fig. 5): Foreign, and especially Turkish, nationals are affected to an above average degree by job market upheavals. Since the 1974 oil crisis, their unemployment has always been higher than that of Germans. Since most Turks were employed as unskilled laborers in "crisis industries" such as the coal and steel



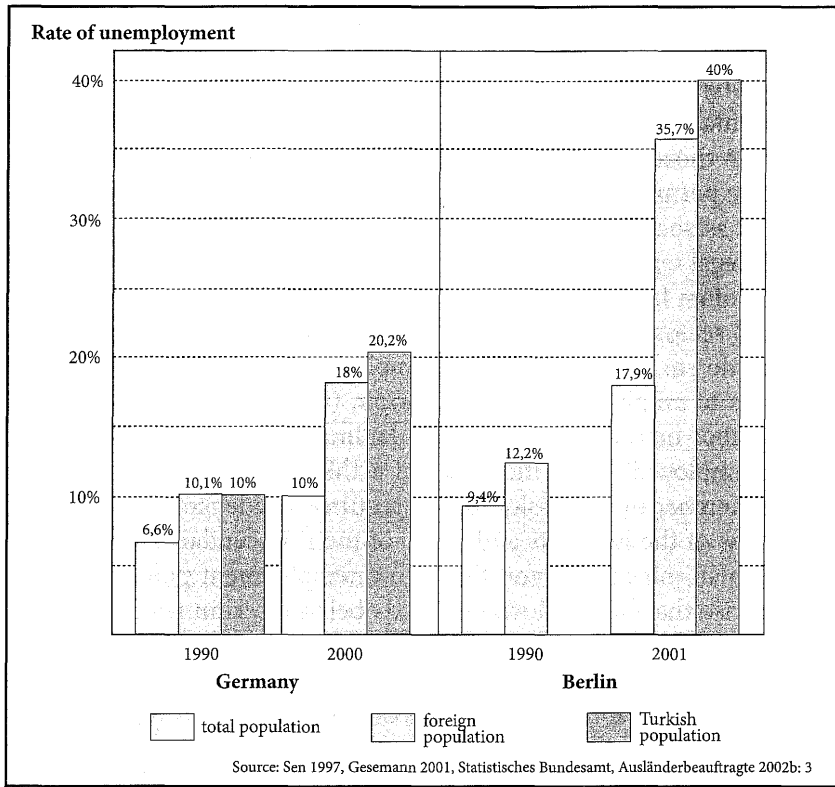


Figure 4: Unemployment in Germany and Berlin.

industry, they were the first ones to be affected by rationalizations. And also the recent crisis on the job market, which was unusually intensely experienced in Berlin with the disappearance of industry as a result of the reunification of Germany, affected Turkish people more than all the others.

Apart from dismissals, a main reason for this is that people of Turkish origin have little chance to find (new) jobs. This is primarily due to their low work-related skills and especially their poor language skills. Children of Turkish immigrants who have grown up in Germany frequently only first come into contact with the German language at school and are there—as a result of the high segregation—often taught in classes with a majority of fellow pupils who likewise speak poor German. A lack of language competency is thus often the cause of career discrimination: in Berlin, at the start of the new millennium, 20% of the Turkish youth

left school without qualifications (Germans: 8, 8%), and of ten Turkish unemployed persons, only one had completed vocational training (*Ausländerbeauftragte* 2002a and 2002b).

The unfavorable work-related prospects are again drastically intensified for those without long-term residence permits. Extension of residence permits can be denied them if they claim government benefits such as social welfare. This combination of discrimination on the foreign-legal segmented job market and the threatened loss of residence permits often leads to many having recourse only to an activity in the informal sector to ensure their livelihood. In fact, there are only two ways to do so: either as an illegal employee, frequently with personal networks to employers of Turkish origin (for the significance of such 'ethnic labor markets,' see especially Hillmann 2000 and 2002), or else as 'self-employed' using the name of a third person who is mostly a family member in possession of the required residence permit.

In view of the migrants and many of their descendants' position on the German job market and the high unemployment percentage, it is no surprise that "unemployment" and "being discriminated against in professional life" are named by many Turkish entrepreneurs as decisive for their business start-ups. Furthermore, nearly half of the questioned self-employed persons in Berlin were out of work for a very long period of time before establishing a business, to be precise, for an average of 19.4 months.

A large part of the enterprise set-ups can thus be characterized as a survival strategy in times of dramatic deterioration of the labor market conditions. Self-employment from pure need is, however, no good premise for success. For the majority it is comparable to a permanent struggle for financial survival (see Fig. 6). A regular income while living at a subsistence level frequently means the loss of all entrepreneurial options regarding a course of action, such as being able to make investments or to start marketing a product. This especially affects industries such as small-scale retail trade and the restaurant trade, in which the competition pressure increased exceptionally in the 1990s due to the numerous new set-ups. The economically poor position of the Turkish people, who form a large part of the customers, further aggravates this negative trend. "Self-exploitation" of the entrepreneur and collaboration without pay by family members are thus frequently the only success factors with which to retain the business. For a major part of the entrepreneurs it must thus be stated that in the end they exchanged their

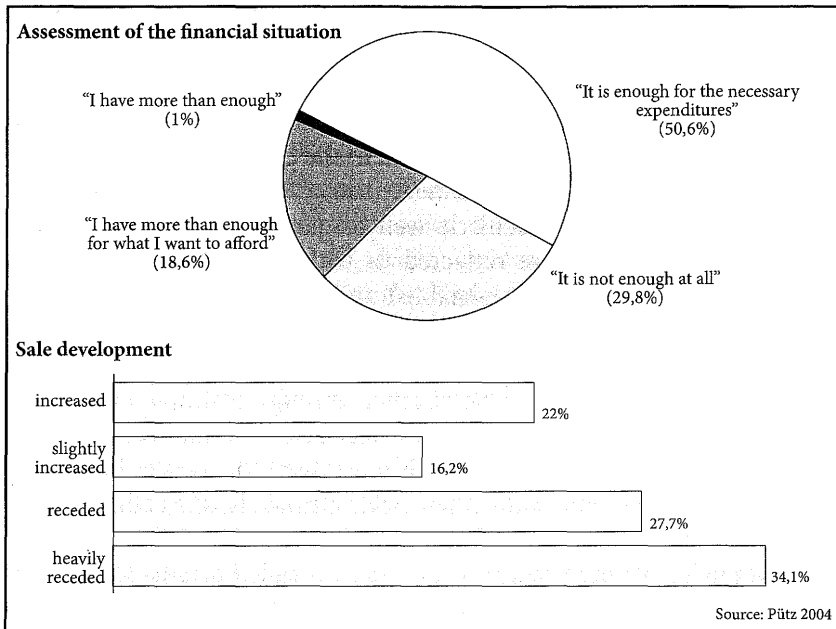


Figure 5: Economic Situation of the Entrepreneurs of Turkish Origin in Berlin.

marginalized position on the job market with a marginalized position as entrepreneur (Pütz 2004).

### 3.3 Explanatory factor regarding "niche market"

The assumption that "niche markets" facilitate migrants' independent start-ups was already an explanatory factor early on forwarded by research under the term "immigrant business" (e.g. Waldinger, Aldrich and Ward 1990). The crux of the argumentation states that migrants, as a result of their consumption preferences, create a specific demand in the adopted country and self-employed persons of the same origin who possess 'cultural competency', are able to fill the resulting market niche. In Germany, niche market argumentations are forwarded to comprehend the causes of the first enterprise set-ups (e.g. Goldberg et al. 1999). These reasons appear plausible in the face of the restricted sectoral gearing of the businesses at the time: travel agencies (negotiation of travels to Turkey), undertakers/funeral parlors (transfers, Islamic burials), translation agencies etc.

From the current perspective, however, the value of the explanation of the niche market initiatives must be critically regarded. Thus the Berlin example showed that the structure of the businesses has, especially since the 1990s, out-differentiated itself. That, e.g., a fourth of all entrepreneurs of Turkish origin are still in the convenience food sector, is not, as niche models suggest, related to a “cultural predisposition” to perform such jobs particularly well or gladly. Rather, institutional framework conditions are reflected in which persons belonging to certain immigrant groups are enabled and others are not (see above). Furthermore, it indicates the powerful effect of discursive attribution, which hardly anyone can eradicate. In accordance with Häußermann and Oswald (1997), this can be clarified through a simple example: a female immigrant from Vietnam relatively rarely profits from her abilities to prepare good Döner (Turkish meat dish), the reason being that in a discourse that defines the labor fields ethnically, she cannot utilize these abilities economically. She has to be “man” and “Turk”—only then would her ability become a resource. So-called origin-determined “cultural resources”, as niche market models partially formed themselves and consequently prove themselves primarily as effects of an ethnic—discourse. Nevertheless, this has considerable relevance regarding action: From the point of view of those involved, this allows enterprise set-ups to appear in specific industries as an economically more meaningful strategy than in others.

#### *4. Culture, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship: theoretical considerations*

Investigations on the topic “immigrant” and/or “ethnic” entrepreneurship were formulated over many years from an essentialist understanding of culture—and often still are today<sup>1</sup>. Admittedly, attributions such as “work harder” or “save more” have in such explicit formulations largely disappeared from the discussion since that time; however, implicitly they still shape the basic concept of numerous lines of argumentation—as “cultural” or “ethnic resources” that foster or limit the entrepreneurship of certain groups.

Such questions underlie perceptions of a coexistence and cooperation of cultures as respectively demarcated and homogeneous units. Culture becomes conceptually linked to a definable social collective which is territorially anchored (“Turkish culture”, “regional culture”). This is, however, not maintainable, neither as a theoretic construction nor as

a concept. Even if homogeneous cultures ever existed, they would, at the very latest, not be identifiable in the era of globalization and movements of migration. Regionally anchored schemes of knowledge and consequently continuous and regionally definable sociocultural worlds do not exist anymore (Werlen 1997: 379). Sociopolitical concerns to such essentialistic conceptions of culture should also be considered. The reason is that research that questions alleged “features”, that “Special something of a culture”, always creates difference. Therefore, in representing a construction of the “Other”, it always runs the risk of encouraging exclusion and discrimination.

Contemporary theories of culture generally comprehend culture as schemes of knowledge or interpretative schemes, features humans essentially need to possess to be able to meaningfully adopt objects and actions or “world” (cp. Reckwitz 2000). The world firstly becomes meaningfully comprehensible over “structures of significance”, and therefore, becomes the condition for any social practice (Giddens 1997). Such schemes of knowledge, which allow a raised arm, be seen as a ‘greeting’, or the shaking of the head to be interpreted as a ‘denial’, necessarily need to be collectively shared. It would be a false conclusion to derive from this that culture as a coherence of symbols is self-contained and is bound to a definable and secluded collective.

As a result, a contradiction exists between the *theoretical* position of non-existence of homogeneous cultures and *everyday* social practice, in which exactly these essentializations are permanently being (re-) produced. That is because what was defined as ‘culture’—schemes of knowledge and meaning structures—is always in itself differentiated through schemes of classification which facilitate the classification of things and their comprehensibility and reduce complexity for the person taking the action. Formation of meaning is inseparably connected to classification for the person carrying out the action. This means that certain symbols such as language, origin and clothing are permanently being marked under aspects of exclusion and affiliation and difference is created. Cultural boundaries, which symbolize that there are interpretative schemes “on the other side” that do not correspond to one’s own, are continuously being drawn.

Alleged ‘cultural characteristics’ are thus discursive constructions which develop their whole effectiveness in action itself and in the order of practice. This is true for every action. Even presumably “economic” situations of interaction do not get by without referring to shared symbolic orders and cannot be conceptually thought of without referring

to schemes of knowledge and interpretative schemes. This means, for example, that a business agreement between two entrepreneurs can only obtain a mutually satisfactory result if both entrepreneurs have the same conceivability concerning the appraisal of how such arrangements are sealed and how binding they are. In this sense every economic action is always at the same time a cultural action.

How can the relationship between culture and entrepreneurial action be conceptualized without padding into an 'essentialist trap'? The concept of transculturalism which Welsh (1992, 1999) developed appears fertile in this context. In referring to debates of globalization, Welsh assumes that territorially anchored, homogeneous cultures cannot be accepted any more. Transculturalism in this case implies the annihilation of congruity of territory and culture. Simultaneously, Welsh relocates the assumed theoretic location of cultural boundaries from an inter-personal tier to an intra-personal tier. This means that the "inner-outer-difference" which is attached to every demarcation is conceptually relocated to the tier of individual subjects. These are also defined by transculturalism and, therefore, dispose of different cultural reference systems. For this reason the perception of culture as a per se given and self-contained coherence of reference, of symbols, becomes obsolete. Simultaneously, "cultural difference" is still conceivable as a construct of affiliation and exclusion through signifying symbols.

On the basis of these considerations, culture can be conceptualized for action-oriented empiric research in moving the focus off questions of the specificity of alleged existing homogenous cultures and concentrating on the question of the practice of demarcation which the 'cultural' actors are continuously conducting, because demarcations that build up meanings on the basis of the familiar become separated from the corresponding 'inside' and the non corresponding 'outside'. This perspective of "transculturalism as practice" (Pütz 2004)<sup>1</sup> is not only to be understood as a concept of analysis.

In equal measure, it can be seen as a concrete action of real subjects. Through the relocation of the "inside-outside-differences" to an intra-personal tier, multiple belonging of individuals is conceptually accepted as well as empirically seizable. Hence, one can derive from

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<sup>1</sup> Boeckler (1999) follows a similar idea in his conceptualization of "Culture as diacritic practice", as a continuous insertion of contingent differences into principally undivided world.

this that humans dispose of routines of action with which they can displace themselves into different interpretative schemes in a form of 'everyday transculturalism', e.g. to enable business partners to attain the same conceivability of meaning in a situation of economic interaction. 'Everyday transculturalism' can transform to 'strategic transculturalism', if these schemes of knowledge are reflexively accessible to the actor, and therefore deliberately applicable as an ability to operate and orientate oneself reflexively in different symbolic structures. Cultural interpretative schemes can therefore be understood as a repertoire that keeps several options of action ready, to which the individuals may have a reflexive access.

Based on the example of a content-analytical evaluation of biographic interviews which were led within the framework of a DFG-project with entrepreneurs of Turkish origin in Berlin, the practice of cultural demarcations is supposed to be comprehended empirically in the following two examples. In the first example the construction of 'Turkish' social resources caused by demarcations will be in the center of interest. Then the perspective of 'strategic transculturalism' will be comprehended on the basis of an excerpt of one of the biographic analyses.

#### 4.1 *The Construction of "Turkish" social resources*

The assumption that migrants and their descendents had particular characteristics that were immediately associated with their descent or origin is the core statement of numerous essays on the topic of "immigrant business". Light and Rosenstein (1995a: 171) define these as follows: "Ethnic resources include an ethnic culture, structural and relational embeddedness, social capital, and multiplex social networks that connect the entire group. Ethnic resources characterize a whole group". The afore-mentioned basic concepts of "embeddedness" (Granovetter 1985) and "social capital" (mostly reverting to Bourdieu 1983 or Coleman 1988) have basically nothing to do with the origin of the entrepreneurs. They were, above all, developed in recent years in the field of economic sociology but have also established themselves in the debate of economic geography (e.g. Glückler 2001, Bathelt und Glückler 2002). The essential thing about this is that economic action is categorically always comprehended as a social action and thus the context of social relationships, as being relevant for any kind of economic action have been moved into the center of interest. The model for further discussion of 'ethnic' resources reverses the logic of argumentation. Social

resources become 'ethnic' ones at this point, since ethnics are existent as a priori and are perceived differently from each other. This means that an entrepreneur, as a 'predisposed being', is assigned a specific type of embeddedness, social capital etc. due to his origin.

To tie up to the inaugurative statement one should conduct a change of perspective in examining social relationships between entrepreneurs with a similar background of migration. It is less the question towards specific characteristics of a given group that should be in the center of interest, but rather the question of how the inside-outside-difference is produced alongside of symbols as the national labeling of origin and which functions these demarcations have, e.g. for the accumulation of social capital. This can be comprehended in the following narratives of entrepreneurs of Turkish origin to the acquisition of information or to the selection of business partners.

Tabip (codename) primarily describes a dyadic relationship with a considerably aligned competitor (relational embeddedness), whom he tells about cheap sources of supply. However, he expects future quid pro quo (reciprocity):

A couple of days ago I'm on the phone with a vendor from West Germany, for example green lentils, and he says: 'I've got something for 1,50 for you'. Then I'm so fair and other wholesalers—friends, you know people I know from the fruit market, people I've worked with for ages—I'll call them and say: 'Look, I've found out something. Just call there and there, tell them my name and everything is fine.' And then they really do that. [...] Because, I scratch his back and he'll scratch mine. And if he notices something in sometime in the future, doesn't matter what, something that can help me, then he'll tell me. [...] You know, he doesn't only have to help me in business, it can also be something private or anything else. If I'm looking for something, car, a forklift, I mean something cheap and stuff like that. That's why, one back scratches the other. [...] But not everybody does that, only very, very good people do that.

Ali also describes the constitution of trustworthy relationship in a dyadic relationship. Afterwards, however, he describes a situation, in which 'entrepreneur x' loses prestige and reputation due to an enclosed network of other entrepreneurs to which an entrepreneur who was harmed by him belonged (structural embeddedness). Ali, therefore, builds upon the fact that confidential information should only be passed on in a tight circle of 'good contacts':

If an entrepreneur makes mistakes, eh, and that happens fast, the others hear about it, this entrepreneur has made mistakes. For example, we're



three businessmen and we talk to each other, he says to me: 'Ali, holy shit, for example x, company x gave me a check, and the check bounced.' Or I say: 'Yes', I tell them: 'Please be careful. That guy has three open accounts by me and doesn't want to pay.' Or too difficult, date of payment. Robert: "Do you do this with all business partners, to exchange such information?" Ali: "Yes, with good contacts".

The narratives of Tabip and Ali confirm the perspective that no economic interaction can be understood outside the context of social relations. Every observer would describe the narratives to be an everyday occurrence. Both the situations of interaction and the social relationships as well as their effect is well known to everybody from everyday life and are not necessarily associated with origins or "being a Turk". However, this impression reverses itself to the opposite in observing how both entrepreneurs commence their narratives:

Tabip: "So, the Turk, he's everywhere. He knows all his information. They help each other. I don't know if the Germans do that among each other, I don't think so. But that's what the Turks do. [...]"

Ali: "Hm, yes. That's the way it is. First of all trust to the Turks. [...]"

The social affiliation to an imaginary 'Turkish community' advances to become a vital requirement to be able to participate in specific networks and to take advantage of mutual help and trust. The construction of a nationally—designated culture is an economically probate application according to which inclusion or exclusion from social relations is decided and the choice of business partners is simplified. On the one hand, there is often reference to a large discourse on "Turkish" entrepreneurship. Therein, a myth of Turkish entrepreneurs is created which is set up on the central categories of honor/trust and mutual salvage/solidarity. By referring to this discourse, entrepreneurs make these categories economically useful as social capital. Simultaneously, by using them, they stabilise the meaning structures.

Discourses of affiliation deploy a large relevance of practice and prove to be important for entrepreneurial success as a mechanism of in- or exclusion in social relationships. According to Giddens, such schemes of knowledge are reconstituted and stabilized in their application. Simultaneously, however, they are continually undergoing a process of transition by being permanently renegotiated. This aspect can be pointed out by another example: Ulvi, the owner of an advertising agency, reports of cultural demarcations from the point of view of an excluded person. He sees himself being confronted with a situation in his early steps as an

entrepreneur in which language is used to symbolically mark differences between the communities of “Turks” and “fake Turks”. Ulvi’s language does not permit a definite classification. Therefore, he is encountered with distrust, which endangers his carrier. He is threatened with the loss of his business contacts due to this demarcation:

Ehm, my old partner, eh, he had something against me. I didn’t really notice this from him, because he was always very nice and polite. But from the internal side, I know, that he told his father, with whom I had a business connection, eh,: ‘Oh Gee, he’s an idiot, that’s one of those German-orientated Turks’ and ‘Let us try out somebody else’ and so on. (laughs) Exactly that situation really did exist. And that’s the way, eh, the rest of the family, eh, of my partner, eh, they always had this strange eye on me, because I, because my Turkish was just such a weird Turkish. It wasn’t the normal Turks, that the Turks talked, that was caused by me, having more to do with Germans, my Turkish was more like a bad translation. Only partly translated from German. My sentences were constructed in a strange way, principally they were German sentences, with, eh, Turkish words.

A national or linguistic labeling of cultural identity produces a “we” and an “other” and is a method of simplifying the selection of business partners. People like Ulvi do not fit into such a dichotomic discourse of affiliation. They alienate and irritate by questioning the logic of cultural attributes by their very existence. Ibrahim, a board member of a Turkish company alliance, impressively expresses how access to established bi-national constructions of identity give him a secure feeling in his everyday social (as well as entrepreneurial) dealings, and what effect people like Ulvi that do not correspond to these constructions have on him:

The main problem if you look back: first, second, third generation. [...] Sometimes you’re just scared, what kind of people they are, because they’re, eh, much, eh, they’ve become alien to their own culture. And those who have lost their own personality. And therefore, they have a bad image, and that’s what actually annoys the natives and, eh, the own side. You can’t really assign them to a category. [...] And I’m terribly scared how such Turks will appear to others. I’m my own culture, my own belief, my own values in the country, I can understand the Germans better, and the Germans can comprehend me better as a Turk.

People like Ulvi cannot “definitely be assigned”. They do not fit into the scheme and, therefore, endanger the co-existence with the Germans that is based on difference. For Germans cannot comprehend the Turks as “being a Turk” because they are then no longer assigned to the scheme

of knowledge of "being Turkish". Thus, they are a threat to many people. They endanger the maintenance of nationally-labeled cultures. Not only do they question the fundamental opposition, but, beyond this, the principal of opposition itself, which suggests and demands the plausibility of dichotomy (German—Turkish), and the possibility of separation (Bauman 1995: 80).

Both examples point out that the assumption of alleged cultural demarcations is not maintainable and that "culture" has to be conceptualized comparably as both a condition as well as a process (Schiffauer 1997). So the German-Turkish discourse goes along with constructions of honor and mutual help. Therefore, it can be activated in an appropriate context of practice and become an important source of accumulation of social capital. Entrepreneurs stabilize this discourse in referring to it in economic interaction. Contrariwise, cultural symbols are always being newly constructed by a continuous process of interpretation and application. Alleged stable schemes of classification lose their power through entrepreneurs like Ulvi due to the fact that they are people who implicitly carry processive changes in themselves and therefore destabilize cultural constructions.

#### 4.2 *Strategic Transculturalism*

If cultural demarcations are not naturally existent, but are rather produced discursively and therefore changeable, then they are in principle also available to the individual. The initially disposed "transculturalism as practice" would then not only be seen as a concept of analysis, but rather as a concrete practice of precise actors. This should be reconstructed in the following by Kevsan's example.

Kevsan (her codename), was born in 1968 in a mountain village in the province of Sivas. She came to Germany at the age of three with her parents. After completing the "Hauptschule" (nine years of school) and becoming a trained nurse, she worked in homes of the elderly from 1989. At the same time, she received her *Abitur* (university-entrance diploma). In 1993, she successfully applied for a place at university and studied educational science. At this point she married and gave birth to two children. In an occupation that followed in a welfare center, she had the idea to open up her own business in the welfare segment. She did this in 1999. In 2001 she already had more than 40 employees and an annual turnover of more than € 1M. Kevsan's great grandmother is a survivor of the massacres on Alevis in the 1930's and other relatives

were persecuted and killed due to their religious affiliation and pro-Kurdish political activities. Therefore, the maintenance of a collective identity and the simultaneous concealment thereof is a very important and continuous topic of the family in everyday life. The requirement to reflexively deal with belonging to imaginary communities is already applied to the family configuration of Kevsan. This pursues her in her present entrepreneurial activities. There are three dominant lines of conflict: the linguistically-marked ethnicity of *Kurdish-Turkish*, the ascription of *Alevistic-Sunnistic* in reference to religious orientation and the ascription to the role of *men/women* referring to gender. All three fields of discourse evolve a large dynamic in her biography, between appropriation and rejection to her corresponding ascription of identity.

Kevsan firstly got to know from her fellow students that the linguistic (Kurdish) and religious (Alevistic) establishments in her family are targets of persecution in Turkey after having migrated to Germany with her family. It turns out that the strong hegemonic discourse in Turkey is also very powerful in Germany. Kevsan is taught German and Turkish in Berlin. Nevertheless, because of her Kurdish accent, she is identified as "Kurdish". Due to this, she is exposed to a double ethnicization, firstly as a "foreigner in Germany" and, secondly, as a "Kurd amongst Turks". Kevsan has been looking these factors in the face by using two strategies to the present day: first, in attaining knowledge and being respected for this, and secondly, in changing her pronunciation of Turkish so that a linguistic encoding is not possible.

Also the attributions as an Alevi family member of a "bad, impure" group were latently taught to Kevsan at an early age by the virtue of the taboo of this topic in public. An offensive "commitment to Alevism" in her puberty was like a liberation from the dominant practices of ascription, and was at first "successful" for the creation of her own individualism. But this led to the exclusion from her fellow Sunni students, which continued in her private life. The religious background of her family is the cause for many relationships having ended. She counteracts this by attaining more knowledge, in intellectually dealing with the topic of "The perception of women by the Alevites and Sunnites" in her diploma thesis. Through this, she brings herself into a position which enables her a reflexive access to different confessions and to the connected social practices and discourses. This can be understood as the vital requirement in the development of the ability to "strategic

transculturalism”, which she later was able to turn into value in her entrepreneurial practice.

By choosing a formal business look and perfect make-up, Kevsan does not allow social affiliation to an ethnic group or religious denomination to be discerned through her outer appearance in business contacts. She lets herself be perceived more as a business woman by these features of distinction, and, therefore, gains respect and distance. She is also not determinable by her language. Simultaneously—and this is vital—she has developed the ability to deal flexibly with cultural codes and to apply them situationally. This is due to her practical and reflexive examination of powerful social affiliations as well as the dynamics between appropriation and rejection of positions of identity that had been brought closer to her. This ability, described as “strategic transculturalism” (Pütz 2004), can be appreciated as a resource that contributes substantially to Kevsan’s economic success. This is exemplary revealed in an interactive situation in which the acquisition of a customer is at stake:

I go there and introduce myself. [The customer] is younger than I am, looks at me, says: ‘Hello, take a seat.’ I take a seat and say: ‘What are we waiting for?’ Then he says: ‘For your boss.’ Then I say: ‘Excuse me, I don’t have a boss.’ He replies: ‘But your company does have a boss.’ I answer: ‘The company does have a boss, and that’s me.’ He looks at me, kind of like this: ‘You!’ And he’s just so big, and I stand there, and he points his finger at me: ‘You’re the boss? Naa, we don’t want to have you then.’ Then I ask him: ‘Why don’t you want to have me?’ ‘Naa, the company is run by a woman [...]’. I stand there and his wife comes in and greets me with a nod of her head, she is veiled.

In a conversation—which is “pure business” dealing with the negotiation of a job and a client acquisition—Kevsan finds herself back in a situation that is primarily not determined by economic parameters such as costs and quality, but rather by a ‘cultural’ ascribing of meaning. She sees herself being confronted by traditional gender role perceptions. Neither her excellent professional references which are normally a probate agent to use in the acquisition of contracts nor the attributes of her outer appearance as a business woman are accepted as symbols for her professional and job-related qualifications. She has to redefine cultural interpretative schemes in the matter of negotiation and adjusts to this by using two kinds of symbols. On the one hand, she picks up the condescending utterances of the family man and his referral to a corresponding traditional discourse of the role of women, and on the

other hand the characteristics of his wife's veiling. Thereupon she uses other interpretative schemes and coding rules:

Then he says: 'Yes, if a company is run by a woman. Furthermore, your company is really new. I don't know if you're going to be bankrupt, and anyway a woman can't run a company.' Then I say to him: 'You know what? If your problem is that I'll be bankrupt someday, I can tell you that I've got really good coverage. My brother has also got his own company. I will never go bankrupt, 'cause he would help me over the hard times.' [...] Then he becomes a bit softer, and then he says: 'Who is your, who is your brother who helps you?' And then I think about staying or whether I should leave. Then I say: 'Company x and y belong to my brother.' And he says: 'Ah, him, he's the guy on Mehringdamm, of course. I know him. Then there is no problem,

Economic dealings are always also "cultural" dealings; therefore, the schemes of knowledge have to be transformed in the sense of entrepreneurial relevant situations of interaction of "customer acquisition" Kevsan realizes that the symbolism of "educated, qualified expert" does not have any effect. She identifies that the situation is defined by another discourse and adapts to the applied code rules. It becomes clear that questions of power, understood as an ability to assert one's own interpretative schemes, play a central role in the examination of cultural aspects of entrepreneurial action. Kevsan draws on codes that correspond to interpretive schemes that have been powerfully enforced in interaction for her own representation. Therewith, she finally stabilizes the corresponding discourse. She devaluates her professional qualifications and abilities and uses codes in which she obtains all her qualifications through her older brother's position in society. In this way, she fulfils what is expected of her by her counterpart. Thus, she gets the contract in the end. In a kind of global evaluation, she declares such situationally dependent relocations to other interpretative schemes in the sense of 'strategic transculturalism' to her major principle in entrepreneurship:

One doesn't see that I'm Kurdish, nor that I'm Alevi. I'm very untypical for a Kurdish woman, I mean from the looks. And my customers, if I, I always say: [...] If they want me to be a Kurd, then I'm a Kurd. And if they say I should be a Sunnite, then I' a Sunnite.'

The extract from Kevsan's biography analysis and the quotations of the entrepreneur affirm one of the initial considerations to "transculturalism as practice". Cultural boundaries are not "natural", but rather

constructions that are discursively constructed and (re-)produced by practice. Therefore, social affiliation is not a priori a given dimension which results from "being", but is established by social practice and thus, in principle changeable. This aspect is often ignored in examinations to "cultural embeddedness" that refer to alleged "norms and values".

Thus, demarcations that separate the Inside from the Outside, and therefore produce communities, are always an act of constructing identities because difference is produced by symbolic marks, and this I correlate/ is placed in relation to the Other. Such processes of (self-) positioning have to be regarded as a vital element when cultural aspects of entrepreneurial action are to be examined. Entrepreneurs move—like all other participants—in a field in which positions of identity are permanently being negotiated. As the example of Kevsan shows, the idea of an "essential identity" as well as the idea of a substantial "essential belonging" to a community has to be abandoned. In fact, the term "positioning" seems to be more adequate than the term of "identity", for the aspects of action (to position oneself), the effect of ascribing (to be positioned) and the situational character (positioning as an always contextualized phenomenon) are combined in it, which are constitutive for the construction of identity.

The aspect of positioning is vital to understanding the actions of the participants in so-called pure "economic" situations of interaction. These can actually relocate themselves into several imaginary communities, in terms of transculturalism as a concrete practice, and therewith principally have the ability to contextually refer to different interpretative schemes and to apply these to their actions.

The ability of transculturalism can further be defined on the tier of the individual participant. *Everyday transculturalism* describes the routine consultation of interpretative schemes to establish an equality of meaning in situations of interaction with the actors. According to Giddens (1997: 57), such routines are anchored in the "practical conscience" and are generally not accessible to the person involved in a reflexive examination. *Strategic transculturalism* describes a purposeful reflexive positioning. Interpretative Schemes that are negotiated in recurring situations of interaction can be at the disposal of the person involved in a "discursive consciousness". This enables him to flexibly handle identity codes to adjust himself intentionally and situationally to different reference systems. The example of Kevsan demonstrates that strategic transculturalism is a useful resource in business situations

which can enhance the scope for manoeuvrings in market dealings and and therefore enables entrepreneurs to participate in different social relations at will.

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# Islam and Muslims in Germany

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## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	ix
List of Tables, Figures, Maps and Illustrations .....	xi
List of Contributors .....	xv

Islam and Muslims in Germany: An Introductory Exploration .....	1
JÖRN THIELMANN	

### PART I

#### FRAMING OF MUSLIM LIFE WORLDS (*LEBENSWELTEN*)

Euro-Islam: Some Empirical Evidences .....	33
FARUK ŞEN	
Islamic Norms in Germany and Europe .....	49
MATHIAS ROHE	
Religiousness among Young Muslims in Germany .....	83
KEA EILERS, CLARA SEITZ, KONRAD HIRSCHLER	

### PART II

#### ISLAM AND SOCIAL PRACTICE

Governmentality, Pastoral Care and Integration .....	119
LEVENT TEZCAN	
Prayer Leader, Counselor, Teacher, Social Worker, and Public Relations Officer—On the Roles and Functions of Imams in Germany .....	133
MELANIE KAMP	
Christian-Muslim Encounter—Recent Issues and Perspectives ....	161
FRIEDMANN EISSLER	
The Bellicose Birth of Euro-Islam in Berlin .....	183
WOLFGANG G. SCHWANITZ	

## PART III

## COMMUNITIES AND IDENTITIES

- Muslims' Collective Self-description as Reflected in the Institutional Recognition of Islam: The *Islamic Charta* of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany and Case Law in German Courts ..... 215  
 NIKOLA TIETZE
- Islamic Instruction in German Public Schools: The Case of North-Rhine-Westphalia ..... 241  
 MARGRETE SØVIK
- Difficult Identifications: The Debate on Alevism and Islam in Germany ..... 267  
 MARTIN SÖKEFELD
- Philosophers, Freedom Fighters, Pantomimes: South Asian Muslims in Germany ..... 299  
 CLAUDIA PRECKEL

## PART IV

## CULTURE

- Turkish-German Filmmaking: From Phobic Liminality to Transgressive Glocality? ..... 331  
 VIOLA SHAFIK
- A Literary Dialogue of Cultures: Arab Authors in Germany ..... 353  
 Yafa SHANNEIK
- The Entertainment of a Parallel Society? Turkish Popular Music in Germany ..... 371  
 MARIA WURM

## PART V

## MEDIA

- "I can watch both sides"—Media Use among Young Arabs in Germany ..... 395  
 JUDITH PIES

Islam in German Media .....	423
SABINE SCHIFFER	
The Turkish Press in Germany: A Public In-between Two Publics? .....	441
CHRISTOPH SCHUMANN	

## PART VI

## GENDER

Re-fashioning the Self through Religious Knowledge: How Muslim Women Become Pious in the German Diaspora .....	465
JEANETTE S. JOULI	
Gender in Transition: The Connectedness of Gender and Ethnicity in Biographies of Female Entrepreneurs of Turkish Background .....	489
VERENA SCHREIBER	

## PART VII

## ISLAMIC ECONOMIES OR BUSINESS AS USUAL?

Transculturality as Practice: Turkish Entrepreneurs in Germany .....	511
ROBERT PÜTZ	
The Construction of 'Turks in Germany' as a Target Group of Marketing .....	537
MATTHIAS KULINNA	
Islamic Financing Transactions in European Courts .....	569
KILIAN BÄLZ	
General Index .....	585