# (In)formal Institutions, Culture and Educating Migrant Girls: The View from Berlin

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This essay examines migrant youth culture through the lens of gender, thus rendering Turkish girls visible – the 'absent' subject veiled in irresistible headscarf debates and cultural Otherness. In so doing, it pursues two connected goals. First, it turns to public settings to elucidate the organising discourses that facilitate, and constrain, the participation of migrant girls in the everyday routines and larger civic spaces of Berlin. Specifically, it asserts a discourse of culture in two variants, and legitimises the presence of young women in organised settings. When deployed, one variant espouses a particularistic, ethnically bounded vision of culture, whose normative codes, in the form of timeless Turkish or Muslim traditions, come to contain the activity span of girls. The other variant embraces a humanistic interpretation, in which the normative aspect of culture emerges as subordinate to its universalistic content, and aspires to transcend boundaries of ethnicity and gender. The second goal is to develop an argument regarding the connection between intimacy and institutionalised public discourses. By focusing on how Turkish girls talk about 'their problems as woman', an attempt is made to show that publicly available discourses, specifically a generic feminism, provide the young women with a language for articulating otherwise 'unspoken matters' in public and in private, and enable them to achieve intimacy.

## Entering the public space: Culture and (in)formal institutions

Youth and migration studies, if they are not discussing problems and anomie (at the outset let me underline that it is not my intention to investigate the integration problems of Turkish girls), turn to the sites of popular culture and style to locate the agency of young people in public spaces. According to Angela McRobbie, for instance, it is in 'the sounds in the kitchen, the noises in the home, and the signs and styles on the street' that one captures the ways social relations are conducted (1994: 9). Although propositions based on popular culture are meant to hold for the young in general, they seem to apply to the girls more than to the boys (see also Sernhede in this volume).

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Consumption of style appears to be the chosen site for public engagement for the girls. As represented in most writing, within their close circles of friends, the girls shop and consume, follow and initiate fashion, and create a (sub)culture.

While admitting the importance of popular cultural forms as sites for young people's creativity and engagement, I disagree with privileging them as the primary points of entry to public life when it comes to substantiating the agency of young women. In Berlin, one of the major avenues for Turkish girls to gain access to public arenas is the network of (in)formal cultural and political associations and recreational centres. Many of the organisations have separate settings for Girls' Groups *(Mädchengruppe)* or reserve certain days of the week for the exclusive use of the girls. At the very least, they arrange a series of activities specifically designed for young women. Aside from youth centres, a wide range of women's organisations provides facilities and delivers services to young women. In Berlin at any given time one is sure to find a wide variety of women's initiatives, women's cafés, information and emergency centres and centres or organisations dealing with women's health and professional problems and providing leisure activities, along with a Turkish *Hamam* (bath) for women and a multicultural travel centre for young migrant women. To different degrees, Berlin's municipalities or its Senate support these institutions, both politically and financially.

Behind this emphasis on providing for and organising women lie three connected catalysts. One is the incentive and policy preferences put forward by state and municipal governments for projects specifically catering to women – thus mainstreaming the 'women question'. Another is the influence of feminism, which, at the level of organisations and the state, facilitates a climate favourable to the pursuit and prioritisation of women's issues. The third catalyst derives from ideas about the place of women in 'migrant cultures'. When migrant culture is taken as an essentialised Turkishness, it furbishes the logic for setting up Girls' Groups as sanctuaries against the 'repression' imposed upon young women by their families. When migrant culture is treated within a framework of diversity, it occasions organisational elaborations on multiculturalism, such as the Turkish *Hamam* mentioned above.

## Caveat: headscarf debate

At the earlier stages of migration, the proportion of female to male migrants was significantly low, since migration meant the recruitment of male factory workers. Later, however, the numbers of female immigrants reached a considerable parity with men, mostly due to women-only recruitment policies and family reunifications. Again, at the early stages of migration, the women immigrants, Muslim or otherwise, were simply invisible. Migration was perceived as a matter of labour importation and was temporary; women hardly made the public agenda.

Later, with the cultural turn in migration, that is, with the increased emphasis on culture in terms of rights, duties, and membership of immigrants, women and the women question came to the fore with regard to the immigration question. As categorical Muslims, immigrant women from diverse places (such

as Turkey, Pakistan, Morocco, Surinam) and with different social, educational and cultural backgrounds have become the subject of *foulard* affairs, headscarf debates. In media representations, they are immanently portrayed as 'beyond the veil' and thus silent. Their presumed invisibility, and patriarchal oppression, under Islamic traditions have led, in the words of Stanley Cohen, to unremitting 'moral panics' (1980), especially after the indiscriminate attacks in public places perpetuated by radical Islamist groups and organisations.

In Europe today, imprinted on the female body, the headscarf empirically discriminates foreignness (non-Westernness) and authenticates it, mostly, as Islamic. When the subject matter is immigration or Islam, pictures of women with headscarves invariably accompany newspaper articles, television coverage and academic studies. The image provides the necessary visual accreditation to the written and spoken word.

On the one hand, the headscarf (variously called *hijab, turban, foulard, kopf-tuch)* signifies an eternal Islam that underwrites the submission of women to the authority of Muslim men and Muslim tradition. The tradition as such is considered anathema to the normative values of the West and appears as the main obstacle to the integration of Muslim women into Europe or the West. On the other hand, Muslim women without headscarves are considered secular – hence, 'Westernised'. However, being 'Westernised' according to this reasoning denotes not integration but a loss of tradition, cultural dislocation, and inauthentic selves.[1]

In short, the headscarf as a sign hides Muslim women behind a timeless culture and tradition, regardless of their religious beliefs and their political and cultural orientations. If they wear the sign, they are deemed to be the factual prisoners of Muslim culture – and thus silent. If they are without it, they are considered to be culturally confused – and thus are silenced by the logic of inauthenticity. They become located in the shadows of a precarious Nowhere, standing at an incommensurable distance from the modernity and present-tense of the West.

Though intuitive, this cultural take – and undue emphasis – on the headscarf issue renders invisible the extensive participation of immigrant women in the social, cultural and economic life of the countries in which they reside. They actively engage in the societal projects of their surroundings and times. From the public spaces of the Here-and-Now in Europe, variously as women, immigrants, Turks, Algerians or Muslims, they speak of their conditions, expectations and resolutions and they speak to the world at large, articulating utopias in opposition to, and because of, the uncertain eventualities encompassing their lives. Their accomplishments and activism since they have surfaced in the imaginary of the European mind are a testimony to their resilience, inventiveness, and engagement – though no end to the headscarf debate is on the horizon.[2]

[1] Elsewhere I call this seemingly paradoxical set propositions the 'headscarf conjecture of migrancy' (Soysal 1999: 284). Within the migration debate, the conjecture has attained the status of a social fact in the true Durkheimian sense.

[2] Note that I do not mean that the debate over the headscarf is superfluous. Wearing or not wearing a headscarf has implications regarding the women question. The way it is deployed with regard to immigration prevents any substantive deliberation.

## Speaking intimacy

Confining its focus to friendship circles and close-knit female groups, most work within the domain of youth studies looks for intimacy in the private (moments, places and stories). Intimacy materialises in private conversations and plays. Public stages and expressions are categorically set aside for displays of intimacy. In public, the reasoning goes, intimacy is performed and communicated over calculated distances and emotions, mostly in the form of stylised femininity.

I suggest a move in the opposite direction to locate formations of intimacy. Taking my cue from Lauren Berlant's work (1997, 1998), my aim is to complicate the tacit division of labour between public and private that emerges when writing and conversing about intimacy. Public expressions, even in their most formalised discursive modes, constitute and conjure up intimate connections. They provide a vocabulary for questioning prescribed techniques and 'institutions of intimacy' as in romance, dating, and marriage, while evocatively constructing intimate attachments between persons and conferring 'intimate' plasticity to otherwise categorical collectivities such as womankind.

To substantiate these assertions, I turn to the public expressions and narratives of Turkish girls in Berlin. In the rest of this essay, I shall focus on a workshop designed to help girls discuss the 'specific problems of migrant girls'. Moving from this event, I aim to explore the engagement of young Turkish women with the contemporary discourses of culture and elucidate the terms of their participation in the public spaces of Berlin.

Speaking about 'the problems of Turkish girls in Germany' at an all-female workshop is in a way a highly conventionalised public exercise. And the formulaic assertions (and experiences) that the migrant girls narrate in such a forum do not necessarily call for 'alternative plots' that bypass life courses coupled with institutions of intimacy. Yet, through public talk, young women break away from the certainty of institutions of intimacy and disturb the plots they are supposed to follow in courtship and in public–gendered and cultured Turkish schemes of intimacy.

## The workshop commences

May 19th symbolically marks the start of the Turkish Liberation Struggle, which led to the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. It is celebrated as a national holiday in Turkey, one that is dedicated to Turkish youth, the future and the destiny of the nation. On 18 May 1996, the Turkish Science and Technology Centre in Berlin held its third annual Berlin Youth Forum.[3] It was a daylong festival, with panel discussions, workshops and an evening of festivities. The theme of that year's forum was broadly defined as 'problems facing migrant youth in Germany'. And the festival's motto, suitably chosen for the tenor of the event, was *'All are Different, All are the Same'*.

[3] I am well aware of the trials and tribulations of the ethnographic present. I take the event narrated here as a 'diagnostic tool' (Moore 1987).

The audience, which varied between fifty and eighty throughout the day, mainly comprised young participants, mostly girls, and their parents. Also present were prominent public figures, among them the Minister of Education of the State of Berlin, the Turkish Consul General, and the director of the Foreigners' Office of Berlin, the members of the local and international press (in fact the BBC was there), influential immigrant activists, friends of foreigners and, not to be forgotten, four social scientists studying Turks in Germany. It was a high-profile event and attracted significant press coverage.

The forum began with the opening speeches of the distinguished guests. They all celebrated plurality, called for harmony and tolerance, praised the value of education and congratulated the young people for coming forward to talk about their own issues.

Then young speakers, five girls and two boys, took their places on the podium. They were all Gymnasium (university-track high school) students, between the ages of seventeen and nineteen. They read the position papers they had written. Issues they brought up traversed the field of excessively debated 'problems': the identities of the second generation, racism in Germany, discrimination against migrants, gender equality, education of migrant children, youth unemployment and misrepresentation of migrants in the media. They all framed their speeches within the premise of plurality and tolerance, taking for granted a multi-cultural society such as that in Berlin.

Their rendition of migrancy, however, had a salient theme: gender, or more precisely, the vexed question of the restrictions placed on females. In all the presentations, they ventured to make a statement, positioning themselves in opposition to the 'mentality' of their parents and of society. They blamed 'culture', an abstract entity but evidently Islamic and Turkish, for the pressures they were experiencing as teenagers growing up in Germany. They cautiously compared 'Turkish' parents with 'German' parents. Gülten, one of the leading figures at the conference, argued for instance that their parents' 'over-protection' and insistence on the 'preservation of traditions and values' stood between Turkish girls and their independence. The categorical 'German family' in her model represented the other end of the spectrum: independence and self-sufficiency.

In these presentations, culture was the manifest problem when its object was identified as the containment of the conduct of females. Their resolution of the problem demanded the emancipation of girls and dispensing with incompatible mentalities and traditions. As another speaker's declaration in favour of emancipation underlined, they 'believed in themselves' and sought to be productive individuals, educated, independent and free from the limitations of a single culture, ethical or religious. They wanted to remake their own 'cultures' and mentalities, not necessarily as Turkish or German but embracing universal principles of 'respect for human beings, equality, peace and freedom'. Only then was culture acceptable and constituted a contribution to the well-being of individuals and societies.

It was clear from the presentations that the migrant youths who took the podium were well versed in the contemporary discourses that dominate the

public spaces in Berlin – and Europe, for that matter. They were appealing to discourses on human rights and ideas of personhood when framing their problems and offering their solutions. They saw themselves first and foremost as individuals capable of engaging with the obstacles confronting them on the road to preparing a future for themselves and society at large. That future owed much to modernist dreams of women's emancipation and individual freedom.

After all the position papers had been read, the forum took a lunch break to resume in the afternoon for the workshops. These were thematic extensions of the issues presented in the morning and were intended as intimate settings for 'open discussions' among the young people. I joined the workshop on the problems of girls. More than fifteen girls and two boys were in the room, sitting round a large table. I sat at one corner of the table, listening, taking notes and videotaping the conversation. One of the boys spoke frequently as a male supporting feminist causes. A few adults wandered in and out, staying only briefly and not saying much, with the exception of a female researcher and a male social worker who, to the annoyance of the young people, interrupted the conversation quite frequently with brief lectures on how to behave properly.

The conversation began hesitantly as a general commentary on their conflicts with their parents. Gülten, from the organising team, acted as the moderator. She opened the floor for discussion, encouraging everyone to participate, and proceeded with a brief narrative about her own relationship with her parents. Her parents, both second-generation, were fairly liberal towards their third-generation daughter. At first, they reacted to her demands with the customary 'no' but now the issues were being settled by discussion. Following her self-assured introductory remarks, others joined in with their own comments. They noted impersonally that 'the parents' were backward and wanted their girls back home early, they worried too much and they were too inquisitive about their daughters' whereabouts.

While the discussion was proceeding uneventfully, one of the younger girls, Melike, who had been silent thus far, seized the floor and started to talk, as if in a monologue, only interrupted by questions.

### Melike's little story of girlhood

Timid at first, but gradually gaining confidence, Melike speaks on the problems of girls:

> There are many girls who cannot leave home, go beyond the door...I know from my friends... Many girls cannot go out, beyond the door. I'm going to study with this friend of mine. They go somewhere else. You cannot go out...inside the house...feel depressed. You get depressed. Yes, those girls . . . Yes, the family forbids. The family represses the girls. They also have desires. They want to dress well. All the young people wear some brand name. The most important thing is wearing brand names now. Brand names. Everyone wants to be in fashion.

She continues, her voice a bit louder:

> It's because there is too much repression in the family. That's why. Those girls, those I talk about, when they go out of the house they wear something else.

> They do it in secret. Everything can be done in secret. You say 'Don't smoke', then she smokes. Everything happens in secret. I cannot go to my mother and say 'Mother, I smoke'.

Melike then responds to a question about her relationship with her own parents:

> I said I talked back but I have great respect for my parents. My father and mother tell me that they are both my friends and my parents. If you have something to say, they tell me, 'Come and tell us'. They tell me 'Don't be ashamed, don't be timid. We want you to have everything. Let's be friends. If you don't like something, explain it to us. And we will explain to you why we do things that way'.

Melike opens up and talks more about problems, including marriage:

> I'm embarrassed in front of my father. I'm very much embarrassed to talk to him about those issues. But my father finds them quite normal. Even so, I can't go to my father to talk to him. Once I was sitting with my friends and talking. My mother overheard our conversation and joined us. Later, she asked me if I have a boyfriend. I was embarrassed to talk to her. I've never said anything like this to her before.
>
> She said 'Just tell me. Why are you hesitant? Am I going to pressure you? When you're ready to marry, are we to find somebody for you? We'll tell you "Marry this one" and you'll say "Yes"? I said 'Not that. There is nobody.' But there was somebody then. But I couldn't make myself say it. I said it later. I can't lie to my parents. They know if I'm lying. I'm very bad at lying. My mother said 'It's your own decision but be careful. You're a girl, you're Turkish, you're Muslim. Be careful about everything.'
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> I have cousins older than me. My uncles always put pressure on them. This year one of them is going to get married. She is only seventeen, eighteen. I am against all that. The girl doesn't want to marry. The family is forcing her. They say that she has to marry. She cannot say anything to her parents. I'm telling her to sit down and talk to them. I told my father that they were forcing my cousin into marriage. He said 'I don't agree with the way they are doing it but we can't say anything to them'. The guy even attempted to beat her. My mother talked to her mother. It seems now that they are thinking again about it.

Melike's resolve in telling her 'typical girl' (Griffin 1985) story functioned as the long awaited catalyst to change the course of the conversation. From this moment on, the workshop took a sudden turn to the realm of personal experience – its stated goal. Other girls joined in to elaborate on Melike's story and to register their own tales of 'problem'. Their narratives were not simply confessions. They were delivered with a decorum appropriate for a workshop, though they were not detached explanations, either.

The responses to Melike's forced-marriage story were immediate and intense. One girl affirmed the truth of such stories by recounting another case she knew. Her friend echoed the affirmation with yet another story of forced marriage. Another one expressed her disbelief that parents could do such a thing. The only possible way out for another was to run away. She announced that she could not afford to ruin her own life and marry against her own wishes. The common feeling was that marriage without knowing and loving the person was unacceptable and improper, but not everyone agreed that running away from home was a desirable solution.

Then the conversation traversed other topics. They talked about uneventful family visits at weekends and described how they asserted their independence by evading these boring family occasions. They talked about how neighbourhood gossip intruded into their lives. Melike disclosed an incident about herself, a rumour that she was involved with her cousin, who had 'only once' invited her out to dinner. The gossip, set in motion by 'old ladies', she contended with a quiet rage in her voice, spread all over Berlin and even reached Turkey.

In their comparisons of mothers and fathers, the fathers without exception appeared as the figures of absolute authority, whose repressive directives were constraining their everyday lives and their freedom. Although most of the girls tried to exempt their own fathers from this undesirable role, there was no disagreement about the truth of the father's position in the family as either the benign or the despotic sovereign. To the astonishment and approval of others, one of the girls called her father, who had presumably left the family, a 'psychopath'. In the narratives, mothers were commonly depicted as reliable confidantes but subordinate to their husbands, having little or no say on decisions which affect their daughters and themselves. One girl compared the mother's position in the family to being a housekeeper in a cheap boarding house. It was as 'offensive' as that.

Throughout the workshop, like Melike's narratives that I have cited in some detail, all the accounts of intimate experiences were woven around 'problems' and progressed with unexpected, and at times accidental, shifts in subject, tense and content. It was not always clear if the story or the remark belonged literally to the self or to an abstract person. The first person of 'I' and 'my family' effortlessly transmuted into the third person of 'friends, those other girls' and 'the family, the parents', securing a desirable distance between the self and the problem. In the confused past and present of the narratives, one was not sure if the narrator was retelling an 'actually happened' event or rendering a 'typical' instance of the problem in question.

The terrain of problems was familiar: staying out late, going to discos, having boyfriends, the prying eyes of neighbours and the repression of fathers and brothers. These ordinary teenage complaints dangerously bordered on disclosures about abusive brothers, forced marriages and 'psychopath' fathers. The shifts between the realms of serious and playful talk were momentary – the frivolous talk always carrying the eventuality of the serious, and the serious renditions regularly flowing back into the playful.

Whether they were signs of compulsive troubles or routine teenage defiance, the narratives that the young women exchanged during the two hours of intense conversation were the vehicles for establishing intimacy of the 'disclosing' kind (Jamieson 1998: 1). In other words, by re-telling in public stories about 'their problems', migrant girls disclosed 'private' feelings and concerns to others, achieving a collective familiarity and understanding. They breached secrecies and distances that were ingrained in 'privateness' and maintained through the institutions of intimacy, in particular the family. They exposed their fathers and brothers as men and denounced 'family and traditions' as institutions imposing undesired marriages upon them. Furthermore, through

their fragmentary narratives, they disclosed female selves, albeit 'formulaic' (Berlant 1998), speaking for and about their gender group, the migrant girls. Utilising a basic vocabulary adapted from feminism, they claimed personhood, a state of being free and independent and enacted rebellion against the roles mandated for them as daughters, sisters, and mothers.

The female voice and intimacy evidenced during the workshop were necessarily contingent on the script and design of the event. In the first place, the young women gathered there with the manifest purpose of sharing and discussing 'their problems as second-generation Turkish girls'. This agenda was firmly connected to the powerful scripts of migrancy. Hence, the stories of personal experiences recounted in the meeting inevitably approximated the dominant scripts of 'problem' narratives with prescribed causalities and resolutions. The young women accordingly implicated culture (as in Turkish tradition), religion (as in Islam), and their parents (the first generation) as the source of their problems and sought emancipation as persons with youthful needs and desires (for boyfriends, fashionable clothes, independence).

Furthermore, the 'close association, privileged knowledge, deep knowing and understanding' (Jamieson 1998: 13), anticipated by proper definitions of intimacy, were incomplete and temporary. The disclosure of feelings was not 'free-floating' but delimited by the discursive possibilities allowed in publicly available stories. The participants followed conventional storylines, qualified their rebellions, and at times took for granted the institutions of intimacy. When the meeting ended, the setting and conditions for organised intimacy simply ceased to exist. The young women left behind their provisional partners in intimacy with whom they had shared stories.

All this notwithstanding, the scripts enacted in the workshop were fluid enough to allow for intimate performances and dissenting voices against the prevalent institutions of intimacy. The Turkish girls were confronting the most influential institution of intimacy at this stage of their lives, namely, the family. They identified the male hegemonic techniques of the family as the primary impediment to achieving meaningful personal lives. With youthful defiance, they positioned themselves in opposition to this 'repressive' institution, shared intimate stories of family problems and claimed their rights as women. In so doing, they were negotiating their personhood and future within, and in opposition to, the organising discourses of migrancy and institutions of intimacy.

## Caveat: multiculturalism and Islam

This cultural participation does not preclude an intensive – and increasingly contentious – debate over Turks and Islam and the prospects of a multicultural society. The cover of a recent issue of the journal *Focus,* which styles itself as 'the modern news magazine', was headlined *'Die Multikulti-Lüge* [The Multikulti-Lie] against a stencilled figure of a woman wearing a headscarf (10 April 2006). *Focus* was not alone in spotlighting 'multikulti' as *the* problem of Germany. It was simply following suit and highlighting the usual stories: of headscarves, youth gangs, segregated men's coffee houses, segregated high-

rises with 70 per cent immigrant inhabitants, soaring crime figures, low language skills, unemployment and extremism of various kinds – a bleak picture, indeed.

What ignited the integration debate recently was the brutal murder of Hatun Sürücü, a twenty-three year-old Turkish woman, by her brothers for disgracing her family. Hatun's crime was to leave her husband and attempt to raise her child as a single mother – hence bringing shame on her family. At the trial, the younger brother pleaded guilty to the crime, while the older brothers claimed their innocence – or ignorance – of the crime. When the trial ended, the older brothers were acquitted and celebrated their release with victory signs in front of the cameras; the younger brother was sent to a juvenile prison to serve nine years.

The murder of Hatun Sürücü galvanised long-entrenched doubts and questions about the compatibility of Turkish (and/or Muslim) traditions with Western norms and ways of life, particularly with regard to the place of women in Muslim societies and cultures. The debate did not simply position Germans against Turks, but generated a multi-vocal questioning. The Turkish feminist activist Necla Kelek, for instance, condemned honour killings in an article published in the renowned intellectual weekly *Die Zeit* and pleaded with Muslims to question their traditions and change them. Her call for reform in Islam was answered in the same newspaper with a strongly worded rejoinder from sixty prominent German and Turkish ethnographers, intellectuals, immigration researchers and activists, who called attention to the complexity of the debate and the dangers of a blanket condemnation of immigrants (as Muslims) at a time when there is growing anti-immigrant sentiment, among both the populace and policy-makers.[4]

The polemic of 'Kelek vs. Intellectuals and Ethnographers' was not the first of its kind. In the past, more often than not, female authors and activists of immigrant origin, and with mostly feminist orientations, have enraged their detractors with their critical stances against headscarves, the segregation of women, honour killings and other kinds of violence against women within immigrant communities and in their home countries. It is also crucial to point out that the critique of 'tradition' is not a stance restricted to women and activists at that. It is a passionately and publicly debated issue, creating unusual alliances and rivalries – between Germans and Turks, the intellectuals and the streetwise, religious and laypersons, leftists and rightists, and males and females.

The public debate on immigrant women, Islam and multiculturalism is not restricted to Germany, either. In the Netherlands, the legacy of decades of multicultural policy-making has come under intense scrutiny since the killing of the filmmaker Theo van Gogh, who outspokenly questioned the compatibility of Islam with Western ideals. In Denmark, free speech has come into collision with respect for Islam and religious rights following the publication of the caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed, as well as causing worldwide riots. In France, the fragile resolution of the *foulard* affair (and the seeming

[4] See *Die Zeit* (1 and 2 February 2006) at http://zeus.zeit.de/.

*détente)* achieved by banning all religious symbols from school premises is suddenly shaken by riots and the burning of cars parked in the suburbs. Even in Britain, known for its pragmatic approach to religious attire, wearing of the veil by a female school aide is causing anxiety, as well as stimulating a call by Jack Straw, the former Foreign Minister, for the removal of head covering. Not unlike in France, in the home countries of the immigrants, in Turkey and Tunisia, for instance, bans on headscarves are grounds for unremitting debates on personal rights, religious freedoms and principles of secularism.

Without going further into the details (and merits) of debates and polemics over Islam and multiculturalism, I would like to assert that what lies at the heart of all this contentious politics – and the divergent positions as regards individual rights, gender equality and culture – is the question of women. In the post-nine/eleven era, the term Muslim has attained a status of unqualified infamy, which has undeniably contributed to the *widespread* perception of every Muslim person as an adherent of uncivilised, non-modern culture, if not a terrorist. Muslim women, not coincidentally, have always been at the centre of the debates on Islam and its place in European social spaces. What is lost in this moral panic over Islam and Islamic culture are the narratives of Gülten, Melike and Hatun Sürücü – and the thin lines that separate their narratives and futures. The current debate is definitely not about them, but over them.[5]

## What does the future hold?

The ruling authorities in Western Europe are certainly in an uneasy relationship in their responses to what is termed the 'question of Muslim/immigrant women'. While 'security' and cultural concerns lead to exclusionary discourses and policy measures that designate immigrant women as *de facto* Muslims, and dangerous at that, concerns for diversity and women's rights promote causes and measures, such as gender streaming, that benefit immigrant women and facilitate provisions for realising their rights as women. The local and state governments, as well as the European Union, allocate substantial resources, financial and otherwise, to projects that aim at the advancement of women and their cultural, educational and social well-being. In this respect, the EU progressively funds and sponsors youth projects that promote intercultural understanding and 'European' principles of anti-racism, diversity and gender equality. Through its *Youth for Europe* programme, for instance, the EU allocated about $113.6 million during the five years between 1995 and 1999.

The talk in Germany today, as well as in other European states, is of reform, as in re-forming education, the labour market, and welfare and pension systems. Reform here does not refer to a humanistic project but to the conversion of society along the lines of a doctrinal liberal economy and the precepts of an institutionalised human rights regime. More locally, it is a move away from a nationally designed quintessential welfare state towards a globally compatible – and competitive – state within the European Union. The change is under way

[5] For a selective list of critical scholarly works on multiculturalism, rights and gender question, see Benhabib (2002, 2004), Brah (1997), Falah and Nagel (2005), Soysal Nuhoğlu (1994, 2000), Werbner and Modood (1997) and Wikan (2002).

and the debates on education, unemployment, Islam and citizenship amplify the wager of the venture.

The effects of reform, and the budget cuts that come with it, have been nothing but drastic. In Kreuzberg, the proposed cuts for 2003 amounted to 500,000. Berlin-wide, the state aimed to save about 8 million in expenses in the area of youth work (*Die Tageszeitung,* 27 June 2002). Overall, for 2002-3, the Berlin government anticipated (and essentially realised) cuts in the vicinity of 100,000 million in budget items for municipal departments serving the youth (ibid.). It is not difficult to predict the outcome of these cuts: closing youth centres, laying off social workers, reducing operating hours, eliminating services. In fact, this situation is not new. Since the mid-1990s, there has been gradual but visible deterioration as regards both the condition of youth centres in Berlin and the number of cultural projects undertaken by them.

Irrespective of whether Germany will be able to lay aside a historical tradition and dismantle the welfare state in the face of strong opposition, the transition has normative and practical consequences. How will the youth participate and produce culture in an Open City Berlin that lacks resources and places for young people? What will happen when the (in)formal institutions that educate young people – and enable them to educate us – disappear? What should a young person expect from a state that grants its Muslim residents the right to possess and learn their culture and religion in school, while under its security measures a Muslim becomes a categorical adversary? What happens if immigrant residents in Berlin continue to opt away from citizenship and prefer to stay as citizens?

These are vexed questions and their answers are not readily available. The story of migration, the movement of guest workers to Europe, began as a labour story. As social scientists, we documented this narrative in accounts of labour markets, employment statistics, wage differentials and remittances. Then the story of labour surrendered its place to stories of culture. Accounts of difference, recognition, resistance, hybridity and diasporic formations have found their rightful places in our chronicles. As the worlds we inhabit become 'globalised' (or imagined as such), we have traced the movements of peoples and goods in transnational spaces and recounted tales of boundary-making and border crossings.

Despite these shifts in narrating immigration, the tales of culture have proved to be timeless and persistent. In narratives of culture, a well-intentioned but limiting vocabulary of ethnic difference perpetuates representations of youths as between enduring traditions (their traditions) and unattainable modernities (native modernities) – and thus serves to sustain insurmountable, and unwarranted, categorical barriers between migrant and native youths. Once committed to the realm of difference, migrant young people get removed to the margins of public policy – and note the double marginalisation of the girls. As non-natives, they become targets for integration, and the policy instruments of the state focus on their seeming cultural deficit, forsaking any meaningful conversation on difference.

It is needless to state that integration of the cultural kind is typological and its realisation is left to a succession of generations: At first, the hopes are with the

second generation. If that is no good, along comes the third generation and we know that there is no fourth generation in the migration story. Perhaps it is time to leave aside customary tales of integration and (second) generations – headscarves and all – and render narratives that take account of the institutional parameters of (re)producing the condition(s) of youth. We would then be equipped to intervene in public policy and elaborate culture stories.

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