

**Islamism in the Diaspora. The fascination of
political Islam
among second generation German Turks**

Werner Schiffauer

WPTC-99-06

*Lehrstuhl Vergleichende Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie
Europa-Universität Viadrina
Frankfurt/ Oder*

Islamism in the Diaspora. The fascination of political Islam among second generation German Turks

Werner Schiffauer

In his article on cosmopolitanism Steven Vertovec (forthcoming) analyzes the different meanings this concept acquires in different contexts and among different authors. He points out that one can take cosmopolitanism (1) as a socio-cultural condition (there is the empirical fact of cultural convergence on a global scale); (2) as an ideology (we are living in one world and have to develop the consequences); (3) as the political project of setting up transnational institutions; (4) as the political project of individualized actors expressing multiple loyalties; (5) as an attitude or disposition (an openness toward divergent cultural experiences); (6) as a practice or habitus (as competence of dealing with complex meanings and situations).

Disentangling the concept that way however, raises one question immediately. Given the fact that at least points (1) and (3) refer to undeniable developments, why do (2) and (5) evidently not result from that? Or to phrase it somewhat differently. As cosmopolitanism is an empirical reality - why is cosmopolitanism as an attitude and identity evidently not a sweeping success story? Why is it that in a globalising world parochialisms of all kinds (be it religious, cultural, regional) are so attractive?

My hypothesis is that the flourishing of parochialisms is not a passing phenomenon but that it is in fact brought about by the very process of growing cosmopolitanism. Just as the big cities during the last half of the nineteenth century were the breeding grounds for nationalist movements, it is emerging cosmopolis which is the breeding ground for today's parochialisms. A crucial role in this process plays the quest of recognition which will become a key issue in a globalizing world. Difference demands recognition - and the more we live in a world where strangers meet, the more important becomes the desire for recognition.

Recognition is a complex act which entails at least three dimensions. (1) The cognitive dimension refers to the problem of perception. Difference has to be perceived - nobody after all wants to be recognized for the wrong reasons; (2) The normative dimension. Difference has

to be valued, appreciated - recognition is the very opposite of devaluation or discrimination;

(3) The practical dimension. Real recognition cannot be theoretical but it has to result in some action. If it is not supposed to be just “lip service” it has to cost something. These dimensions are in practice not easily reconciled with each other. The consequence of this is that recognition is not something that is once and for all given, but it rather seems to be an endless process. Let me just point out some of the intricacies of the concept which play a role in the case I am going to present. The first is an ambiguous relation of recognition and hierarchy. On the one hand the demand for recognition tends to question established hierarchies as it aims to establish a place for a new group. On the other hand the quest of recognition supports established hierarchies. The recognition by the powerful is worth more than recognition by the powerless (and in the final run it is only the recognition by the powerful which counts). To make it even more complicated, the power of the powerful may (at least partly) be reestablished in this very same act of asking them for recognition. A lot of the dynamics of power relations are the results of the interplay of both the subversive *and* conservative tendencies in the quest for recognition. The ambivalence is an important mechanism in the process of reintegration of former radical minority positions into the hierarchy. This is usually interpreted as corruption by some (often a next generation) and often triggers off a new round in the fight of recognition. A second issue is the contradictory nature of difference and recognition. Is not “real difference”, one might ask, incompatible with “real” recognition? Can one really recognize something which is different - would not “real” recognition imply conversion? Would not real recognition therefore dissolve the very difference that created the problem of recognition in the first place? If on the other hand real recognition is not possible - would that not mean that the desire for recognition cannot possibly be fulfilled?

But let us leave phenomenological analysis here and turn to turn to a case which I think is good to think with about this type of questions. The Islamist community of Cemaleddin Kaplan in Germany.

The community of Cemaleddin Kaplan was formed in the eighties as a breakaway from the National View - the European branch of the Refah (Welfare) Party, the party of the former Prime Minister of Turkey, Necmettin Erbakan. The aim was to conduct an Islamic revolution

in Turkey along the lines of the Iranian model and to reestablish the caliphate. To Kaplan the parliamentary way (for which the Refah Party stood) seemed unsuited to this aim because it would require too many compromises. Admittedly, one would be able to win positions of power by working within the system, but only at the price of the central concerns of Islam. Instead of this Kaplan opted for the extra-institutional grass-roots movement. The Koran was to be the sole foundation for overcoming what was seen as the disastrous split of European Muslims within Europe, a mass movement was to be established and power seized in Turkey. At the end of the seventies and beginning of the eighties the movement was transformed more and more into a sect - into an elitist cadre party, which viewed itself increasingly as the spearhead of the Islamic revolution. This development expressed itself in an increasing degree of dissociation from the outside world (one example of which was articulated in the condemnation of Erbakan as an apostate); but above all the proclamation of a government in exile and the reinstatement of the office of *locum tenens* for the caliph on the part of Kaplan in 1992, and culminating in his self-appointment to caliph in 1994. With Kaplan's death the movement seems to have come to an end. His son Metin, who succeeded him in the caliphate, does not have his father's charisma. In early 1996 the movement split and a counter caliphate under Ibrahim Sofu was proclaimed. In summer 1996 Metin issued a fatwa condemning the counter caliph to death. In May 1997 Ibrahim was actually killed by a death squad in Berlin. Although - of course - Metin was under suspicion nothing could be proven. In October 1998 Turkish authorities claimed that they had stopped an attack on the Anýtkabir during the festivities celebrating the 75th anniversary of the revolution. In March 1999 Metin was arrested on charges of creating a terrorist association.¹

The radicalization of the movement went along with a change in the social composition of the community. The first followers of Kaplan had been autodidacts of the first generation, men who had little or no formal education who had taught themselves to read and write and who had discovered the Islam on their own terms. They had found in Kaplan somebody who

¹For the development of the community see Atacan 1993, Mumcu 1987, Schiffauer 1991

expressed their scepticism toward wider society. They associated Kaplan's program with the hope of the restoration of the unity of Islam - an issue of central importance for them. Most of these men left Kaplan when he became more sectarian. They were quite clear about the fact that claims to the caliphate were unacceptable to the other Islamic communities and would therefore deepen the frictions rather than help to overcome them. Interestingly enough, younger migrants of the second generation followed their footsteps - among them a considerable number of academics and high school students. These students introduced new practices into the community. They set up study groups to learn Arabic, to study Islamic law, to learn about the life of the prophet and so on. In short, they developed a rather academic approach to Islam using the intellectual tools they had acquired in German institutions of higher education.

In this paper I want to focus in particular on these young men. They are interesting in the context of this seminar because although empirically being cosmopolites, they consciously reject a cosmopolitan identification. Rather than discussing them in general I want to present a case study. Seyfullah is the younger brother of the murdered counter caliph. When I met him in 1993 he was in twelfth grade of the Gymnasium and had become an important person in the Augsburg branch of the Kaplan Community. His case throws some light on the above-mentioned intricacies of the problems of recognition.

Seyfullah is the youngest of the six children of a Turkish migrant. The father had emigrated to Germany in 1956 and had brought his family to Germany in 1974. He had worked as a *hoca* in the Milli Görüş (National View), i.e. the European Branch of Erbakan's Welfare Party. Seyfullah was born in 1976. The father tried everything to create a protected Islamic environment in Germany within which the children would by themselves pick up Islamic norms and values. When he was ten he went to the Gymnasium. Seyfullah joined the Kaplan-Community in 1981 when 15 years old. In the interview I asked him how this decision came about.

“I started to separate from home. I attended the Gymnasium, so I was *free, I did*

everything I wanted (in German)². We fled from the mosque during Ramadan and visited friends. I bought a skateboard. I learnt to make jumps with it. In a way it was extreme. I was the first Turkish skateboarder there where I lived, in Bobingen. Of course the Turks objected...Driving the skateboard I made a lot of friends. I had a lot of German friends. There was no Turk among them. Many Germans, many. None of my Turkish friends had so many German friends like I did. I know many, many Germans...Then the thing with the graffiti started. All my friends started with it - and so did I. That went on for two or three years. But then I realized. I had no internal Peace (huzur). And I was always in a bad mood. When something minor happened, *I made a mountain out of a molehill* (in German). I was always nervous and tense. Everywhere - within the family and outside the family - everywhere. I had big problems, psychologically, I had big psychological problems. And then it went extremely bad at school. I worked - and I did not understand why it worked out so bad. I got a "5" in German and six "4"³. So that was in seventh grade. Psychologically I was completely down. Then I realized. It does not go on like that. Slowly I started to pray the namaz - but I continued meeting my old friends. I started to pray the namaz and continued in the old ways. Then I realized. We are Muslims and we do not know the Islam. At that time my family moved into a different village and I could not meet my friends any more. I had a lot of time. I started to watch a lot TV. I was very occupied by it. That was very harmful. During that time I went to visit my older brother in Berlin. He told me about Cemaleddin Kaplan. My God that was quite different from everything I heard from the hocas up to now. It was fascinating. Ibrahim explained a lot of fascinating stuff and then he gave me books. Books from Cemaleddin Kaplan. I had read things about Islam but I understood only half of it, I had no vocabulary. And then I read Cemaleddin Hoca - and there was nothing which I did not understand. I stayed a long time in Berlin. We bought a lot of books, read a lot. My brother recommended books - and since then I cannot stop reading."

² The interview was conducted in Turkish. Every now and then Seyfullah slipped into German. This is indicated by the use of italics.

³ The German marking system ranges from "1" (excellent) to "6" (non sufficient). "5" is poor; 4 "sufficient".

The overall structure of the narration is fascinating. It is the story of a psychic crisis and its solution. Terminology and structure point out that Seyfullah interprets his biography with a model of the self which is very different from that of the first generation. The latter were very reluctant to speak about individual experiences. The basic idea in this generation was, that the individual self is extremely uninteresting for somebody who is seeking truth and self perfection. What good would it do to talk about individual mistakes and errors, there is nothing to be learned from them? One should rather speak about divine truth. According to this model the individual self is not relevant. One does not find oneself by staring at oneself, but rather in the act of transcending the individual self. In this generation barely anybody spoke about psychic crises - they were considered to be shameful. Seyfullah's narration however centers around an individual self which finds itself in a painful process. It is not by chance that his story sounds much more familiar to a Western reader than the accounts given by the first generation. Seyfullah interprets himself in the model of the self which he picked up when growing up in Germany. This model of the self is conveyed through a lot of channels (literature, discussions, counseling) - all transporting the message of the importance attached to the individual self in this culture. Self-fulfillment, independence, self-realization, autonomy - all these values are expressing the existentialist message that one should become what one is. So the very structure of narration shows that *empirically* Seyfullah is a cosmopolite - a hybrid both of Western and Islamic influences.

One might note here *en passant* that it is an individualized self which is particularly vulnerable to problems of recognition. The reflexivity which is implied in this structure of the self is more dependent on the other, than a self which sees all these individual traits as obstacles to self perfection.

Let us now turn to the content of the description. The story is structured into three chapters. The Pre-Kaplan phase, the crisis, and the solution of the crisis. The description of first phase is characterized by the ample use of the ethnic ascriptions "German" and "Turkish." By implication the two worlds are set against each other: the German world of the Gymnasium - presumably free - and the Turkish world of the family - presumably rather confined. This seems to be plausible at first sight - but when one looks closer at the examples Seyfullah gives

one has doubts. Why should activities like skateboarding or graffiti painting be depicted in the opposition German - Turkish? Wouldn't it make much more sense to describe the conflict in terms of an opposition of youngsters and adults (after all there is quite a number of German parents who would not be too happy about these activities)? The reason for the interpretation in ethnic rather than generational terms lies in the fact that the two institutions which are crucial for a young Turk growing up in Germany - the family and the school - portray the situation exactly in this way.

Turkish parents tend to be rather quick in interpreting all kinds of activities of their children as *almanla^omak* ("becoming German"). This reduction of complexity is quite understandable - it results from fears widespread among members of the first generation, of becoming alienated from their children in a foreign environment. On the background of this fear the activities of the second generation are screened. Any sign of rebellion, of hesitancy to meet the demands of parents or of new habits are readily interpreted as signs of *almanla^omak*. There are different strategies to deal with that - but especially families of believers (who are more value conscious than most secular minded families) tend to adopt a protective or overprotective attitude.

A similar reduction of complexity takes place in German schools. The teachers do not interpret actions of their students or their respective parents (e.g. a refusal to participate in school trips) as attempts to cope with a structurally difficult situation, but rather explain them straightforwardly as "Islamic conservatism".

So young Turks growing up in Germany face a double problem of recognition. The compromises which result from the attempt to grow up as a Turk in Germany tend to be misinterpreted by the parents as attempts to become German and by teachers as sticking to a Turkish background (and rejecting the necessity of integration). There is a perceptual problem involved in this, as there is a remarkable lack of knowledge both in migrants' families about the situation at school and vice versa. Even more important is the normative issue. Both worlds mutually tend to depict each other as problematic. In Turkish families, Germany is associated with broken families (German kids are supposedly thrown out of the house by the age of eighteen), sexual liberty, alcohol and drugs, Nazism and violence. The Germans portray the

Turkish-Islamic family as backward, authoritarian if not oppressive, violent and hostile to women. So the children find themselves in the situation where one aspect their existence is always devalued.

A lot of Turkish children in this situation develop a strategy to defend the German “culture” vis-à-vis their parents and the Turkish culture vis-à-vis the Germans. But as both sides have a rather stereotypical knowledge about each other children are forced to defend themselves with the wrong arguments. Often they find themselves trapped in the situation that when they say the truth, a wrong message comes across. This is a very painful situation. Although they are linguistically competent in two languages, they cannot translate from one context to the other because everything said is interpreted against the wrong background. In such a situation one is forced to represent oneself in a systematically distorted way so that at least part of the message gets across. Eva Hoffmann - a woman from Polish background who had moved to the United States in the fifties - describes in a very precise language the feeling of loss of reality and powerlessness, which goes hand in hand with such a situation. The book is one of the best accounts of the migration experience; its title. “Lost in Translation” (1989/1993) neatly sums up the problem I am trying to describe here.

In the beginning there is a remarkable asymmetry in Seyfullah’s quest for recognition. As the number of references to German friends show, he is very much striving for the recognition by the German peer group. This probably reflects the fact that in Gymnasium he is spending a lot of time in an almost all-German environment. Let us make a second general point (again *en passant*) about the relevance of recognition. It seems that the desire for recognition increases rather than decreases with higher education. Cosmopolitan competence makes one more and not less sensitive about recognition granted or withheld.

Taking the way Seyfullah describes himself during this time, one expects that sooner or later he would rebel against the culture of his parents in the name of German culture. He does not - and in fact very few young immigrants do. The reason is actual discrimination - a fact many of them become painfully aware of in puberty. This has psychological reasons but above all sociological facts are important. In this age, the young Turks move beyond the rather

protected sphere of family and school - and experience rejection. This experience makes identification with Germany very difficult because it now gets the sting of identification with an aggressor. The resulting conflict can express itself in a variety of ways; aggressiveness, depression, identification with radical opposition groups⁴

To put it more abstract: the confrontation with discrimination means that young Turks growing up in Germany are thrown back to the group they wanted to break away from - and they are shown that they are not desired by the group they wanted to belong to. They thus have to come to terms with a situation, which is in itself contradictory.

It is my hypothesis that by turning to Kaplan, Seyfullah found *his* way out of this crisis. This explains the fascination he expresses in the passage quoted. By turning to Kaplan he finds an Archimedean point which allows him to do three things. (1) With Kaplan he can articulate at the same time opposition and loyalty with the Turkish community in general and his parents in particular; (2) At the same time he can find in an intellectual satisfying way a diasporic identity; (3) He can develop convincing strategies in dealing with the discrimination of German society.

The Intergenerational Problem. Opposition and Loyalty

The accusation of the second generation of being *almanlaşmış* is often countered with accusations which center on the first generation's consumption practices and knowledge. To be less analytic and more exact, members of the second generation tend to accuse the parent-generation of stinginess and ignorance.

It is not accidental that these two issues come up in the struggle for recognition. Consumption

⁴ For a precise description of young migrants in Germany see Tertilt's excellent study of a Turkish gang in Frankfurt am Main (1996).

practices refer to the specific ascetism of the first generation, which was a consequence of the life perspective. They had planned to accumulate enough money for investment in Turkey and then to return. They worked here in order to live there as Abdelmalek Sayyad neatly summed it up. The radical ascetism was possible because Germany was a rather desymbolized sphere. Other than in Turkey it was not worth the trouble to go into status competition in Germany. A symbol for this situation is the fully equipped house in Turkey which the owner occupies for one month a year and which contrasts with a rather shabby apartment in Berlin. For second generation Turks this consumption practice posed a problem, because they felt that it would obstruct their intention to get recognition as a Turk living in Germany. The feelings of embarrassment about parental consumption practices was very clearly articulated in following quotations I take from an interview I conducted with young migrants in Berlin. “We are Turks but we live in a nice apartment” - “Or show me a German who was able to wreck seven cars in three years. And the Germans want to tell me that being a foreigner I save and buy a house over there and all that.” Especially the second quotation shows that young immigrants often tend to a fierce consumerism with which they protest against the image of the poor immigrant.

One of the problems with fierce consumerism is that it feeds all kinds of suspicions of the first generation with regard to *almanla'mak* - especially when it is associated with crashing cars. It tends to deepen the conflicts with the first generation. It is against this background that it is interesting to see how Seyfullah phrased the same accusation of stinginess.

“There are scrooges who love money. If a person like that gives a donation of 10 Mark he says. ‘the money slips through my fingers’. The same person however does not hesitate to spend 100.000 Mark or 150.000 Mark on his house in Turkey...Somebody like him does not hesitate to fly to Turkey in order to build his house there. O.K. that’s fine - but when this person goes on Pilgrimage he starts to wail. ‘I will die there, somebody else will get my money.’”

It is pretty clear what is achieved by this reformulation of the attack. Seyfullah maintains his criticism (the investment in Turkey - the stinginess in Germany) - and thus keeps up the

general criticism. But his critique is not voiced any more in the name of consumerism but - quite the contrary - in the name of ascetic religion. By abstaining from consumerism he finds a legitimate angle for a critique. He confronts the first generation with their own ideals. By submitting under the law he gains power to speak (and to condemn) in the name of law.

This structure will become even clearer when we turn now to the question of knowledge. Again it is not accidental that this topic comes up. The distribution of knowledge in migrant's families is a well-known problem. Compared to their parents, children growing up in Germany have a much greater competence in the German environment - especially when they go to an institution of higher education. As far as technical knowledge is concerned this usually poses no problem - and parents are often only too happy to profit from their children's competence (and of course are proud of it). But then of course there are issues which are again related to the fears of losing the child to a world which is characterized by alcohol, drugs, rebellion, sex. In these regards etc. parents tend to be much less prone to trust the judgement of their children. It is not difficult to imagine the conflicts that evolve. Fighting for example for the permission to participate in a school trip the children might try to argue and attempt to give the parents a realistic idea about the situation. Usually this is pretty much in vain and they are confronted with stereotypical arguments like. "This is not our way, not our custom, it's not-Islamic, it's against our religion" It is not difficult to imagine the helplessness, the despair, the anger of a fourteen year old in such situations.

By turning to Kaplan Seyfullah once again succeeds in inverting the roles.

"I see a big difference between the first and the second generation. First of all, the first generation knows very little about Islam. You can count those, who know anything with the fingers of your hand. Most of them just pray, keep the fast, maybe they give alms and do the pilgrimage - that's about all. But the second generation is much more prone to Islam and has much greater knowledge. You should come one time and question the young believers. You will see a lot of differences to the old folks with regard to dogmatic knowledge, philosophy of Islam or the life history of Muhammed"

“And these old folk - what should I say. If you tell them something and they say. ‘Hey listen. You are younger than I am. You have nothing to tell me’. But they ignore that point in Islam where it is said. ‘Islam has nothing to do with age but with knowledge.’”

Seyfullah manages again to beat the parental generation on their own ground. He presents himself as the better Muslim. The parents had always told him not to do something because of Islam - now it is him who tells them. But there is more to that - namely an important emotional aspect. This became very clear when he described the generational change in the community.

“Abuzer [a believer of the first generation who quit Kaplan] cannot read the Quran. He argues against Islamic positions and cannot even read the Quran. You turned Islam into a cult of idols he said. I heard it myself. Then he attacked the Hanefite School, he yelled and screamed, although he himself is praying the *namaz* according to the Hanefite teaching. There are such inconsistencies. And when he left he said - I heard it myself. ‘You are following the path of the devil. He who separates from the community is following the path of the devil’ Shall he prove that with the example of the prophet, the Quran and the Sunna! If we committed a mistake, we will ask for pardon. We shall change our ways and inform the whole community. I know them [the members of the first generation who left the movement] like I know my father. I have known them since I was born. My father went with us into their houses since I was two or three years old.”

There was a tremendous emotional fervor behind these lines. One could hardly understand Seyfullah. The men he is naming as his opponents are those who left the community after Kaplan declared himself the *locum tenens* of the caliph. There is an interesting shifting in this passage. Seyfullah does not *directly* mention his father who had remained loyal to Erbakan all his life (a fact which Seyfullah did not mention in the interview with me). In this context it seems likely that the two men mentioned - Abuzer and Mehmet - at least for a period of time had been the better fathers (his own father had been very critical about Kaplan and had blamed him for disrupting the unity of Islam). The disappointment is so much greater as a consequence. By attacking these men and saving the father from (explicit) criticism he can express all his disappointment and anger about the first generation without breaking with his

own family.

In a somewhat similar way this difficult balance between opposition and loyalty/ love is kept up by the identification with a person like Kaplan. By age, and more so by status, Kaplan occupies the structural place of the grandfather. What, therefore, comes into play is the identification of alternating generations. By siding with the father of the father one can articulate opposition against the father. One gets the support of the person who is in the legitimate position to give orders to the father. By the very act one can simultaneously signal opposition and belonging.

Diasporic Identity

The turn to Kaplan also allows the development of a stable diasporic identity. The young migrants of the second generation grew up with a phantasmatic Turkey. The dream of return had structured the life of their parents. It was kept alive despite the fact that (due to economic factors) a return to Turkey became less likely from year to year. This dream was reconciled with the hard facts by a fragmentation of time: not now - but in three to four years one would return. The nature of this dream is neatly expressed in the phrase *kendisini gurbetten kurtarmak* - “to save oneself from leaving in a foreign country ”- which points out that it was associated with the promise of salvation from the suffering characteristic of life in diaspora.

This dream was passed on to the second generation. But as young Turks developed ties to Germany too the result was also ambivalence. On the one hand they longed for Turkey and loved to be in Turkey - but once they were in Turkey (for an extended vacation) they realized that they could not live in Turkey any more and longed to be back in Germany.

There is one particular concept of Kaplan which helped to solve this cognitive dissonance. This is his depiction of the situation of Turkey as a state of *cahiliyet* (paralleling it to pre Muhammedan Mecca), i.e. as a state of absolute darkness characterized by persecution, idolatry and tyranny. The first generation never really accepted this interpretation. Living in the diaspora they knew very well, that it was easier to practice Islam in Turkey than in

Germany - the situation there could therefore not be that bad. But for the second generation the idea was absolutely convincing. The idea of *cahiliyet* meant that one could stay in Germany without having to give up the idea of an eventual return to Turkey. After an Islamic revolution one would of course return and contribute to the build-up of an Islamic state. For the time being it makes much more sense to stay in Germany (which is paralleled by Medina) and to prepare for the fight in Turkey (by qualifying oneself as a medical doctor or an engineer for instance).

This has one very practical consequence. Up to now dual citizenship is granted only exceptionally in Germany. Usually one has to give up one's Turkish citizenship to get the German one. This is perceived as an act of changing sides and is regarded by many Turks as an act of disloyalty to the *vatan* (homeland). This explains the general hesitancy of applying for a German passport by many Turkish migrants. The followers of Kaplan are a notable exception. Almost all the young persons in the community had German passports. Why, after all, should they do without the advantages of a European Community Passport and stick to the passport of a Satanic system? But that was not everything. More secularly oriented Turks are given a hard time in Turkey, when it is known that they are holders of a German passport. They are attacked often for being *almancı* (half Germans). That never happened to a follower of Kaplan. The Islamist identification protects them efficiently from any accusation of fraternization with the Germans. In a way the young *Kaplançı* profit from the fact that there is a tendency in Turkey to conflate nationality and Islam - two aspects they very clearly separate.

Again the point can be made that identifying with Kaplan allows the development of a stable diasporic identity. It allows you to invest your psychic energy simultaneously in two places; in Germany and in Turkey.

Coming to terms with Germany

Joining Kaplan finally enabled Seyfullah to define a position vis-à-vis Germany. Seyfullah expressed the opinion that Turkish Muslims are doubly discriminated. According to him, the Germans would eventually make peace with secular Turks and finally accept them, but not

with practicing Muslims. Especially if you publicly demonstrate that you are a Muslim - by wearing headscarf or turban for example - you are confronted with hostile reactions. His assessment is supported by findings of a recent research in school we conducted. It was very telling that the so called “headscarf girls” were described as a problem by the teachers - despite the fact that neither with regard to discipline nor to success they were in any way conspicuous. This is also felt by secular Muslims as very disturbing. The above quoted young man who had crashed seven cars in two years, said in the same interview. “If they keep up putting pressure on us like that I will force my wife to put on a headscarf. I mean. Who are we to be told what to wear.”

After joining Kaplan, Seyfullah started to confess his Muslim identity openly. The submission under the law gave him enough self-confidence to adopt the strategy of outing which is so well known from other minorities. The logic of outing can be understood by referring to Goffman’s analysis of the stigma (1963/1980). The usual reaction to discrimination is to hide the stigmatized attribute (like being gay or handicapped) and thus to structure life around this attribute. This means accepting the stigma in the final analysis. Outing means to turn this logic upside down. By openly demonstrating the stigmatized attribute one goes onto the offence. One confronts the public with its own stereotypes and thus passes the buck on. *Honi soit qui mal y pense*. This may not be religious (and most outing is not religious) - but religion certainly helps in giving the necessary strength and courage required for such an action. When you make a point you are not just referring to your right of difference - but you can feel superior because you are right in an absolute sense. And that allows one to confront even a superior opponent. Let us take a look at the following example.

Muslim children have the right to take two days leave at the end of Ramadan. The Kaplan community makes a big issue about the fact that it starts Ramadan one day earlier than the other Turkish-Islamic communities - thus demarcating boundaries. Seyfullah therefore insisted on taking off one day early from school - and as he became sick in this time he did not return on time. Coming back to school he was called into the headmaster’s office.

“The headmaster called me in his room. I had hardly entered when he started to yell at

me. Why I would cut classes? I explained him everything, from A to Z The idiot did not understand it. Then he said. “We cannot make an exception for every single case”. But I want to live according to my religion and do what is written in the Quran and not what is said by the Office of Religious Affairs .. and I don’t accept that a godless institution like the office is accepted as representative of Islam here in Germany. And the director said. ‘If you want to live according to Islam you have to go to Saudi Arabia or to Iran.’ I could hardly keep to myself. Almost I had hit him on the mouth. That’s a scandal. You either have to leave or accept our religion.”

It is of course a minor incident but it reflects the strategy of direct action which now becomes possible. One takes a right and does not ask for it beforehand, well aware of the fact that it would be turned down anyhow. This strategy of fighting for recognition is very efficient because either way one wins. If the authorities let it pass one has made ground. If the authorities refuse they expose themselves as being hostile - and thus demonstrate the necessity of keeping up the fight for recognition.

It would however be wrong to interpret this as opting out of society (as it is sometimes done). It is rather a strategy of empowerment within the system. One establishes a fact and then starts to ask that it is recognized (of course sometimes it is not - but then like in our case - the necessity of the fight is demonstrated). So one aims at reentering the dialogue - but a dialogue in which power equations have changed.

The quest for recognition

I stated in the beginning of this text that Seyfullah’s case might be a good story to reflect upon the intricacies of the process of recognition. Let me now sum up what we can learn from this case in five hypotheses.

1. Around the age of twelve Seyfullah shows a rather desperate quest for recognition by his German peers. He seems to participate in activities like skateboarding or graffiti painting in

order to get that recognition (and not the other way around - it is not that he is engaged in one activity and then looks around for like-minded friends). The driving force behind this is the desire to escape the condition of invisibility which Ralph Ellison (1947/1984) has so clearly described in his *The Invisible Man*. Seyfullah wants to *be somebody*, he wants to *make a difference* - and this is why he *wants to be different* (in this first phase from “other Turks”). Although this desire is certainly in a way related to puberty (probably the phase in life in which the desire for recognition is felt most sharply) it certainly cannot be reduced to it. This leads to a first conclusion. *It is not (always) a preexistent difference which leads to the demand of recognition but it is the deeper desire of being seen/ taken account of/ valued which then brings forth strategies to achieve that.*

2. The experience of discrimination means the confrontation with the foundering of this first strategy. Seyfullah managed to be different from the other Turks, but it did not make a difference in the society at large. In a way Seyfullah’s turn to Kaplan can be interpreted as an intellectually more satisfying way of making a difference - especially as it takes into account the experience of discrimination. In a way Seyfullah has now found an Archimedian point and was able to reconstitute himself as *subject*. He managed to overcome a situation in which he was defined by the stereotypes of the others. As *almanlapmýþ* by his parents; as *alamancý* by the Turks; as *Muslims* by the Germans. In a way he took the power of definition out of the hands of others.

In order to be successful the logic of recognition has to be concealed. Nobody gets recognition for the fact that he wants to make a difference (wants to escape invisibility), but only for the fact that he *is* different. The performative nature of the desire to make a difference must be hidden. Take the situation with the headmaster. The argumentation of Seyfullah would have been doomed to fail, if he had admitted that he “just” wanted to be treated differently in order to get the feeling of being somebody. In order to have any chance of getting recognition, he had to turn to a general argument: in this case that a “true religious claim” is something valuable and thus has a right to be recognized. This leads to our second conclusion. *The fundamentalist claim to authenticity can result from the logic of the process*

*of recognition.*⁵

The turn to authenticity is not - it should be noted here - the only general argument on which a demand for recognition can be based. Another possibility is to appeal to the value of progress. The attempt to be different by being more progressive (in terms of lifestyle or political opinion) is a very efficient and in fact more widespread strategy. The fact that Seyfullah decided for the “authenticity-strategy” is related to the chance it gave to come to terms with his parents. Turkish migrants from more secular oriented families probably would favor the other strategy.

3. *The desire for recognition is not only a problem of the underprivileged.* It does not diminish with (economic, educational) integration but rather grows with it - especially in situations that are characterized by prejudice and discrimination. There are two reasons for that: 1) integration means more contact with members of the majority; 2) integration means the promise of being accepted - and actual discrimination can be all the more painful.

4. *The universalization of a Western concept of the individual self by the spread of the Western form of education supported by the pervasive influence of the mass media will intensify the quest for recognition.* When one conceives oneself as an individual self one defines the relation to the other in a subject-object structure. In this structure it becomes an increasing problem to be denied the position of a subject - that is the position of being able to act on the world. And it is a liberating experience to regain agency.

⁵ It is in particular this point which I would raise against Taylor (1992) and Honneth (1992). Cultural or religious difference is often the product of (and not the reason for) the struggle for recognition .

5. I pointed out in the beginning that the ambiguous nature of recognition makes it likely that the quest will never be fulfilled. This holds true for Seyfullah too. One has the impression that the weakness of Seyfullah's strategy paradoxically lies in the fact that it is just too good. It dissolves the in-built ambiguities of the process of recognition. Turning to the divine truth does not only mean empowerment but also intolerance and self-righteousness. This is very evident in the way this generation speaks about other communities. Whereas the first generation had in mind an Islamic network within which there are varied and different ways to God (and although you might not agree completely with the other there is a basic respect expressed in the norms of politeness) nothing like this is reflected in the second generation. They insist that they *know* the truth - and on their right to voice that wherever they are and whatever they do. Older believers find it scandalous when Kaplan declares opponents to be apostates - these young men really endorse that measure. In that they resemble more the Maoists of the seventies or the radical feminists of the eighties than the generation which first rallied behind Kaplan. In other words, they are self righteous and intolerant. *Subjectively* they feel that the others just have to recognize them because they argue in the name of divine truth. But this claim may be just too powerful - *objectively* it means to demand conversion (and thus to carry the act of recognition to one of its extremes) and not to ask for recognition. And this is very likely going to fail. There are only temporary solutions for the problem of recognition - which implies that the identities emerging in this quest are also only temporary. In fact my prognosis is that the shift from identifying with Germans to identifying with Kaplan will not be the last one in Seyfullah's life.⁶ So my last hypothesis derived from our case study is. *Parochialisms of all kind might appear as attempts to solve the problems of recognition - but as they do not provide stable solutions to the problem they are likely to be short lived. They have more the character of fashions than of stable structures.*

Atacan, Fulya. 1993. *Kutsal Göç. Radikal _lamc_ bir grubun anatomisi*. Ankara. Ba_lam Yay_nc_l_k.

⁶ A fascinating portray of these temporary identifications is given by Hanif Kureishi in his *Black Album*.

- Düttman, Alexander Garcia. 1997. *Zwischen den Kulturen. Spannungen im Kampf um Anerkennung*. Frankfurt am Main. Suhrkamp
- Ellison, Ralph. 1947/1984. *Unischbar*. Herstein. März
- Goffman, Erving. 1963/1980. *Stigma*. Frankfurt am Main. Suhrkamp.
- Hoffmann, Eva. 1989/1993. *Ankommen in der Fremde - Lost in Translation*. Frankfurt am Main. Fischer.
- Honneth, Axel. 1992. *Der Kampf um Anerkennung. Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte*. Frankfurt am Main. Suhrkamp.
- Kureishi, Hanif. *Das Schwarze Album*. 1995/1997. München. Knauer
- Mumcu, U_r. 1987. *Rabita*. Istanbul. Tekin.
- Schiffauer, Werner. 1991. *Die Migranten aus Subay. Türken in Deutschland. Eine Ethnographie*. Stuttgart. Klett-Cotta.
- Schiffauer, Werner. Forthcoming. *Die Gottesmänner*. Frankfurt am Main. Suhrkamp
- Taylor, Charles. 1992. *Multikulturalismus und die Politik der Anerkennung*. Frankfurt. Fischer.
- Tertilt, Hermann. 1996. *Turkish Power Boys*. Frankfurt am Main. Suhrkamp
- Vertovec, Steven. Forthcoming. Fostering cosmopolitanisms. A conceptual survey and a media experiment in Berlin. *Cultural Anthropology*