

## Doing National Identity through Transnationality: Categorizations of Inequality in German Integration Debates

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[Thomas Faist and Christian Ulbricht]\*

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## Doing National Identity through Transnationality: Categorizations of Inequality in German Integration Debates

Thomas Faist and Christian Ulbricht<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Immigration and the social integration of migrants have raised the issue of group boundaries around (national) identity. Historically, states have used immigration policy as a tool in fostering a particular national identity (Zolberg 2006), and integration policies and debates have served to answer the question “who are we?” In contemporary public debates in Germany, as in other immigration countries in Europe and North America, the issue of national identity looms large, especially in drawing attention to the social integration of immigrants whose dispositions, principles, worldviews and competences are, allegedly, at times incompatible with liberal-democratic values and norms<sup>2</sup>. Debates abound over such issues as the compatibility of Islam with democracy and with gender equality; the relationship between migrants’ cross-border ties and national loyalty in dual citizenship; and transnational political claims-making of migrants. These debates have been inextricably related to and discussed in terms of “non-integration”, “failed integration” or “disintegration”. This negative coding often refers to transnationality, to cross-border transactions in the broadest sense. Typically, for more than two decades, the ‘3 Ts’ have been identified by many a politician and writer as contributing to disintegration and segregation: e.g., Turkish television received via satellite and cable, low telephone costs for international calls, and cheap cross-border travel via air flights (Scholl-Latour 1999: 268). Implicitly, the claim seems to be that while the national is associated with integration, the transnational more often connotes disintegration. Transnational here refers to migrants’ cross-border ties, often to the countries of origin. In essence, the question is how national identity is discursively constituted by referring to what could be called transnational. And what are the implications of constituting the national for issues of resources, status, privilege and power?

The integration of immigrants has turned into a question of incorporating or rejecting creeds and principles. The associated processes have been ambiguous, as we observe changing boundaries but also new boundaries and the hardening of old boundaries. Here, the term boundary refers to specific patterns of relations and representation between groups located on one or the other side. Thus boundaries denote social relations, representations,

perceptions, and evaluations (Barth 1969). One manifestation of shifting boundaries is that entire groups are now perceived to belong to the whole of (national) society, or at least to be on their way. In contemporary Europe this can be seen in efforts to incorporate organized Islam institutionally (Laurence 2006). For example, in Germany, there has been a gradual adaptation of existing corporatist institutions regulating church-state relations to better capture the realities of immigration situations. Interfaces such as the national “Islam Conference” have been established in which Muslim organizations have begun to function as public agents (Tezcan 2012). Human rights norms have also been used to rationalize steps toward organizational incorporation of Islam in Germany. An explicit transnational phenomenon involving shifting boundaries is dual citizenship. Even countries which reject dual citizenship as a rule, such as Germany, nowadays have a high percentage of new citizens, indeed almost half of them, who are not asked to renounce their former citizenship upon naturalization. This situation is influenced by human rights considerations in the case of persons who would otherwise be stateless but also considerations of gender equity (Faist 2007). Yet, there is also a hardening of boundaries by means of exclusionary tendencies, as evidenced by what has been called civic integrationism in Europe, rejecting multicultural accommodation. Examples can be seen in bans on religious attire (see Amiriaux, this volume) or in outright exclusion, either at the border—through more stringent admissions policies, for example, regarding family reunification—or from the fabric of civic life—through rigorous naturalization tests. Also, above and beyond dual citizenship, the issue of terrorism has kept the significance of cross-border ties alive in public debates.

There is indeed a puzzle: both the inclusion of the transnational into the national but also its exclusion need to be accounted for. The transnational is part of what one could call the non-national, yet does not exhaust this latter category. The non-national, for example, could refer to multiple national identities without necessarily implying cross-border ties. This analysis deals with part of the puzzle in the discursive realm by examining public debates on the juxtaposition of national identity and migrants’ transnational ties in Germany since the 1990s. Doing national identity means that it is not a quasi-natural phenomenon but needs to be socially reconstituted on a continual basis to tap into specific reciprocity and specific solidarity needed to underpin national policies and politics. It is in public debates that parts of these efforts at the social constitution of national identity become visible. Three questions stand at the centre. First, what is the role of doing national identity via the transnational ties of migrants for integration discourse, that is, what are the categorizations of the transnational vis-à-vis the national? Second, what are the mechanisms operative in the usage of transnationality to define the national? And third, in which ways is the binary

transnational/national instrumentalized politically through symbolic politics and integration as a meta-issue, that is, as a frame which is connected to manifold social, economic and political problems? The empirical examples provided are meant to illustrate how a social mechanism analysis<sup>3</sup> of transnationality as a marker of difference – in the following referred to as heterogeneity (Blau 1977) – may work<sup>4</sup>.

The role of transnationality for defining national identity and integration needs to be placed within a broader understanding of heterogeneities and inequalities. Transnationality, and this is a new claim we are advancing, is a marker. It is thus akin to differences of income, gender, religion, sexual orientation or age. Here, transnationality is seen as an attribute ascribed to some (not all) migrants and which is considered to be good for some and bad for others. Transnationality as a heterogeneity has two dimensions. First, transnationality is a binary categorization, as in the juxtaposition of national vs. transnational. In this case it is a largely ascriptive heterogeneity, ascribed to persons, groups or organizations. The juxtaposition is significant since the national is often tied to the integration of immigrants whereas references to the transnational signal challenges to social integration or even disintegration. Second, transnationality can be a nominal categorization, evaluated, for example, as either good or bad, depending on the category and context applied. In academic and public debates alike, transnationality is regarded as a desirable element of upward mobility for people with higher incomes and for the educated classes (Mau and Mewes 2007). However, persons of lower social status are often considered to have barely any transnational ties, or – as in the case of migrants – transnationality is associated with non-desirable downward mobility, coupled with the risk of social segregation and disintegration (Esser 2006). In this second meaning transnationality is associated with worldviews and lifestyles<sup>5</sup>.

Heterogeneities such as transnationality are not in themselves natural or self-evident categories which then translate into inequalities. There is always a process underlying the production of inequalities in the context of such heterogeneities. For example, from a Marxist point of view differences in resource endowments in labor markets and capitalist production translate into class inequalities by means of surplus extraction through the mechanism of exploitation. Or take gender as heterogeneity. It is through mechanisms of social closure that gender assumes crucial importance in the ranking and sorting of workers, and – indirectly – for the division of labor in child care. In the production of inequalities out of gender as a heterogeneity, various categorizations are at work, for instance the attribution of allegedly innate abilities (for example, motherly love) to women. To conceive of transnationality as a

heterogeneity allows us to link the concept to studies of inequality which are focused on the processes, and more concretely, the mechanisms that lead from differences to inequalities.

Tracing the production and maintenance of inequalities out of heterogeneities such as transnationality is at the core of this analysis. Changing views on migrants' transnational ties in Germany can be clearly discerned in the shift from the early years of recruitment to the settlement of some migrants. In the early 1960s when "guestworkers" initially arrived in Germany, there was an expectation that they would return to their countries of origin, such as Turkey. While the majority actually did so, a significant number remained. In the early period, transnational ties, embodied in the sense that migrants would eventually return to their home country, were seen as positive and thus an inherent part of the migration process. This view changed completely in later years when public debates focused on issues of integration. It was then that evaluations in public and academic debates gradually came to prevail in which transnational ties, for example, in continued attachment to and political engagement in the country of origin, were seen as problematic signs of non-integration in Germany. More recently, there is evidence in data from the General Survey in the Social Sciences (Allgemeine Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften, ALLBUS) which suggests that between 1996 and 2006 significant changes took place in boundaries between migrant groups (immigrants) and the majority group (German-Germans). First, over a period of ten years, the majority group has changed its perception of certain migrant groups – hailing originally from Italy, Spain and Greece – and now considers them as belonging to the majority. The national "we" now includes other citizens from European Union countries. However, there were also categories where no change took place, or where there was even an increase in perceived dissimilarity, such as the category "Muslim". Second, the percentage of the population consenting to the claim that those born in the country should also be given the right to naturalize has increased (Faist 2010).

The analysis undertaken in this paper is meant to serve as a sketch for the more systematic empirical content analysis of documents in public debates on national identity and integration in Germany and other OECD countries. Here, we delineate initial insights from an analysis of anthologies on public debates, based mainly on Göktürk et al. 2007, parliamentary debates in the German Bundestag and secondary literature. As such, this analysis has a programmatic intention. We concentrate on two realms of the German integration debates: the discourse on dual citizenship, and social and religious life which emphasizes cultural difference, with a particular focus on migration which originated in Turkey<sup>6</sup>.

## **Categorizations on the Basis of Transnationality**

The premise is that the national is defined by contrasting it to the transnational which implies at the same time that the national needs to be separate and distant from the transnational. This constitutes a social regularity which has been raised, among others, by George Herbert Mead, who argued that a person's identity is formed by interaction with a "generalized other". This latter term refers to the social group that delivers to the individual his or her unity of self. Mindful activity involves a conversation between the objects immediately available in the social environment, representing the generalized other (the "me") and the person (the "I"). It is by means of reflexiveness – turning the experience of the individual back upon him- or herself – that agents are able to perceive the attitude of the other toward them.

"Reflexiveness", according to Mead (1967: 134, 138), "is the essential condition, with the social process, for the development of mind." The self thus can be conceived of as a social structure that arises in and through communication and social experience. The attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community (Mead 1967: 154). This means that the environment influences the person or group through the way in which it is perceived. In a nutshell, in Mead's theory of self, it is through the response of others that we become aware of our own attitudes and selves. Importantly, we cannot know ourselves without first being involved in symbolic communication with others. Communication thus precedes conscious rationality (see also Plessner 1981 (1928): 383, 392). Persons and groups – we may even think of organizations or systems – know about themselves through their environment.

Persons and groups can only see what they allow themselves to see.

Mead argues that it is through the response of the Other that the self and identity are constituted. We could go one step further: The self also announces what that Other (here, migrants attributed with transnationality) seems to be about. In our case, the self, the nation, also seems to know exactly what the Other is all about. To fulfil an identity-generating and maintaining function, there is not necessarily a need for an actual response from the Other. The powerful position of nationals may even allow them to engage in a conversation on the Other all on their own.



## Binary Categorizations

The debates on integration and the national “we” mutually reinforce each other: the imagination of the national “we” is supported by tenets on integration, and the reference to the transnational ties of migrants serves to distinguish integration from non-integration or disintegration. Some of the transnational can be incorporated into the national, especially if it conforms to liberal principles, in contrast to fundamentalist beliefs. Yet the transnational has to remain somewhat alien so that it can function and be used as a distinguishing marker by categorizing the Other. This implies two processes. First, national identity is not clearly defined beyond very general ideas such as competence in the national language(s) and loyalty to the constitution. Yet, second, in contrast to national identity, the transnational is quite often referred to in somewhat specific terms, such as cross-border, fundamentalist terrorism based on Islam. Only in this way can it serve political purposes. Nonetheless, the culturalization through reference to integration applies only to certain immigrant groups, and there are changes over time in that some groups are then perceived as part of “us”. For example, “guestworkers” from Italy were considered the Other in the 1960s, to be replaced gradually by migrants from Turkey and later Muslims. German citizens abroad (especially the highly educated, such as scientists) and highly-skilled labor to be recruited are not discussed in terms of integration but in the frame of economic competitiveness. These results can be arrived at through a careful analysis of categorizations, namely binary categorizations such as national vs. transnational, and nominal categorizations, distinctions within transnationality which form the basis of normative judgments as to its desirability.

The debates on national identity as part of discussions on social integration have evaded a definition of “what is a German?” This point can be seen very clearly in a debate which, at first sight, sought to clarify the demands placed upon immigrants in Germany, namely the debate on the German “guiding culture”. CDU-politician Friedrich Merz instigated the debate in 2000 in the newspaper *Die Welt*. Other than references to the importance of allegiance to the constitution and the law, no clear definition of this guiding culture can be found. Though rich in insinuations regarding cultural heritage, all other statements remain cryptic: “The country must be tolerant and open; immigrants who want to live with us on a long-term basis must, for their part, be ready respect the rules of coexistence in Germany”. This guiding culture has an explicit liberal outlook: “I have described these rules as the liberal German guiding culture”. This means that “(t)he constitutional tradition of our Basic Law is essential to our country’s culture of civil liberties” and that “German culture was shaped decisively

after World War Two by the European idea (...) with a Europe of peace and freedom, based on democracy and a social market economy”. This idea of a guiding culture is set apart from positions associated with the violation of civil liberties and human rights: “Integral to our system of freedom is the position of woman in our society, which was achieved only after decades of struggle”<sup>7</sup> (Merz, cited in Göktürk et al. 2007 313) The debate on guiding culture can be seen as mainly of strategic use in party politics since the other culture (Islam) is neither simply traditional nor new. Journalist Gustav Seibt observed that in

(t)he CDU (...) has developed the concept ‘German guiding culture’ as a new answer to these circumstances. (...) The content of the idea is diffuse, applying to everything from the Basic Law and command of the German language to ‘Western values’ (...) However unclear the content of the concept ‘guiding culture’ may be, its function is clear. The phrase guiding culture denotes an empty space: the assimilative attraction that enables immigration societies to receive foreigners and still retain their own identity. (Seibt, cit. in Göktürk et al. 2007: 314; see also Mark Terkessidis, cit. Göktürk et al. 2007: 316)

In some parts of these debates the national is more clearly defined only because it is juxtaposed to the transnational. Overall, the national, as exemplified by the debate on the guiding culture, is ambiguous, equivocal and pluri- or multivalent in terms of meaning. The transnational, by contrast, is usually portrayed in these discourses as a concrete danger or at the very least a problem associated with broader incompatibilities, such as accession of Turkey to the European Union. Social historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler commented that “(e)verywhere in Europe, Muslim minorities cannot be assimilated and seclude themselves in their subculture. The Federal Republic has no problem of foreigners, but only a Turkish problem.” (*Die Zeit*, 12 September 2002). The incompatibility of cultures in this view pervades social integration on a more systemic level. Populist writer Thilo Sarrazin is one of the latest exponents:

I curse satellite receivers, without those we would be much further along with integration. (...) Learning German is up to 80% the task of the migrants. (...) But if I read Turkish newspapers only, watch Turkish TV only and meet Turkish friends only, I do not want to integrate. (*Die Welt*, 10 March 2010).

In a fashion typical for much of the immigrant integration debate, Sarrazin changes back and forth between the non-national in a wide sense (Islam) and the migrants' cross-border communication. The transnational ties of some categories of migrants are seen as simply leading to ethnic and religious segregation.

There is a similarity in the way in which the transnational and, often at the same time, the multicultural are defined: both are believed to lead to disastrous outcomes<sup>8</sup>. A typical statement on multiculturalism as a threat to national integration from conservative politicians reads like this:

... we must hand down a clear rejection of multicultural ideologies. With the concept 'multicultural', a link is usually made to the notion that different foreign cultures have equal rights alongside German culture and that (...) they will be recognized as a piece of our national culture. This approach amounts to the formation of an official 'state of many peoples', which neglects the concerns of the German majority populations in an unacceptable way. The consequences would ultimately be to relinquish the nation as a community of laws and common destiny, a loss of identity and the feeling of belonging together, (...) and the development of segregated 'parallel societies'. (Günter Beckstein, former Minister of Interior of Bavaria, cit. in Göktürk et al. 2007: 303)

It is toward those failures arising out of what is perceived to be actually existing multiculturalism that the demand for integration (*Integrationsaufforderung*) is directed. Ever since the 1990s multiculturalism in public debates, much like the references to cross-border transactions of former "guestworkers", has served as a foil for dystopian visions.

Regarding transnationality, in the aftermath of 9/11 and during the controversy over dual citizenship in the late 1990s, it has become central to the definition of national integration. First, 9/11 resulted in reinforced demands for integration. As political scientist Bassam Tibi noted in *Die Zeit*:

The terror attacks of September 11 proved in a concrete way that security issues are closely connected to immigration, given that the attacks were organized in the German Islamic Diaspora (...) Nowadays, only the integration of Muslim

migrants offers an effective means to counter religious extremism. (Tibi, cit. in Göktürk et al. 2007: 228).

While 9/11 may not have been the primary cause of the demand for intensified efforts at integration, it certainly directed more water to the mills of adaptation into the national “we” against the transnational Other. It is an interesting example of the way in which transnational phenomena, such as terrorism, add to the constitution of the national itself. A transnational phenomenon such as terrorism can be used to legitimate nationalist exclusion. Coupled with the suspicion harbored against Muslims as loyal citizens has been the fear that they are manipulated from abroad:

Turkish voters with dual citizenship are not ‘neutral’ voters who hold the future of the new homeland dear to their hearts. As long as they allow themselves to be manipulated so completely by the press in Turkey, they will remain ‘foreigners’, who are just exploiting the right to vote. (Irina Wiesner<sup>9</sup>, cit. in Göktürk et al. 2007: 161)

Second, the dual citizenship issue aroused by far the greatest extent of emotional and normative debate over integration of both immigrants and the nation, especially in the late 1990s. Ironically, while the Social Democratic-Green coalition, which came into office in 1998 (and worked until 2005), called for abolishing the requirement of renouncing one’s former citizenship when acquiring German citizenship, the reform finally enacted in 2000 did not make many inroads in this respect. A degree of liberalization was introduced with added exemptions to the law regarding family ties and business activities (to already existing exemptions such as the avoidance of statelessness). The children of immigrants, however, still must choose at maturity which citizenship they wish to hold. At the same time a rather far-reaching (by European standards) *jus soli* found its way into the new citizenship law.

Dual citizenship has been discussed since the early 1990s in Germany only with respect to integration. Explicit transnational considerations did not enter into the debates about dual citizenship even though a growing percentage of the populace is born abroad or has parents who immigrated. Instead, in public debates over the past 20 years politicians from all parties have viewed dual citizenship predominantly as a way to lower the hurdles for naturalization in removing emotional and social barriers. The overarching goal has been social integration into

the national state and overall migrant social integration. The difference in political positions has been whether or not dual citizenship should be tolerated for this goal or whether it should be rejected. For the latter position, the following statement by a member of the *Bundestag* succinctly summarizes the position of the CDU: “Of course, one could entertain links into various countries for various reasons. However, viewed from a citizenship perspective, there should be membership and belonging to one and one country only.”<sup>10</sup>

### Nominal Categorizations

In addition to the binary perspective, transnationality can also be categorized nominally, for example, good vs. bad, desirable vs. non-desirable, for migrants and non-migrants alike. Nominal categorizations refer to particular subsets of immigrants or non-immigrants whose cross-border social practices and demands are deemed to be either incompatible with or desirable for liberal politics. Here, the connection between transnationality and social inequality seems to be characterized by a dualism. On the one hand, for people with higher incomes and for those who hold degrees from tertiary educational institutions, geographic mobility and transnational networks are often regarded in public and academic debates alike as a social asset, an element of upward social mobility (for a differentiated empirical analysis of this claim in the German context, see Ette and Sauer 2010). On the other hand, persons of lower social status are considered to have barely any transnational ties; or if they do, transnationality is associated with downward mobility, coupled with the risk of social segregation and disintegration. In this latter perspective, migrant groups with few material resources, and little cultural and social ‘bridging’ capital beyond immigrant enclaves, are thought to derive no benefit from cross-border ties. Instead, transnational practices are seen as an expression of ethnic segregation (cf. Esser 2008).

There are two groups which exemplify nominal categorizations of transnationality at the upper end of this dualism: the so-called highly qualified from abroad who are to be attracted to work in Germany, and highly-qualified German citizens who work abroad as professionals and scientists. In both cases there is a striking absence of the integration discourse. Instead, the core of the public debates centers around the positive or negative repercussions for economic competitiveness of national economies, be they claims about “brain gain” or “brain drain”. It seems that the categorization along culture pertains to the ranking of low-status immigrants, while categorizations in terms of economic utility are reserved for highly-skilled immigrants and German citizens who are emigrants. The main empirical question then is: in

which context and toward which category is the distancing mechanism used to draw boundaries?

Chancellor Gerhard Schröder launched a “Green Card Initiative” in 2001 to attract highly-qualified personnel to the labor markets in Germany, reasoning that

(i)f we do not want to lose the competition for the best minds, we need an objective and informed debate on a labor market-oriented immigration (...) Given the demographic trends, we should try early on to gain in the long run a sufficient number of skilled workers for our economy. There is a fierce international competition for these professionals. With the Green Card initiative, we have given a powerful impulse to the issue of immigration. (...) With this contribution to rapid alleviation of skill shortages in the IT sector, we shall provide additional jobs for the people in this country. Because statistically, each Green Card Expert has created on average two and a half additional jobs. <sup>11</sup>

As with highly-skilled labor from abroad, the national state as a “competition state” (Cerny 1997) is concerned not only about gaining brains but also the emigration of its own “highly qualified” citizen-workers. While the term “brain drain” in the 1970s denoted the exodus of highly skilled labor from so-called developing to economically developed countries, it has now entered the discussions of OECD countries with regard to its geographically mobile citizens. Discussion was sparked in 2006, when emigration from Germany reached the highest level since 1954, that is, more persons left Germany than entered<sup>12</sup>. In comparison to other OECD countries, the number of German citizens moving abroad was in the middle range. Therefore, there is nothing exceptional about this situation. Nonetheless, in public discourses Germany turned from being a “reluctant country of immigration” directly into being a “country of emigration”, evidenced by mass media, such as TV soap operas entitled *Umzug in ein neues Leben* (Moving into a New Life) or *Goodbye Deutschland: die Auswanderer* (Goodbye Germany: the emigrants). *The Economist* on 26 October 2006 even opined that Germans abroad will be tomorrow’s (new) guestworkers. The accompanying public debates singled out particular professions, especially scientists. In these commentaries Germany’s Nobel prize winners had only one option to escape Germany’s restrictive and stifling regulation of scientific work – move to the United States. This scenario tied neatly with the concern about the “flight of the creative class” (Florida 2007) and

Germany's losing its "best and brightest". All of this discourse mirrored the terminology applied to the "global hunt for talent" (Kapur and McHale 2005)<sup>13</sup>.

Considerations of inequality have entered into the debates in a particular case which stands at the intersection of labor migration and the mobility of the so-called highly-qualified. This is the case of the children of former "guestworkers" who move from Germany to take up work in economic powerhouses in Turkish cities such as İstanbul and İzmir. Somewhat provocatively, such movements have been called "second generation return" (see King and Christou 2010). The primary interpretation of this phenomenon refers to discrimination encountered by the "second generation" in Germany and to failed integration, finding fault not with the children of immigrants but the majority population (Sievers et al. 2010).

In sum, transnationality thus doesn't always and necessarily lead to new inequalities nor does it necessarily reinforce old ones. Here, a comparison with Georg Simmel's concept of the "stranger" is instructive (Simmel 1992: 746): Transnationality can only be imagined via contact with nationality, and this connection is only made when relevant for cultural, political or economic reasons. Therefore, we should be aware that the evaluation of migrants' transnational ties depends on context. Transnationality is an ambiguous category.

### **Mechanisms Underlying Categorizations**

The drawing of boundaries between national integration and (potential) transnational disintegration constitutes a set of processes which call for a closer analysis of the underlying social mechanisms. Such mechanisms are cautious generalizations referring to recurrent processes and identifiable causalities. An analysis guided by mechanisms and focused on public debates shows how inequalities are generated and reproduced out of transnationality, constantly interacting with heterogeneities in, for example, religion, ethnicity, gender or legal status. We also need to take a closer look at the response of those who are categorized as transnational.

Before outlining these mechanisms, it is important to point out that the hierarchizing mechanisms analyzed here are typical but not necessarily representative. An example relates to the institutional incorporation of Islam into the German corporatist political landscape. Here we observe ambiguous processes, namely both new boundaries and the hardening of old boundaries. On the one hand, the institutional incorporation of Islam is

evident. In general, corporatist institutions are those which mediate between state and private institutions and fulfill public functions, such as unions and employer associations which, in Germany, are autonomous in determining wages and working conditions without state interference. In a similar way, the Christian churches and the Jewish community have the status of a “corporation of public law”, which enables them, for example, to be members on the boards of public mass media programming and control boards, give religious instruction in public schools and have church taxes collected by the state. As a first step toward a public role for Muslim organizations, the human right to religious practice has been used to rationalize measures toward organizational incorporation of Islam in Germany (Koenig 2007). On the other hand, there is also a hardening of boundaries with exclusionary tendencies: there are always those who do not fit, for example, Islamic fundamentalists. The latter processes are part of civic integrationism in Europe, rejecting multicultural accommodation.

Turning to the social processes of classification with respect to immigrant integration, we note that this is a matter of social power, since categorizations can be seen as strategic instruments of inequalities. The three most prevalent discursive mechanisms regarding social integration of migrants producing inequality in public debates are symbolic exclusion, culturalist ranking and generalization (homogenization), all of which result in hierarchization. The mechanism of symbolic exclusion works primarily through the specific mechanism of cultural ascription. It pertains, for example, to the question of whether Islam is a part of German culture. Former Federal President Christian Wulff initiated a debate in 2010 when he claimed: “But Islam nowadays also belongs to Germany” (*Aber der Islam gehört inzwischen auch zu Deutschland*). Critics immediately conceded the point but emphasized that “we” are steeped in the Christian-Jewish tradition. The Prime Minister of Hesse, Volker Bouffier, claimed that Christendom and Islam are fundamentally incompatible as long as there is no liberalized, European Islam. Another example is the debate on dual citizenship. The overwhelming majority of voices in public debates since the 1990s have not considered transnational ties of actual and future citizens as an integral part of citizenship, which should in their view be nationalized. In other words, cross-border transactions in themselves are not taken to be relevant for citizenship. It is only an individual’s country of origin that needs somehow to be tolerated in order to lower the threshold for citizenship acquisition, rendering transnational ties primarily as an emotional component of the citizenship calculus of immigrants.



Public debates also rely on a second mechanism, the discursive ranking of cultures by way of distinguishing various categories of transnational migrants and mobiles. As pointed out above, there is a clear distinction around the desirability of transnationality for distinct groups: for labor migrants from abroad in Germany transnationality is considered a first step toward exclusion and segregation. This may result in the symbolic devaluation of the resources of certain categories. In essence, this devaluation is legitimized through reference to socio-cultural backwardness and the danger of segregation and disintegration. In this perspective transnationality simply is another word for an undesirable “parallel society”. For the highly-skilled, moving into or out of Germany, aliens or citizens, transnationality is discussed without any culturalist ranking but as a prerequisite for increasing economic competitiveness of the national economy and as a jump start for persons who experience upwardly mobile patterns<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, we may hypothesize that symbolic exclusion is a typical example of binary categorizations of transnationality. Subsequently, discursive ranking is an example of a mechanism signifying nominal categorizations of transnationality.

The mechanisms of symbolic exclusion and cultural ranking intersect with a third social mechanism, namely generalization. The mechanism of generalization is important because it connects the realms of discourses and public policies, as exemplified in the debate over proposed guidelines for naturalization in Baden-Württemberg<sup>15</sup>. The category of persons called Muslims is frequently portrayed and perceived as a relatively coherent community. In some public debates this generalization is connected with devaluation and exclusion. What is interesting is that governmental efforts usually have not been intended to devalue Muslim applicants for German citizenship. Instead, the measures have served to differentiate between the wheat and the chaff, distinguishing between secular Muslims and problematic cases. The reasoning given is that extremists should not be naturalized. In this way national integration policy and the fight against terrorism and political-religious extremism are semantically connected. The key term is prevention: as the “war against terrorism” does not rest content with identifying those who actually committed terrorist acts, integration policy may seek to prevent those ready to exert violence from becoming citizens. In order to make such distinctions, civics knowledge and mastery of the national language are desirable but are not the main point. Instead, positions with respect to values and norms are decisive. In the proposed naturalization test in Baden-Württemberg, for example, questions ask parents how they would react if their daughter wanted to dress like other (German) girls and women, or when a son or brother was insulted; if a man married several women; and if they would use force to marry off their daughter. The panoply of questions covered practically all publicly debated issues such as gender relations, the headscarf, homosexuality, honour killings,

forced marriage, terrorism and freedom of religion. The answers were meant to give a comprehensive picture of the inner disposition of the applicant. Eventually, the federal government decided on a standard test which abstained from examining the internal disposition and ethos of applicants; a sign that civil integrationism may indeed not be so aggressive but conform to liberal standards. Nonetheless, the debate around the test showed that generalization of characteristics expressed by German-German journalists, in this case stereotypes about Islam, proved to be the main mechanism.

There are various strategies used by political agents claiming to speak for those symbolically excluded and for those whose symbolic resources are devalued. There are at least two mechanisms of framing, that is, symbolic inclusion and reactive reframing. A particularly potent example of efforts at symbolic inclusion, in this case into another national community, can be found in a speech delivered by Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan in the Köln Arena in 2008 (see also Langenohl and Rauer 2012). Significantly, Erdoğan did not mention the term integration but pronounced “assimilation as a crime against humanity”.<sup>16</sup> His remarks ultimately did not refer to Germany but to Turkish domestic politics (the overwhelming part of his speech dealt with Turkey). He started with the claim that there is forced assimilation in Germany, and followed with what appear at first glance to be two seemingly contradictory messages. First, he encouraged those he considers his compatriots to participate actively in German life and not to consider themselves as victims of discrimination. Second, he went on in extensive detail – and for most of his speech – praising the social and economic policy achievements of his government. Both claims were linked by a strategy which has been aptly called “long-distance nationalism” (Anderson 2001). Erdoğan referred to the cross-border attachments of immigrants of Turkish origin in Germany in urging them to practice transnational nationalism, thus simply redefining the transnational in a way that may be interpreted as transplanting Turkish politics to Germany, hence a sort of long-distance nationalism. In no way did he refer to transnational social spaces in between Turkey and Europe – a space which by now has achieved a dynamic and a life of its own (Faist 2000). Ultimately, Erdoğan alluded to transnationality only superficially in order to get across his major point: the competition of two nations, the German and the Turkish.

This train of thought has pervaded many speeches and statements by Turkish politicians of the current AKP government over the past decade. A recent statement by the Minister of Economics, Zafer Çağlayan, reinforced this message:

You should never assimilate and you should never forget your language and religion. Yet you should naturalize and become citizens in the countries in which you live. You should enter the economic and political streams, ask critical questions and exercise the right to vote. If you do so, you will be a formidable power which cannot be ignored<sup>17</sup>.

It is quite evident that the processes of exclusion and inclusion engaged in by politicians in both Germany and Turkey refer to issues of national (social) integration. Applied to Turkish politicians, one may even speak of an opportunity hoarding mechanism, seeking to monopolize the representation of Turkish migrants across borders.

The mechanism of reactive reframing can be found in the pronouncements of several (umbrella) associations of Turkish immigrants, mostly as a response to dominant discourses which emphasized the necessity of social integration. Up until the mid-1990s, reference to transnational ties was more frequent than later on (Rauer 2010). Since then, transnational issues have been dealt with in ambiguous ways. For example, the Turkish Community Berlin (*Türkische Gemeinde Berlin*, TGB) stated that it would keep strict neutrality regarding all political, religious and ethnic conflicts in Turkey. Yet in the same breath, the TGB noted that it could position itself on events and developments in Turkey if it influences or compromises the situation of the Turkish minority in Germany. On these matters there has been competition among migrant associations. For example, the Council of Turkish Citizens (*Rat der Türkischen Staatsbürger*, RTS<sup>18</sup>) accused the TGB of being a “tool of Ankara”, a “nationalist lobby”. Since the mid-1990s the strategy of the TGB has changed; now discussions are geared toward integration in Germany and occlude politics in Turkey. This may also be part of a more general shift in the positions taken by Turkish migrant associations which, partly in response to civic integrationist pressures, now cater much more to the integration agenda (Faist and Amelina 2008). An analysis of all reports in four major nation-wide newspapers (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*; *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*; *Die Welt*; *die tageszeitung*) between 1995 and 2004 confirms this: five major topics are noted (number of articles in parentheses): citizenship (N= 241), Islam (N=203), integration (N=200), exclusion and racism (N=129), accession of Turkey to the EU (N=72), and other (N=66) (Rauer 2010: 77). Despite this decisive shift, which could be described as a reactive reframing of the context of integration, from the perspective of most Turkish migrant associations, the national and the transnational are seen to interact. For example, political and social inclusion through naturalization was considered to depend upon a higher

tolerance of dual citizenship. Although migrant associations were only minor players in the debates on dual citizenship, they expressed a clear demand for increased political participation.<sup>19</sup>

### The Symbolic Politics of Doing National Identity and Integration as a Meta-Issue

So far we have analyzed the binary and nominal categorizations employed in discourses on national identity and integration with respect to transnationality and have identified some of the mechanisms which involve transnationality in the semantic production of inequalities. It is now possible to turn to the political context in which categorizations and resulting hierarchizations of transnationality operate; usually in conjunction with other heterogeneities such as religion. How is the binary transnational-national instrumentalized politically, and what are the consequences for inequalities?

Public debates are struggles over interpretations of symbolic boundaries. Ideas concatenate into discursive categorizations and result in hierarchizations. In this case the categories used to describe integration vs. disintegration and, concomitantly, national vs. transnational do not simply organize lived reality in appropriate categories in the sense of an accurate representation of processes. At the very least, such categorizations are involved in the creation of the perception of that reality and its interpretation. If these available categorizations are used for decisions in policy-making, they then link directly to political structures and decision-making (cf. Foucault 2004: 187)<sup>20</sup>.

Migration in general and transnationality more specifically are easy to instrumentalize politically. Integration and, implicitly, transnationality serve as meta-issues (Lasswell 1938), which abound in symbolic politics (Edelman 1964). All kinds of issues, such as unemployment, cutbacks in the welfare state or terrorism, can be tagged onto migration and integration. The symbolic uses of politics helped to construct migration as a meta-issue: in the 1980s, by not recognizing the reality of immigration, it could be successfully used as a factor allegedly accounting for the deleterious effects of economic crisis and policy failures (Faist 1994). In the 1990s and 2000s transnationality in the sense of continued attachments across borders, such as speaking the language of origin at home, has come to be seen as an impediment to social integration into German society. Overall, migration, integration and transnational ties have thus become meta-issues for social inequalities, associated with various “social problems”. The opportunities for symbolic politics and the use of migration as

a meta-issue to bolster national identity have even increased over the past few years. With the arrival of a new age of austerity, the capacity of national states to mediate between the rights of citizens on the one hand and the requirements of capital accumulation on the other has been severely affected. Governments everywhere face stronger resistance to tax increases, particularly in highly indebted countries where infusions of public money will be needed for many years to pay for goods that have long been consumed. Although and perhaps because it has become increasingly difficult to pretend that the tensions between capitalism and democracy can be handled within the boundaries of national political communities, symbolic politics sometimes is a convenient escape. In order to be effective symbolically, and this is a crucial requisite for politicization, the transnational needs to appear as a very concrete danger, albeit a diffuse one. Otherwise transnationality cannot be instrumentalized. In a way, it is quite puzzling that the transnational - so fluid and malleable by definition - needs to be turned concrete in order to relate to the static logic of national states. This partly accounts for the empirical finding reported above, namely that transnationality is often depicted as a concrete threat to social integration (for example, the 3 Ts mentioned above), whereas the national is not defined, as in the debate on the guiding culture. In a nutshell, politicians seek such issues to demonstrate that they can deal with cross-border matters or with what is called globalization. The issues which are picked up in public debates vary from country to country. In Germany and the Netherlands, for example, dual citizenship was at the center of symbolic politics in the 1990s. In these two cases dual citizens were portrayed by the critics of multiple citizenship as reaping undue advantages, such as the right to vote twice.

Nonetheless, there is contestation of devaluation and hierarchization. Interestingly, the same types of arguments used to distinguish national-liberal-modern from transnational-illiberal-traditional are used by those symbolically excluded to claim inclusion. For example, the demand for freedom to practice religion and for institutional integration on the same footing as established religious communities is frequently put forward by the excluded on the argument of human rights violations. This specific kind of counter-mechanism already points to the changing ways and the limits of using the transnational to define the national.

## **Conclusion: The Limits of the Binary National vs. Transnational**

The binaries of national-transnational and the nominal categorizations of transnationality are particular expressions of the relations between national identity and the Other. The representation of national identity is supported by tenets on integration, and the reference to the transnational serves to distinguish integration from non-integration or disintegration. A caveat must be kept in mind here: mechanisms such as symbolic exclusion, culturalist ranking and generalization via reference to social integration into the nation do not apply to all immigrant groups, or at all times. Some groups over time may come to be perceived as part of “us”, an effort directed at equalization. Moreover, Germans abroad (the highly-skilled, such as scientists) and highly-skilled labor deemed desirable for recruitment to the German labor market are not discussed in terms of integration but within the framework of economic competitiveness. In this way, the empirical examples discussed suggest that it is useful to conceive of transnationality as a heterogeneity involved in the discursive production of inequalities. The social mechanisms by which this is achieved, for example, symbolic exclusion and culturalist ranking, both function as distancing mechanisms which serve to produce and maintain hierarchies. There are also efforts at inclusion from those affected by discursive exclusion, which constitute counter-mechanisms. Yet the dominant discourse on national identity and integration has mainly proceeded in public arenas without strong involvement of the voices of those excluded. The production of such discursive inequalities with potential for and actual links to social structural and institutionally based inequalities is reinforced through the instrumentalization of integration in political debates, for example, for political campaigns. In such contexts, we frequently encounter symbolic politics, which is reinforced by the use of migration, integration and transnational ties of migrants as meta-issues.

There may be limits, however, to the production of inequalities based on transnationality. This applies in particular to the binary national-transnational. The juxtaposition of national versus transnational may become problematic as a binary categorization to the extent that “value generalization” (Talcott Parsons) is advancing. According to Parsons, the more a society becomes differentiated, the more its values become abstract in order to legitimate all its different functions, segments and subcultures. The higher degrees of differentiation within the system of modern societies result in problems of systems and social integration. Usually, such problems – for example, the norms held relevant to produce social integration – can

only be plausibly addressed by including new entities, structures and mechanisms within the normative frame of society.<sup>21</sup> As we have seen, public debates in Germany over the past twenty years have been replete with multiple references to frames going far beyond cultural specificities and into the realm of a liberal (political, social, economic) order. The frequent invocation of human rights is just one example (cf. Moyn 2010). These new elements need to be placed within the normative structure of society, a process Parsons called “value generalization”. In other words, “when the network of socially structured situations becomes more complex, the value pattern itself must be couched at a higher level of generality in order to ensure social stability.” (Parsons 1971: 27)

This insight is helpful in understanding the changing relationship between the national and the transnational. If Parsons’ claim holds true for the post-World War Two period and the country (Germany) we analyze, the national is ever more differentiating and it becomes more difficult to instrumentalize transnational ties politically. After all, much of what used to be discursively conceived of or portrayed as the transnational – including liberal convictions, a confession to human rights or republican understandings of nationality – is (now) part of national self-understanding. The boundaries of the national have been widening. In other words, the transnational redefines the national by the incorporation of the former by the latter. Yet how can the transnational be instrumentalized when the national is ever more differentiating? Since Germany has been in the process of redefining itself to include (certain types of) Islam or tolerate cross-border loyalties, and as an immigrant society, the Other cannot just be the migrant or foreigner as such anymore. As a consequence, the boundaries of national identity are remade and now the agents draw lines between bad and good foreigners and good and bad forms of transnationality.

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<sup>2</sup> Adherence to liberal norms is by no way the only exclusionary criterion. Yet in a country like Germany, statements which openly discriminate categories along “race” would be expected to be rare because the racist past of the Nazi regime is shunted present in the public sphere..

<sup>3</sup> On social mechanisms of inequality, see Tilly 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Two research projects in the Collaborative Research Center “From Heterogeneities to Inequalities” (CRC 882) deal with the ambiguity of transnationality. Both projects mainly deal with social structural analysis and not, as does this paper, with analysis of public discourses. The project “Transnationality and the Unequal Distribution of Social Protection” analyses the nominal categorizations in Turkish-German, Polish-German and Kazakh-German social spaces. The project “Pilot Study: Longitudinal Panel” uses mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative, to design a longitudinal study of households in the German-Turkish space which also uses interval categorizations to capture the mobility of persons, ideas, remittances etc. (<http://www.sfb882.uni-bielefeld.de>).

<sup>5</sup> A third meaning is not discussed here. Transnationality can be captured as an ordinal categorization which is useful for measuring cross-border transactions across time for social agents (for example, over life courses). In this case it refers to practices and competences of persons, such as visits, sending remittances or engaging in transnational political claims-making. In this paper we refer mostly to the first and second dimensions. This focus implies that we use a very wide and loose notion of transnationality.

<sup>6</sup> A third main debate, citizenship discourse on social rights, social security in particular, cannot be dealt with here for reasons of space; see also Eder et al. 2004: chapter 3 who found these three topical issues the main arenas of public debate in major German newspapers from 1996 until 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Similar statements abound in public debates. In the words of the Bavarian minister of the interior at the time (1999),

(r)real integration demands, first of all, major accomplishments from individuals. The acquisition of the German language is a first crucial step. In addition, foreign fellow citizens must devote themselves to our state and its societal and constitutional order and value systems with no ifs, ands, or buts. Respecting our political, social, and cultural conditions is essential. (Günter Beckstein, cited in Göktürk et al. 2007: 303)

<sup>8</sup> In academic discourse, the two are very different: multiculturalism is mainly concerned with social integration within the national state, without explicit consideration of cross-border transactions, whereas transnationalization as an analytical perspective takes into account the latter, leaving open the unit to which integration refers – immigration or emigration national states, migrant groups, localities, etc.

<sup>9</sup> Executive Officer of the Society for Endangered People, and International organization for the human rights of Kurds.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Huber, then Minister of Interior of Thuringia, in Bundestags-Plenarprotokoll 17/25: 2232B, cf. Bundesrats-Protokoll 869/2010: 117B.

<sup>11</sup> Gerhard Schröder, Speech opening Cebit on 21 March 2001 in Hannover; [http://www.bundesregierung.de/dokumente/Rede/1X\\_34261.htm](http://www.bundesregierung.de/dokumente/Rede/1X_34261.htm)

<sup>12</sup> A typical statement in parliament (Bundestag) raising the issue of “brain drain” goes like this:

We need the best brains. Yet the problem is: These brains are thinking too often in other places in this world. It is simply a fact that the country of poets and thinkers is losing its thinkers. The data although incomplete, show this: In 2005 about 150,000 Germans emigrated, about 100,000 have returned. There is already a big gap. The significance can be played down, as you did, Mr. Schäuble. However, we have to take this problem seriously. (Thea Dückert, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, in: Deutscher Bundestag 2007 Plenarprotokoll 16/ 119: Stenographischer Bericht, 119. Sitzung. Tagesordnungspunkt 28: Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Sibylle Laurischk, Rainer Brüderle, Dirk Niebel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP: Konsequenzen der Auswanderung Hochqualifizierter aus Deutschland. Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag, pp. 12371- 12394, here: p. 12383, own translation)

<sup>13</sup> See the documents in: Deutscher Bundestag 2007 Drucksache 16/5417. Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Sibylle Laurischk, Rainer Brüderle, Dirk Niebel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP -Drucksache 16/3210-: Konsequenzen der Auswanderung Hochqualifizierter aus Deutschland. Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag.

<sup>14</sup> Sometimes, the interpretation then immediately moves from arguments emphasizing “brain drain” to desirable mobility in and out of Germany:

The mobility of highly skilled workers can only be appreciated, for Germany, in the case of foreign specialists and scholars alike. It is in our own interest that our scientists and professionals go abroad to educate themselves, to collect personal experiences and to return with this knowledge back home. In the same way, we are interested to attract internationally renowned scientists and professionals to work in our country. (Annette Hübinger for the parliamentary faction of CDU and CSU -. Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 16/119, October 2007: 12391

<sup>15</sup> The interview guidelines were part of a train of measures: In 2005, Austria introduced a test examining civics knowledge, the Netherlands followed suit in 20006. In Germany, heated debates emerged

when the Länder Baden-Württemberg and Hesse came up with guidelines for naturalization interviews. The proposal for a test in Baden-Württemberg came to be known as the “Muslim test” (Muslimtest).

<sup>16</sup><http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/erdogan-rede-in-koeln-im-wortlaut-assimilation-ist-ein-verbrechen-gegen-die-menschlichkeit-1.293718>

<sup>17</sup> “Bulunmuş olduğunuz ülkelerde, asimile olmayacaksınız, dilinize ve dininizi asla unutmuyacaksınız, o ülke vatandaşlığına geçerek, o ülkenin tüm siyaset ve ticaret kanallarına geçerek, o ülkelerde hesap soran ve oy veren konumda olacaksınız. Bunları yaptığımız zaman hiç bir güç, bu gücün karşısında duramayacak.” (Hürriyet, 19 November 2011)

<sup>18</sup> The RTS was founded in 1994 as a loose association of 17 Turkish and Turkish-German umbrella associations with approximately 2,000 single organizations. The RTS defines its goal as “the preservation of all aspects of Turkish citizens in Germany and the support and coordination of efforts of various clubs and associations. In general, political demands of the RTS are dual citizenship, combating xenophobia and protection against attacks and to improving the living conditions and the legal situation of Turkish migrants and their children.

<sup>19</sup> One of the crucial questions for further analysis is whether exclusionary mechanisms ultimately result in self-identification as a sort of self-otherization among the immigrant groups concerned (Hall 1996). This possibility would imply that not only the receiving group but also the newcomers conceive of themselves as the Other. Another possibility is that those affected negotiate their way around dominant beliefs.

<sup>20</sup> The public debates and the negative portrayals of some types of transnationality, that is, the transnational connections of some types of migrants expressing or resulting in disintegration, are frequently far removed from the actual practices of transnationality in everyday life, in manifold localities, as observed in empirical research (see, for example, Faist and Özveren 2004). Research thus suggests a much more nuanced and balanced picture of transnationality as a heterogeneity. While a number of studies, particularly within the American context, have shown that transnational resources can contribute to improving the social position of the lower-income groups (see Levitt and Jaworsky 2007), such findings refer mostly to national frames of reference in the country of settlement, and implications for the place of origin have not yet been examined systematically beyond case studies. For a transnational inequality perspective, the dynamics of multiple places of reference within a transnational space must be taken into account. By the same token, multiple affiliations can also give rise to new restrictions and conflicts; for example between those who remain spatially immobile and take care of

supporting children and elderly family members on the one hand and those migrating abroad on the other hand.

<sup>21</sup> Since we use Parson's position on value generalization only as a heuristic, we take the term "society" as being unproblematic for this analysis. Also, we do not argue that value generalization is inherently evolutionary in terms of an ever progressing march toward ever more abstract norms. Reversals are possible.