

# The turkish migrants generation in germany history essay



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Having come to a new country at some point in their life, migrants of the first generation become members of a new society, bringing with them their own history, memories and identity. Migrants of Turkish descent make up the largest group of foreigners in Germany, while Germany is still only on the brink of accepting its status as a country of immigration. Facing a situation where this group of migrants has already reached the third generation, this paper discusses the identity of Turkish migrants in Germany and suggests that there is a shift in identity between the first and the second generation. Furthermore the concept of Heimat is being discussed, in order to identify whether the idea of a homeland, being in the country of descent or in the new location, changes between the generations.

Both concepts will be applied to the movie “Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland” that tells the story of a three-generation family of Turks in Germany.

Keywords: Migration – Identity – Generations – Heimat – Cognitive Dissonance

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## **Introduction**

In Germany, “ the multicultural approach [...] has failed, utterly”[1]. This quote by German chancellor Angela Merkel recently has been dominating amongst discussions about migration and diversity in Germany. Having said that during a speech on October 16, 2010, she was pointing out that Germany has been “ kidding itself[2]” to think that the workers invited in the 1960s would eventually leave again, yet they are now permanently living in the country. She was thereby addressing the fears of 30% of the German population that see their country “ overrun” by foreigners.

With the opening of the job market to workers from the ten member states that joined the European Union in 2004, on May 1, 2011, Germany is now

facing a new wave of immigrants, dominantly by Polish workers. The Institute of German Economy estimates that about 800. 000 Polish migrants will come to Germany over the two coming years.[3]

Still it remains the Turkish population that makes up Germany's biggest group of migrants. Having come to Germany mainly after the 1960s, there are now over 1. 65 million Turkish migrants living in Germany. A big proportion are still the migrants of the first generation, yet the second and third generation German-Turks are growing in numbers, raising the question whether they see themselves as Turks or Germans.

Within the scope of this paper it will be discussed whether there is a shift in the identity of these migrants; whether there is a different identity within the first generation Turks as opposed to the second generation. Furthermore it will be seen in how far the concept of " Heimat[4]" changes according to the generations. Discourse analysis is being used to theorize identity and the concept of Heimat, followed by an introduction to German immigration history, in order to explain the difficulties and the biased situation of the German population towards migration. The application of these theories will be done achieved a movie analysis of the movie " Almany - Willkommen in Deutschland"[5].

## **Identity construction and the concept of Heimat**

### **Identity construction**

In order to eventually start from the hypothesis that there is a shift of identity between first and second generation migrants, one must be aware of how identity is being built. Samuel Huntington described it as: " a product of

self-consciousness, that I or we possess distinct qualities as an entity that differentiates me from you and us from them"[6]. With identity being in need of self-consciousness, it is not something that every individual has as a fixed feature from birth to death. Identity only comes into being once an individual is aware of itself and its features and characteristics.

Identity is construction, as Huntington puts it: we " are what we think we are and what we want to be"[7]. It is formed against " the other" and by defining what " they" are, one can find one's own identity to define who the " I" is. As long as someone is not aware of a certain feature of its identity, it is not part of it. Features only become identity once one is aware of them. Identity is made up by " Images of individuality and distinctiveness held and projected by an actor and formed (and modified over time) through relations with significant others"[8].

This identity that a person takes on can change over time. If an individual finds itself in a new situation, where a tension between the surroundings and its identity appears, it might suffer cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance here refers to a conflict that appears by the clash of two different or even conflicting identities and held beliefs.[9]To relieve this tension, the individual must try to relieve situation, by changing its surroundings or by redefining itself.

In a specific migrant situation, this refers to the migrant finding himself in the new surroundings, the new country. Being from a different cultural, political, social or national background, there are naturally some aspects of life in which the identity of the migrant and that of the " native" group, thus

the already existing population of the country, clash. In order to relieve this tension, the migrant can either chose to isolate himself from the society or, over time, achieve to redefine his identity in order to fit in with his new surroundings.[10]

There is not only the identity of an individual, but also groups have an identity. Individuals find and redefine their identity in groups. Individual may be part of many groups and thus able to shift identity.

How the “ others” perceive an individual is crucial to the individual’s identity formation. If a group ascribes certain characteristics to an individual, it is likely that it takes over these characteristics and makes them part of its identity.[11]In the case of migrants this can be seen in marginalization. If the native population of a country perceives a migrant or a whole group of migrants as inferior and/or marginalized, it is likely for this group to start thinking of themselves as marginalized. The situation then changes for the worse, if the migrant takes over this idea of being marginalized and reacts by emphasizing this distinction as part of his identity.

Another distinctive trace of identity is that one can only take on an identity if the members of the group that already have this identity agree.[12]A migrant can thus only become of his host society if the society is willing to not marginalize him but integrate him into society.

An individual usually has several identities, being defined by the respective situation it finds itself in. These identities can be territorial, political, cultural, national, etc. This also depends on the basis of which the identity is formed.

Identity can be ascribed, referring to features of the individual such as age,  
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ancestry, gender, ethnicity or race.[13]An individual's cultural identity is usually defined by its affiliation with a tribe, a nationality or a language. Political identity on the other hand is formed by the individuals belonging to a certain faction, interest group or attachment to a certain leader. Social identity is defined by whom the individual socializes with, its friends, colleagues and family.

There are many more of these different identities that could be named, yet they all lead to the same conclusion: every individual has multiple identities, each of which become more distinct depending on the situation an individual is in.

## **The concept of Heimat**

Migrants coming to a new country leave their geographical home to move on to another, new geographical home. The absence of the " old" home may in many cases leave to homesickness, yet this is mostly triggered not by the geographical shift of home but by the shift in relations and surroundings. [14]The question may be asked, to what extent this is connected with the geographic location, but it must also be addressed in how far the feelings of being at home are dependent on relationships with others.

In her publication "(Be)coming home, Helen Hayes furthermore raises another question: is this " desire for home regressive and nostalgic, or can it also be creative and future-oriented"[15]? It's usually only by leaving their place of origin that an individual becomes aware of its home, it is a paradox that " only by way of transience and displacement that one achieves an ultimate sense of belonging"[16].

Whilst trying to find their new place in the host society, migrants might run the risk of over-identifying with their particular role and life circumstances that they had encountered back home in their Heimat, creating a situation where they are stuck at a fixed point of time, place and identity. This prevents them from renewing their identity and from changing it in a way that would make them feel at ease in the new home.

“ Being at home is to have a definitive answer to the question of where, and who, we are, which refuses to admit of change, of the possibility that where home is, and who we are, is endlessly subject to question”[17].

Homesickness is thus a manifestation of a migrant's desire to be back in the known world, to be back in a life they knew, where they were not in separation from the main society, but absorbed in the society they are used to. “ Home is the source of primary identity [...] because home is the locus of self, culture and belonging”[18].

Migrants are therefore confronted with the struggle of homesickness and the challenge to attain a sense of being home in the middle of all uncertainties and unknown surroundings of their new home. They are, especially at the beginning, trapped between the multiple meanings of home.[19]

“ On the one hand, ‘ home’ is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘ origin’. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality... the varying experience of the pains and pleasures, the terrors and contentments, or the highs and humdrum of everyday lived culture”[20].

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Heimat is not only the place that the migrant has left, his homeland, but it is now also the new surroundings, the present point of living. The new home does not offer the relationships and places that the migrant is used to and familiar with, but rather offers the chance to create new relationships. The decision a migrant has to take is whether to find himself in a situation that Hayes calls the “home as bad faith[21]”, where his life and identity are being oriented towards the home of the past, which in reality often leads to separation from the new surroundings, or whether he chooses to accept the new location as his new home, by redefining his new identity detached from the homeland.

If accepting the latter choice, a migrant reaches the state of “becoming home”, where Heimat is no longer the country of this migrant’s origin, no longer “a point of departure, or a retreat from freedom” but “the clarification of one’s life purpose”[22]. The feeling of being home is then no longer attached to the familiarity with a certain geographic location and the relationship with others. The migrant sees his purpose of being and does not need relationship and places to define his own identity and has found the place where “one feels that the way one is living is true to one’s ultimate sense of purpose in life”[23].

The situation becomes different with second generation migrants. Whereas their parents have lived in the Heimat and have experienced it for a certain part of their life, second generation migrants have usually come to the new country as a child or teenager. To them, the sense of the Heimat being located in the country of descent is not as strong, if existent at all, as it is for their parents. As for migrant’s children of the second generation that were  
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born in Germany, for them the attachment to their country of descent is even less dominant, as they know it only from holidays or their parent's description.

## **Migrant Identity in Germany**

In a study of 2001, undertaken by the Institute of intercultural and international studies in Berlin, more than 100 interviews with Turkish migrants from the first and second generation had been held in order to determine the feeling of identity of these migrants. A second study of 2009, by the opinion research center Info was conducted amongst 1000 persons, a third of them being German, Turks in Turkey and Turks in Germany, respectively.

Both studies resulted by showing that there is a certain self-image of the Turks in Germany, yet this does not contradict their positive attitude towards the German society.[24]93% believe that they have to preserve their Turkish culture, yet for them this does not contradict their acceptance in the German society. 83% believe that one can be a good German and a good Muslim at the same time.[25]

The Turkish roots of all respondents were evident and not denied, yet they had developed an identity that superseded this own identity, reflecting their situation of life in Germany. Even though there might still be a close connection to their or their parent's, home country Turkey, it is often seen as a distant, strange country. Nevertheless, there is no "only-German" identity amongst these migrants. "We're Turks, but Germany has become half of our home[26]", is a typical statement that appeared throughout the surveys.

Only 21% see Germany as their “ home”, whereas 38% describe Germany and Turkey as their home, and 37% see Turkey as their homeland. 42% plan to return to Turkey one day.[27]

Islam is a very important uniting factor of this migrant group. Of the Germans asked in the study 37% described themselves as strictly or somehow religious, Turks in Germany did so with 64% and of the Turks in Turkey 75% said that they were religious.

Yet there are other identity and traces of character that are seen as common, as opposed to the German “ coolness”, such as family-orientation, hospitability, spontaneity.

When entering the second generation of Turkish migrants, the self-image of the Turks is still present in the identity of these Turks, yet the feeling of belonging, of being „ a Turk” is disappearing. Young Turks are challenging and questioning the values and norms of their parents and accept their values and traditions, as long as they are compatible with their way of life in Germany.[28]

Nevertheless, a common identity of being a German Turk is still important to these second generation Turks, as they do not yet feel fully included into German society. They are confronted even stronger with the inequality that they face in areas such as schooling and job opportunities than their parent did.[29]45% feel unwanted in Germany, and only 54% believe that Germans and Turks have the same chances in education.[30]

As a result of their study, the authors of the study do not see any danger in this self-image of first and second generation migrants, as it should not complicate cohabitation in Germany. There are issues that need to be addressed, such as language knowledge, teaching of religion, like there are with any other group of immigrants, but the fear of the birth of a “ Turkish parallel society” is something the authors see as not justified.[31]

When speaking about the integration of Turkish migrants, their children and grandchildren, one question that generally arises is that of a self-image within this group in the society. This question easily triggers misunderstandings and fear, as it is obvious that the social background, lifestyle and the idea of values and norms of these migrants are different to that of the native German population.[32]But generalizing all Turkish migrants into one big group, by ignoring their heterogeneity creates problems, which may lead to the idea that migrant communities and collective identities are not useful to their integration.

## **History of German Immigration**

Germany counts a total of 6.69[33]million foreigners[34], which equals 8.7%[35]of the population. Amongst these are 24%, thus 1.65 million, migrants of Turkish descent in Germany. Of these 6.69 million foreigners, 1.31 million (19, 4%) were born in Germany, a proportion that becomes over-proportionally high amongst the Turkish foreign population, where 33.3%[36]have been born in Germany. These migrants are part of the second and third generation of the German population holding a foreign citizenship.

When it comes to the German generation divided by its migration background, 15.6 million persons had a background of migration in 2008, which equals 19%<sup>[37]</sup> of the population.

Facing these high numbers of migrant population, it is important to know that, historically Germany has not been an immigration country, but has only become so after 1945. In the years following the end of the Second World War, German immigration has been dominated by migrants coming from the south, entering the country as work force. Nowadays the composition of these migrant streams has changed, as Germany has become Europe's largest immigration country, receiving immigrants not only from its neighboring countries but also from more distant regions.

German society contains a large amount of first generation immigrant population, yet, even more importantly, there is an important fraction of second-generation migrants.<sup>[38]</sup>

The history of immigration in Germany can be divided into six phases, beginning at the end of the Second World War. In the early 1960s the first migrant streams consisted of displaced people of German ethnicity that came back into the country from the Eastern neighbors.

A second period can be placed from 1955 to 1973, presenting a great influx of labor migrants from the Mediterranean countries. This was in large parts due to Germany's active policy of recruiting guest workers. "The principal idea behind this recruitment effort was to retain the remarkably strong manufacturing-led growth performance of the German economy despite shortages of manual labor"<sup>[39]</sup>.

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In 1960, already about 280. 000 foreign workers were employed in Germany and new contracts to recruit workers in Spain and Greece were signed.[40]In 1961 a recruitment contract with Turkey followed. In 1964, Armando Rodrigues entered Germany as the one millionth guest worker.

Initially the idea was to recruit these workers and have them voluntarily return to their home countries after a certain amount of time spent in Germany, a period of time that would be ideally about three years, as mentioned by the minister president of that time, Hans Filbinger. This assumption was backed up by statistical data that implied a relatively high number of voluntary remigration, thus not implying the need for any administrative force. As late as in the spring of 1973 the federal state government of Baden-Württemberg stated that:

„ nach den gegenwärtig vorliegenden Erfahrungen die freiwillige Rotation verhältnismäßig günstige Auswirkungen zeigt und auch künftig voraussichtlich entsprechende Ergebnisse zu erwarten sind“[41].[42]

Yet this idea turned out to be only wishful thinking, as, due to the facilitation of the conditions of residence in 1971, more and more migrants decide to not return to their home countries but to stay in Germany, having their families following them.

The costs, both social and infrastructural, of immigration to Germany started to reduce the economic gain of their work. Structural problems became evident when the number of foreign pupils in German schools rose from 35. 100 in 1965 to 158. 000 in 1970, overstraining the already overcrowded

schools.[43]The same problem appeared in the housing sector, where <https://assignbuster.com/the-turkish-migrants-generation-in-germany-history-essay/>

infrastructure could not provide the necessary coverage that was needed to fully connect the areas that immigrants were moving to with the rest of the city.

In a third step, with the first oil crisis in 1973, the policy towards immigration changed. Counting 2.6 million guest workers, Germany stopped the recruitment of guest workers and immigration was restrained. The crisis led to a discussion about the costs and effectiveness of these labor migrants, yet there was also increasing fear amongst the German public that feared social conflicts.[44]The only ways of entering Germany for migrants left was via family reunification and asylum applications

A fourth period followed this stop of recruitment, marked by a great increase in family unification.

„ Der Anwerbepausen forderte den Familiennachzug [...] geradezu heraus. Das gilt auch für eine Maßnahme aus dem Jahre 1975, als die Kindergeldsätze für ausländische Kinder, die im Heimatland geblieben waren, gekürzt wurden. Die Statistik zeigt deutlich, wie die Zahl der Zuzüge durch diese beiden Maßnahmen angestiegen ist“[45].[46]

A fifth period can be placed between 1981 and 1990, While before 1981 the debate was mainly focused on ways of integration the guest workers that had turned into immigrants, the discussion now mainly circled around the question how immigration could be limited and how much more immigration the German society could bear.[47]The former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt stated on November 11, 1981:

“ Die Bundesrepublik soll und will kein Einwanderungsland werden. Einigkeit [...] bestand auch darüber, dass der Zuzug und die Nachführung von Familienangehörigen unter Anwendung aller rechtlichen Mittel im Rahmen des Grundgesetzes gestoppt werden soll [...] [48]” [49].

In 1983 the “ Rückkehrförderungsgesetz [50]” was being passed as an attempt to solve the arising problem of immigration, offering migrants financial incentives to return to their home. It was in large parts initiated because the major parts of immigrant population, being from Turkish descent, were seen as not capable to be integrated into a western country marked by Christianity. [51] While the initiative might have been welcomed and drawn on by migrants that had already planned to re-migrate, the overall conclusion of the initiative was that it had failed.

A sixth phase started after 1990, with the fall of the iron curtain, an increased inflow of people from Eastern Europe emerged. A new immigration law was enforced in 1991, improving the situation of immigrants that were already in Germany, yet did not address the situation of naturalization. In general, the 1990s showed a greater focus on asylum politics and the situation of the German resettlers from Eastern Europe, rather than on the issue of the guest workers.

In a seventh phase, being the most recent major change in German immigration policy, it was the introduction of the new Immigration Act that marked an important turn in German immigrant policy. Whereas the principle of descent [52] (ius sanguinis) had determined the descent of immigrants by the descendant of their parents, it was now the introduction



of the birthright that determined the citizenship. This new law came hand in hand with the first time that Germany officially admitted: “ Deutschland ist schon längst zum Einwanderungsland geworden[53].”[54]

Children born to migrant parents receive thus the German citizenship by birth, yet they have to decide between the age of 18 and 23 which citizenship and thus which passport they want to keep, the German one or the one of their parents descendant.[55]

Having now determined that Germany has historically not seen itself as a country of immigration, it becomes evident why the German population is often reluctant to accept the rise of the foreign population.[56] Yet, as discussed in chapter 2. 1, it is essential for the host society to accept the migrants and their willingness to change their identity in order to embrace their new surroundings. It becomes thus harder for the migrant to relieve the tension produced by cognitive dissonance, as the shift of identity cannot be completed.

As Germany is though more and more coming to realize that it has become a country with substantial immigration, a situation that is, as mentioned beforehand, likely to increase due to the work force coming from Poland, it might become easier in the future for it to accept the presence of citizens with a migratory background.

## **Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland: Movie Analysis**

### **Summary**

The movie tells the story of three generations of a family of Turkish descent living in Germany. The grandfather Hüseyin and his wife Fatma migrated to Germany in 1962, bringing with them their three children Muhamed, Veli and Leyla and a fourth child, Ali, is born in Germany. Also featuring in the movie are the two grandchildren Cenk, son of Ali, and Canan, daughter of Leyla.