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Turkish Mosque Archives in Industrial Towns in Southern Germany: An Ethnographic Survey

Gerdien Jonker | ORCID: 0000-0002-6928-7068

Isabel Elbel

Arne Klein

Jule Klopke

Stephanie Müssig

Jens Schönstedt

Victoria Ulbricht

Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg,

Erlangen Centre for Islam and Law in Europe EZIRE, Erlangen, Germany

Gerdientje.jonker@fau.de; isabelelbel@gmx.de; arne.klein@fau.de; jule.

klopke@fau.de; stephanie.muessig@fau.de; jens.schoenstedt@fau.de;

victoria.v.schmidt@fau.de

Abstract

Starting from the thesis that European mosque archives offer important sources for the history of Muslims and Islam in Europe, this contribution presents results of a pilot survey into the whereabouts of mosque archives in Germany. Focusing on five small towns in industrial zones where predominantly Turkish contract workers have settled, we asked Turkish mosque administrators, chairmen and imams how they had handled papers in the past, whether and where they had stored folders that were not in use anymore, and what kind of documents their collections contained. What we found were various archival records in a wide and unexpected range of places. We also learned that our questions prompted very different reactions. Umbrella organisations understood their archives as tools for preserving the written sources documenting their origins, whereas local administrators tended to see them as records of their personal memories. Our conclusion is that the time is ripe for the development of knowledge about mosque archives in Germany and, with regard to the founding generation, this is of crucial importance.

Keywords

mosque archives – Germany – history of Muslims – ethnographic survey

1 Introduction

On 1 April 2021, the day we started research, Germany was still in the middle of the third corona virus lockdown, when travel was discouraged and indoor meetings were prohibited. To make a start at all, we therefore decided to first make ethnographic walks around the mosques in each of the towns where we lived, do preliminary internet research on those we intended to visit, and for first contact simply rely on the mail. Thus, Jule Klopke explored several smaller towns on foot, joining Isabel Elbel in Nuremberg at a later stage. Arne Klein and Victoria Ulbricht took to the streets in Fürth and Jens Schönstedt in Heilbronn and Neckarsulm. For some months, Stephanie Müssig undertook her own ethnographic walks through Nuremberg to gain an overview and support reflection on the factors that shape (mosque) archives (s. Müssig in this volume). Gerdien Jonker coordinated the process via Zoom meetings and Zoom also paved our way to the boards of the Muslim umbrella organisations that we asked for help.

These walks proved to be helpful for thinking ahead about the archival collections we hoped to find. They allowed us to get to know the neighbourhoods, take a good look at their inhabitants, mosques, churches and local cemeteries, to get a sense of their longevity and atmosphere, and make initial conjectures about the relation between each field (street, quarter, neighbourhood) and the mosque archive that had been collected in it.

By mid-May, COVID-19 restrictions were becoming fewer, each of us had found a discussion partner in a mosque (an imam, chairman or board member) interested enough to arrange for a face-to-face encounter and ready to offer a tour of the mosque and give us a hearing. In each case, this led to a complicated tangle of communications, both within the mosque board, the community and the umbrella organisation, and between the discussion partners and researchers themselves. Quite clearly, our question about the whereabouts and contents of mosque archives had thrown a stone into still water. For the mosque communities, the idea of safeguarding the evidence of Muslim life in Germany that they had in their possession slowly took root. Eventually, this led to carefully supervised inspections of filing cabinets and archive storerooms, drawing up checklists and enlisting the help of community members who had stored things at home.

This contribution offers a first report of our findings and is by its nature very much a work-in-progress. Writing in October 2021, we decided to present thick descriptions of what happened in mosque communities the moment we voiced our intentions as this will best capture the many surprises we met along the way. Next, we describe the individual particularities of mosque archives, identify their storage places, and list the contents of the archives we were able to view. In the outlook, an attempt will be made to outline potential next steps.

2 Ethnographic Approaches to Archives

Anthropologists have established approaches to archives that are helpful for the study of mosque archives in Europe (Bell, 2017; Both, 2018; Derrida, 1995; Fabian, 1983; Farge, 1989; Moliné and Mouton, 2008; Zeitlyn, 2012). Addressing their smell, and texture, their fragility, and their relationship to the communities in which they have accumulated, anthropologists offer views of archives as objects.

Archives may reflect their surroundings or distort the world from which they are taken. They decay, are forgotten, burned, or thrown away. Two examples may suffice here. In *L'ethnologue aux prises avec les archives*, Antoinette Moliné and Marie-Dominique Mouton consider collecting photographs, newspaper clippings and field notes of generations of ethnographers visiting the same village or region, thereby creating an archive that reflects the field over time (Moliné and Mouton, 2008). They approach archives as a reflection of the world around them. Anne Both, however, in *Le sens du temps*, starts from within the archive. Following archivists on their daily routine through corridors filled with brittle paper, she asks how they deal with the idea of 'time' when facing the contradictory tasks of storing documents 'forever', while receiving masses of new of material daily (Both 2018).

Advancing the approach to archives as fragile objects with a specific relationship to their surroundings, the anthropological studies quoted above greatly helped us to pinpoint the nature of our object. What is a mosque archive? What does it look like? Where can it be found? Does it differ from other archives? Before we start with the actual survey, we answer these questions so that readers have some idea of what to expect next.

- (1) Unlike national or federal archives, mosque archives usually collect the daily communication of a community centre with an immediate environment, the success of any mosque community being dependent on its accessibility, preferably being within short walking distance and allowing

face-to-face encounters at different levels. Mosques are places of oral communication and the paper trail they produce reflects this.

- (2) Anyone who riffles through the contents of a mosque archive finds written and photographic records related to religious services alongside evidence of social life at very many levels. Tea afternoons and community outings, amateur football teams and needlework courses, marriage contracts and death certificates sit beside texts of religious teaching, debates, Qur'an memorisation training, prayer circles and sermons. Records of building activities, membership lists and board gatherings help to clarify the relationship between inside and outside over longer periods of time. Contracts with shop tenants and restaurant caterers within the mosque premises, lawsuits over conflicts, and neighbour complaints tell the story of multi-faceted social activity.
- (3) During the research, it became apparent that whenever files were full and been put aside, administrators and mosque boards faced the question of whether to store them for a longer period, and if so, where to find a place for it. When the mosque community had moved in the past from another site, that question became particularly crucial. What to do with boxes full of papers that had lost their current relevance? Over the forty, fifty or sixty years of the mosques' existence, that question had been answered very differently.

Every archive has a keeper and our research objects also differed in the matter of caretaking and ownership. Mosque administrators are not trained archivists by profession. For them, handling documents rises out of the need to meet the requirements of German bureaucracies. Questions aimed at learning how they go about that job are often answered with concerns about what to show (questions of representation), and who in the community is entitled to do so (questions of hierarchy). Even more, questions about the archive trigger stories of the histories that lie behind the records. This exchange, often taking the form of the elder generation telling the younger about what 'really' happened, characterised our search.

While the ethnographic literature helped formulate the particularities of our object of study, this contribution does not engage with theoretical approaches to archives. That topic receives ample discussion elsewhere in this Special Issue. The Introduction describes the nature of archives, including their history, meaning and changing roles in the present. Of the contributions collected here, Bekim Agai reflects the phenomenon of 'Muslim Collective Memory in Formation', while Stephanie Müssig discusses 'Factors That Shape Mosque Archives' through the lens of 60 years of church archiving.

3 The Survey

This section presents the steps taken between 1 April and 31 October 2021, the timespan of sampling. They will be presented in chronological order, offering résumés of contacts established, reactions and unexpected encounters, and overviews of the archival collections the researchers were able to see. All the towns involved in the research lie in southern Germany. Fürth and Nuremberg are situated in northern Bavaria, and Heilbronn and Neckarsulm constitute adjacent townships in Baden-Württemberg. These are all industrial towns, while Nuremberg is the home of Germany's biggest metal-working industries, Siemens, AEG and Bosch, and Siemens and AEG also dominate Schwabach, Forchheim and Erlangen. In the past, Fürth was Germany's number 1 town for breweries but, although beer is still produced today, household electronics and children's toys have now taken the lead. Heilbronn and Neckarsulm supply parts for Audi and other German car manufacturers, with the Audi plant alone providing jobs for more than 15,000 employees in the past. Back in the 1960s, contract workers from Turkey and south-eastern Europe settled in the industrial parts of these towns, living in dormitories adjacent to the factories. The areas where the factories stood were surrounded by railways on one side and motorways on the other. The sparse development of streets and municipal cemeteries stretching behind them marked the outskirts of the towns. Today, even though Heilbronn and Neckarsulm are still strongly connected to car manufacturing, especially Audi, the city has experienced massive structural changes, entailing a reshaping of the cityscape. But the industrial outskirts character is still tangible in many ways. Figure 1 gives a photographic impression of the Vicinity of a Turkish mosque in Erlangen.

In 1973, the German government allowed the families of contract workers to join them, and most of them stayed in the neighbourhood. A modest infrastructure arose, consisting of shops, hairdressers and restaurants, as well as mosques in town houses and apartment buildings. Turks and Albanians provided the first prayer rooms, providing space for both religious duties and social activities. Around 2000, when Bosnians, Pakistanis and Arabs also settled in the neighbourhoods, they found Muslim infrastructures already in place. In all the mosque archives, registration of societies with the local authorities, membership lists and rental contracts may be expected to be found among the first documents filed.

When first visiting the neighbourhoods with considerable Muslim populations in these towns, researchers studied all the mosques they encountered *en route*. Singling out 21 mosques, they made careful note of their appearance,



FIGURE 1 Vicinity of a Turkish mosque, Erlangen-Stüd
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what they offered and the character of the community, their close proximity to each other as well as their position in relation to the main thoroughfare, which usually had a Turkish flavour. Communication with the owners of the mosques was first established at random. However, it soon became clear that, given the time available for data sampling, establishing communication and starting a conversation with a total of 21 administrators and mosque boards would overrun the time budget. As Turks had founded the oldest settlements and, with 14 mosques, dominated Muslim community life in the towns, it was decided to focus first on some of the Turkish mosque archives and consult the Bosnian, Pakistani and Arab archives at a later stage. After a first round of learning that the individuals responsible had gone to Turkey or being advised to return 'after corona', the number of working contacts was fell further to six.

Figure 2 notes the towns involved, the mosques in the survey area, and the Turkish mosques that were contacted. The next two columns indicate whether administrators showed an interest in the research questions, and whether the Muslim umbrella organisations to which they belonged could be consulted. The last column indicates the time period over which communication took place.

Establishing contact with mosque communities and Muslim umbrella organisations of which they are members was undertaken simultaneously. While the researchers on the ground went through the process of gaining a hearing, and chairmen and administrators went through the process of receiving them, the coordinator wrote to the Muslim umbrella organisations with a view to explaining the aims of the project to them. Here, a difference arose. While contacts were established on the local level with the Turkish religious organisations DITIB, ATIB (Türk Ocak), Millî Görüş (MG) and Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren (VIKZ), on the national level only the umbrella organisations of VIKZ and Islamrat responded and the DITIB and ATIB Unions remained silent.

The characteristics of the umbrella organisations will be dealt with in the next section, but it may be noted here that Millî Görüş dominates Islamrat and that the two are interlinked on a personal level in many ways. During the

interviews, the Millî Görüş discussion partners frequently changed hats, so to speak, so that we had repeatedly to ask: Is this the president of Islamrat speaking now, or are you saying that as a Millî Görüş official? Incidentally, such questions caused a lot of mirth and greatly helped towards creating a good working atmosphere.

3.1 Umbrella: Verband der islamischen Kulturzentre (VIKZ)

When in 1924 the new Turkish Republic forbade Sufic Islam in Turkey, a movement spread among the people in the countryside who had no resources with which to encounter this new situation apart from their religious solidarity (Mardin, 1989). Learning the Qur’an by heart and joining prayer groups that performed silent prayers in the Sufi Nakhsibendi tradition, they managed to stitch together a very stable social infrastructure, which they named Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren (VIKZ). Today, VIKZ Germany manages some

Survey areas	Mosques in the survey area	Mosques included in the survey	Interest in research endeavour	Umbrella organisation?	Period of communication
Fürth	5 Turkish	<i>Mevlana Cami</i> (DITIB)	Yes	No	7 months
Nearby town ^a	1 Turkish	<i>Anonymous Cami</i> (ATIB)	Yes	No	7 months
Nuremberg	4 Turkish	<i>Ayasofya Cami</i> (VIKZ)	Yes	Yes	7 months
	1 Albanian				
	1 Bosnian				
	2 Pakistani				
Heilbronn	3 Turkish	<i>Fatih Cami</i> (MG)	Yes	Yes	7 months
	1 Bosnian				
	1 Arab				
Neckarsulm	1 Turkish	<i>Imam Azam Cami</i> (VIKZ)	Yes	Yes	7 months
Erlangen	1 Turkish	<i>Mavi Cami</i> (DITIB)	Yes	No	1 month
	1 Arab				

^a To protect our discussion partners, the venue was anonymised.

FIGURE 2 Sampling mosque archives in southern Germany

300 mosques with attached youth hostels and dormitories, offering adults the opportunity to participate in prayer circles and children places in dormitories, assisting them with schoolwork and teaching them *ahlaq*, good behaviour (Jonker, 2002).

A conversation with Erol Pürlü, Press Officer of VIKZ Germany and an architect by profession, opened the path to Ayasofya Cami in Nuremberg and Imam Azam Cami in Neckarsulm. He said that VIKZ had a great interest in investigating the 'founding years'. In the 1960s and 1970s, the first VIKZ founders were agricultural workers with little education and no knowledge of the German language, who nonetheless managed to set up associations and create vibrant local Islamic centres. How did they do that? As this generation slowly dies out, there was a sense of urgency among the VIKZ leadership to gather key knowledge before it was too late. Pürlü indicated that his organisation could definitely use some support to achieve such a major work. 'Where all those documents have been stored, we just do not know' (Zoom conversation on 10 May 2021). To learn about their existence, it would be necessary to visit the local settlements one by one. Offering us his help and the cooperation of the VIKZ mosques involved in the research, he asked to be informed about the findings of the research on a regular basis.

3.2 *Umbrella: Islamrat Germany*

Over the last 60 years, Millî Görüş has gone through phases that supporters call 'demands for workers' rights' (in line with the ideals of labour movements), 'religious-revolutionary' (protesting against Turkish secular politics), and 'religiously-driven social activity' (in line with, but also independent of, recent Turkish governments). Opponents of the Millî Görüş ideals have branded them as 'Islamist' (Seufert, 1997; Schiffauer, 2010). For that reason, Ali Kizilkaya, Murat Gümüş and Kerim Erdogan, the young men who currently make up the board of Islamrat Germany, initially expressed doubts about how our research would be used. 'In Germany, we are the bitten dog. What we say or do is usually used against us', is how they phrased their hesitation to open their mosque archives for research (Zoom conversation on 14 June 2021). These three officials are young and have a university education. We speak the same language, underscored with curiosity and trust in the written word. In the course of our conversation, they admitted to nursing a keen interest in collecting the written records of the past in order to learn what really happened. They pointed out that our request had already launched an internal debate, the main themes of which were the desire for greater transparency and the strengthening of the community's collective memory. The sermons however, they hastened to

add, 'could maybe become something of a problem' (Zoom conversation on 14 June 2021).

An exploratory talk with Burhan Kesici, former president of Islamrat Germany and born into an earlier generation, outlined the many problems ahead. Questioned about the whereabouts of the administration of the 17 Millî Görüş mosques in Berlin, he said, 'not here in the central office! If you are looking for order and continuity, you will have to ask hierarchical organisations like Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren or Sufi houses, which can order their communities to store their documents in an orderly manner. But we are like the Lutheran Church, we let our local communities decide for themselves!' (face-to-face conversation on 8 April 2021). Like Pürlü, Kesici advised the research team to visit each community separately.

Kesici also pinpointed the two key moments when documents could have gone missing. The first was around 2000, when the idea of 'paperless administration' took root. As the central administrator of Millî Görüş Berlin, instead of paper files, he created internet presentations and put anything of interest on the web: reports, photographs, newspaper clippings, etc. The second moment came around 2010. In the aftermath of 9/11, Millî Görüş communities in Berlin, in their wish to demonstrate the beauty of Islam and also to make a new beginning, erected representative mosques. 'Maybe they still possess the drawings', Kesici mused. But as for other archival records, he is not so sure (face-to-face conversation on 8 April 2021).

3.3 *Local Mosques*

Figure 3 presents dates relevant to the mosque communities that cooperated in the survey. After the town to which they belong, their name and affiliation, it notes the founding dates and the year(s) when the community moved to another site. It also lists the places of storage that were shown to the researchers, as well as those that were only mentioned to them. The last column gives a cursory overview of the items we were able to study.

Covering a timespan between 44 (Fatih, Aya Sofya, Anonymous) and 25 years (Mevlana), all the mosques involved in the survey moved to a different site at least once, causing a breach in continuity in the storage of documents. This is how administrators explained to the researchers why boxes full of documents had landed in the attic or in the private homes of former administrators. The archival records we were able to view were of a similar nature, including documents pertaining to building management, personnel, finance, membership, religious and social activities and sound recordings of sermons and sohbet (religious conversations), as well community photographs. In three of

Mosque	Start	Changed site	Places of storage	Contents of archive
Mavi Cami (DITIB)	1981	2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Nowhere in the mosque – In the homes of the elder board members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Photographs – <i>Orally recounted memories</i>
Anonymous Cami (ATIB)	1977	1985	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In the chairman's office – In boxes in the upper storey, and temporarily in private homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Statutes, protocols, and membership lists – Finances – Invitations for the annual festivals – Certificates of football matches – CD with stories for the 30-Year-Jubilee – Ditto photographs – Press clippings (also online) – Sermons (also online)
Mevlana Cami (DITIB)	1994	2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In the chairman's office – In a special storeroom – In places unknown to the present administrator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Correspondences with umbrella organisation's Register Office – Üye – Membership lists – Finances – Architectural plans and building activities – Building management – Rental contracts (in the mosque building) – Photographs of mosque football teams – Chronicle of the 30-Years-Jubilee – <i>Orally recounted memories</i>

FIGURE 3 Mosque archives in the survey: modes of storage and approximate contents

FIGURE 3 Mosque archives in the survey: modes of storage and approximate contents (*cont.*)

Mosque	Start	Changed site	Places of storage	Contents of archive
Ayasofya Cami (VIKZ)	1977	1994 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In the chairman's office – In an upstairs storeroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Correspondence with Register Office. Ditto with Nuremberg authorities – Üye – Membership lists – Management of building (plans and drawings of dormitory and resident students) – Rental contracts – Personnel management – Contributions of members; student payments, donations – Tax consultancies – Sermons (also online) – Sohbet (also online)
Fatih Cami (MG)	1977	1983 1988 1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In closed cupboards in the boardroom and the imams' office – In a spare room – In private homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Finances – Üye – Membership lists – Building management – Contracts – Architectural plans – Youth organisations – Organisation of halal meat – Organisation of <i>hac</i> and <i>umre</i> – Marriage documents – <i>Orally recounted memories</i>

the participating mosque communities, mosque elders also offered a glimpse of archives they carried around in their heads, relating memories of how the work was started.

3.4 *Fürth and a Near-by Town: DITIB and ATIB Mosques*

Although the DITIB and ATIB Unions did not respond to our attempts to establish contact, it soon became apparent that local DITIB and ATIB mosques were very well willing to do so, thereby demonstrating that they had ample space for manoeuvre. The DITIB Union Germany represents the German branch of DIYANET, the state-governed religious corporation of Turkey. In Germany, there is considerable public suspicion about the aims of the DITIB Union as it works in close consultation with DIYANET. For example, Friday sermons are overseen in Ankara before being distributed among the German mosques. Where Muslim education in schools is concerned, federal governments in the past have suspected the DITIB Union of acting as Turkey's 'long arm' (Teczan and Thielmann, 2012).

The two DITIB mosque communities involved in the survey demonstrate independence (Beilschmidt, 2015). Thus, the founder of Mevlana Cami in Fürth showed genuine interest in the researchers' questions and, after some hesitation, allowed them to take stock of the archival situation (see below). In contrast, the administrator of Mavi Cami in Erlangen expressed regret at being unable to engage with the survey, stating, 'I have looked hard into the matter but am not able to help you. This mosque does not have room for any archive. What we have here are memories and photographs. Best would be, that you ask the elder folks' (face-to-face conversation on 21 April 2021). The same independent attitude seems to hold true for the Anonymous Cami in a nearby town. In the past, it was part of the ATIB Union Germany but, because ATIB is suspected of far-right associations, it currently finds itself under observation by bodies that protect the constitution (*Verfassungsschutz*) and, for that reason, many ATIB mosques now cooperate with DITIB mosques (Thielmann, 2020). This mosque too is currently manoeuvring between old and new loyalties. When asked, the administrator claimed independence from any umbrella organisation, since this mosque had already distanced itself from the ATIB Union in January 2020. But the mosque's Facebook presentation still speaks another language, featuring links to ATIB institutions, including the official ATIB journal *Referans*. The difference between oral and written presentation involuntarily demonstrates the difficulties connected to moving from one political frame of reference to another. Nonetheless, when invited to cooperate in the survey, the administrator handled the researchers' questions with kindness and transparency. During their visit, he explained the various parts of the

mosque archive, opened the one in the chairman's office and answered all the researchers' questions (on 21 April 2021 and 27 May 2021). Sometime after, he also contributed some photographs to the survey, showing rows of files standing in the administration cupboard (Figure 4).

Starting with just 20 members in 1994, Mevlana Cami today represents an impressive DITIB community with over 400 members (face-to-face visit on 1 May 2021). The mosque is housed in a former barracks and surrounded by a sprawling parade ground. In a compromise with the German antipathy to tall minarets (Reinhardt and Furlinger, 2015), the entry to the building has been adorned by a small cupola and two low minarets. As well as a spacious prayer room for men only, it houses a prayer room for women, rooms for youth activities and schoolwork, a teahouse and a restaurant. To erect this mosque was a mammoth enterprise, leaving behind a paper trail dealing with matters of construction and financing, communal resistance to minarets ('no minarets in Frankenland!') and how to maintain (good) relations with the town. Today, the restaurant is also a community centre. As in many other DITIB mosques, youth care and football go hand in hand and are considered key to integrating the next generation (ditib.de 2007).

Mr Duman is the founder of Mevlana Cami. Arriving in Germany as a university student in the 1980s, he also started a pharmacy in the nearby town of Heilbronn, supervising the mosque construction and the archive in his free time until 2004. He is very concerned about appearances, and also disapproves of any disorder in the filing cabinet. From his unique position as a founder and long-time board member, he carries all the ups and downs his community has gone through in his head and therefore seems to struggle with the



FIGURE 4 A view of the administration cupboard in Anonymous Cami

idea that files should be key to understanding the mosque's history. For him, what counts are personal life stories recounting achievements against all odds. During the visits, the researchers heard many details of his own history, his political outlook, how the mosque was constructed and how integration could be achieved. The paper files in the office appear to contain construction drawings, finances, lists of paying members (*üye*), communication with the city council and the mayor, youth work, and photographs of football teams, reflecting much of his life work.

3.5 *Nuremberg: Ayasofya Cami (VIKZ)*

Ayasofya Cami is situated directly on the ring road surrounding the old town of Nuremberg. From here, one can see the city wall, defence towers and castle. This is the centre of the centre and a desirable area. The building itself does not look much like a mosque. Previously used as an office building, it features a bland cube with almost blinded windows, hardly noticeable in passing.

Since 2006, Serkan Değirmendere has governed internal processes. He is responsible for the religious services and relationships with Christians and other segments of German society. But his heaviest burden lies with the boarding school and its responsibilities to house and feed the children, including helping them with schoolwork and career choices, and developing tools for their smooth integration into German society as 'people of faith'. After much telephoning, a first date was arranged at short notice (face-to-face conversation on 6 May 2021). Here, a complication emerged. Just before the survey began, two babies were born to the team. The researchers, having organised their other children's home schooling before they could leave their homes, decided to take the babies with them, the pandemic situation forcing them to improvise. For this administrator, expecting to maintain his image of 'university professors', two mothers with babies were probably beyond his expectations. The researchers noted that it took some months before communication could be restored on an equal basis.

Our decision to change the composition of the research team almost immediately resulted in very different dynamics. From now on, every visit contributed towards deepening the conversation. When the researchers returned in October, the director had thoroughly prepared to show them whatever archival records he had been able to retrieve. Having already asked around in his community to look for more documents, and having studied the checklist beforehand, Mr Değirmendere told them that he was ready to make copies of everything for research purposes. However, from the open cupboards and stacks on the table it quickly became clear that, before 2006, documents used to be sent to the VIKZ central office in Cologne on a regular basis, resulting in relatively 'young' administration records being in his possession. To remedy

his own and the researchers' disappointment, a plan was developed to organise a small exhibition on the history of the mosque. This, the administrator felt, might positively stimulate community members to return the archival records that were currently kept in their private homes.

3.6 *Heilbronn: Fatih Cami (MG)*

Situated between a Greek Orthodox church, a Turkish ATIB mosque community, the Turkish Roundtable, the DİTİB mosque, an intercultural centre, a provider of hot meals for the needy, a kindergarten, a gym, a playground, a hairdresser and several supermarkets, Fatih Cami presents itself as a long white utility building, topped by a small cupola and an equally small minaret. Twenty-five years ago, the community started to work from an old shoe factory situated in the middle of the so-called Hawaii quarter, a structurally weak city area. The supermarket on the other side of the street carries a large Millî Görüş notice telling customers that its meat is halal. Notices outside and inside the mosque stress its professional self-understanding: prison chaplaincy, hospital visits, an education centre, after-school help. In the back window of a car parked in front of the building, a large sign aptly expresses the spirit of the place: 'With faith, everything is possible!' (*İman varsa. İmkanda vardır!*).

Here is Millî Görüş at work, a heady mixture of religious fervour, social work, sports and youth activities, and down-to-earth demands for rights. It took the researcher three visits for the community to digest his questions, understand their value, and recompose itself. During the first visit, he was given a tour of the mosque and listened to a long recital of the problems the community was facing. During the second, to which the researcher brought his parents and his aunt, one of the board members of Islamrat Germany made his acquaintance. During the third, he met with Mustafa Yigit.

Mr Yigit is the former chairman and a key player in the history of the Fatih mosque. He is a cook by profession, still helps in the Fatih mosque kitchen, and, if the need arises, also in the kitchens of the nearby Turkish communities. He is a networker and very well connected with the Turkish mosques in and around Heilbronn. It was his idea to start the large restaurant in the mosque that today represents the heart of community life. Mr Yigit had come to look at the researcher and hear what he wanted. He asked questions, listened to the answers, and then beckoned the (much younger) mosque administrator to his side. 'Alright. You want to know about our history. Then let me tell you', he said. He had brought a bag full of pictures and a small folder with key files from his term in office. The story that followed was recited in Turkish and lasted at least an hour. The administrator translated. The researcher, taking notes, realised that much of what was said was new to the administrator too. When Mr Yigit had left, the administrator asked, 'Did that help you? Anything else we can do?'

The researcher said (hesitantly): ‘What about the files ...’ Files? The administrator walked to the back of the room and threw open large cupboards full of folders and documents, in this room, in the next room, and even more in the imams’ room. Somebody arrived to look for the marriage folder, which somebody else had taken. During the search that followed, the researcher took some hasty photographs. With their help, the list of contents could finally be drawn up.

4 Summary and Outlook

During its short period of data sampling, the pilot project on mosque archives in Germany collected data on the attitudes of Muslim dignitaries towards their own archival efforts as well as on the contents of the archives themselves. It was an exercise in listening to the people who put themselves between them and the filing cabinet and in writing down the stories they felt urged to relate instead. For these reasons, the research was rich in surprises, forcing the researchers to re-train their eyes on the people in front of them instead of on the original object of their attention, which had been cupboards full of files and their contents. Achieving that without losing sight of the goal may therefore be seen as the main outcome of this research. As was indicated at the beginning, looking for relevant ethnographic factors in mosque archives helped the research to achieve two blocks of substantial knowledge. In finishing, they may be summarised as follows:

4.1 *Mosque Archives as Part and Parcel of Their Immediate Surroundings*

On the previous pages, some mosque archives in Turkish mosques in southern Germany were described. Their appearance, storage places, and approximate contents were closely tied to the story of Turkish contract workers arriving in Germany in the 1960s. To make those descriptions, ethnographic approaches have been of utmost help.

- First, they urged the project to pay attention to the world around the mosque, sharpening its understanding of the relationship between inside and outside. Thinking ahead, the researchers looked at the street with the eyes of a collector, wondering about the possible connections between the mosque and passers-by in the street, mosques and churches standing side by side, the mosque and cemeteries bordering the neighbourhood, etc.
- Second, once communication with the mosque was established, ethnography helped to understand the irritations that arose as part of the work researchers tried to establish, allowing insights into such things as

modes of archiving and their place in the administrators' consciousness, storage places, lost archives, and the role of collective memory in the community.

- Third, once standing in front of the filing cabinet in the office of the imam or chairman (it was not at this stage possible to consider more remote storage places), ethnographic survey urged the researchers to pay attention to its position and appearance, as well as the labels on the the files, and how the administrator commented on them. The neighbourhood inquiry now made it possible to draw a quick overview of what was, and what was not, filed on the shelves.

4.2 *Intergenerational Differences and Expectations with a View to Safeguarding the Past*

Whether pietistic or state-oriented, right-wing, or leftist, every Turkish mosque community and umbrella organisation we consulted realised the importance of the mosque archives for their communities. But the approach of the young generation towards any paper trails and their whereabouts differed fundamentally from the reaction of those who produced all that paper, the founding generation itself. The young people had gone through university, trusted the written word and were already looking forward to reading the sources. In contrast, the founding generation who had done the backbreaking work felt stimulated to finally tell their story. For them, it was difficult to understand that we were looking for files with dry facts rather than asking them what they had achieved. During the survey, these differing expectations initially constituted a source of irritation. Telling the story – to the researchers, but also to the young officials who accompanied the founders – was a step towards remedying this.

To conclude. Apart from archival records in various places, each Turkish mosque in Germany possesses 'living archives': men and women of the founding generation who need to tell their story as long as they are around. For this research, time is the key factor. While much time and patience will be needed to gather the written sources from their different storage places and study them, as far as the storytellers are concerned, time is already running out.

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