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The Gap between Culture and Cultures: Cultural
Policy in Berlin and its Implications for Immigrant
Cultural Production

Kira Kosnick



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KIRA KOSNICK

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Abstract

This paper explores the uses of the culture concept in cultural policy practices and institutional frameworks directed towards immigrants in Berlin, Germany's capital city. It is shown how a divide between culture as Hochkultur (high art) and cultures as the ethno-cultural diversity of life forms (socio-culture) traps immigrant cultural production in separate funding-schemes, institutional structures and discourses. It is argued that this divide inscribes an implicit 'whiteness' into those areas of cultural production that claim to be merely 'quality-oriented'. Examples will be discussed in order to examine the practical consequences of this divide. In conclusion, the paper outlines an argument about the links between cultural policy in Berlin and the cross-border dimensions of Turkish immigrant cultural life.

Keywords

cultural policy, immigration, whiteness, ethnic arts

Introduction*

In the late summer of 2003, a new poster began to appear on street corners and unused wall spaces along the sidewalks of Kreuzberg, Berlin's neighbourhood with the highest percentage of immigrants from Turkey. Pasted next to or on top of countless other Turkish-language posters announcing concerts, political gatherings and nightclub events, this one was advertising the release of a new CD by Turkey's most famous pop-star, Sezen Aksu. Rather than simply enticing passers-by to go buy it, however, the poster featured another important announcement: this CD would be available in large-chain German music stores only. Unlike the myriad of imported CDs and cassette tapes which are sold in small Turkish stores all over the city, often together with other goods in import-export shops, Sezen Aksu's CD would try to break into the market and distribution networks which sell the bulk of audio consumer products in Germany. For immigrant consumers, this was anything but good news. Used to paying about eight Euros for CDs imported from Turkey, they would now have to pay twice that amount to buy Aksu's *Yaz Bitmeden* ('before the summer ends').

Another Turkish pop star followed suit: Mustafa Sandal's song *Aya Benzer* ('she's like the moon'), was re-released by the German label Polydor in a spiced-up version. The new version targeting the German market featured a thumping beat and a guest appearance by young and attractive Gülcan Karahancı, known to TV audiences as moderator on Germany's music television channel *Viva. Viva*, as the German *MTV*, had also heavily promoted the video of European Prix-de-la-Chanson winner Sertab Erener, well-established as a singer in Turkey, but new to non-Turkish European audiences. German newspapers took note, announcing Turkish pop music to be the latest wave of global pop exoticism making it big in Germany. (<http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/musik/0,1518,262420,00.html>, KulturSPIEGEL 9/2003, visited 25.08.2003)

Not so surprising, at first sight, considering that immigrants from Turkey and their descendents constitute the largest ethnic minority group in Germany, and have over the past forty years established a lasting presence. One might expect that this presence would make itself felt also in the cultural sector, and introduce Turkish cultural influences into the German world of arts and entertainment. While the admission that Germany has become a country of immigration came very late, the dominant political discourse has shifted in the course of the 1990s toward speaking of Germany as a multicultural society, despite conservative forces arguing for a German '*Leitkultur*' which should ensure the primacy of traditions and values deemed indigenous over those introduced by immigrants (Bloomfield 2003). In fact, it is rather surprising that Turkish cultural influences still play such a little role in German cultural life, even though interest in world-music and non-Western art forms has been growing steadily over the past decades (Greve 2003).

The acknowledgment of Germany as a multicultural society obviously does not answer the question of how the cultural contributions associated with different immigrant groups are to be categorized and valued in national public arenas. Nor does an apparent increase in transnational flows of cultural commodities and musical production between Turkey and Germany necessarily mean that immigrant and postmigrant¹ artists find it easier to achieve public recognition in German cultural arenas.

The paper presented here will examine these issues by looking at the case of immigrant and postmigrant artists in the city of Berlin, and at the ways in which their work is categorized, channelled and made public sense of by German cultural institutions. I argue that an entrenched conceptual divide between culture as *Hochkultur* (high art) and cultures as the ethno-cultural diversity of life-forms traps

* Research for this paper was conducted while the author was at the University of Southampton.

1 The concept of postmigrant has been recently developed and promoted by second- and third-generation immigrants in order to claim both local belonging and migration background.

immigrant and postmigrant cultural production in Germany within separate funding-schemes, institutional structures and discourses.

Berlin

As Germany's capital city, both federal and state government efforts have concentrated over the past decade on bolstering Berlin's image as a 'world-open' (*weltoffene*) city composed of diverse groups, fast-changing and in synchronicity with global cultural flows (Vertovec 1996). While Berlin cannot claim the status of a 'global' city in terms of its strategic economic importance (Krätke 2001), it significantly represents Germany's image to the world, and in the national context figures as the place where Germany is most intimately caught up in global cultural developments (Held 2000, Hoffmann and Schneider 2002). To support such claims, city representatives point to the ethnic diversity of Berlin's population as well as to the range and quality of cultural institutions and artistic scenes. Two different concepts of culture are intermeshed in the representations of Berlin as a 'happening' capital city: culture as a marker of ethnic groups, characterizing traditions, values and a particular way of life, and culture as a limited domain of artistic activities and institutions, associated with theatres, museums, opera houses and the like. The characterization of Berlin as a world-open city hinges upon both its multicultural composition and its creative-artistic vibrancy. Ideal conditions, one might assume, for immigrant and postmigrant artists who can lay claim to making cultural contributions in this double sense.

Yet, unlike other world cities that emphasize their cosmopolitan qualities, Berlin does not have a particular reputation for launching the careers of immigrant or postmigrant artists. And despite the recent crossover attempts of Turkish pop music into German mainstream markets mentioned above, these artists are based in Turkey, not in Germany. There is no Turkish equivalent in Germany to the success stories of French Rai and British Bhangra music, both of which have been significantly shaped by artists with immigrant backgrounds, even though Turkish pop has been similarly described as a synthesis of 'oriental' and 'western' elements (Coşkun 1995, N.N. 1995b). Different histories of migration might partly account for this lack. But taking into account the popularity of Turkish music among immigrants and their descendents, as witnessed by music sales as well as the nightclubs that have emerged in many German cities in the 1990s, it seems curious that Turkish pop stars should not also rise from within the migrant population. In fact, they have risen from it, but the German music business has scarcely taken note. Like Turkey's most famous male pop star Tarkan, several well-known singers were born or spent parts of their childhood in Germany, but have launched their musical careers in Turkey (Bax 1999). As Martin Greve describes in his detailed study of Turkish musical life in Germany, aspiring migrant musicians of all musical genres hope to gain fame in Turkey, as the context that provides the true yardstick for both musical quality and audience appeal (Greve 2003).

Ten years ago, the relatively brief success of Rap and Hip Hop artists from Berlin formed an exception. In the mid-1990s, groups like Cartel and singers like Aziza A. were heralded by German music publications as the representatives of authentic ghetto-voices, doing for postmigrant youths what American Rap stars had done for African-Americans in the United States (Cheesman 1998, Rose 1994). However, they had only moderate commercial success in Germany. Cartel enjoyed a brief period of notoriety in Turkey, heralded as defending Turkish culture abroad (N.N. 1995a). A decade later, it appears as though ironically scientific interest has by far exceeded musical and commercial interest in migrant Hip Hop artists, judging by the number of recent academic publications (Burul 2003; Kaya 2001; Soysal 1999, 2002). But even considering other musical domains, artists with a Turkish background have hardly been able to make a dent in German cultural life. Are German music companies simply unwilling to take risks and promote local talent (Kreuzer 2004)? Or does Turkey loom too large in the cultural imagination of artists with migrant roots? Is it the 'three T's'—travel, television, telecommunications—which have reinforced the position of Turkey as a point of orientation for migrants in Germany, leading to segregation? All of these arguments have been advanced as explanations for the conspicuous absence of Turkish influences in German cultural life.

Yet, immigrant and postmigrant representation in music and the arts does not have to do with personal initiative, interest and commercial markets alone. Cultural policy has a crucial role to play in providing access to arts education and performance opportunities, in structuring artistic genres and defining the standards by which artistic quality is judged. This is particularly the case in Germany, where public expenditure for ‘culture’ is high, and continues to be seen as a necessity despite economic crisis (Ahearne 2003, Elpers *et al.* 2000, Weiss 1999). And nowhere is the commitment to public spending on culture more visible than in Berlin, despite the fact that the city has accumulated a stunning deficit from which it is unlikely to recover in the near future. Burns and Van der Will argue that the city is living beyond its means, supporting a cultural life that is second to none in Germany despite crippling debts, mainly because of a continuing political investment in publicly financed cultural politics that characterizes the country as a whole.

The commitment to culture, while certainly being tested by Germany’s lagging economic performance, still appears very strong indeed. [...] To be sure, this comes at a price, but for the moment the big German cities, and not just Berlin, appear to prefer to live in a state of technical bankruptcy rather than forswear their commitment to culture. (Burns and Van der Will 2003:150)

In a country in which the public financing of culture and the public administration of cultural politics reign supreme, cultural policy issues cannot be neglected when it comes to the success or failure of different forms of cultural production. Thus, in order to understand the current situation of immigrant art and the role of non-Western cultural influences in the allegedly ‘world-open’ city of Berlin, it is important to take a look at the specific policy conditions under which immigrant and postmigrant artists can engage in cultural production and find audiences for their work. Following a decentralized approach, cultural policy in Germany is primarily a matter of the *Länder*, the different regional states, and their municipal councils (Heinrichs 1997, Sievers and Wagner 2002). Over the past years, however, the federal government has increased its involvement, particularly in the new capital city. Owing to Berlin’s particular status as a city-state that is also Germany’s capital, the three levels of municipal, regional state and federal cultural politics coincide, making for a complex picture of public involvement that has significant consequences for immigrant and postmigrant cultural production. Turkish-German music coming out of Berlin is an interesting case in point.

Soziokultur and High Culture

Ayşe Çağlar has pointed out that the phenomenon of German-Turkish Rap might be ironically described as a ‘prescribed rebellion’ (Çağlar 1998). A musical genre that crucially relies on its street-credibility—‘keeping it real’ is the motto of the voice from the ghetto—Rap has in fact been explicitly promoted to postmigrant youths in Berlin as a mode of expression and activity deemed appropriate and beneficial by social workers and youth centre institutions, with public funds going into the creation of performance spaces, workshops and public contests. Though often presented as rebellious ‘organic intellectuals’ who articulate the plight of postmigrant youths in clear opposition to a dominant ‘system’ that excludes them (Kaya 2002a, 2002b), German-Turkish Rap artists have been able to benefit from, and have been shaped by cultural policy measures in the city.

Like other cultural activities supported by public institutions concerned with social issues at the city or district level, the main aim behind such promotion has not been to create artists, but rather to get kids ‘off the streets’ and ‘out of trouble’. In the context of neighbourhood associations, youth centres and *Volkshochschulen* (publicly subsidized schools that offer training courses in everything from arts and languages to vocational courses for a small fee), culture is firmly linked to socio-political goals. German-Turkish Rap is valued by policy-makers for its alleged integrative potential and expected social benefits, not as an art form. It thus falls into a domain of cultural policy that has been termed *Soziokultur*, or socio-culture.

The notion of *Soziokultur* dates back to the 1970s in the Federal Republic, when in the context of a general revolt against traditions, *Kultur* was redefined as a good to be enjoyed and practiced by all parts of the population (Heinrichs 1997). Rather than promoting what was seen as an elitist and conservative

cultural establishment restricted to the middle- and upper classes, cultural policy was to promote widened access to both cultural consumption and production. Particularly on a communal level, different forms of culture were as a result ‘discovered’ for cultural policy-making, such as folk music, photography and cultural activities formerly labelled as ‘hobbies’. The focus thereby shifted from performative, public-oriented forms of cultural production toward the recognition of cultural production as a form of self-realization and social participation, not geared toward a public audience but toward the transformation of its active participants. The concept of *Soziokultur* emphasized the importance of creative activities for personal growth and social cohesion, and sought to radically democratize cultural landscapes, particularly at the grass-roots level of the communes (Deutscher Städtetag 1992).

However, the new institutions and initiatives that were to implement these goals did not replace the established landscape of theatres, opera houses and concert halls that were associated with the concept of *Kultur* as ‘high art’ and ‘national traditions’. In times of relative affluence, federal states and communes could afford to simply add to what was already there. The result has been a dual structure of *Soziokultur* and *Hochkultur*, in which different meanings of culture and different aims associated with those meanings have been institutionalized in different arenas.

Soziokultur tends to be the concern of low-level public bodies and institutions, with city districts and communal governments allocating funds that serve different purposes of cultural education and social integration. *Hochkultur*, on the other hand, falls within the domain of higher-level policy-making. It is Berlin’s state senate which provides the budget for established theatres, museums and orchestras in the city.² In matters deemed to be of particular representational relevance, the federal government has been stepping in. Cultural institutions in the capital city whose image is deemed to reflect upon the entire country receive funding from the federal government, as stipulated in the *Hauptstadtkulturvertrag*, the Capital City Culture Contract signed between the city and the *Bund* (Regierung Online 2001).

Another level of distinction between *Soziokultur* and *Hochkultur* pertains to the areas of policy-making: Berlin’s Senate Administration for Science, Research and Culture (*Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur*), finances and regulates primarily the arts-oriented domain of *Hochkultur*. However, other Senate Administrations also deal with cultural matters and engage in policy-making in cultural domains. The Senate Administration for Education, Youth and Sports as well as the Administration for City Development will for example provide funding for cultural activities and initiatives that are deemed to further their respective policy goals. Thus, the task of managing disadvantaged neighbourhoods (*Quartiersmanagement*) might entail engaging residents in cultural activities, and the latest family pass (*Familienpass*) offering discount theatre, movie and concert tickets to families is advertised on the Senate’s education web pages. The divide between *Soziokultur* and *Hochkultur*, the forms of its institutionalization and its influence on cultural policy-making have significant consequences for immigrant and postmigrant cultural production.

Immigrant Culture(s)

Historically, the rise of socio-cultural politics in the 1970s Federal Republic coincided with the peak of labor migration to West Germany, and its public perception as a socio-cultural rather than just economic phenomenon. Civil society organizations (such as unions, the churches etc.), employers, politicians and the media debated the distinctive cultural needs of labour migrants, and how these needs could be met in order to increase productivity and minimize social conflict (Kosnick 2003). Cultural difference needed to be managed in the interest of social harmony. Up until the mid-1980s, it was preserving the connection with cultural traditions ‘back home’ which formed the undisputed centre of cultural policy concerns towards labour migrant populations (Kosnick 2000). Most immigrant cultural activities took place in the very contexts and locations that also enabled ‘*Soziokultur*’: in youth centres,

2 See also below.

Volkshochschulen, neighborhood associations, and local cultural facilities linked to the smallest entities of cultural policy-making in Germany, the *Kommunen* or city districts.

With the slow political recognition in the 1980s that Germany has in fact become an immigration country, public discourse and policy have slowly shifted toward a politics of integration, with the image of a multicultural society gaining ground. Immigrant groups are now understood as culturally distinct groups whose ‘difference’ is to be accommodated and defused of disruptive potential. In this context, discourse and policy concerned with immigrant and postmigrant cultural production remains primarily tied to socio-political goals. The preservation of distinctive cultural traditions has thus remained high on the agenda, now linked to ethnic identity politics in a multicultural framework (Kolland 2003). In a society seen to be composed of multiple ethnic groups that are carriers of distinct cultural traditions and qualities, cultural production can demand public support, both to ‘preserve identity’ and to publicly represent its traditions as a contribution to multicultural life and diversity in Germany. It is important to note, though, that the culture to be supported in this context is a marker of ethnic group identity, and not *Kultur* in the sense of the creative arts.

When artists with immigrant background seek recognition in this second domain of cultural production, both meanings of culture are potentially mobilized. As a consequence, their work faces a collusion of semantic contents of culture concepts and, linked to them, different policy contexts and modes of public intervention which have profound consequences for immigrant and postmigrant cultural participation and expression in Berlin. Despite the recognition of immigrant cultural influences as an asset for the city and its cosmopolitan ambitions, this has not automatically opened the doors for immigrant and postmigrant cultural production into the territory of ‘high culture’, as occupied by state theatres, opera houses, concert halls and museums. Instead, this production remains closely associated with socio-culture, a link that becomes particularly visible in the institutional structures and practices that deal with non-Western cultural-artistic forms in the city.

In Berlin, two cultural institutions deserve particular mentioning when it comes to the representation of non-Western cultural traditions and developments in the arts. The first one, the House of World Cultures (*Haus der Kulturen der Welt*, HKW) receives its funds from the federal government, which signals its strategic importance in representing the new capital city.

The House of World Cultures

The House of World Cultures has set itself the task of presenting cultures from outside Europe through their fine arts, theatre, music, literature, film and the media and engaging them in a public discourse with European cultures. The House of World Cultures’ programme focuses on the contemporary arts and current developments in the cultures of Africa, Asia and Latin America as well as on the artistic and cultural consequences of globalisation. It gives priority to projects that explore the possibilities of both intercultural co-operation and its presentation. (House of World Cultures, mission statement, 2004)

The House of World Cultures (*Haus der Kulturen der Welt*, HKW) might be Berlin’s strongest argument for taking seriously enough the artistic potential and relevance of non-Western cultural influences. The HKW is Berlin’s most prestigious cultural institution focusing explicitly on the representation of artistic work from outside of Europe and the ‘Western World’. Significantly, this includes artists and art forms that might be located in Europe or the West, but that are importantly influenced by cultural developments and traditions in the non-Western world. In terms of cultural policy in Berlin, the HKW plays an important role as a showcase institution for Berlin’s artistic vibrancy—to both the rest of Germany and to the rest of the world. It has been taken over as a cultural institution by the federal government in 2001, along with several other institutions likely to enhance Berlin’s image as a capital city. For artists, to perform at the HKW equals a confirmation that one has reached the ‘highest’ level of artistic development as an ‘international’ artist, and (at times *or*) that one’s work is cutting edge. Just what is considered cutting edge can be learnt from its Internet mission statement. An excerpt:

The House of World Cultures' programme work reflects changing global conditions and creates a basis for new forms of interdisciplinary artistic co-operation. [...] Migration, international networks, encounters with other traditions and other modernities have transformed cultural conditions throughout the world and created new conditions for art. National cultures, even where they are still experienced as homogeneous by many people, no longer ensure binding cultural affiliation. [...] All over the world, artists, authors and scientists are relating to these changes in their works. In co-operation with them, the House of World Cultures seeks to develop a programme presenting responses and artistic models that reflect these international conditions in terms of what they mean for the individual and for human beings living together in a global world. (http://www.hkw.de/external/en/profil/das_hkw/c_index.html)

The prominence of motives like migration, international networks and new living conditions in a global world is an indication that the HKW is not content to put 'foreign cultures' on display, in the tradition of overcome anthropologies that see culture as firmly rooted in (preferably national) territories. Instead, global transformations and interconnections form the central artistic interest for the House, reflected in programs and festivals that stress cultural hybridity and flow: yearly events such as the festival for new music, *TranSonic*, the performance festival *In Transit*, and the open-air music festival *popdeurope—migrating sounds in and out of europe*.

Thus, migrants in one sense are key for the House of Cultures and the fluid concept of culture it tries to promote. The cross-border movements of people complicate the relationship between culture and place, and migrants are particularly likely to have multiple and complex cultural affiliations. The HKW's general secretary Hans Georg Knopp fluently quotes cutting-edge cultural critics of migration when reflecting upon approaches that can adequately capture the cultural state of the current world. The migrant is a key figure, in an abstract sense, in so far as this figure epitomizes the shifting forms of identification and challenges to notions of cultural homogeneity. In a more concrete sense, however, migrants have far less representation at the House of World Cultures. Immigrants and postmigrants living in the city of Berlin are not particularly targeted as an audience for HKW events,³ and no special effort is made to recruit them as performing artists. When describing the pedagogical mission of the House of World Cultures, the general secretary paints a telling picture of its audience:

It is something of a pedagogical mission, one could say, but one that is filled with art, to make people realize that there are other values, be it social or aesthetic ones, that there are other modes of expression, which carry the *same* value as that which I know, that which represents *my* culture. (Author's interview with Hans Georg Knopp, 21 August 2003, translation from German)

While cultural hybridity and global flows are very much at issue in the contents of what the House tries to offer Berlin, these processes seem not to have transformed the city itself—at least not that part of the population which Knopp imagines as the HKW's audience. Despite the claims that national cultures can no longer ensure binding affiliations, this targeted audience seems to be in firm possession of one particular culture, against which the equality of non-European cultures needs to be asserted. Thus, implicitly, cultural difference still comes from elsewhere. Berlin needs to be taught about the cultural dimensions of globalization, it does not appear to participate in them. As much as cultural hybridity, migration and globalization are addressed in the work of artists and thinkers presented by the HKW, they are almost always brought in from 'outside' the city, and rarely represent the cultural complexity and dynamics of Berlin itself.

Even the 2003 *popdeurope* festival, claiming to present the diversity of popular music cultures that the children of immigrants have created in European metropolises, has not entered Berlin into the mix. The concerts offering 'migrating sounds in and out of Europe' featured musicians from cities such as Lisbon, Marseille, Budapest and London, but none from Berlin. Turkish musical influences were represented by the artist Mercan Dede, who moves between Istanbul and Toronto, and fuses religious

3 Though space is occasionally let to immigrant organizations for independent events.

Sufi music with electro beats. Local Turkish DJs were invited to spin tunes for the crowd before and after the concert, but no Berlin artist was featured in the concert line-up.

When asked why the House of World Cultures does not seek to cooperate more with Berlin's immigrant population, Knopp refers to the particularities of the city's migration history: 'Berlin has a different migration history. Berlin has a labour migration. I am not quite certain, but I think most of the Turks who came here came from Eastern Anatolia.' (ibid.) They have little understanding of contemporary developments in the arts, he claims. Lacking intellectuals, Berlin's immigrants are less likely to produce, let alone appreciate, artistic work of the kind the HKW seeks to present. To Knopp, immigrant and postmigrant artists are not disadvantaged through the HKW's policies.

I still think that an artist is either good or he (sic) isn't. No matter where he comes from, no matter in which milieu he is working, he is either good or not. And I don't give any credit because of someone's background, not in an art project. Neither positive nor negative. (ibid.)

Knopp sees no potential conflict between this dismissal of relative standards regarding artistic quality and the HKW's mission to assert the equality of non-European modes of expression. But the precise nature of his standards of judgment when it comes to 'good art' remains unclear. If artistic quality will automatically assert itself and rise to the top, one would indeed have to infer from the line-up at the House of World Cultures that such quality is lacking among immigrant and postmigrant artists in the city. However, Knopp offers another explanation for the situation: while the HKW has a more international orientation, another institution in the city concerned with non-European culture focuses on work emerging in the context of the city, the *Werkstatt der Kulturen* (Workshop of Cultures).

The Workshop of Cultures

With their culture, religion and language, with their aesthetic notions and their art, almost half a million people from more than 190 nations, among them many artists and intellectuals, make up the international flair of Berlin—a world city in transformation. In this context, the *Werkstatt der Kulturen* presents itself as a place of intercultural art and communication, as a platform for the impulses of new social and cultural movements emerging from the urban milieus shaped by migration. (<http://www.werkstatt-der-kulturen.de/index2.htm>, translated from German)

While the HKW has its home within a stone's throw of the German Chancellor's office in the centre of Berlin, the Workshop of Cultures (*Werkstatt der Kulturen*, WdK) is located in one of Berlin's poorest neighbourhoods with a high percentage of immigrant residents, the district of Neukölln. Conceptualized as a 'workshop for integration in a new Berlin' in 1993, the WdK wants to play an active role in facilitating intercultural encounter, exchange and transformation among and across different ethnic, cultural and religious groups in the city. The former Commissioner for Foreigner Affairs (*Ausländerbeauftragte des Senats*, today renamed Commissioner for Integration) who coined the term 'workshop for integration' (*Integrationswerkstatt*) was a driving force behind its inception, and her office continues to provide the basic financial support for the WdK (*Ausländerbeauftragte des Senats* 1999). At present, the Workshop has a secured budget of no more than 625.000 Euros per year—just enough to cover basic maintenance costs. Financial support for the WdK's different projects has to be obtained from other sources of funding, and thus the WdK staff each year enters the application race for grants from institutions like the Capital City Culture Fund, the *Klassenlotterie* (public lottery money), the Sociocultural Fund of the *Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft* and others.

Presenting intercultural art is only one of the aims of the WdK, as part of a wider conception of intercultural exchange and development to which the Workshop seeks to contribute. As a 'forum for the multicultural civil society', the WdK foregrounds not so much artistic as social criteria and goals, stating in its profile that it understands itself 'as a place of active citizenship and self-determined engagement with the legal and political processes of the democratic society.' (WdK 2004, translated from German) The presentation of immigrant and postmigrant artists consequently aims at showing

the diversity of lifestyles and aesthetic orientations as a cultural resource and development potential of the city, with the hope of promoting dialogue and social change in the urban environment.

Significantly, it is the House of World Cultures and not the Workshop of Cultures which has been taken on by the federal government as a showcase institution for the new capital Berlin. What is more, the WdK's finances are not anchored in Berlin's proper cultural budget (*Kulturhaushalt*), but in that of the Office of the Commissioner for Integration (formerly for Foreigners). It is thus culture in the plural, particularly immigrant cultures deemed to form part of a multicultural Berlin, which is key at the Workshop of Cultures, not culture as a singular domain of aesthetic production. While both the House of World Cultures and the Workshop of Cultures speak of cultures in the plural, it is culture in the singular, with reference to an implicit standard of artistic quality, which dominates the work at the HKW.

The Workshop of Cultures is best known in the city for its yearly Carnival of Cultures (*Karneval der Kulturen*), with four days of street festivities and a large parade to which a wide range of immigrant groups in the city contribute. Over the past eight years, the Carnival has been growing steadily in size, with around 1.5 million visitors per year and around 5000 active participants. The parade is advertised as a demonstration of Berlin's cultural diversity, put on display by 'participants from more than eighty nations living in Berlin' (ibid.). In this context, the cultural diversity of urban life in Berlin is strongly tied to ethnic groups which are mobilized to represent their cultural distinctiveness. It is thus difficult for the Carnival to avoid accusations of staging a form of 'picturesque multiculturalism' (Frei 2003) which glosses over the social inequalities and conflicts that characterize everyday life in Berlin. Though participants are encouraged by the organizers to represent intercultural projects and groups in the city, the overall impression of culture as a marker of ethnic or national group identity remains central to the Carnival's choreography and reception.

The WdK's managerial staff does not subscribe to a picturesque vision of urban multiculturalism at all, and works politically to challenge the boundaries of publicly financed culture in the singular.⁴ Yet, given its main sources of funding, its public mission and its representational practices in the city, the Workshop of Cultures operates as a firmly socio-cultural institution, rather than as an arts-oriented one. The House of World Cultures, on the other hand, strongly rejects sociocultural projects as part of its own agenda. It also rejects any particular responsibility for showing the work of immigrant or postmigrant artists, or targeting immigrants as part of its audience, deeming this the task of the Workshop of Cultures.

Importantly, then, a correlation can be detected between immigrant/postmigrant cultural production and the domain of *Soziokultur*, with institutional structures and public funding schemes favouring the recognition and evaluation of such production in integrationist terms. Just as importantly, there is significantly less public funding and support available for work with an 'intercultural' agenda that draws upon local experience, as the director of the Workshop of Cultures, Andreas Freudenberg has explained succinctly in a debate at Berlin's House of Representatives (*Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin*):

There is a big difference between international art and international arts exchange and that what is developing in terms of intercultural work in urban milieus. The difference is that in one area, impulses are brought in from outside, while the other area brings in and integrates the substance available here, thus taking on and culturally working through experiences that take place here in the urban milieus. It is important to clearly mark this difference [...] International cultural work receives support, the urban, intercultural scene does not receive such support. (Ausschuss für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten 2003:15)

4 To give an example, the director of the WdK Andreas Freudenberg co-organized the Second Federal Congress for Cultural Politics, 'inter.kultur.politik.—kulturpolitik in der multiethnischen gesellschaft', Berlin, 26-27 June 2003.

The 'Whiteness' of Cultural Policy

The Cultural Budget of the city serves as a stark reminder what kind of culture is deemed most worthy of state support. The following table shows both how different domains of cultural production are separated out as categories, and how they are ranked in terms of their importance and financial needs.

Table 1: Kulturhaushalt - Cultural Budget Berlin 2003

Budget Area	Amount 2003 (in €1000)
Total City Budget	21.195.607,80
Culture Budget total	448.700,50
Theatres	208.083,00
Churches	77.119,40
Museums	57.167,20
Orchestras	33,631,60
Libraries	28.177,50
(Film, Memorial Sites, etc.)	Around 10.000,00 each
Diverse Areas/Socio-Culture	2.836,00
Fund for 'Project Support in the Area of Cultural Activities of Citizens of Foreign Descent'	343,00

Source: 3.12.2002, Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur

The table reveals the primacy of 'high cultural' institutions as a matter of city-state concern, with socio-culture and immigrant cultural activities ranking lowest on the scale of financial support. As stated above, public funding for socio-culture in general and for immigrant and postmigrant artistic expression tends to be made available in other policy contexts as well, such as the Senate Administration for City Development or the Office of the Commissioner for Integration. But it is worth taking a look at the ways in which immigrants and postmigrants are considered within the public sector of *Kultur* proper, the domain of culture in the singular.

The fund 'Project Support in the Area of Cultural Activities of Citizens of Foreign Descent' (*Projektförderung im Bereich der kulturellen Aktivitäten von Bürgerinnen/Bürgern ausländischer Herkunft*) has been established to offer competitive grants for which eligible groups and individuals can apply once a year. In the information material distributed by the Senate Administration, the criteria for funding are described as follows:

Support is given to artistic and socio-cultural projects of citizens of foreign descent living in Berlin, at the centre of which stands the maintenance and development of cultural identity, and/or the encouragement of intercultural dialogue. (Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur 2003, translation from German)

It is evident that the concept of culture employed in this context refers to cultures in the plural, linking them to ethno-national groups as their representatives. Even though the funds are to be made available for projects, not for institutional support, more than half of the budget has for the past years been going toward Berlin's Turkish-language theatre *Tiyatrom*, founded in 1984. Representatives of the theatre have so far failed in their efforts to be re-categorized as a 'regular' theatre and receive part of the institutional support the Senate provides for the city's theatre landscape. What is more, within

German-Turkish circles there is a heated and ongoing debate as to the lack of quality productions at the *Tiyatrom*, and the exclusive reign of some theatre producers to the disadvantage of other groups and individuals producing Turkish or German-Turkish theatre in the city (Türkoğlu 2003).

Reflecting back on the history of Turkish-language theatre production in Berlin, dramatic advisor Hülya Karıcı has pointed out the connection between the current miserable state of this theatre scene and its 'exotic' status in academic and cultural policy contexts: 'To be interesting/exotic at the same time carries within it the notion of being foreign. But it is impossible to create a culture as a foreigner'. (Karıcı 2002, translation from Turkish)

Intended as a kind of affirmative action tool to increase participation of immigrant and postmigrant artists, the fund for 'citizens of foreign descent' has become something of a trap, keeping artists out of other funding circuits which offer considerably more money and/or institutional continuity. A Senate Administration representative for the fund told me in an interview that the advisory council which makes funding decisions in the area of non-institutionalized theatre projects regularly turns away Turkish applicants, advising that they should rather submit an application to the 'foreign descent' fund.⁵ Accidentally, the fund's resources have been more than halved over the past ten years. Instead of being just an additional source of funding complementing those opportunities open to everyone, the fund thus now poses a hindrance to immigrant participation in 'mainstream' categories of cultural production, effectively keeping out people and issues deemed to represent culture(s) with a plural 's'. In this sense, it is possible to speak of the 'whiteness' of cultural policies in Berlin.

Whiteness has been established as an object of study and analytical concept in the United States to investigate how structural positions of privilege and power are simultaneously constructed and masked (Frankenberg 1993). Noting that the study of 'race' had been by and large focused on people of colour, scholars have focused on the question of how whiteness could become an implicit norm against which racial 'otherness' is measured. It is precisely the lack of an obvious racial bias within seemingly neutral institutional practices and discourses that characterizes white privilege and establishes whiteness as an unmarked, normative position (Hartigan 1997). It is blackness that carries the burden of 'race' as a category of difference and deviance from the norm. Along similar lines, Janet Halley has analyzed the obsession with publicly identifying gays and lesbians in the U.S. as the implicit construction of heterosexuality, stable as a category and norm only in the context of labelling its Other (Halley 1993).

By aiming to investigate the 'whiteness' of cultural policy in Berlin, I do not want to claim that policy-makers in the city operate with racial categories. Instead, I propose to use the concept of whiteness to analyze how the difference between 'culture' and 'cultures' similarly inscribes immigrant and postmigrant cultural production as Other, denoting the primacy of ethno-cultural difference over artistic ambition.

'Whiteness' in this sense is at issue when Berlin actor Nursel Köse finds it difficult to obtain film roles that do not replicate her performance as Turkish cleaning woman in the film *Anam*, when film maker Yüksel Yavuz has problems obtaining funds for projects that have nothing to do with migration issues, or when it is ignored that musician Aziza A. makes a point of giving concerts at feminist and queer events. It is at issue when the Bavarian film company representing Fatih Akın's new film at the Berlin Film Festival is seeking a translator for press interviews who knows Turkish as well as German and English, even though all the German-Turkish actors involved are unsurprisingly in perfect command of German. It is at issue when a music editor trying to be helpful and facilitating contacts for me at Berlin's public-service radio station *Radio MultiKulti* sends an email to the host of one of their weekly radio programs, Erci E., stating that an academic would like to interview him about Turkish identity, while I had stated that I would like to talk to Erci E. about his career as a Rap musician.

It comes as no surprise that Hip Hop and Rap have been the artistic genres in which the contributions of musicians with Turkish background have achieved the strongest public recognition.

5 Author's interview with Manfred Fischer at the Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur, 20 May 2003.

Instead of assuming that that young postmigrants are simply naturally drawn to these genres because they best express their authentic marginalized urban experiences, it is worth asking to what extent such assumptions structure cultural policies, market opportunities and media interest, making Rap and Hip Hop the sensible choice for young aspiring artists who aim for public success.

The ‘whiteness’ of the *Kultur* establishment in Germany is stabilized by deep-seated expectations that immigrant and postmigrant cultural contributions will be either concerned with maintaining ethno-cultural traditions or with expressing cultural hybridity, always invoking culture as a marker of group identity. Even though the *Ausländer* (foreigner) concept has gradually become less acceptable as a term for immigrants and their descendents in German political discourses, the cultural contributions of immigrant and postmigrant artists are expected to be statements about cultural difference and Otherness.⁶

Transnational Culture

It is in light of these circumstances that the transnational circuits of cultural production and exchange between Germany and Turkey have to be considered. Turkey’s pop stars and other famous musicians are regularly brought to Germany on concert tours, performing in front of almost exclusively immigrant and postmigrant audiences. Since the country’s economic recession has hit these population groups in disproportionate numbers, concert organizers are even less likely to risk failure by presenting little-known artists from Berlin. The latter might appear as background musicians, but will not take centre stage for fear of not filling concert halls. Stars from Turkey, well known in Germany partly through the ubiquitous presence of satellite television, promise greater crowds.

When the 24-hour Turkish-language radio station *Metropol FM* went on air in Berlin in 1999, a new opportunity seemed to open up for representing the variety of local Turkish life in the city, and offering a platform for local musicians. But given the station’s difficulties in becoming commercially viable with a relatively small and economically weak target group of listeners, every effort has been made not to alienate any part of its potential audience. As a result, the Turkish music that is featured in its programs must have already proven its chart potential and thus audience appeal—which up to now it can only prove in Turkey, as explained above. Certain musical genres, for example Rap and Hip Hop, are considered by the station’s management as too particular, and too disruptive, to be played on air.

Another local radio station, the public-service *Radio MultiKulti*, makes a much more deliberate effort to report on local developments in its daily hour of Turkish-language programming. Its funding secure, its editors can afford to ignore mainstream tastes and present topics as well as music that are not as easily digestible. But since the Turkish program has lost its one-time monopoly on Turkish-language broadcast with the influx of satellite imports and the emergence of *Metropol FM*, few listeners still make the effort to tune in.

Returning to the beginning of this paper, the local company responsible for the poster campaigns in the streets of Kreuzberg, advertising the release of Sezen Aksu’s latest CD, once used to produce the work of local artists like Aziza A. and Cartel. Ünal Yüksel’s *Ypsilon Musix* tried out innovative marketing ideas, such as selling a döner-shaped CD with the work of local Turkish-German musicians at döner-kebab stores which offer Germany’s preferred fast food. None of these strategies proved successful. While the company still produces a few German-rapping Hip Hop artists from Berlin, the focus of their business has now shifted toward promoting the work of pop stars from Turkey, in cooperation with larger international labels.

6 In the context of the ongoing EU Fifth Framework research project ‘Changing City Spaces: New Challenges to Cultural Policy in Europe’, within which research for this paper was conducted, interesting parallels are emerging in other European cities. Initial findings suggest that the concept of ‘whiteness’ might illuminate similar aspects of different cultural policy contexts across Europe. Comparative research findings will be published on the project’s website at <http://www.citynexus.com>

Given a situation in which Turkish cultural life in Germany cannot rely on public financial and institutional support, commercial reasoning has out of necessity taken centre stage, allowing little room for the nurturing of local talent. The current economic crisis in Germany, which has affected immigrants from Turkey and their descendents disproportionately with high unemployment and declining buying power, has dealt another blow to the feeble cultural scene that has been able to emerge on the commercial terrain. Infighting, fierce competition and even legal battles between Turkish cultural organizations, groups and individuals are a well-known constant of Turkish cultural life in Berlin.⁷ As Martin Greve concludes,

The central problem is that after decades of exclusion from German institutions and from public funding, German-Turkish musical life is in a condition of advanced atomization, in which almost all musicians have learnt to fend for themselves only, and in which institutions promising continuity seem like new and daring experiments. (Greve 2002:17)

In light of these findings, an increasing orientation of immigrants and postmigrants towards Turkey and its cultural life as well as cultural industries seems like a logical and rather sensible turn. As much as the famous three ‘T’s of television, travel and telecommunications might facilitate the growth of transnational affiliations among migrant populations, it needs to be asked what the alternatives to such affiliations could be at their place of residence.

Political scientist Thomas Faist has recently problematized the link between cultural recognition and migrants’ emphasis on ethno-cultural distinctiveness, as well as their ties to the country of origin (Faist 2000: 43). He has stated that ethnic minorities’ insistence on collective status has long been understood as resulting from a denial of cultural recognition within the majority society, as Max Weber argued already in the 1920s. Faist points out the irony of his own findings, which suggest that the multicultural politics of liberal democracies can in fact promote the retention and development of transnational ties. Refraining from cultural assimilation, ‘tolerant’ immigration countries such as Germany open up possibilities for transstate networking and resource mobilization. Migrants’ transnational ties are thus not simply a result of repressive political measures, but might on the contrary be accelerated in their development by multicultural rights and policies granted in immigration countries.

The research findings presented in this essay indicate a somewhat different twist in the link between multicultural politics and transnational affiliations: policies and institutions that are designed to acknowledge ethno-cultural distinctiveness promote transnational activities not simply by leaving space for them, or offering resources. The seemingly liberal and tolerant character of such policies itself needs to be questioned.

I have tried to show in this paper that there is an important divide that runs through cultural politics, institutions and artistic work in Berlin: a division between a domain of culture in the singular (*Hochkultur*) that aims for ‘artistic quality’ and is governed by standards that are rarely questioned as to their implicit and sometimes explicit non-immigrant bias, and a domain of ‘socio-culture’ (*Soziokultur*) which has socio-political aims and targets those at the bottom of economic and ethnic hierarchies. This latter domain seeks to emphasize cultures in the plural, namely the distinctiveness of ‘cultures of origin’ that immigrants are assumed to have brought with them. Berlin appears as a patchwork of cultures which are tied to social groups as their representatives. The cultural production of immigrant and postmigrant artists is evaluated mainly with regard to its integrative-political potential. Though established in the seventies with emancipatory aims, the domain of socio-culture has in many ways become a prison-house for immigrant and postmigrant artists.

⁷ To give a few examples, the fight between different Turkish theater groups in the city has received public attention even in the German media (Kosnick 2003). Notorious is also the conflict between two institutions seeking state recognition as academies for Turkish music (so far in vain), the Conservatory for Turkish Musik (Berliner Konservatorium für Türkische) and its rival, the German-Turkish Music Academy (*Deutsch-Türkische Musikakademie*), and the infighting in the more or less inactive Turkish Cultural Council Berlin (*Türkischer Kulturrat Berlin*).

The case of Turkish artists in Berlin shows the all-but-liberal consequences of contemporary German multiculturalism in action, which in fact exclude them from funding opportunities and venues available to non-immigrant and external artists. In the gap between *culture* and *cultures*, immigrant and postmigrant artists are bound to disappear. Instead of tolerating their alleged urge and desire to turn to Turkey, the politics of culture in Berlin often leave them little choice but to seek their fortunes abroad.

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