Dimensions of Multiplicity: New Perspectives on Turkish Muslim Community Centres in Germany as Relational Space

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Abstract

The paper is based on an ethnographic study of Turkish Muslim Community Centres in Germany. It analyses the multiplicity of these centres at various levels on the basis of participant observations, interviews, plans and photographs. The article describes the multiplicity of religious, cultural, social and commercial functions in the multifunctional clusters that are constantly changing. It clearly shows how individual spaces house a variety of overlapping social practices and how users associate diverse meanings with the centres. The paper develops a new perspective on mosques by focusing on the space and the complexity of everyday routines.

Keywords

multiplicity – multifunctional mosque – ethnography – Turkish Muslim community centre – converted buildings – relational space – lived religion – poststructuralism

1 Introduction¹

Muslim community centres have many different functions and meanings. This article seeks to give a nuanced description of those functions and meanings and other aspects of multiplicity. The empirical basis is an ethnographic field study of community centres used by Muslims of Turkish origin in Germany that are operated in converted buildings. Both social sciences and architectural approaches are used to analyse the various aspects of these spaces. Participant observations are used to establish how people create in their daily routines the social and material dimensions of the space that is the community centre. Narrative interviews and informal discussions in the field show that a variety of meanings are associated with that space. Construction documents, plans and photographs illustrate the diversity and changing nature of the buildings. This allows a nuanced analysis of multiplicity in community centres. We discover diverse spatial structures into which diverse and constantly changing religious, cultural, social and commercial functions are integrated. We also see how different social practices and meanings overlap, or take place or apply simultaneously.

To allow an exploration of multiplicity in all its dimensions, the study takes an open approach based on grounded theory methodology. The findings are therefore reached inductively on the basis of the material collected. Starting by asking what is happening in the field allows us to uncover aspects that previous studies on mosques have overlooked. Such studies focus primarily on topics that are associated with mosques in the public discourse, such as conflict, integration and gender relations, while the many different meanings that users associate with the space are largely ignored. Our study differs from research from an Islamic or religious studies perspective as it covers as many functions and meanings as possible and not only those generally understood as religious. Unlike studies on the architecture of mosques, our study does not give a typology of the buildings. This approach reveals the multiplicity of architectural forms and functions that a mosque may have or house. A nuanced ethnographic description of space thus allows us to explore everyday life at community centres in all its diversity—i.e. in much greater complexity than is

1 This paper presents the findings of the project “Gemeindezentren türkeistämmiger Muslime als baukulturelle Zeugnisse deutscher Einwanderungsgeschichte”, conducted by Wüstenrot Stiftung and the University of Siegen. The project was led by Chantal Munsch and Stefan Krämer. Research assistants: Kathrin Herz and Marko Perels. See: Kathrin Herz, Chantal Munsch & Marko Perels. *Gemeindezentren türkeistämmiger Muslime als baukulturelle Zeugnisse deutscher Migrationsgeschichte*, ed. Wüstenrot Stiftung (Ludwigsburg: Wüstenrot Stiftung, 2019).

usually the case. We believe such an approach is particularly important when looking at mosques, for mosques are usually explained on the basis of religion, a specific ethnic culture or an architectural form, which reduces consideration to just a few of their many aspects.

2 Theoretical Perspectives: Lived Religion, Relational Space and Poststructuralism

The three theoretical perspectives on religion, space and difference that characterise our research findings are: lived religion, relational space and poststructuralism.

A lived religion approach opens up a specific perspective on Muslim community centres as, according to Meredith McGuire, it focuses on the everyday nature of religious life and clearly illustrates how complex it is.² Robert Orsi stresses that a view of religion-as-lived shows that the religious cannot be separated from the profane or material, but that in fact all are connected through everyday practices.³ Studies on lived religion clearly show that such everyday practices differ from what is prescribed by religious institutions. Nadia Jeldtoft, for instance, describes the case of a Muslim who associates Reiki healing with Islam and the case of another who integrates verses of protection from the Qur'an into his bedtime ritual with his children.⁴ We do not apply the lived religion approach to what are largely private circumstances, although others often do. Instead, we show that even institutionalised religious spaces such as Muslim community centres reflect such complexity.

Alongside the lived religion approach, we also follow that of relational space. The relational space model, as suggested by Martina Löw in particular, links the material and social dimensions of space. Ultimately, space is created not just by placing human beings and social goods within it—in other words at a material level visible from the outside—but also by processes of imagination, perception and memory.⁵ This defines two key factors for our study. First, spaces are dynamic and subject to ongoing processes of change, as they are produced through actions. Second, the same places may be associated

2 Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford: University Press, 2008).

3 Robert Orsi, "Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion", in *Lived Religion in America*, ed. David D. Hall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997): 3–21, p. 7.

4 Nadia Jeldtoft, "Lived Islam: Religious Identity with 'Non-Organized' Muslim Minorities", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34/7 (2011): 1134–1151, pp. 1142–1146.

5 Martina Löw, *Raumsoziologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001).

with different actions and meanings by different people, as Andrea Benze and Anuschka Kutz find with reference to Löw's spatial model.⁶

This observation of complexity and multiplicity finally takes us to post-structuralist approaches. With the concept of decentration, these approaches postulate that a specific object of research never has only one central meaning but in fact encompasses many different meanings depending on the perspective from which it is 'read'. Zygmunt Bauman points out that a search for clear classifications as demanded by modern science always poses the risk of stigmatising the Other as unusual or strange.⁷ Winter argues that lifeworlds must therefore be shown in all their complexity and with their many different, complex truths.⁸ In her ethnographic research, Ruth Mandel deconstructs the uniform notion of 'Turkish' immigrants in Germany and describes their varied and changing definitions of themselves and their migration experiences. For example, she describes the 'Turkish' migrant in his kebab shop not as a ghettoised victim, but as a creative player with transnational skills.⁹

All three theoretical perspectives presented are aimed at achieving a nuanced analysis of complex phenomena that is close to the material. Such studies are therefore necessarily designed as qualitative analyses of one or only a few case studies.

3 The Development of Mosques for Muslims of 'Turkish' Origin in Germany

The development of mosques in Germany is closely linked to the movement of migrant workers, so-called '*Gastarbeiter*' ('guest workers') from Turkey. Previously, there had been very few mosques in Germany. The first large group of Muslims arrived in the country following the recruitment agreement with Turkey (1961). Today, their descendants form the largest group of people in Germany from an immigrant background. They also represent 63% of

6 Andrea Benze & Anuschka Kutz, "Nahezu unsichtbare Aneignung", in *Aneignung urbaner Freiräume: Ein Diskurs über städtischen Raum*, ed. Thomas E. Hauck, Stefanie Hennecke & Stefan Körner (Bielefeld: transcript, 2017), 75-104, p. 83.

7 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1991).

8 Rainer Winter, "Ein Plädoyer für kritische Perspektiven in der qualitativen Forschung", in *Qualitative Forschung*, ed. Günter Mey & Katja Mruck (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2014): 117-132, p. 122.

9 Ruth Mandel, *Cosmopolitan Anxieties: Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

Germany's Muslim population.¹⁰ They are to this day constructed as others. The dominant discourse is that of a different 'Turkish' or Muslim culture that threatens a 'German' *Leitkultur* (lead culture).¹¹ Ethnographic studies, however, show how different forms of Islam are being reinterpreted in "accordance with local conditions".¹² Between 4.6% and 5.2% of the total population of Germany is Muslim.¹³ Germany is now the European country with the most mosques (at least 2,600).¹⁴ Of those mosques, 1,500 to 1,800 are predominantly 'Turkish'.¹⁵

The dominant representation of the mosques of these former migrant workers draws strongly on the discourse on integration. The first prayer rooms were created by the workers themselves in the employer-run dormitories. As the workers gradually established themselves in the towns and cities, started families or brought their families over from Turkey, community centres developed close to where they lived. These were set up in converted spaces originally built for other purposes. Once the migrants' descendants became established in the country, some visible new builds termed 'representative mosques' appeared and these became the ultimate goal of this development. These new builds are controversial—over recent years, conflicts and mistrust of mosques seem to have increased.¹⁶

The status of former migrant workers affects the object of our study in two ways. First, it defines the buildings that now house the community centres. The workers' low wages and the hostility of many landlords and property owners have limited the selection of buildings.¹⁷ The communities could generally only acquire buildings that were no longer of economic interest to the social majority. Second, migration and life as a religious minority have an impact on the functions of the community centres. Although the establishment of the

- 10 Sonja Haug, Stephanie Müssig & Anja Stichs, *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland: Studie im Auftrag der Deutschen Islam Konferenz* (Nürnberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2009), p. 322.
- 11 See, for example Jennifer A. Miller, *Turkish Guest Workers in Germany: Hidden Lives and Contested Borders, 1960s to 1980s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).
- 12 Ahmet Yükleken, *Localizing Islam in Europe: Turkish Islamic Communities in Germany and the Netherlands* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2012), p. 4.
- 13 Haug, Müssig & Stichs, *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland*, p. 11.
- 14 Stefano Allievi, *Conflicts over Mosques in Europe: Policy Issues and Trends* (London: Alliance Publishing Trust, 2009), p. 27.
- 15 Rauf Ceylan, "Islam und Muslime in Deutschland: Ein Überblick über die zweitgrößte Religionsgemeinschaft", *Zeitschrift für Religion, Gesellschaft und Politik* 1/1 (2017), 75-88, p. 82.
- 16 Allievi, *Conflicts over Mosques*, p. 89.
- 17 Michael Guggenheim, "Unifying and Decomposing Building Types: How to Analyze the Change of Use of Sacred Buildings", *Qualitative Sociology* 36 (2013): 445-464, p. 458.

mosques was religiously and culturally motivated, they also provided important support for new immigrants upon their arrival and for their life in Germany. Here, the community could buy halal products and find help with official documents, such as applications to bring over their families.¹⁸ Ahmet Yükleyn writes that “Mosques [...] took on the roles of socialization, networking, and ethnic bonding and became sites for life-cycle rituals like circumcisions, marriages, and funerals.”¹⁹ In the light of the many different functions that these spaces still fulfil today, the term ‘community centre’ appears to us to be more appropriate for our study than the term ‘mosque’.

4 The State of Research

Current research into mosques in Germany largely focuses on issues that shape the public discourse. Primary among those issues are new builds and the conflicts surrounding them.²⁰ Another focus is the connections drawn between built space and integration: mosques with domes and minarets are seen as visible symbols of the dis-integration of the community²¹—mosques with glass façades, on the other hand, are seen as a statement of successful integration.²² On this point, there is discussion of a European Islamic building culture through which a new mosque architecture may emerge.²³ Community centres in converted buildings are often referred to dismissively as so-called ‘*Hinterhofmoscheen*’ (‘back-court mosques’) and perceived simply as a (disappearing, non-integrative) intermediate stage on the route to a new build. They are discussed in particular in the context of attempts at categorisation (‘mosques in converted spaces’ v. ‘representative mosques’) that shape literature

18 Rauf Ceylan, “Islam und Stadtgesellschaft”, in *Handbuch Stadtsoziologie*, ed. Frank Eckardt (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2012): 711–719, p. 716.

19 Yükleyn, *Localizing Islam*, p. 9.

20 Allievi, *Conflicts over Mosques*; Thomas Schmitt, *Moscheen in Deutschland: Konflikte um ihre Errichtung und Nutzung* (Flensburg: Deutsche Akademie für Landeskunde, 2003); Jörg Hüttermann, *Das Minarett: Zur politischen Kultur des Konfliktes um islamische Symbole* (Weinheim: Juventa, 2006).

21 Christian Welzbacher, *Euroislam-Architektur: Die neuen Moscheen des Abendlandes* (Amsterdam: SUN, 2008), p. 43.

22 Mehmet Bayrak & Ömer Alkın, “Kritik von Fortschrittsnarrativen im deutsch-türkischen Migrationskontext: Migrationskino und Diasporamoscheen im Integrationsdispositiv”, *Global Media Journal* 8/1 (2018).

23 Welzbacher, *Euroislam-Architektur*.

on mosques overall.²⁴ There is little literature on these buildings in their own right. This gap in the research and the restrictive, negative associations were the grounds for our study of converted buildings focusing more closely on everyday life in those spaces.

The multifunctional role of mosques is repeatedly mentioned in the literature, but rarely in detail. The first key perspective is the historical one. A central narrative is that surrounding the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, which is seen as a prototype for all mosques, as a multifunctional location.²⁵ Seán McLoughlin argues that "mosques have always been multi-functional. They have acted as social complexes and networks for Muslims to meet, learn, preach and study, do business or take advice, eat and at the end of the day perhaps, find accommodation."²⁶ Godfrey Goodwin describes the earliest form of the *külliye*: "one building housed the place of prayer and teaching as well as serving as a hostel."²⁷ A *külliye* is described as a complex comprising a variety of facilities with religious, social and cultural functions. *Külliye* were generally laid out around a courtyard and typically included buildings such as soup kitchens, hospitals, libraries, hamams, Qur'an schools and guest houses—and of course the mosque.²⁸ A market was sometimes also attached.²⁹ One such complex is the Nuruosmaniye Külliye in Istanbul, which dates from 1757. Shops were part of this *külliye* from the outset. They were designed to finance the mosque after the death of its founder.

The literature describes various developments in the present day. While, according to Rauf Ceylan, the mosque as a *külliye* hardly exists in Turkey today, it has been revived in the towns and cities of Germany and Europe in

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- 24 Allievi, *Conflicts over Mosques*, p. 17-19; Bärbel Beinhauer-Köhler, "Von der unsichtbaren zur sichtbaren Religion. Räume muslimischer Glaubenspraxis in der Bundesrepublik", *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 7/3 (2010): 408-430, p. 411.
 - 25 Ossama Hegazy, "Towards a Contemporary Mosque: Rethinking the Prophet-Mosque in Medina via Applying Socio-Semiotics", *International Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Society* 4/1 (2013): 17-24.
 - 26 Seán McLoughlin, "The Mosque-Centre, Community-Mosque: Multi-Functions, Funding and the Reconstruction of Islam in Bradford", *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 19/2 (1998): 211-227.
 - 27 Godfrey Goodwin, "Külliyye", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. C.E Bosworth, E. van Donzel, B. Lewis & Ch. Pellat (Leiden: Brill, 1986), vol. 5, p. 366.
 - 28 Goodwin, "Külliyye"; Serpil Özaloglu & Meltem Ö. Gürel, "Designing Mosques for Secular Congregations: Transformations of the Mosque as a Social Space in Turkey", *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 28/4 (2011): 336-358, p. 338; Sabine Kraft, *Islamische Sakralarchitektur in Deutschland: Eine Untersuchung ausgewählter Moschee-Neubauten* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2002), p. 22.
 - 29 Kraft, *Islamische Sakralarchitektur*, p. 22.

the context of migration.³⁰ Christian Welzbacher sees many of the European mosques as miniature *külliye*.³¹ As cultural centres, he argues that they offer an opportunity for social cohesion in the local area as some of their functions are used by both Muslims and non-Muslims alike.³² Michael Guggenheim describes “retreats from the hectic streets”, where men drink tea or read and young people chat or do their homework.³³ Others such as Petra Kuppinger list the various functional areas of mosques in Germany. Alongside the prayer room, these include businesses such as travel agencies, barbershops and restaurants.³⁴ After the foundation of the Republic of Turkey (1923), state institutions replaced the social functions of mosques—which “became purely places for religious services”.³⁵

5 Sample and Research Methods

This study was based on ethnographic field research³⁶ designed to achieve as thick as possible a description of everyday routines. Such detailed and nuanced descriptions open up a new perspective on the object of our research by focusing attention on social practices that are often ignored because the everyday tends to be disregarded. Social practices are largely implicit, rarely explicitly mentioned in interviews or concepts. That is why our study takes as open and explorative an approach as possible to what happens in the field. Participation in the field was therefore required. Key to uncovering new aspects beyond the usual, established perspectives was grounded theory methodology. The aim was not to respond to a predefined research question, but rather to develop the broad lines of the research on the basis of the material collected.³⁷ The various items of data were examined in great detail to establish

30 Ceylan, “Islam und Stadtgesellschaft”, pp. 716–718.

31 Christian Welzbacher, *Europas Moscheen: Islamische Architektur im Aufbruch* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2017) p. 16.

32 Welzbacher, *Europas Moscheen*, p. 107.

33 Guggenheim, “Unifying and Decomposing Building Types”, p. 461.

34 Petra Kuppinger, “Factories, Office Suites, Defunct and Marginal Spaces: Mosques in Stuttgart, Germany”, in *Reshaping Cities: How Global Mobility Transforms Architecture and Urban Form*, ed. Michael Guggenheim & Ola Söderström (London: Routledge, 2010): 83–99; Guggenheim, “Unifying and Decomposing Building Types”.

35 Özaloglu & Gürel, “Designing Mosques for Secular Congregations”, p. 341.

36 Georg Breidenstein, Stefan Hirschauer, Herbert Kalthoff & Boris Nieswand, *Ethnografie: Die Praxis der Feldforschung* (Konstanz/München: UTB, 2013).

37 Anselm L. Strauss, *Grundlagen qualitativer Sozialforschung* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1998).

what they indicate. The aim was to establish a central phenomenon and an increasingly thick description of that phenomenon by constantly comparing the variety of material collected. In this research, this phenomenon was that of multiplicity. We would not have discovered this phenomenon without an open approach. Neither research literature nor the explanations offered by people in the field raised multiplicity as relevant.

The sample in the study concentrates on 'Turkish' Muslim community centres that use converted buildings. It is designed as qualitative research for in-depth analysis. Forty-six community centres were visited from the outside and inside. These visits were documented in field notes and photographs, and in some cases also in sketches. Fifteen community centres were then selected and analysed in detail; most of the interviews and longer observations took place in those fifteen centres. One selection criterion for community centres was their early foundation by the generation of 'guest workers' (late 1970s/early 1980s). As migrant workers mainly came to West Germany and West Berlin, the communities investigated are there. Other criteria were set so as to cover as wide as possible a range of functions, different urban typologies and building types, different ages of buildings and locations within the cityscape and different Islamic umbrella associations.

The study combines various methodological approaches in order to access many different perspectives on community centres from architecture and the social sciences. Floor plans, sketches and photographs are the basis for the material examination of the spaces. These show the various functions assigned to spaces in the building at the time of the study as the preliminary result of a process. They also illustrate the layout of individual spaces and specific arrangements of things in these spaces. Exploring the building history through construction documents from municipal archives opened up a historical perspective on these buildings' processual 'having-become'.

Participant observations make visible the everyday, routine practices with which people create this space through their actions. Participant observations were conducted, for example, during drinking tea, celebrations and other events, during prayer and at the hairdresser's. A total of around 145 visits to the communities were undertaken.

The views of the actors in the field were recorded and subsequently transcribed in 16 narrative interviews with a total of 21 interviewees. Most interviews were in German and some in Turkish. The question of the biographical experience of a community centre gives the interviewees considerable scope to develop their own individual perspective on the centre in question. The interviews were mainly conducted with those in positions of responsibility at the community centres, both with founding members who

are now retired and with younger people who had only recently taken up their roles. Four interviews were conducted with women. A large number of informal discussions, both brief and extensive, were also held in the field. The interviewees were for example hairdressers and their customers, tearoom staff and imams, both women and men, both young and old.

6 Research Findings: Multiplicity in 'Turkish Muslim' Community Centres in Germany

In what follows, we examine multiplicity and change in community centres from a range of perspectives to allow a nuanced analysis. At certain points, we focus on the building, at others on the range of functions offered by the centre, and at others we concentrate on specific spaces or situations. The initial focus is primarily on the materiality, then more on practices within the spaces and finally on the significance that actors attribute to the space in their narratives. From the various perspectives, we can identify seven different aspects of multiplicity and change, and these are presented below.

6.1 *Converted Buildings*

Looking at the architectural structures from a material angle reveals major differences between the buildings, largely due to the fact that all the community centres studied are located in buildings that previously had other uses. They were not specifically built for the purpose of 'being a mosque'. The buildings were constructed as different architectural typologies, including, for example, a petrol station with garages, public baths, a commercial bakery, a carpenter's, a residential and commercial building, a dance hall and an office building. As a consequence, we find not only differences in the appearance of the structure, but also different locations within the town and different forms of integration into the immediate surroundings. The change in function is not generally apparent from the outside, for the new owners have rarely built extensions or changed the exterior. In most cases, therefore, the original typology remains part of the cityscape. That a mosque has now moved into a workshop is not visible from the outside.

It is in the interiors that the change in function is apparent. The various original typologies have created very different conditions into which the communities' programmes must fit. The former dance hall that we researched in our study has a large 'empty' interior, which can be redesigned and divided up as required. The office building, on the other hand, has a long corridor

with rooms leading off on each side. The garage complex comprises a large number of small rooms large enough for a parking car, each with its own door and arranged around a U-shaped courtyard. In each case, the original purpose defines the material space and characterises the building. The new users have had to adapt to that fixed layout. New uses in the examples above are accordingly organised along the corridor or around the courtyard. That the communities succeed in integrating their concept into these very different building typologies demonstrates the great flexibility that appears to define the ‘Turkish-German’ community centre as an architectural object. In the mosque associations, we observed decades of considerable expertise in the very modern question of changing use.

6.2 *Multifunctional Clusters*

The second angle is the community centre as a spatial unit that combines a variety of functional spaces. We see a multifunctional cluster of religious, social and commercial functions—between which the boundaries are often blurred.

The following example from our study shows a possible combination of functional spaces. The first thing you see from the street is a travel agency. Above the travel agency are a number of flats, including one for the imam. A cash machine has recently been installed at the corner of the building. The complex behind, a conglomeration of connected buildings, extends over three floors and has multiple entrances. In the basement are seminar rooms, which are used as classrooms for Qur’an and language courses, a small kitchen, a room for the ritual bathing of the dead, a barber’s, the *abdesthane* (toilets) and a room for the young people. One large room is currently empty—this was previously a supermarket. The storey above houses a tearoom, an office shared by the imam and the board, a large conference room and the two prayer rooms for women, which are also used as classrooms. On the top floor are the prayer room for the men and a large kitchen.

The community centres we studied generally have an office or tearoom—and all have classrooms. In our material, this appears to be the basic set of functional spaces in a ‘Turkish-German’ Muslim community centre. In addition to the situation described above, we also found other functional rooms in the centres, such as halls, consultation rooms and childcare facilities, bookshops, mobile phone shops, supermarkets, bakeries, cafés and restaurants, boarding accommodation for pupils and trainee imams and a hall of residence for students. Each mosque develops its own combination of functions in line with its needs, and the specific building places varying restrictions on the

implementation of those functions. The precise combination of functions therefore varies from place to place. All these functional spaces make the community centre a multifunctional cluster.

This mixture of different functions in close proximity to the place of prayer has a long tradition, as many authors note with historical references to the *külliye*. In terms of their architecture, the historical *külliye* are not comparable to the centres we studied: the historical complexes have a separate building for each functional unit.³⁸ The mosque is always separate; it stands alone and stands out from its surroundings. In the 'Turkish German' community centres studied, changes in use have created more complex spaces and cluster-like structures of which the prayer room is a part.

Views on the multifunctionality of these centres varies—it is either rejected as a barrier to integration,³⁹ or valued as creating a historical link to the *külliye*. Many (although not all) actors in the community centres explicitly state that the functional variety is positive. That a mosque is not just a place to pray is something that we heard repeatedly. Board members proudly presented the many different functions of their community centres. Visitors to the community centres described this combination of functions as 'handy'—those coming to pray can also purchase their groceries, for example. The combination is also necessary to the centres' funding: the shops, restaurants, cafés and flats are essential as they generate (rental) income, which is used to keep the centres running. Donations and monthly membership contributions do not cover the costs of maintaining and operating the building or of paying teaching staff. Functions that initially appear commercial thus also serve to finance religious work. Ultimately, this question of funding is a clear example of how difficult it is to separate the various social spheres.

6.3 *Changing Dynamic Functional Clusters*

Some of the organisations we studied go back around 50 years—most acquired their buildings in the late 1970s or early 1980s. Nowadays, they bring together three or indeed in most cases four generations: former migrant workers who have long since reached retirement age, their children and grandchildren,

38 See, for example: Goodwin, "Külliyye"; Özaloglu & Gürel, "Designing Mosques", p. 338.

39 See, for example, Rauf Ceylan, "Islam und Urbanität—Moscheen als multifunktionale Zentren in der Stadtgesellschaft", in *Rechtspopulismus als „Bürgerbewegung“. Kampagnen gegen Islam und Moscheebau und kommunale Gegenstrategien*, ed. Alexander Häusler (Wiesbaden: VS, 2008): 183–197, p. 194.

who now have leading positions as adults and young adults, and pupils and infants.

If we take a historical perspective, it is clearly not just the function of the building as a whole that has changed. The individual rooms in the centres have also been adapted, in some cases repeatedly, to changing needs. Not all mosques have increased the size of their buildings; often, the changes are limited to the interior, whose use and form is modified almost continuously. Some functions are given more space, new functions are added and others disappear completely. In some cases, further changes are already being planned while previous modifications are still being implemented.

The creation of new functional spaces is due first to new groups of users. In the early days, the mosque associations were almost entirely male. Women then joined, as did young adults and children, and finally the elderly. Parents' need for religious and language classes for their children led to a need for classroom space. Later, those children—now teenagers—wanted billiard tables and, if there was enough space, separate youth rooms. Women asked for their own prayer rooms and social spaces. In recent years, childcare facilities for infants have also been created. As the community ages, many community centres are now developing plans for their own retirement homes. One continuing trend appears to be the growing number of pupils, which means that more and more classrooms are required. If a mosque increases the size of its facilities—by adding an extension, for example—this is very often for additional classrooms, as well as for multipurpose spaces in which the entire community can come together.

New functions are thus not solely a result of new groups of users, but also of a changing migration society. A typical example is the decreasing importance of the community centre supermarket, which was often initially run by the mosque association itself. When migrant workers first arrived from Turkey, that supermarket was frequently the only place where they could be sure of getting meat products that complied with the traditional religious slaughter rules. Over recent years, numerous competitors have emerged outside the community centres. Another example is student halls managed by the mosque association. These halls of residence not only generate rent, but also respond to a shortage of housing and the high price of accommodation in urban areas. Association boards are also hoping that the students will provide role models for the children and young people in their community.

As the available space is usually limited and often restricted, it is frequently impossible to provide a dedicated area for all the desired functions. Moreover, there is not always a consensus within the community as to what functions

are important. Not all members of the community are convinced, for example, that a PlayStation, a hairdresser's or a café are important. We heard (although not often) of differences of opinion on how spaces should be used. A common narrative was that of women who were trying to obtain more space; some of the men we interviewed also explicitly emphasised the importance of providing women with their own spaces. The way in which such potentially controversial decisions were reported to us appeared to be rooted in great solidarity. The emphasis was usually on the community as a whole, in which the various different groups are granted their place.

Changes in the size of individual functional spaces usually involve building work: breaking through and removing walls to create larger rooms or building walls to create several smaller rooms in place of one large space. Functions 'move' within the building through this reassignment of space. Although such building sites were part of everyday work at the community centres we visited, it was almost impossible for us to reconstruct previous 'movements' of functions and the corresponding changes in layout. First, there was often no one who could have provided such information—the relevant people had died or had moved back to Turkey. Second, early conversion work was seldom documented. In some cases, however, conclusions can be drawn on the basis of traces of use in the material space in combination with what were told: in one building, for example, we found wall tiles in a tearoom previously used as a grocery shop. Where the tiles are is where the meat counter used to be. The grocery shop has long since ceased to be part of the centre, but it has left traces in the room like archaeological strata.

6.4 *Multifunctional Spaces*

Not only does the community centre appear multifunctional as a spatial unit, but individual rooms are also used on a multifunctional basis. By multifunctional spaces, we mean specific rooms that have explicitly been assigned multiple functions. Their frequency in the community centre appears to be a consequence of the lack of space: it is not possible to provide separate rooms for all functions. The following section analyses these multifunctional spaces that are typical of community centres. We can define two categories of multifunctional space: spaces with multiple functional areas that can be used at the same time, and spaces in which only one function is possible at any given time.

Tearooms are typical multifunctional spaces that are divided into multiple functional areas. Let us look first at the material aspects of such a space, in particular the furnishings and their arrangement in relation to each other and to the physical room. We found indications that many different things can

happen in a space simultaneously: a barber can cut a customer's hair behind a partition in what probably feels like a separate room while a round of billiards is played at the other end. The game may need to be interrupted if someone wants to buy sweets, for the shelves in the kiosk set up in front of the tearoom look very close to the billiard table.

What it means when different functional zones in one room are activated simultaneously by different users is illustrated by the following example: A chaired discussion group for mothers is about to take place, and a number of small tables have been pushed together to form one large table. On the table are plates of pastries and fruit. The discussion starts. The member of tearoom staff hovers behind the counter. He serves tea to the participants. After a while, two women with a small child enter the room and sit down at a neighbouring table. They do not initially join the discussion. Suddenly, the room gets noisy. More and more children enter. It is their break time. Most pupils head for the kiosk to buy drinks and snacks. Some children come to the table where their mothers are sitting. They eat the fruit and climb onto their mothers' laps. The situation appears too noisy to continue the discussion, so those involved decide to suspend the debate until the end of the children's break.

In this situation, the different uses are apparently not possible simultaneously. At this moment, the room cannot fulfil its multifunctional role. From an architectural perspective, we could argue that there is a conflict of use. However, neither the mothers nor the children see the situation as a conflict. Together, they turn the tearoom, which a moment ago was a seminar room, into the break room.

The second category of multifunctional spaces is rooms in which one function precludes the other. The two intended uses are only possible at different times. Such a situation is typically found in spaces that are intended both as prayer rooms for women and as classrooms. Regulated times of use ensure that the use or user groups do not overlap. Lessons are in the morning at weekends. During this time, there is no women's prayer room—the prayer room is 'deactivated' and unavailable. Nevertheless, an examination of the things in the room clearly reveals that both functions are, whether activated or deactivated, always present. The equipment and furnishing of this room are not neutral. The floors are covered with a prayer carpet. We generally found heavy desks and chairs here like those used in schools—unlike in the prayer room for men, which is kept free for prayer and in which the only objects are generally low Qur'an holders (which are moved away after use). On the walls, we find a collection of items and equipment for both functions. The notice boards and pictures painted by children are evidently part of the 'classroom' function, whilst the loudspeaker (for broadcasting prayers from the men's

prayer room), a range of prayer beads and a clock showing the prayer times are part of the 'prayer room' function.

Although use itself does not overlap i.e. the room never has to be a classroom and a prayer room simultaneously, there is potential for conflict, as participatory observations showed. The room slowly fills. Thirty women are already there. Loudspeakers transmit the imam's words. The women line up. Prayers start. However, the room is not yet quiet. Although they are in the prayer position, some women are still whispering with their neighbours; tables around the room that were not moved out of the way before prayers are pushed and shoved while other people are already deep in prayer. More women arrive. They also want to pray in this room, but cannot because of the tables in the way. They squeeze through between those praying and the tables into the adjoining room—a room with similar fittings and equipment to that described above. The description shows that the furnishings for classes restrict prayer, even if the room has explicitly been assigned a prayer function. Such conflicts of use explain the efforts by mosque associations to provide separate spaces for all functions. A lack of space means that this is not, however, possible in all centres.

6.5 *Complex Social Practices*

Below, we discuss social practices. We observe what the users do in the individual rooms. Our observations clearly demonstrate that this only corresponds to what the rooms were planned and designed for up to a point. This is the case with the barber, for example, who appears as part of almost every community centre. While the barber is giving one customer a sharp, clean cut and professional shave, there are almost always several other people in the room waiting. We heard jokes, debates on German politics and potential business discussions. There was a lot of laughter. A comparison of our observational notes shows that entertainment is just as much a part of a visit to the barber as a clean and inexpensive haircut.

Observations from the prayer room also show that it is used for much more than praying. Even during prayer, we repeatedly saw children playing between the rows of praying adults, and also sometimes young people who appeared more interested in their mobile phones than in prayers. Between prayers, the men use the prayer room to relax. Some doze, while others chat, charge their mobile phones or read. We sometimes saw children running around. The size and relative emptiness of the room make it particularly good for playing tag or setting up obstacle courses. The room is thus sometimes a place of rest and sometimes a playground—despite the 'Prayer room' sign on the door, despite the prayer carpet on the floor, despite the prayer niche and the pulpit for

preaching. It is not the signs on the doors or the things in the room and their arrangement that make the room a prayer room, it is the actions of its users.

6.6 *Temporary Recoding of Rooms to Places of Prayer*

A typical social practice that we observed in the community centres is the temporary constitution of prayer rooms. This process of recoding is most common on Fridays, during Ramadan and on other religious holidays, when many Muslims who do not practise on a daily basis attend prayers and the existing prayer room becomes too small.

We can observe how a tearoom is routinely 'converted' to a prayer room by the members of the community: just before the time for prayers, the room fills up. Tearoom operation is suspended. Tea glasses are packed away; tables and chairs are pushed aside. A carpet is rolled out across the floor. Someone had already brought it out of the cellar—it was in the corner of the room. Fixed loudspeakers transmit the imam's words from the prayer room above the tearoom. After prayers, the room is then changed back and tea is soon being served again. This observation shows how routine the creation of these spaces is for visitors to the mosque. Social practices and artefacts are key to this kind of conversion. Items such as portable carpets, which guarantee ritual purity, and loudspeakers for broadcasting the prayer are kept nearby. The act of creation illustrates the difference between assigned function and actual use of space. One function replaces another in turn. The men who were drinking tea stay to pray. Most also remain after prayers to drink another tea.

6.7 *Attribution of Significance in Narratives*

The final perspective on multiplicity centres on actors' narratives about their personal experience in the community centres.⁴⁰ This perspective demonstrates that the mosque is much more than just a place to pray—and this is explicitly emphasised by the interviewees. Our analyses also show that interviewees each recount certain aspects of the community centres in particular detail and/or with particular insistence. The aspects highlighted as particularly relevant vary from interview to interview. The mosque does not mean the same thing to everyone.⁴¹

Several of our interviewees stressed the importance of education as a central function of community centres. 'Education' may refer to religious aspects such as Qur'an classes, as well as to language classes or help with homework for

40 Our thanks to our student research assistant Naima Brüggenthies, who was instrumental in the evaluation of the interviews for this section.

41 In this section, we use the term 'mosque', as this is the term generally used by interviewees.

school. Again and again, those we spoke to emphasised the need to teach 'true' Islam, so that young people did not end up in the 'wrong' (radicalised) groups. Some recounted the intellectual pleasures of discussion and reading groups (*sohbets*), in which questions of partnerships, family and upbringing are debated. Parents set great store by their children learning Turkish, so that they can maintain a connection with Turkey.

Other interviewees emphasised the community centre's social work function. They saw the mosque as having an important role in keeping young people away from drugs, crime and violence—and radicalised Islamist groups. Support for women or advice for parents on bringing up their children, psychological support for the mentally ill, and assistance for refugees, were all mentioned.

In several interviews, the mosque was said to be a place in which the relationship between 'Germans' and 'Turks' can be explored. This issue was raised by almost all those we interviewed, and for some, it was central to their narrative on the mosque. The specific aspects highlighted varied widely. The mosque is presented as a place whose physical structure represents belonging to the town, either because the mosque with its minaret is a defining part of the city skyline or because it fits in so well with the urban aesthetics that it is hardly noticeable. The mosque is also the place that must be at the heart of opening up its community and congregation to the local town. Networking and inter-religious exchange are, according to the interviewees, central to its responsibilities. At the same time, discrimination against and mistrust of Muslims was a commonly voiced concern. Finally, some interviewees stress that the mosque is an important place where people of 'Turkish' extraction can learn about and remember their 'roots'.

The mosque is also valued as a haven of calm away from the noise and hustle and bustle of hectic city life. In a similar way, some describe the mosque as a meeting place and a place of community. Here too, a number of different aspects are raised. One interviewee has found a form of family through his involvement in the work of the mosque. Another appreciates the fact that mosques are places where she can keep meeting new people. A third drives some distance to Friday prayers because he knows a lot of people in one particular mosque and enjoys seeing them.

In some interviews, the mosque appears primarily to be a place of construction and organisation. Interviewees recount that a lot of labour is required to maintain the building and keep adapting it to changing needs. This maintenance of the mosque is particularly significant to the interviewees because it is a place that they have inherited from their parents or grandparents, and want to pass on to their children. They are proud of the building as a

property that their congregation was able to acquire and develop. Particularly for members of the board, the mosque is also a place in which they can develop and implement plans—with great pleasure and creative drive. There are always new plans for all the things that could still be done.

Finally, the community centre is presented as a place under threat that the interviewees must protect. The mosque is threatened by attacks, and by prejudices about Islamism and terrorism. Interviewees caution particular care as regards Islamist groups, who bring mosques into disrepute.

7 Conclusion

Our study expands research into mosques in two ways. First, it demonstrates the diversity and complexity of the phenomenon of multiplicity in 'German-Turkish' Muslim community centres: they combine religious, cultural, social and commercial functions in multifunctional clusters. These clusters are constantly changing and may also take on very different material forms. Individual spaces in the centres may be temporarily converted, activities may overlap and specific multipurpose arrangements may also exist. In line with the complexity of everyday life, the meanings that users associate with these places are hugely varied and diverse. One key factor in the multiplicity outlined and the dynamics illustrated here is that these spaces were not simply adopted but rather created by Muslims in the specific context of migration. The way in which these spaces were and are still being created shows how varied Muslims' requirements of these community centres are in a changing society shaped by migration.

Second, the analysis opens up a new perspective on Muslim community centres. This perspective is not aimed at categorising or defining a typology of mosques. Instead, the nuanced description of the everyday provides an insight into the complexity of this lifeworld. An open ethnographical approach describes space in terms of its social and material dimensions rather than primarily as specifically religious, ethnic or architectural space. Embracing the complexity of the everyday thus allows a description that is open to a multiplicity of voices and trajectories and therefore does not categorise groups or their spaces as other.