Conceptions of Homeland and the Question of Return: A Study Among Munchen Residents with Turkish Background

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The beautiful city of München (Munich) located on the Isar River and within view of the Alps is the capital of the prominent southeastern German state of Bayern (Bavaria). It is home to BMW and the most successful soccer (fußball) team in the German Bundeslegia, has a notably high standard, and ensuing cost, of living, as well as the lowest crime and unemployment rates in Germany. It is the most desired location for migration and relocation in Germany, and has continually been ranked as one of the most livable cities in the world.[6] The Englisher Garten is one of the largest urban parks in the world, and the numerous beautiful churches, historical palaces and gardens, as well as modern concert halls, museums, cafés and restaurants, and locales of vibrant nightlife pepper the inner and surrounding areas of the city seasoning it with dynamic and flourishing "culture."

München's culture, however, is understood differently by those who visit and among those who reside and attempt to find their place and home within it. To some, München is known as the most northern city of Italy because of its leisurely pace and warm, hearty reputation, but to others it is a city of stereotypical "Germanness" due to its significance in history and the arts and because of its emphasized cultural symbols. Coloring impressions of München, especially those of foreigners and outsiders, certainly is its renowned two hundred year tradition of Oktoberfest and the six major and ancient breweries calling it home. München identity is propagated by images of the brick, onion domed Frauenkirche, the gothic Rathaus, and afternoons spent in secluded, restful Biergartens complete with pretzels, weißwurst, men in lederhosen, and women in dirndls.

There is, however, another side of München which is less commonly known to visitors and vacationers but forms the context of many residents daily experience and reality. München is Germany's third largest city of 1.37 million within the city limits and 5.48 million in the metropolitan area (Munich 2010:1), and among its inner city residents, 24 percent are non-German nationals and around 300,000 foreigners reside in this diverse city (2010:4),[7] many of these are Turkish. Turks are the largest non-German ethnic population in all of Germany (Levinson 1998:37) and are at the center of many discussions regarding immigration, migration,

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[6] See the City of Munich Department of Labor and Economic Development Munich Fact Sheet January 2010 for migration information. Munich ranked 7th in the 2010 Mercer Quality of Living Survey (Mercer 2010) and 1st for a similar 2010 survey in Monocle Magazine (Monocle 2010). Also, friends and students personally mentioned to me that München is the most expensive city in Germany, but since it is so nice, one person asserted that everyone in Germany ideally wants to move there. Some called it a "Polizeistadt," literally a police city, with one student calling it "over policed." The state of Bayern, in general, was viewed as strict and conservative socially and politically which was often attributed to its strong Catholic heritage.

[7] See also official statistics from Landhauptstadt München http://www.mstatistik-muenchen.de/rclnks/themen.htm

and integration as well as questions of cultural definitions and implications for both personal and national identity.

I lived and studied in Munich (München), Germany from the end of March to the end of July 2010. During my daily travels throughout the city and my commute to school, I noticed the diversity of the city especially the Turkish influence in the restaurants I saw, the people I encountered, the language and accents I heard, and even through the more obvious displays of Turkish language and flags on the signs and in the windows of many shops. This aspect of München was particularly noticeable on my weekly journey to Goetheplatz to attend church. An ambling excursion into the surrounding neighborhood revealed a local densely populated by ethnic Turks. Most of the store signs were either entirely in Turkish or had simple German phrases above doors covered with photos of Turkish pop stars, vistas of Istanbul, or Turkish national symbols. Everything seemed out of place which started me wondering what being in or out of place really means, if people living here felt alienated, or had they found a sense of belonging, a place, and a home? Were obvious displays of Turkish heritage evidence of a displaced identity, a deeper longing to return to a different homeland, or were such displays evidence of something else such as a pragmatic attempt to materially capitalize on cravings for the exotic and the "other". Was this principally an issue of identity, or do economics take the central role? Or perhaps, the source of apparent discontinuity rested in my misunderstanding and interpretation alone?

Part of my studies took place at the large, local University, Ludwig Maximilians Universität München (LMU Munich) where I took the course "Istanbul: Urban Culture, Practices and Representations." This course served as the context for the development of my project among ethnically Turkish residents of München. Having little knowledge regarding Istanbul prior to taking the class, and therefore, having to deal with my own impressions and vague ideas, I became curious about impressions of Istanbul, and Turkey more generally, especially in München. The debates around Turkey's candidacy -since 1999 - for acceptance into the European Union (EU),[8] its ever growing economy, as well as the long, varied history and present prominence and influence of Istanbul itself, such its position as a 2010 European Capital of Culture,[9] for example, all had potential to influence Turkey's image in Germany. Furthermore, Turkey's vast sociological disparity, ethnic diversity, and even its position as a buffer state for African and Eastern Europeans often seeking to enter the EU as migrants and refugees further create an identity of almost unmatched complexity.[10] Such depth of possible understandings elicited my interest in what identity Turkey assumes in the minds of German residents, both the personally connected and those completely unassociated with Turkish identity.

After doing some preliminary research and interviews with University students, a travel agency, and some shop owners, what became most interesting, and easily investigated in areas I already frequented in München, was determining the significance and meanings associated with

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[8] See Lejour, 2005

[9] "The Present, Future, and Past capitals." *ec.europa.eu*. European Commision, 11 June 2010. Web. 18 July 2010.

[10] See Bewer 2005-2006

Turkey for German residents with Turkish family background. Would existing ties create idealistic impressions of Turkey, and Istanbul in particular, or aspirations for separation and promotion of only German identity? Furthermore, would impressions of Turkey affect conceptions of homeland or influence desires to either return to Turkey or stay in München? Some literature suggests acclimation and contentment rely most importantly on family considerations, economic or social conditions, and opinions of health and social services intimately influencing intentions to leave or stay in Germany. What I found, however, that while notions of identity correlated to all of these factors, conceptions of home and permanent association rested more with social and economic considerations than familial ties.

In order to make this argument, I begin with an overview of Turkish Migration to Germany and a summary of relevant literature and present discussions focusing on an anthropological study among returnees to Turkey which served as a theoretical point of comparison throughout my work. I describe my positionality and the context and process of this study, and follow this with a discussion of the ideas informants formed of Turkey and contrast them with conceptions of Germany. To discover this information I posed open-ended questions, asking them to describe Istanbul and what they thought about it and then to do the same for München. I considered the words they used and the comparisons they made to decipher their understanding of the two places and discern the extent to which they revealed an affinity and connection to one and not the other. Next, I explore questions of belonging and what it means to be home, turning to the push and pull factors that guide settlement decisions. Finally, I suggest options for further investigation into ethnic and social backgrounds and their potency in forming societal affiliation and national identification.

Germany - Home or Workplace?

After the Second World War, many people immigrated to Germany as recruited guest workers. In the 1950s Germany had about 600,000 foreign residents, and by the 1970s this number increased to about 3 million, and continued to rise through the 1990s (Fassmann 1992:460). Turkish immigrants arrived in vast numbers, sending 250,000 in 1973 alone (Wolbert 1991:181), becoming the largest non-German ethnic group in Germany. Today, however, many return to their families' countries of origin. In Germany, this is particularly significant for the Turkish population with returns reaching peaks in the 1980s and continuing through the present. While over 200,000 returned just in 1984, partially due to government incentives (1991:182), in 2009, still about 40,000 left Germany for Turkey - most settling in Istanbul - significantly exceeding the number arriving from Turkey that year (Steinvorth 2010). Therefore the questions remain; why do they leave, and what ideas about present and potential lives affect this decision?

A study published in 2005, conducted among returned Turkish migrants, investigated reasons for either leaving or staying in Germany. They cited several motivations previous studies found important among migrants still in Germany who intended return to Turkey. These factors were location of family, health and social services, and economic factors (Razum 2005). Informants who left family in Turkey during their migration period stated they "felt that this made life in a foreign country even more difficult, and that the loneliness and estrangement were a source of stress" (2005:731). Therefore, reuniting with family impacted their decision to leave. Some informants, who regularly travel between the two countries, experienced the reverse effect of these ties, indicating that family wishing to remain inhibited complete relocation to Turkey. In

both cases, however, the decision was "strongly influenced by their family's place of residence" (2005:731).

Issues of health and social services seemed, in their study, to influence returnees in favor of their past experience in Germany. In this matter, "Germany was preferable" to many informants who often "complained about inequalities with respect to social and human rights in Turkey" (2005:724), and in health care they "rated the German system superior in terms of accessibility, quality and doctor-patient relationship" (Razum 2005:730). This perception has potential to powerfully influence an individual's desire to remain Germany instead of returning to Turkey.

Finally, many economic considerations were found important in the study, but they lacked consistency making significant conclusions difficult. While some "considered the economic situation as an explicit reason for staying in Germany" where greater opportunity allegedly exists to "earn 'good money,'" others left Germany due to unemployment or problems they attributed to their ethnicity and alien status (though this tended to be more prevalent in certain manual occupations) or because they felt they had not achieved the success for which they hoped (Razum 2005:730). Other participants moved back precisely because they had achieved success. This success allowed them to return "to lead a good life or start a business in Turkey… and at the same time benefiting from their well-deserved German pension" (2005:731-732). Such respondents idealized Turkey, felt they belonged there, and consequently returned as soon as deemed possible.

This lack of consistency, however, was attributed to "the heterogeneity" of economic positions within the study group (Razum 2005:734). When looking at a wider sample, however, findings could aggregate depending on socioeconomic status. In accordance with this possibility, an article in *Der Spiegel* stated that, "the vast majority of emigrants who return to Turkey are young academics moving for economic reasons," and "less qualified Turkish Germans prefer to remain in Germany rather than move to a country where they would have to compete against hundreds of thousands of low-wage workers" (Steinvorth 2010). This is furthered by the fact that "minimum wage in Turkey is just 729 Turkish lira (€380 or $466) a month, while unemployment benefits amount to around €170 per month and welfare benefits are nonexistent," meaning that when one is in a lower social position the wage opportunities are much better in Germany as are the social services (Steinvorth 2010).

The conclusion of the study, however, noted that even in consideration of these practical economic and social factors, "for some returnees, values, traditions and emotions are even more important"(Razum 2005:734). This suggests the importance of an individual's identity and sense of belonging and raises questions of determining influences and the extent to which background contributes. The literature shows various attitudes towards homeland, and three different types of people frequently emerge. In the 2005 study, "all of the older respondents still considered Turkey as their 'home', even after having lived for decades in Germany and becoming entitled to benefits from the German health and social services." Secondly, there are those content to travel frequently between the two countries and "seem to be familiar and comfortable with both cultures and social systems" (Razum 2005:732). The *Spiegel* article indicates a third group consisting of young people who lived their whole lives in Germany. In relocating to Turkey they are, as informant Emine Sahin notes, "not actually returnees" and go "not as Turks, but as Germans." Since they never lived in Turkey, it is in their background alone that any association

rests. Many have stronger emotional ties to Germany and either do not want to leave, or if they do, some experience significant culture shock (Steinvorth 2010:2).

In light of this, and other research, I wanted to discover if some of these questions of identity also apply to residents of München with Turkish background. First, I wanted to see if personal associations with their ethnicity were in fact strong, and whether this would influence the idealization of Turkey. Secondly, I aimed to assess the extent to which these impressions influenced their sense of homeland or produced a desire to leave Germany. And finally, I intended to discover whether contributing motivations of family, social and economic situation, or social services also shaped the identities and desires of my informants.

A Foray into Fieldwork

It was Sunday. After church, I crossed Goetheplatz, passed a statue of Kaiser Ludwig, and headed slightly north. After splurging – being the miser that I am – on a Döner[11] purchased at the little shop my friend and I discovered (for a whole Euro cheaper than anywhere in the more "popular" parts of the city), I arrived at Landwehrstraße. If I looked to my left I saw a Catholic church in the German style common throughout München, but the whole of the street running to that church did not match what I saw in the rest of the city, and seemed contrary to it, as if they did not belong together. Everything was written in Turkish or Arabic, and I these languages being spoken among various people walking along and greeting their friends on the street or calling to those in the shops. The smells emanating from the cafés were not of Laugenbrötchen, Nußecken, or hints of vinegar, but of garlic, cumin, and lamb. The clothing some people wore and the products they bought were different than other areas I knew in München, but does that separate it from München's identity? Does it really not belong, and how do the people feel?

This was part of the Ludwigvorstadt neighborhood of München, around and just south of the main train station or Hauptbahnhof, and was known by locals to be populated by a large Turkish community. I too noticed it as a concentrated area of shops and businesses with clear Turkish associations and selling easily identifiable and marketable cultural representations such as cuisine, modes of dress, and a variety of other goods. . Everywhere a host of symbols, icons, and miniaturizations presented themselves to my curious eyes, reproducing a distant setting for the stage of Germany, and crafting, in this corner of München, a carefully selected performance of the "other" for interested consumers while simultaneously existing as a space of genuine identity for those who live and find meaning within its perceived borders. [12]

In particular, three main streets of Goethestraße, Landwehrstraße, and Schillerstraße caught my attention, and were where I spent most of my time meeting and talking to people in small cafes and Döner shops during days of specific research and interviewing for my project. At

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[11] Döner sandwiches were developed in Germany utilizing the Turkish method of cooking lamb or other meats on a rotating spit and slicing off thin pieces upon order. In Germany, the meat is placed on thick, round pita-like bread and topped usually with a garlic yoghurt sauce, lettuce, tomatoes, and onions.

[12] Principles of the interactions between cultural consumers, and tourists in particular, and those who market and display culture to them are derived from the work of Dean MacCannell (1999).and his discussion of tourism as a performance.

that time, I also visited a store selling various household goods and a larger restaurant. Most of the places I selected as relevant to my study, had obvious displays of Turkish association making them recognizable to me as a visitor relatively unfamiliar with the culture Turkey. I was a lone, female who grew up in the Detroit area of Michigan and attended college in the predominantly white and Christian western suburbs of Chicago. No doubt this influenced both my efforts to relate to my situation as well as the responses of those with whom I spoke. However, I also was clearly not German which often allowed for more openness in discussing issues experience in Germany as both I and my informants often felt, or were viewed, as outsiders. My positionality, however, often made identification of ethnic backgrounds difficult which led to some embarrassing encounters where I was turned away by individuals neither ethnically nor nationally Turkish. Nevertheless, I learned from these experiences as well, and though not addressed in this paper, I encountered interesting issues through responses to mistaken identity and the display of identities not personally shared.

I continually learned, and all the time I spent in the area, both the successful interactions and the failures, gave me a glimpse into the everyday lives, practices, relationships of those living, working, or visiting the area. Because almost all of the shops and cafes into which I entered, only had male workers and owners, my informants were all men except for one in the little Döner shop I visited several times. This woman was very gracious, genial, and told me things in her own way through her demeanor, her interactions with me, some children coming to buy a snack, as well as with some men both connected with running the store and customers, but I could not converse with her, and she refused an interview because of insufficient German, and she said she knew no English. Therefore, I only talked with men, and a few teenage girls, but I still often wonder about and remember this woman from the Döner shop.

I did all my interviewing in German, and after asking for permission, used a voice recording device. Everyone kindly agreeing proved extremely helpful to me, allowing for a better flow and preservation of conversations without having to entirely rely on memory until writing notes following the interview. After listening to the recordings, details not noticed at the time or understood in their full significance provided many key insights. Furthermore, since I am not a native German speaker, and it also was not the primary language of many with whom I spoke, the voice recorder also significantly mitigated the intimidating hurdle of language comprehension because I later replayed and better understood the interviews.

When talking with people, I used a prepared sent of questions which, though simple, I hoped would reveal opinions regarding more complicated issues pertaining to impressions of Turkey and Germany, the informant's sense of belonging and identity, and in what place they wanted to make their home. The questions guided me, but I wanted room for other topics depending on the conversation and what emerged (see Appendix A). For example, since the project was intended for a course on Istanbul, this city was my original focus which shifted to include Turkey more generally because of my findings. Some people had strong opinions regarding the city, but others felt little connection to Istanbul but provided other information instrumental in my conclusions. m just a few minutes to almost a half an hour depending on ease and freeness of the conversation.

Bitte zurückbleiben said the voice of the train operator as the doors snapped closed behind me as I stepped onto the familiar Studentenstadt platform, my home stop – my home

then, anyway.[13] After spending the day trying to talk to people and stretching my German ability to its limit, I felt exhausted as I stepped from the train but also exhilarated by my first ethnographic endeavor. I was full of new ideas and full of tea. After politely refusing the first time and trying to pay the second, I learned to accept graciously the tea, and sometimes baklava, which everyone offered. One man told me tea is very popular in Turkey and is always provided when conversing with guests and friends. It was an expression of good hospitality and polite to accept it.

This is an example of how my fieldwork and the people I met helped me understand, not only the topics I set out to investigate, but cultural aspects of everyday life and practice. In some cases, I simply conversed with people, learning about them as well as sharing about myself. Therefore, as an early attempt at such research, this project was relatively successful not only in terms of results, but also in opportunities to learn and gain valuable experience. I was able to develop methods and approaches of achieving my goal that, while not always perfect, allowed me to perform a task that often seemed daunting. I learned much about performing research, what problems arise, how to accept failures, and even to overcome fears of embarrassment.

Idealizing Turkey

Prior to my research, I was with some German friends at Monday night student religious group and asked some of them about Turkey and Istanbul. Impressions varied extensively. For example, two of the girls both saw Istanbul as a city with much history but many conflicts and contrasts.[14] One conceptualized it as tightly linked with Islam while the other cited many aspects of its secular popular culture. Neither, when asked if they would visit Istanbul, was particularly enthusiastic, however, with the first saying that "Turkey is absolutely not a vacation land" and the other said, "yeah, maybe." [15]

In comparison to the mild interest, relative indifference, and one outright rejection of ever wanting to go to Istanbul or Turkey expressed in earlier discussions with German university students, informants with Turkish background were considerably more positive, sometimes idealistic, and even promotional. Reasons ranged from affordability to history, numerous activities, an interesting night life, and even its physical beauty and good weather. The most frequent and adamantly endorsed advantage, however, was its multicultural character. One informant noted that in Istanbul there are "many different cultures. Jews live there; many different religions live there; there are also many churches there,"and another stated, "My impression of Istanbul is that it is a very good city, a big city...every culture lives there. It is

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[13] *Bitte zurückbleiben* means please stay back and is always said when the doors of the U-bahn are closing.

Studentenstadt literally means student city and is where I lived. It is an area of apartment buildings where only those with student status can live at a cheaper rate.

[14] One informant said, "Istanbul hat viele Gegensätze…ziemlich modern - viel geschichte aber auch modernisch." „Istanbul has many contrasts...pretty modern – a lot of history but also modern"

[15] Names of Informants were not requested, and the German language is repeated in the endnotes as it was used. Grammatical errors are maintained. „Turkei...gar nicht ein Urlaub land" and „ja, vielleicht"

equally Catholic, Evangelical, Muslim…all can live there."[16] In general, this multicultural aspect was perceived to be greater in Istanbul than in München.

> The culture, it is better in Turkey…more culture…you see on one side a church, on one side a Mosque, and then there is a Synagogue, but here you don't see that at all. If you go down the street you don't see any Minarets.[17]

In addition to having positive impressions, those I interviewed willingly identified with Turkey, seemingly without hesitation or discomfort. They portrayed this attitude in speech and through decoration, name, or content of businesses. Most mentioned quickly if they had lived there and when. Furthermore, I visited places such as "Istanbul Bazaar" and "Istanbul Restaurant" where titles made the connection strikingly obvious, and the whole interior of the restaurant displayed photographs of the city. On the walls of one café, hung block prints of Istanbul apparently during the nineteenth century, while another had low couches and "oriental" rugs. Large representations of the Turkish flag clung to windows and above the doors, and many used the Turkish language for product descriptions or titles. Such promotion made sense due to the dependence of informant selection on some visual indication of possible Turkish affiliation, and many business owners profited from these associations, such as Döner shops.

In many cases informants idealized Turkey and Istanbul. For example, one informant, when discussing his impressions of Istanbul, said that it was "lebendig," or more alive, and without much stress. Moreover, in describing multicultural aspects, several individuals looked past cultural tensions and conflicts holding the opinion that all of the different cultures and people live together completely happily (such as how the man at the restaurant described all the different religious centers together on the same metaphorical street). He believed they live "all together" as a "brotherhood."[18] Two men, when comparing their lives in München to what they would be in Istanbul further idealized the possibilities of Istanbul. Both said that all they do here is work and go home, but life in Istanbul would be different, it is a "very very different city" that is much more freeing and in which, "you feel that you live."[19] Life in München was similar to that of a "Robote," and both agreed that in Istanbul this would not be true. Such optimism regarding Istanbul did not, however, seem to correspond to overly negative views of München. While Istanbul was, as mentioned above, seen by some to provide a freer and more interesting life than München, as well as more cultural offerings, most informants spoke positively about München, even those inclined to leave it. Many affirmed München's character as a clean, safe, and livable place where one can raise a family.

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[16] "viele verschiedene Kultur...Juden leben dort, viele verschiedene Religion leben dort, viele Kirche auch dort" and another stated, „meine Eindruk von Istanbul, sehr gute Stadt, eine grosse Stadt...jede Kultur dort lebt, egal mit Katholisch, evangelisch, muslim...alles dort kann lebe... schön."

[17] Kultur, es ist besser in Türkei...mehr Kultur... siehtst du auf eine Seite ist Kirche, eine Seite Moschee, eine Seite kommst du eine Synagoge, but hier siehst du gar nichts...wenn du auf der Strasse gehst, siehst du keine Minaretten.

[18] alles zusammen, Bruderschaft

[19] ganz ganz andere Stadt, du fühlst, dass du lebst

Others, even if fond of Turkey, did not idealize it. It appeared that extremely different situations led to correspondingly different understandings of Turkey. A fortunate conversation with a young Kurdish man revealed such circumstances. Born in Sirnak in Turkey, he left Turkey after experiencing hardship, and lived in Germany four years before coming to München four months before I met him. Not originally from Istanbul, he visited it once, liked it, but would only return for a week vacation not wanting to go back to Turkey but to stay in Germany and ultimately go to the United States. Though he spoke fondly of his birthplace, writing the name of his town down for me and explaining where it was and what it was like, the idealistic view of Turkey as offering a wonderful, pleasant life was completely absent from his perspective. As a Kurd, he experienced a different side of life in Turkey and briefly described real problems such as his experience with social tension as well as monetary and health concerns.

Conceptualizing Home

Significant variance in conceptions of homeland existed, but three modes of understanding seemed to emerge among my informants. Some idealized Turkey or Istanbul and wanted, at some point, to return and live there. For example, the two men mentioned above, found life in München oriented to work and slightly monotonous while envisioning more enjoyable lives in Istanbul. Nevertheless, they said relatively positive things about München suggesting that regardless of benefits and comforts in Germany or length of residency (most for a significant duration), feelings of belonging rested in Turkey as their true homeland. They longed for Istanbul and believed life would be more pleasant there. When asked where he would rather live, the owner of the Konak Bistro, just after describing München as a wonderful city and the best in Germany, said, "Für mich besser ist das Turkei."[20] For these men, a sense of Turkey as homeland was often abstract and emotional rather than rising from discomfort or difficulty in Germany

Those I met who could or frequently did travel between Istanbul and München expressed similar ideas regarding their comfort in both places. They viewed Turkey positively without wanting to return permanently and understood München as their home. It is possible to understand them as part of the growing transnational and "culturally flexible" population of the world (Wilson 2004:133; see also Ong 1999). One shop owner, when asked where he would rather live, said that he already lives in both places, indicating frequent travel between the two cities. I asked where he felt more at home, and he shrugged and replied only that his business was in München. Such a case is consistent with anthropological portrayals of transnationality. In the Razum (2005) article, similar persons, though culturally adapted to both places, still called Turkey home. It is uncertain if this man would agree. It is clear, however, that he was comfortable having a store in München, and seemed uninterested in altering his situation, moving to Istanbul, or starting a business there. Another informant stated he travels to Istanbul, but felt no need to visit every year because he was content in Germany. He explained his feelings by calling Turkey and Germany one land and equal in his opinion, saying "two lands but one land, two names but one land. The name of one is Germany, and the name of the other is Turkey,

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[20] For me, Turkey is better

but both are one land."[21] Furthermore, he clearly identified himself with Germany when asked where he felt more at home. Germany, he said, is his "Heimat," his homeland, and "this land's problems are my problems. So it is, honestly."[22]

Finally, the young Kurdish man provides evidence of individuals who have different ideas about finding a home in Turkey due to challenging social or economic positions. Monetary concerns and availability of social programs influenced his opinion of life in Turkey and Germany. During our conversation, he expressed real problems many people face:

> Example - no health insurance...not good, understand? For example, if I have an accident… you die. You have no money, then no chance and also I don't have health insurance – the doctor - everything is expensive… then Germany is better. I have a card for the Hospital – Turkey, nothing. When you don't have money, you are dead. Ciao.[23]

What this young man believed about Turkey was vastly different from what the men wanting to go back believed, and it seemed grounded in different economic positions. For the men who earned money in Germany, Turkey was a promised land of comfort and enjoyment. Differences in social benefits between the two countries were irrelevant to their return decisions because they probably could afford the necessary insurance and services. Their social and economic position in Turkey likely would remain if not improve, but the young man would be unable to afford services, such as health insurance, that Germany provided. For him, Turkey is not a land of comfort and bliss, but a place of lost security. Therefore, Germany was a more livable and comfortable place.

Social position and class also influenced this young man, and could be a powerful factor for others with similar conditions, in gaining a sense of identity in Turkey. As a Kurd in Turkey, this man's social position brought hardship, causing his departure and affecting his willingness and ability to return.

> I am a Kurd- the other Turks – it is a bit of a problem – for Kurds - not good, understand? Second or third underclass. Work also a problem and so I came here…I have been here four years – Do you understand Asylum? Asylum entrance? Stories, you tell many stories, and then must remain here…yes…but honestly, I want to go to the USA.[24]

Even though he grew up in Turkey, this Kurdish man did not experience the belonging and acceptance that a homeland should provide. In fact, he was displaced, alienated from "other Turks," and unable to participate in society through work. Because of his conditions he decided

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[21] zwei Land aber eine Land – zwei Name aber eine Land. Name Deutschland, Name Türkei aber beide eine Land.

[22] diese Land Problem ist meine Problem. So ist das ehrlich

[23] beispiel keine Krankenkasse..nicht gut. Verstehen? Beispiel, wenn ich ein Unfall bekommt...bist du tot. Du hast keine Geld dann keine Chance und auch ich habe keine Krankenkasse - Arzt, alles is teuer ...dann Deutschland is besser. Ich habe ein Karte für Krankenhaus - Turkei keine. Wenn du hast die keine Geld, bist du tot. Tschau.

[24] Ich bin Kurde. Die andere Turkish - ein bisschen ein Problem - für Kurdish, nicht gut. verstehen? Zweite oder dritte Klasse unten. Arbeit auch ein Problem und denn ich komme hier...Ich bin hier vier Jahre -verstehen Sie Asyl? Asyl Eintrag? Geschichte, viele Geschichte spreche und dann muss bleiben hier...ja...aber ehrlich ich möchte komm USA

Turkey could no longer be his homeland and left that place behind, hoping for a better life and home outside of Turkey.

In light of this, factors that contribute to a sense of homeland or affect relocation desires, such as family location, social and economic situation, or social services and benefits, tend to agree with the literature. It seems, however, that family was less significant in decisions than suggested, and social and economic position, linked to social benefits, proved more significant. Among informants with family still in Turkey, were those both wanting to go and also those wanting to stay. The man from Centrum Café who insisted Germany was his homeland and saw no reason to leave or even visit Turkey every year, also mentioned that many of his siblings live in Turkey. Some younger girls I interviewed said most of their extended families live in Istanbul, but they grew up in Germany, felt it was home, and did not want to go to Turkey except for short vacations. Another example, was the young Kurdish man whose entire family remains in Turkey; he was "here alone."[25] In his case as well, the call of being with family was not as strong as seeking a better life.

Economic and social position as well as social services proved significant because the largest opinion differences occurred between people with very different social statuses. Those very positive towards Turkey and Istanbul, whether wanting to leave Germany or not were all owners of cafés or stores likely giving them a higher level of economic security. Furthermore, they identified with the Turkish majority rather than Kurdish minority group, giving them a higher social status in addition. In contrast, my Kurdish acquaintance, while not completely negative, recognized and was more realistic about some if Turkey's problems and willing to leave it behind.

His case in particular illustrates not only the importance of social position (in Turkey, he was in an underclass), but also of economic security. As a worker in München instead of an owner of a store, his economic level was probably lower. Furthermore, he came seeking asylum and clearly noted his monetary concerns. These concerns gave the social services in Germany significant value, especially due to their comparable dearth in Turkey. Because of these significant differences and the correspondingly different impressions of Turkey, it is possible to suggest that economic and social circumstances are significant variables in determining homeland associations and residency decisions.

Conclusion

From my experience living in München and interactions with people of Turkish descent, I discovered a generally positive view of Istanbul specifically, and openness in identification with Turkey through speech as well as symbolic representations displayed in businesses. I found that

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[25] heir alleine

1. Wenn Sie München mit Istanbul vergleichen was ist anders? (If you compare Munich with Istanbul what is different?)
2. Würden Sie lieber in Istanbul wohnen, oder in Deutschland immer bleiben? (Would you prefer to live in Istanbul, or to always stay in Germany?)

people who shared similar situations also had some common impressions of Istanbul and Turkey. Among those I encountered were 1) those who were in good situations in Germany but idealized Istanbul and desired to return, 2) those who could easily visit or live in either place, were comfortable in both, but preferred to stay in Germany, and 3) those in lower social or economic positions and either could not or did not want to return to Turkey. In accordance with anthropological studies, I discovered the importance of kinship connections and familial proximity, but also the apparent preeminence of material comfort, along with financial and social success, in guiding decisions of residency and finding a home and place of belonging.

I was only in Germany for four months, but what I found introduces important topics for further study. Being able to reside and participate with the Turkish community in München for an extended period of time would further understanding of ethnic identity in Germany and exploration into questions of homeland. Furthermore, being able to converse in Turkish or using a translator would provide valuable insights difficult to gain when both people are using a shared, but less comfortable, language. Perhaps, with fewer language limitations, performing less structured interviews would also be helpful in gaining a broad range of ideas from informants. It also may be useful to have a team of both men and women to minimize possible gender influences. Finally, it could be important to build relationships with people who do not own business which profit from Turkish expression in order to investigate differences between public and private associations of Turkish identity.

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Appendix A

The research questions posed to informants were:
1. Haben sie türkischer Hintergrund? Sind Ihre Familie aus Istanbul gekommen? Haben Sie Familie in der Turkei oder Istanbul noch? (Do you have Turkish background? Does your family come from Istanbul? Do you have family that still lives in Turkey or Istanbul?)
2. Was ist Ihr Eindruck von Istanbul? (What are your impressions of Istanbul?)
3. Was ist Ihrer Meinung nach Istanbul für eine Stadt und was für eine Kultur gibt es in Istanbul? (In your opinion what kind of city is Istanbul and what is the culture like?)
4. Sind Sie schon dort gewesen? (Have you been there?)
5. Möchten Sie dort hin? Warum oder warum nicht? (Do you want to go there? Why or why not)
    a. Wenn ja: Was zieht Sie an? (If yes: What attracts you)
6. Wenn Sie München mit Istanbul vergleichen was ist anders? (If you compare Munich with Istanbul what is different?)
7. Würden Sie lieber in Istanbul wohnen, oder in Deutschland immer bleiben? (Would you prefer to live in Istanbul, or to always stay in Germany?)