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# Introduction: Reexamining Turkish German Archive(s)

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This cluster emerged from a GSA (German Studies Association) conference panel series that aimed to (re)examine the Turkish German archive by specifically taking into consideration developments since 2013. In line with this issue's focus on "investigations into critical and artistic attempts to challenge conceptions of the archive as a static, objective site of knowledge," contributions that follow engage with a variety of positions of archival engagement in the Turkish German context. The ensuing questions have guided our inquiry: How have recent (forced) migrations from Turkey impacted and transformed Germany's cultural, institutional, political, and academic landscape? How do relocation, immigration, and exile figure thematically and conceptually? What kinds of exchanges with long-standing Turkish and Kurdish diasporic communities have occurred? Which collaborative efforts and interventions have emerged that promote "radical diversity" (Max Czollek) and highlight alliances across minoritized communities? How have discourses on dis/integration shifted through artistic collaborations (especially those taking new formats and modalities into account)? How do cultural practices engage multiple sites across borders? How are (post)migrant perspectives and positions changed, rejected or redefined? How do contemporary voices and practices connect to, or "open up old archives" and make the voices of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s "audible" (Utlü "Un/Sichtbar")? In what ways do Turkish German archive(s) help us understand historical continuities and discontinuities and how does the recent wave of migration from Turkey alter our assessment of Germany's "migrant archives" (Yildiz and Rothberg)?

In the context of the 50th anniversary of the labor recruitment contract between West Germany and Turkey, Deniz Utlü wrote the essay "Das Archiv der Migration" (The Archive of Migration, 2011) – which he conceptualized as a "Plädoyer für eine deutsche Geschichte" (plea for a German history)<sup>1</sup> in its extended title – documenting his search for and engagement with the archive of migration. The history this archive tells – an archive which has been forgotten and is not part of the "kollektives Bewußtsein" (collective awareness) – differs from official narratives, as pointed out by Utlü (Utlü, "Archiv"). In his essay, the concern of facilitating access is coupled with the aim to counter forgetting: "wer an die Zukunft denkt, muss sich erinnern können" (those who think about the future must be able to remember) (Utlü, "Archiv"). He further elaborates on the significance of this archive for German history and memory discourse: "[...] die Geschichte, die in diesem Archiv steckt [ist] nicht allein die Geschichte der Migranten, sondern auch die der Mehrheitsgesellschaft. [...] Wird die Perspektive der Migranten ausgeblendet, hinterlässt

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<sup>1</sup> Translations are ours, unless noted otherwise.

das Lücken im eigenen Geschichtsverständnis” (The history contained in this archive is not solely the history of migrants, but also of mainstream society [...] If the perspective of migrants is tuned out, it leaves gaps in one’s own understanding of history) (Utlü, “Archiv”). The archive of migration, as Utlü conceives of it, “trägt keinen festen Namen und hat keinen festen Ort” (neither bears a fixed name nor has a fixed location) and remains fragmentary and is impossible to contain nationally or linguistically (Utlü, “Archiv”). Its holdings are scattered across locations, consisting of a wide variety of documents including photo albums, family letters, VHS tapes, official documents, and out-of-print books. The engagement with this archive, and its inclusion into the “nationale Narrative” (national narrative), would not only result in the transnationalization of national history but also the potential reformulation of a collective subject (Utlü, “Archiv”).

An example Utlü provided for implications of the invisibility but also unlocatability of this archive is the history of the *freitext Kultur- und Gesellschaftsmagazin* which he co-founded with Sasha Mariana Salzmann in 2003. It engages with cultural production from a transcultural perspective and “bietet [auch] Raum, Gesellschaft und Identitäten jenseits von Fremdzuschreibungen und Integrationsdebatte zu denken” (offers space to contemplate society and identities beyond external ascriptions and integration debates) (*freitext*). In his above-mentioned essay, Utlü not only illustrates its aim and formative context, but also establishes a link to the multilingual literary magazine *Sirene*. Founded in 1988, *Sirene* was co-edited by a group of authors, linguists, and literary scholars with the intention to break through the “Provinzialismus, der sich im ‘Literaturbetrieb’ eingeschlichen hat [...]” (provincialism, which snuck into literary industry) (“An unsere Leserinnen und Leser,” 4). With the aim to promote contemporary authors whose work have a cosmopolitan character and to introduce “wichtige Erneuerer innerhalb der literarischen Entwicklung” (important innovators within the literary development), literary translation was a focal point (“An die Leserinnen und Leser,” 4). Moreover, *Sirene* was conceived of as a platform to initiate literary disputes (“An unsere Leserinnen und Leser,” 5). The overlap in both journals’ focus on literary translation and the move away from the emphasis of cultural differences, were only discovered later by the editorial, as Utlü points out. He raises the question of whether *freitext* could have started from a different point and in this way could have carried forward *Sirene*’s objectives and tradition (Utlü, “Archiv”). This excursus on *Sirene* – and its relevance as the potential precursor or reference point for *freitext* – serves as a case study for Utlü’s conclusion: “[o]hne Archiv keine Tradierung” (without archive no tradition) (Utlü, “Archiv”).

The question of the archive has long occupied Turkish-German studies scholarship. Here, Deniz Göktürk’s critical contributions to research on transient archives but also her involvement in the constitution of interconnected print and digital archives (including the sourcebook *Transit Germany*, the *Multicultural Germany Project*, and *TRANSIT Journal* – all referenced by Utlü) come to mind. In her groundbreaking study *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature* (2005), Leslie Adelson has shown how literatures of Turkish migration “involve a preponderance of interventions into and beyond national archives of twentieth-century German culture” (12). In their focus on transnational and multidirectional memory work, Yasemin Yildiz and Michael Rothberg have drawn our attention to the migrant archive, to ignored and/or misrecognized “multidirectional practices of migrant memory” in particular (37). Lizzie Stewart’s analysis of “physical archival remains” of Turkish German performance texts and contexts, expands the

“‘archive’ of German theatrical history” (1). For Azade Seyhan, “literary and critical texts of diasporas,” including Turkish German contexts, “serve as condensed archives of national, ethnic, and linguistic memories” (13). Kristin Dickinson reads Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s third installment of the Berlin trilogy as a “complex theorization of the archive” and highlights her character’s contribution to the archive of migration (54). Ela Gezen turns to the Turkish archive for evidence of the Turkish Brecht reception, itself characterized by various intersecting Turkish and German cultural practices, reconstructing its impact on Turkish German literature in Germany (Gezen). Mert Bahadır Reisoglu explores the interlacing of Turkish and German archives in the works of Emine Sevgi Özdamar (Reisoglu). Berna Gueneli has drawn our attention to European archives to recover (hi)stories of Turkish and Kurdish émigré artists shedding light on wider networks, “asymmetrical web of trans-European connections,” within which their work was produced and situated (Gueneli).

“Der Blick ins Archiv hilft gegen das vergessen” (the look into the archive counters/helps against forgetting)—co-editors David Gramling, Deniz Göktürk, Anton Kaes, and Andreas Langenohl write in the preface to the revised German edition of the *Transit* sourcebook (18). They further conceptualize their collaborative documentation as “Archiv *in transit*” concluding with an invitation to readers to actively contribute to and expand this archive (39). In their contribution to the *German Quarterly* Migration forum, “*Germany in Transit*, ten years on,” David Gramling and Deniz Göktürk take stock and introduce a shift from the question of how Germany is “in transit” to how migration is framed (218). In (re)assessing how “the regulation and representation of human mobility” have changed after a decade since its publication in 2007, they propose that “the current scale of circuitous complexity and interdependence calls for a new epistemic toolbox” (218). The “breathhtakingly empirical challenge” today to take “the national, the supranational, and the transnational seriously at once” may be daunting, but as the hopeful tone at the end of Deniz Utlü’s essay (which stems partly from the new opportunities of archival access on the Internet) shows, we are equipped with new tools and have access to more documents to meet this challenge (219; 218).

The Documentation Center and Museum of Migration in Germany, DOMiD is a pioneering institution and the first of its kind in Germany to document, exhibit, collect and house objects pertaining to migration, promoting a “multiperspektivisches Geschichtsbild” (multi-perspectival view of history) and “inklusive Erinnerungskultur” (inclusive memory culture) (DOMiD). Founded in 1990 by Turkish immigrants under the name of DOMiT (Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration aus der Türkei), the organization moved to Cologne in 2000 and merged with Migrationsmuseum in Deutschland e.V. in 2007, expanding its archives to include materials on multiple immigrant communities. At DOMiD, a series of projects (physical and virtual exhibits, interactive traveling platforms, short films, educational partnerships with schools, research projects and art campaigns) have actively promoted the inclusion of the (hi)story of migration into official narratives and memory debates. Bilingual exhibits such as “Fremde Heimat. Eine Geschichte der Einwanderung aus der Türkei (Foreign Homeland. Immigration from Turkey–Yaban Sıla Olur. Türkiye’den Almanya’ya Göçün Tarihi)” (1998) and “Geteilte Heimat (Shared/Divided Homeland)” (2001), as well as the collaborative “Projekt Migration,” which included artistic exhibitions, research projects and film screenings in cooperation with other institutions in 2005 and 2006, aimed to make

the history of labor migration since the 1950s and its effects on Germany's present and future visible from the perspective of migrants. In addition to its contributions to research, its exhibitions, and digital projects such as the virtual museum, DOMiD's critical role in the musealization of migration is further evident in the realization of Germany's first migration museum, the "Haus der Einwanderungsgesellschaft" in Cologne (scheduled to open in 2025).

Not only scholars and archivists, but also writers and artists, are, and always have been engaging with the archives of migration, dealing with questions critical to this "Reexamining Turkish-German Archive(s) cluster: Where are materials physically stored and housed, and where are they absent? How does migration transform or reconfigure pre-existing archives? In what contexts do they become visible, or remain invisible? And once visible, what new lines of affiliation and historic connections emerge? Excavating the remnants of the past is not only a scholarly passion, but also a creative intervention into the present. In "Memory Meetings: Semra Ertan's *Ausländer* and the Practice of the Migrant Archive" Sultan Doughan draws our attention to Semra Ertan's posthumously published poetry collection and the multimedial archive within which it is located. By examining the ways in which it intervenes into German memorial culture, Doughan conceives of migrant archival practices as a process of recovering the history of labor migration. In a similar act of archival recovery, in "Escaping the Hamster Wheel: Creative Remembrance in Traveling Archives," Deniz Göktürk traces the biography of her mother, Pia Angela Lorenzi, through personal recollections and documents. Engaging with the issues pertaining to the scattered nature of the migrants' private archives, Göktürk notes the absence of migration archives in Turkey, which not only sent but also received migrants from Germany. In his contribution, Mert Bahadır Reisoglu focuses on the fragmentariness of migration archives and formulates archival gaps as "archival dispersions." Relating the discussions in Turkey on archival management to the scattered collections of literary magazines in Germany and Turkey, Reisoglu proposes to read past literary endeavors in journals such as *Ezgi* and *Parantez* as fragmentary processes of archivization.

Engaging with the archives of migration and its mediated memories entails reformulations of identity and experimentations in (self-)expression. Jon Cho-Polizzi's contribution "'Almanya: A [Different] Future is Possible': Defying Narratives of Return in Fatma Aydemir's *Ellbogen*" explores how literature might reimagine belonging and static notions of place. Cho-Polizzi's reading of this coming-of-age story focuses on the protagonist's connection to both Turkey and Germany—imagined and real. He illustrates a shift, "defiant interjections," in narratives of return in the context of postmigration. In her article "The Digital Archive of Diaspora: Blogging (Post)migration," Linda Maeding examines the possibilities offered by digital media for creative ways of self-archiving by analyzing the blog *migrantenstadl*. In "Dadaist delight," the bloggers deploy a variety of aesthetic strategies while creating a digital archive of the "perspectives, experiences and sensitivities of German post-migrants."

As the contributions in this cluster show, archival engagements entail a futurity in addressing current and future generations. Whom they might address cannot be predicted in advance. As the ongoing new wave of migration from Turkey to Germany since the early 2010s shows once again, such reengagements with the archives of the earlier generations prove to be a rich resource to draw upon for the newcomers. With the political and economic turmoil in Turkey after the Gezi protest in 2013 and the failed coup attempt in

2016, Germany became the preferred location of many high-skilled professionals as well as artists and academics, who have mostly relocated to Berlin, where they could find “eine internationale Szenerie, bezahlbare Mieten, ein türkisches Kulturleben, an das sie anknüpfen können” (an international setting, payable rent, a Turkish cultural life to which they can relate) (Lehmann). In a newspaper article on this “new wave” – a self-assigned moniker for the newcomers – journalist Luise Sammann writes: “Ein halbes Jahrhundert nachdem ihre Eltern und Großeltern auf der Suche nach Arbeit und Lohn ihr Land verließen, um bei Siemens, Mercedes und Co. für ein besseres Leben zu schuften, macht sich nun eine weitere Gruppe auf den Weg” (Another group hits the road today half a century after their parents and grandparents left their country in search of work and income, to toil away at Siemens and Mercedes for a better life). While the lineage created through the discourse on family carries its own problems, this sentence unveils the relevance of the Turkish German archives for new waves of migration to Germany. Just as the already existing networks in cities like Berlin attract new groups of people from Istanbul, this archive has the potential to forge new links between the past and the present, as well as between Turkey and Germany. From difficulties such as speech barriers to endeavors for self-expression, the parallels between the labor migration of the last century and today show once again the relevance of archival engagements. The traces of the newcomers’ experiences, however, are scattered in online blogs and on social media platforms, ever threatened by erasure and ready to pose challenges of a new nature to future inheritors of the archival impulse. The archive(s) of migration do not only challenge Germany’s memory culture, but also refuse to be self-contained reservoirs of the past. To reiterate the words of Utlu, those who think about the future must think about the archive, and those who think about the archive also think about its unpredictable futures.

Reengagements with the Turkish German archive do not only reveal its open-endedness and reiterability, but also transform the monolingualism of the field and destabilize its dichotomies. David Gramling writes, “[d]uring the pre-unification Kohl years, the Chamisso Prize and the offices of the federal *Ausländerbeauftragte* had seen to it that literary-cultural production in *German* was to be the gold standard and official focus of attention for Turkish-German relations” (384). The works of authors such as Aras Ören, Güney Dal and Bilge Karasu, who wrote in Turkish but addressed an “internationalist audience” “[challenge] the validity of many of our discursive formations around transnational topics, and the ways we tend to debate them” (384; 393). These archives demand not intercultural but “an *interlingual* Germanistik” (393). This multilingualism does not only concern literary studies but encourages us to rethink a number of fields in their intertwinement, such as German studies and Turkish studies as well as different media within a comparative framework. The plurality of the archive in our title, then, refers not only to an untotizable multiplicity in the Turkish German context, but also to its irreducible connections to infinitely more archives located (or impossible to locate) in different times and places, waiting to be discovered in their fragmentariness. As the archives grow, so do the tools at our disposal to preserve and make them accessible. The promises of digital accessibility, however ephemeral, challenge us to discover, create and encourage new points of contact across regions, languages, and disciplines. Taking their place in *TRANSIT*’s digital archives of migration, the contributions in this cluster aim to contribute to this dialogue.

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