

The Digital Archive of Diaspora: Blogging (Post)Migration

TRANSIT vol. 13, no. 2

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Acknowledgments: This study was carried out in the scope of the research project *REC-LIT. Cultural Recycling: Transliterations in the Post-digital Age*; Reference RTI2018-094607-B-I00 (MCI/AEI/FEDER, UE). It has also received funding from the research lab “Digital Diaspora – Imagined Communities in Cyberspace” of the Interdisciplinary and collaborative research platform *Worlds of Contradiction*, University of Bremen.

Introduction

The question of what constitutes “us” as communities of various kinds has always been crucial for the legitimization of archives. Now that public and private spheres have become digitized, however, the construction of German identity and the recognition of its multidirectional memories (Rothberg) should perhaps more than ever be described as a media-oriented issue. Against this backdrop, I will explore here a form of minority discourse in cyberspace. Because the concept of diaspora has become an important paradigm in cultural studies in recent decades, my attempt is to relate this concept to (post)migrant self-representations in the digital German-language media landscape. These isles in cyberspace, visited by a diverse German-speaking public, can be understood today as an archive in which diasporic discourses and histories are not only stored and preserved but also produced and disseminated in the first place. But whereas the institution of the archive is traditionally bestowed with great authority, the same level of authority is not usually attributed to diasporic collectives.

These still evolving phenomena require both a brief clarification of the term “digital diaspora” and of the changing configurations of “archive” and its widened interpretations in the digital era, which I will analyze by focusing on the blog as one of the most popular Internet genres. In particular, I will examine the blog “migrantenstadl” (<http://dasmigrantenstadl.blogspot.com/>), founded in 2011 and published by Tunay Önder and Imad Mustafa.¹ My analysis will show that this blog is less about specific national or ethnic collectives than about transnational questions of diasporic self-projection and the sense of diasporic belonging. As Nedelcu claims, in the digital diaspora, territorial origin loses its significance and instead spaces in which to communicate gain importance. By taking a closer look at the blog, I explore how the struggle by (post)migrants to gain

¹ The most productive years of the blog were the first three, from 2011 (73 entries) to 2013 (47 entries). Still, the blog continues to be active: In 2021, six entries were published, and in 2022, two entries so far (end of June).

visibility by sharing their knowledge and experiences through specific performances also shapes an unorthodox understanding of the digital archive. From a cultural studies perspective, I will also examine the poetics that blogs like “migrantenstadl” produce and stage as/in the digital archive.

The Digital Diaspora

Despite a wide range of definitions, the concept of diaspora encompasses some minimal criteria; namely, it does not primarily refer to a collective (such as “migrants”), but in a much more emphatic way to *communities* that cultivate a common origin myth, live scattered across several places, and possess a strong group consciousness that seeks to maintain itself in mainstream society. Since the end of the 20th century, the term has been constantly expanded.²

For the present context, the recent concept of digital diaspora will be applied for two reasons: First, in its contemporary meaning the single word “diaspora” focuses on the aspect of communality through the cultivation of a transnational identity based on collective memory and a shared imagination, which are not necessarily present in the phenomenon of migration; second, the extended term “digital diaspora” indicates a particular proximity between diasporic groups and digital media (Alonso, Oiarzaba)³. Furthermore, the term “(digital) diaspora” also indicates a political dimension that can be described as emancipatory, as James Clifford recognized in his still valid approach to diaspora as a “signifier [...] of political struggles to define the local and distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement” (308).

In a wider context, the term digital diaspora also expresses a force that Gilles Deleuze once coined as “deterritorialization” and that Arjun Appadurai thematized (39) when analyzing the strong relationship between media and migration in the modern era. Viewed against this background, diasporic communities draw on a set of communication media to counter the experience of dispersion. Scholarship on Turkish-German contexts has further investigated this relation in the realm of German language migrant media. Kira Kosnick (“Migrant Media” 3), for instance, pointed out the relevance of migrant media in terms of democratic empowerment and participation in immigrant societies.

In predigital times, diasporic subjects relied heavily on print media, and perhaps even more so on radio or television broadcasting to maintain links with their collective. But if diasporic communities have always depended on media for sustaining connections across distance, digitization has now considerably strengthened this basic characteristic and thus accommodates the diaspora, consequently making these communities much more visible. Indeed, circulation and transfer as such are both essential dimensions of the digital diaspora.

² Scholars are divided as to whether the expansion of the concept of diaspora and, in particular, its overlap with research into transnationalism entails a loss of its heuristic dimension or whether, on the contrary, it gains semantic complexity. For a good overview on this debate, see Nedelcu 241–242.

³ Dispersion and circulation characterize both diaspora and cyberspace, and are brought together in the concept of the digital diaspora.

In the German language, “diaspora” often disappears behind the omnipresent concept of migration or is used synonymously for “exile.”⁴ There are, however, studies that apply the concept to the Turkish diaspora in a more specific way, focusing on the descendants of the *Gastarbeiter* generation: “Diasporic cultural identity becomes the major politics of identity for the descendants of migrants who were born and raised in the country of residence” (Kaya 79). In any case, acknowledging the digital diaspora means recognizing, beyond cyberoptimism, that diasporic online platforms and social media ostensibly serve the purpose of not only connecting scattered subjects and groups with one another but also articulating and negotiating their identities on the net. This can be observed not least in the dominance of (auto)biographical content, which is read, retweeted and shared.⁵ These online tools also offer diasporic groups new ways of strengthening or renewing the “sense of community” (see also de Kosnick “Migration und (neue) Medien” 9).

Media in general shapes the way in which communities imagine themselves: This is a basic insight of Benedict Anderson’s classic study, *Imagined Communities* (1983), where he analysed the role of “print capitalism” in the formation of nations. If mass media plays a decisive role in forming and legitimating national communities, the same would be true for digital community media: Their influence on diasporic groups should not be underestimated, although minority subjects most likely use a variety of media not necessarily tied to their communities of origin. This dimension is also what makes diasporic media such a central subject for Cultural Studies: “a diaspora can [...] be held together or re-created through [...] a shared imagination” (Cohen 26). Since Clifford (1994), this shift of focus towards the imaginary goes hand in hand with a critical reassessment and often relativization of the “homeland” for constructions of the diaspora. So what possibilities do digital media offer these movements and their self-representations in Germany?

The Diasporic Blogging Community

Before the massive introduction of social media during the first decade of our century (with the foundation of Facebook, Whatsapp and Instagram between 2004 and 2010), there were two typically opposing future scenarios: on the one hand, quasi-utopian cosmopolitan qualities were attributed to the net (Negroponte); on the other hand, a homogenization of culture(s) was predicted (Ritzer and Stillman). Neither of these hopes or fears have come true.

Blogging in particular has been compared to a kind of diaristic writing (Michelback 52 and 75) and is similarly a highly subjective practice.⁶ However, its popularity might be increasing precisely because it offers a timely platform where authors and readers smoothly

⁴ Mayer has delivered the most extensive and complete conceptual history of “diaspora” in the German language so far.

⁵ In this sense, recent research has observed an important shift from mass media to community media. See Borst, Gallo González.

⁶ Consider Duden’s definition of “weblog“ as a diary-like, publicly accessible website that is constantly supplemented with comments or notes. <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Weblog>.

interchange roles. One blog entry might prompt the next one, in the form of a response, without the temporal distance that characterizes the regular frequency of, say, journal issues. The openness afforded by this technology partly explains the capacity of blogs to combine individual stories with collective sensibilities. Thus, blogging as a contemporary form of writing the self can also enhance the sense of community, countering the often alienating hypervisibility of migrants in mainstream media, where, as Anderson suggested, “the migrant” is often “a placeholder, marking memories of empire, or fears of globalization, or a sense of impending catastrophe” (“Towards a new politics” 1535). It is in this context of the migrant’s representation in mainstream media that the low barriers to setting up and publishing blogs benefit the increased visibility of counter-images. Of course, this does not mean that blogs as such are a progressive genre centred in propagating alternative images. However, with Russell and Echchaibi, we might argue that blogging platforms do often empower migrants to break through conventional barriers to publication.

These new media settings also give rise to new forms of writing; for example, authorship is often collaborative because texts are open to comments by the readers, who themselves also produce new content. A look at (post)migrant cultural blogs and networks shows that the collaboration often transcends the contours of stable national or ethnic identities. The central issue is not so much about “being Turkish/German”, but more about “being or being seen as a migrant”; in other words, about the politics of being made (in)visible.

My analysis is based on samples from the weblog “migrantenstadl”, which is published by authors with a “Migrationshintergrund” (migrant background) and is intended to decenter the German “Mehrheitsgesellschaft” (mainstream society) and diversify its artistic-intellectual scene. The blog authors are concerned with the representational politics of migration and their posts sometimes make for uneasy reading, not just for those with conservative political positions (when posts attack the paradigm of integration), but at times also for readers in the more progressive academic field who are dedicated to interculturality and migration.⁷ Also, the subject of my analysis counteracts mainstream media’s expectations of “good migrants.”⁸ In this way, digital community media open spaces. As migrants were usually actively excluded from deciding how they will be represented, diasporic media propose an alternative narrative to the dominant frames of representation (as refugees, guest workers and potential terrorists). Though they are not necessarily interconnected, together the various manifestations in the diasporic media form an archive of experience, in awareness of existing practices of marginalization. As

⁷ Cf. the parody of (progressive) academic discourse on migration in the dramatic dialogue “Postmigrantisches Schlammgeschlacht” (“Postmigrant Mud-slinging”) between student “Kanaken” and the university lecturer “Frau Dr.”, who points out that there are neither Germans nor Turks: “Es gibt höchstens noch die Bayern, die habe ich höchstpersönlich empirisch-diskursiv erschaffen...nun, sagen wir ‘konstruiert’” (“At the most, there are the Bavarians, whom I personally created empirically-discursively...well, let’s say I ‘constructed’ them.”) (Önder, Mustafa 234; the translation is mine). Note: The blog alternates between the denomination “migrant” and “postmigrant”.

⁸ See Ataman for a short critical review of media representations of “bad” (meaning criminal) migrants and “good” (integrated, successful) *Vorzeigetürken*.

Georgiou recently stated, migrants who make claims are being punished⁹, because they do not have the right to speak as equals, which is a line of argument that makes the roles of non-threatening otherness very narrow. Aiming at a diversification of the German language media landscape, networks like the “Neue deutsche Medienmacher*innen” instigate a change of perspective by putting into practice the claim of migrants to speak in the media as agents and partners.

The change of perspective is also characterised by the blog “migrantenstadl,” which was nominated for the prestigious Grimme Online Award¹⁰ in 2013. The original blog founders Tunay Önder, Imad Mustafa and Amira Amor Ben Ali, all students in Heidelberg at the time, have a similar biography in common: “die Sozialisation in einer migrantischen Arbeiterfamilie, ähnliche Lebens- und Problemlagen, die alljährliche Reise in die Heimatländer unserer Eltern und schließlich ein beachtenswerter Bildungsverlauf” (“socialisation in a migrant working-class family, similar living conditions and difficulties, the annual trip to our parents' home countries and finally a noteworthy educational background”¹¹) (Önder “Was sind Migrant/-innen” 363). Their identities and life situations — and here Önder is clearly speaking on behalf of a diaspora community that goes beyond the three friends — are “keine Geschichten am Rande der großen bundesrepublikanischen Erzählung. Ich erzähle diese Hintergründe deshalb, weil es wichtige Faktoren sind, die unsere Wahrnehmung und unser Handeln in der Gesellschaft beeinflussen und stets beeinflussen.” (“no stories on the fringes of the grand narrative of the Federal Republic. I share these backgrounds because they are important factors that influenced and always influence our perceptions and actions in society.”) (364)

Migrants, Önder argues, are meant to be “deployed” in Germany and are thus objects of state planning.

Das wirkt sich natürlich aus, auf die Kinder und Kindeskinde der Migrant/-innen, auf ihren Habitus, ihr Selbstbewusstsein und ihre Biografie. Deshalb ist es uns wichtig, einen Ort zu schaffen, in dem wir selbst bestimmen, wer wir sind und wie wir sein wollen. [...] Wir haben unsere eigenen Erinnerungen und Geschichten, und wir haben unseren eigenen historischen Bezugsrahmen. Um diese Geschichte(n) mit einer Selbstverständlichkeit einbringen zu können, braucht es Räume – physische, psychische und virtuelle. Es braucht öffentliche Projektionsflächen, Medien und Plätze, die unsere Interpretation der Welt widerspiegeln, und in denen wir dem schöpferischen Prozess des Erinnerens nachgehen können. (364)

(This has a natural effect on the children and grandchildren of migrants, on their habitus, their self-confidence and their biography. That is why it is important for us to create a place where we ourselves determine who we are and how we want to be. [...] We have our own memories and stories, and we have our own historical frame of reference. In order to self-evidently include these, it requires physical, psychic and virtual spaces. It requires public surfaces onto which to project ourselves, media and places that reflect our interpretation of the world, and in which we can pursue the creative process of remembering.)

⁹ According to Georgiou, the voices of migrants have gotten more negative over the years; an example for this is the “Aware Migrants” website (<https://www.awaremigrants.org/>).

¹⁰ Since 2001, the Grimme Institute awards this prize in addition to the traditional television award (“Grimme-Preis”) and the German radio award, in this case for extraordinary publicist achievements on the Internet.

¹¹ All translations from “migrantenstadl” and Önder are mine.

In this self-description, the diasporic consciousness is conveyed in the “we”; the claiming of one’s own spaces for one’s own memories and stories (which at times conflict with the public image of today’s German Republic and its still existing reluctance to be considered an immigrant nation). But this archive-like place is in the process of becoming, just as self-determination is in flux. The blog distances itself from Önder’s quoted, almost sociological self-definition in most places¹²; not in terms of content, but in terms of form and style.

The motto of this blog is “migriert, migriert, sonst sind wir verloren” (“migrate, migrate, otherwise we are lost”). Its Dadaist delight in the combination of the use of non-conformist language, political statements and satire makes these texts culturally productive. The blog and the book that emerged from it in 2016 combine different formats, genres and style registers: photographs and pictures, manifestos, interviews with activists and scholars, dramatic scenes, autobiographical notes and articles, all interspersed with Turkish words and expressions. The political claims and statements of the blog can be partly historicized today, without having outlived their relevance. Until the mid-2010s, however, they were part of a pioneering German language scene in cyberspace, though their positions now have considerably more multipliers.¹³ Although the blog itself may have remained marginal in its reach, its co-initiator Tunay Önder has frequently been invited to speak on public television and at cultural events (see for example [3sat](#)). Leaving aside this public and socially significant presence, I consider the blog entries themselves more as an interface of political-social claims with an eminently aesthetic axis; that is, as an artistic product. But what are these demands, so far only hinted at, and how are they aesthetically realized? On the book cover in print format, one sees a map of Central Europe and Germany, labeled in Arabic.

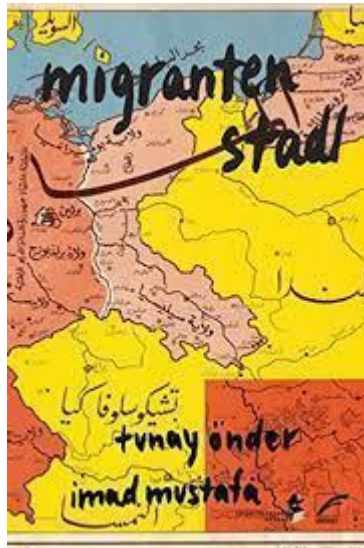


Fig. 1 Book Cover of *migrantenstadt*

¹² Önder is in fact a sociologist by academic training.

¹³ The publications and dramaturgical activities of the Berlin-based writers Max Czollek and Sasha Marianna Salzmann clearly correspond with the blog founders’ positions.

In this way, “one’s own” geography is presented to the non-Arabic-speaking part of the readership in a strangely distorted way, familiar in outline and yet alienated at the same time.¹⁴ The blog is not to be understood in an unambiguous manner. Its title rather indicates a seemingly incongruous fusion of foreignness (*migranten*) and home (*stadl*).

Through its alienating composition, the book cover already functions as an illustration of the bloggers’ call for participation in the Wiesbaden *Biennale* in 2018, which could easily serve as a guiding motto of the blog: “Kanakisiert euch”¹⁵ (“Kanakize yourselves”), which mimics the well-known phrase “Integrate yourselves” ([Einmal Wiesbaden](#)).¹⁶ This appeal, as well as the already quoted “migriert, migriert, sonst sind wir verloren,” may also be read as addressing the majority society; it is an invitation to hybridization. While maintaining the dichotomy of “us” and “them”, the basis of the blog project is to reverse the implied perspective or side. Here, the “others” speak and now make claims for recognition by the majority society.

Of course, this also raises the question of readership: Is this really community media, in the sense of media made to be consumed by diasporic subjects? Certainly, the blog claims to reach the majority society, since its provocative potential is directed at the so-called “bio-Germans”: “Wir wollen nicht mehr Gäste oder Gastarbeiter_innen oder Quotentürk_innen sein in diesem Migrantenstadl.” (“We don’t want to be guests or guest workers or quota Turks in this *migrantenstadl* anymore.”) (Önder, Mustafa 139) The very speech act runs counter to what mainstream society’s mass media expects from “its” minorities. At the same time, however, the bloggers also address fellow migrants directly: “Integriert euch Nicht!” (“Don’t integrate!”) (Ibid. 139). In an interview, Önder stated that in the beginning, the blog was addressed to people who, like herself, came from *Gastarbeiter*-families and had experienced discrimination, but that afterwards readership diversified to include supporters of a postmigrant society, be they of German origin or not (Hill, Önder 64).

The authors are laying claim to a rather uncomfortable place of diffused localization (not-here and not-there), but this in-between area can also mean a common space, a contact zone with utopian connotations that is plurilingual and pluricultural, a place of confrontation and encounter:

Es gibt einen Ort! Değerli arkadaşlar, Brüder und Schwestern, es gibt einen Ort! Ihr wisst, dass ich das Migrantenstadl meine. Das Migrantenstadl ist das Migrantenstadl und nicht der Migrantenstadl. Und dieses Migrantenstadl ist der Ort, wo Biodeutsche und andere Lebewesen aufeinandertreffen und es ist also der Ort, wo beide ihre Sprache verlieren in der heiligen und totalen Integration! Das Migrantenstadl ist das Mekka der Migration! (Ibid. 140)

(There is a place! Değerli arkadaşlar, brothers and sisters, there is a place! You know that I mean the Migrantenstadl. The Migrantenstadl is the Migrantenstadl and not the Migrantenstadl. And this

¹⁴ This reminds me of the later motto of the 4th Berlin Autumn Salon of the Gorki Theatre in 2019: “De-Heimatize it!” ([Berliner Herbstsalon](#)). The book cover aims at the same effect of de-familiarizing “Heimat”, while on the other hand, it can also be interpreted as an attempt of migrant appropriation.

¹⁵ This motto not only addresses a new self-esteem of (post)migrants who still face exclusion in our societies. It also points at a change of perspective: It is society as a whole that needs to “kanakize” itself in order to deconstruct fictitious discourses on purity.

¹⁶ This somehow echoes the slogan “Integration ist over,” found on the website of Kanak Attak (<https://www.kanak-attak.de/ka/aktuell.html>).

Migrantenstadl is the place where bio-Germans and other living beings meet and so it is the place where both lose their language in the holy and total integration! The Migrantenstadl is the Mecca of migration!)

The excerpt displays a striking set of connotations and intertextual references. “Migrantenstadl” contains a reference to an immensely popular, folkloristic television format of the German-language entertainment industry, the now defunct “Musikantenstadl” (1981-2015) that was co-produced by public television stations in the German-speaking countries. Although the reader cannot find any explicit reference to this live TV show, the blog title engages with it by suggesting a popularity and also a sense of representing the core of folkloristic culture that in real life, does not correspond to migrant minorities in Germany. But through formal devices, including a very free and even nonsense use of language, the historical avant-garde is also cited, suggesting a self-location in this “high cultural” tradition. All this, together with the satirization of the unquestionable principle of integration and the mention of “Mecca” and “migration” — signal words that in the mass media symbolize a problematic scenery, fundamentalism and even “danger” — results in a quite heterogeneous conglomerate. Incidentally, the montage principle realized in this excerpt linguistically characterizes the entire blog and leads us back to the avant-garde, as part of which the bloggers may also see themselves, by laying claim to a decidedly West European tradition like Dadaism.¹⁷

The self-reflexivity of the blog, however, is what marks the authors as late avant-gardists, whose claims for a utopian place of conviviality might be just as radical, but who can no longer aim at a *tabula rasa*-attitude (this is what being “post-” is about) and therefore adopt a more reflexive perspective:

Was tun wir da eigentlich, wenn wir schreiben, Fotos oder Bilder posten und Aktionen starten? [...] Was ist das Migrantenstadl überhaupt und wie soll man das benennen? Ist es eine blogophile Performance, eine literarische Intervention, theoretischer Krach, absurdes Theater, eine diskursive Formation, ein postmigrantisches Projekt [...]? Migrantenstadl – andere haben es gesagt – ist ein Schauplatz, wo etwas passiert. (“Was sind Migrant/-innen” 361)

(What are we actually doing when we write, post photos or pictures and start actions? [...] What is the Migrantenstadl anyway and how should we name it? Is it a blogophile performance, a literary intervention, theoretical noise, absurd theater, a discursive formation, a post-migrant project [...]? Migrantenstadl - others have said it - is a site where something is happening.)

The “migrantenstadl” project shows a strong discursive and political commitment, but also has a notably performative component. It is about providing a forum for “diejenigen, die sonst keines haben: Mehrheimischen, Migrant_innen und anderen Marginalisierten” (“those who otherwise have none: multi-natives, migrants and other marginalized people”) (Önder, Mustafa [cover text]), about participation and reflexive self-positioning as part of a much greater diaspora. Pointing at such wider alliances, the blog for example includes references to the Jewish writer Esther Dischereit and presents her book about resistance

¹⁷ Although the Jewish thinker Vilém Flusser is not quoted, he could be considered an influence for the blog in view of the striking similarities in migrant empowerment. Flusser, himself a refugee from National Socialism, had already conceived of migrants as the real avant-garde of his time in his essays *Von der Freiheit des Migranten* (published in 1994). Önder herself states: “For the Migrantenstadl, the self-designation 'migrant' ultimately stands for an oppositional figure that counteracts the dominant logics of thought and function.” (“Was sind Migrant/-innen” 367-368)

against the New Right (<http://dasmigrantenstadl.blogspot.com/2021/01/buch-des-monats-mama-darf-ich-das.html#more>). At the same time, however, the blog project is also about linguistically mediated provocation, about an aesthetic self-positioning; the authors describe their blog as a “platform for Dadaists and textual terrorists” on the front of the website. Taking another look at these Dada moments, the reader becomes witness to a kind of *Sprachlust*, the pleasure in twisting and inverting linguistic conventions, fearless of apparent contradictions.

[...] das Migrantenstadl ist unmöglich unmöglich und daher möglich! Es gibt keinen Grund, mir das zu glauben, also tut es trotzdem! Im Namen des Ö's, des Ü's, des Döner, Doyschlands, der Drüse und Don Juans: Das Migrantenstadl lebt, trotz allem und gerade deshalb! (Ibid.: 363)

([...] the Migrantenstadl is impossible impossible and therefore possible! There is no reason to believe me, so do it anyway! In the name of the Ö's, the Ü's, the Döner, Doyschland, the gland and Don Juan: the Migrantenstadl lives, despite everything and just because of it!)

“Migration” becomes a kind of formula for the common bond of the digital diaspora; for example, in the utopian demand “dass alle mit einer Sprache sprechen: jener der Migration.” (“that everyone speak with one language: that of migration.”) (Ibid.: 363) A kind of mixed language in which words and phrases from the languages of migration stand unmarked next to German sentences to form this “universal language”, which, however, is not precisely comprehensible universally, but instead explicitly exhibits its foreignness.

Another strategy of the blog is the aforementioned change of perspective that reverses the roles of minority and majority, which often has a satirical effect and by that reversal (reminiscent of Kanak Attak) makes the absurdity of discursive attributions visible. This becomes clear in the caricature-like response to the study on “Lebenswelten junger Muslime in Deutschland” (2011) by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, which “migrantenstadl” proposes to complement by commissioning a study on “Lebenswelten junger Christen in Deutschland”, and which is supposed to provide information about the “willingness of the bio-German population to integrate” ([Lebenswelten](#)). The aesthetic device of parody produces an insight through which the relationship between majority and minority is shifted. It triggers a thought process about how mainstream majority produces “its” minority. Here, the blog’s reversal of perspectives and their concomitant positions of power corresponds with recent social media initiatives and media-driven polemics, such as author Sinthujan Varatharajah’s proposed labeling of bio-Germans as “Menschen mit Nazihintergrund” (“people with a Nazi background”) ([Die Zeit](#)). However, “migrantenstadl” is not only about who is allowed to speak about whom and how, but about how community is produced through speaking. What is special about this dadaistic, surreal and activist blog is not only the fact that political-social demands are disclosed in an aesthetically playful way, but also that it constructs a diasporic “we,” because quite evidently the blog initiators write in the consciousness of belonging to the “migra-nation” (if you will), which I call “digitally diasporic” in a transethnic sense. The conceptualization of a transnational identity, the telling of collective stories and the production of a common memory are the axes on which this diasporic belonging unfolds.

In terms of the avant-garde references and the aspired construction of a transversal community, there is one antecedent that comes to mind, although it is not explicitly referred

to in the blog: the network Kanak Attak¹⁸, founded in 1998 and a pioneering avant-garde postmigrant organ in its own right. In the manifesto “Kanak Attak and Basta,” the network not only rejects “every single form of identity politics”, but also heralds the “End of Dialogue Culture”:

Whoever believes that we celebrate a potpourri out of ghetto-hiphop and other clichés will be surprised. We sample, change and adapt different political and cultural drifts that all operate from oppositional positions. We go back to a mixture of theory, politics and cultural practice.

The radicality of this early manifesto is still palpable. The founders of “migrantenstadl” could be read as late avant-gardists, in that their focus is less theory-informed and more dadaist. Whereas the great fury of Kanak Attak, which emerged out of historical and political moment, is less present, nevertheless marginalization, experiences of exclusion and class consciousness are central issues to the blog. However, the bloggers follow a different, that is, a more playful strategy to place their convictions and experiences in cyberspace, identifying new allies for a new form of virtual community.

The Digital Archive: A Place for the Digital Diaspora?

The elements that shape the diasporic “we” by constructing an identity through shared histories and memories are also the core aspects through which any archive legitimizes itself. As a “knowledge storage infrastructure” (Weitin & Wolf 10), an archive lays the ground for a vivid cultural memory; however, the word “archive” has furthermore undergone an exceedingly strong metaphorization since Foucault specified its role in discourse as a system of enunciability (1969), so that today all kinds of storage, even the Internet itself, are described as archives. The general transformation of the institution and metaphor of archive through digitization also raises the question of the relationship between archive and diaspora. Does the diaspora, as a dispersed community, not contradict the authority embodied by the archive? The *Metzler-Lexikon* still describes the archive as a symbol “für den schwer zugängl[ichen] Ort von (pers.) Schicksal und (staatl.) Macht” (2012: 23), as a place of personal destiny and state power that is difficult to access. I suggest that diasporic experiences be considered just as marginalized in the institution of the archive as they are in social reality. Nevertheless, the traces of diaspora in cyberspace, as in the blog “migrantenstadl”, might themselves be understood as part of an initiating archival process and thus as the beginning of a canonization of their knowledge, experiences and perceptions.

If by “archive” we mean the place where these documents are stored and guarded, its conception undergoes profound changes in the digital era. The institution of the archive tends to move away from a specific physical space with limited access to become a more participatory and even collaboratively authored virtual entity (Calvo, Maeding, Vollmeyer). The key task of the digital archive then is, according to media theorist

¹⁸ I thank Ela Gezen for mentioning this, as it is definitely important to reconstruct the traditions in which postmigrant initiatives find themselves located (be they explicitly named or not). This is especially necessary when talking about the *new* form of digital archives that might otherwise obscure these existing genealogies.

Wolfgang Ernst, no longer defined by deposition but by circulation and transfer. This is what Ernst calls the paradigm shift in the reconceptualization of the archive in the digital age.

However, whether analogue or digital, archives still tend to give themselves the appearance of neutrality, a myth that Schwartz and Cook help to dismantle. They describe archives as an instrument of power that legitimizes certain social narratives and, in this way, do not simply compile history in documents, but rather create history through a selective process. The bloggers of “migrantenstadt”, which collects perspectives, experiences and sensitivities of German postmigrants, seem to be well aware of this. They take advantage of the dynamic nature, connectivity and availability of the digital archive¹⁹ and use it to engage in community-building beyond ethnic and national boundaries. This is about a diasporic community without a geographical center, without any other idealized place than the promised home of the “migrantenstadt”²⁰, just as decentralized as the digital archive. The dichotomy between center and periphery that historically characterizes the institution “archive” no longer exists in digital space. On this level, “digital diaspora” and “digital archive” certainly converge, even if the Internet’s former promise of an inclusive public memory encompassing all social classes is seriously questioned. This concerns not only “digital divide”, but also the danger of political fragmentation and social insularity, which some want to recognize in the participatory character of the digital archive (Haskins 407).

If “migrantenstadt” is understood as one piece of the puzzle of broader digital manifestations, this still emerging archive is certainly capable of generating new cultural and historical narratives and rearranging old ones (through the shift in perspective referred to earlier), despite the well-argued objections to cyber-optimism. The question, however, is whether and how posts on “migrantenstadt” could possibly become or be treated as archivalia.

This cannot be understood without focusing at least briefly on the role of memory as a link between diaspora and archive. The traditional and, of course, still powerful image of the archive as a storehouse, which suggests a kind of second-order memory or “meta-memory” (Assmann), is passive in nature. It holds memories that are not necessarily in demand at present, but are saved from oblivion.²¹ This image of the archive as a passive memory does not apply to the digital archive of diaspora. In the case of the blog, the provocative mottos, claims and direct appeals to the readership make this all too clear. A broad social negotiation on redefining German society, on recognizing multidirectional memories and identifying common bonds is at stake here. Furthermore, due to the technology involved, the blog with its dated entries depicts a flexible and vivid structure. The “users” of this archive witness how the archive is constantly growing and responding to historical events (as for instance, the NSU trial) and debates with ever-changing

¹⁹ Ernst (202) has pointed out that the emphatic connotation of “archive” gets lost through these developments. According to him, the temporal conception of the archive has changed, as the digital archives, once online, are no longer separated from the present.

²⁰ Cf. also Kaya’s categorical formulation: “For the modern diasporic subject, home is the place to which they cannot return” (82).

²¹ One function of the cultural archive is to ensure that seemingly useless data is preserved for possible future retrieval.

frequency. Additionally, there is the transformation of memory itself that is induced by digitization. We can witness this fundamental change when reading the blog, bearing in mind Haskins' apt description of digital memory as "a form of mediation that collapses the opposition between modern 'archival' memory (storage, order) and traditional 'lived' memory (presence, interactivity)" (401).

Beyond this, however, the digitization of the archive has also shifted the temporal axis because documents are no longer stored as signifiers of the past. The content of "migrantenstadl", for instance, does not presumably pass through long and established selection processes; creation and archivalization of a document occur at nearly the same time. The digital, fluid archive is characterized by posting and streaming, that is to say by its radical presentness and ephemerality. On the blog, any reader can post comments on any blog entry. "migrantenstadl" can therefore not only be read as an archive of the (post)migrant diaspora. Precisely because its themes are of the utmost topicality for contemporary German society and are therefore hard to consign to the attic by placing them in an archive, they also renegotiate the traditional relationship between archive (passively connoted) and canon (as actively circulating memory). The canon keeps the past present. It is the "active working memory of a society", except that it can no longer be contrasted with the archive as a passive "reference memory", as Assmann still does (106).

The production of this dynamic, actively memory-forming archive is realized in the poetic word lists published on the blog,²² which encompass the multilingualism of the diaspora and transcribe German everyday words according to how Turkish migrants hear and pronounce them:

Wörterayntoff²³

schutudgart
kölün
münhen

hapbahnoff
schiwanhalterschitrasse
meryemplass

[...]

doyçlan.
()

²² Of course, this strategy has been used by other (post)migrant collectives, too. Kanak Attak developed a hybrid speech at the same time that it manifested not to be a friend of folkloristic "Mültikültürälizm" ([Manifest](#)).

²³ This neologism "Wörtereintopf" would mean something like "word stew".

At the outset, I noted that, like the digital archive, a digital diaspora is centerless, dissolving dichotomies of center and periphery. Here, however, the readers witness the attempt to use digital possibilities to move marginalized “Sprach- und Sprechrealitäten” to the center again. This way, contemporary transcultural works like “migrantenstadl” also show the difficulties in renouncing a thinking in these binary categories and thus invite us to further inquire into the possible contradictions implied in the concept of “digital diaspora”.

Der Wörterayntoff versteht sich als ein Archiv, das sich stetig weiterentwickelt und marginalisierte Sprach- und Sprechrealitäten beleuchtet und in den Mittelpunkt der Aufmerksamkeit rückt; denn manchmal, so unser Credo, erschließt sich das Wesen einer Sache erst dann, wenn man sie vom Rand her denkt. Das Sammeln und Veröffentlichen dieser grenzüberschreitenden Worte ist wichtiger Bestandteil zukünftiger Kulturarbeit. (Önder, Mustafa 105)²⁴

(The Wörterayntoff sees itself as an archive that is constantly evolving and illuminating marginalised speech and language realities and bringing them to the centre of attention; because sometimes, according to our credo, the essence of something is only revealed when you think about it from the margins. Collecting and publishing these transgressive words is an important part of future cultural work.)

Migration means mobility, and (digital) diaspora is the political reframing of that movement into a communal identity, the blog-archive being a site where multifold diasporic identities and memories are constructed. The ethics and also politics of (self-)representation form their common foundation. The “Wörterayntoff” shows us that this particular ethics and politics is not to be separated from the aesthetics of representation.

²⁴ This “credo” and practice is also reminiscent of Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s language play with broken German and transliterations from the Turkish language, as in her early story collection *Mutterzunge*. I thank Deniz Göktürk for this suggestion (and further ones).

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