The tale of two mosques: Marxloher Merkez Mosque vs. Cologne Central Mosque

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On October 2008, the biggest mosque in Germany at the time was opened in Duisburg's Marxloh district. In addition to its size, what distinguishes this building from other mosques in Germany was the lack of protests against the construction of this building. On the other hand, in Cologne, just 40 minutes away from Duisburg, the construction of the Cologne Central Mosque was faced with so many disputes that its opening has delayed by 10 years, opening in June, 2017 in spite of the fact that both project were started around the same time. This paper presents two stories: the success story of the DITIB commissioned Marxloher Merkez Mosque and problems surrounding the Cologne Central Mosque. Through this analysis and a theoretical framework based on the notion of visibility, the aim is to investigate the factors that contribute to the successful reception of the mosque by the public through an exhaustive contextual analysis. I theorize that three factors enabled this positive reception of the mosque. These factors are: (1) the architecture and local context, which contributes to the visibility of the mosque (2) urban design process of the mosque, which plays a role bringing different actors together and (3) the politics of visibility which was framed through the self-presentation and the reception of the mosque by the media. I argue that although the Marxloher Merkez Mosque project compared to the Cologne Central Project is perceived as a successful project that managed to overcome the risks associated with social conflict, this "Miracle" of Duisburg only provides social cohesion on the surface and leads to "self-orientalism" and further alienation.

Keywords: Turkish diaspora in Germany, Cologne Central Mosque, Marxloher Merkez Mosque

1. Turkish mosques beyond the visibility-representation nexus

Today, wherever one looks, Islam - and whether it belongs to Germany or not – stirs a heated debate ("Is Islam Changing Germany" 2017). Before 2015, Germany had already been home to over 4 million Muslims, most of whom came from Turkey after World War II. Even before the start of the contemporary refugee crisis, the debate on Islam and its place in Germany was framed around a Turkish population that had not been well-integrated into the German society. Today, many Turks prefer to live in social (and spatial) enclaves within big cities, where the dominant language is Turkish rather than German and attend mosques that are operated by DITIB - Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs, an organization linked directly to the Turkish Government Authority for Religious Affairs (Su 2017). This involvement of the Turkish government - and its self-defined role as the administrator of Islam in Germany - has been shown by scholars and politicians as one of the most important factors preventing Turkish Muslims from integrating into German society (Kern 2017).

The involvement of the Turkish government in the administration of Islam is closely related to the legal status and accommodation of Islam in Germany. European nation-states' handling of Islam, the minority religion, differs substantially as the institutionalization of any religion builds upon the pre-existing patterns of church-state relations (Bader 2007, König 2007). Especially in Germany, the institutional position of Islam is very underprivileged. Christian churches and Jewish synagogues in Germany have formal status as corporations according to public law. This status allows them to profit from the taxes collected by the state. As Muslims living in Germany do not have such an organizational structure, German authorities do not grant Islam the same legal status (Fetzner & Soper 2005). For this reason, Islamic organizations in Germany remain disadvantaged compared to the established churches as they lack legal recognition and financial support (Fleischmann & Phalet 2012). Nielsen (2004) explains the operational structure of Islam in Germany. Since Islam is not a formal religious community recognized by the state, the religious associations operate under the category of registered associations (*eingetragener Verein, e.V.)*. Unlike the Jewish, Catholic and Protestant communities that work closely with state authorities and are included in the decision-making

process in the areas of education, welfare and health, the lack of a legal recognition prevents Islamic associations from taking part in the policy making process (Tol 2008).

Although the Turkish government has been sending imams to Europe since 1975, it was not until the establishment of DITIB in 1984 that efforts to organize the religious life of Turkish immigrants took effect (Pederson 1999, 26). DITIB denies links to any official or private organizations and defines itself as an independent umbrella organization, however, it is the Turkish government's extension for religious affairs abroad and relies on financial support from the Turkish government. DITIB works under the Directorate for Religious Affairs, which is a part of the Turkish prime minister's office. The organization is responsible for delegation of imams and employees abroad and these employees have the status of civil servants of the Turkish Government (Tol 2008). The imams are sent abroad temporarily and replaced every four years. DITIB functions through 14 state level organizations and 930 registered cultural associations (e.V.) that also act as mosques and follow the official Turkish view of Islam ("*Hakkımızda*" 2017). The role of the Turkish government as a major religious organizer or even the administrator of Islam in Germany has served to further alienate an important section of the Turkish immigrant population who still lack basic citizenship rights despite their long presence in the country. Because Turkish immigrants do not have the right to vote unless they have acquired German citizenship, Islam and Islamic organizations have become the only platform to voice social grievances within German society (Tol 2008). Within this sphere of limited rights, mosques mark the unmistakable presence of Islam in Germany and provide Turkish people their *right to the city.*

Lefebvre argues that the true citizens of a place are those who use the space daily, however the ethnic Turks living in Germany have been denied their "right to city" as they remain marginalized the German society (1996). Pollack concluded that this feeling of not being accepted is expressed through the passionate defense of Islam as an attempt to be a part of a group (2016). As Lefebvre affirms that the struggle for "right to city" remains symbolic until it is given a material form, the "right to the city" in this case is claimed by appropriating the urban space through mosque spaces. As the presence of Turkish-Germans cannot be asserted through formal means, such as work or social participation, they exercise their "right to city" in *alternative publics* which are neither public nor private spaces where participation is closely related to the sense of comfort and belonging (1996). The increasing mosque attendance among Turkish-Muslims in Germany shows that mosque spaces are being transformed into such "alternative publics" where Turkish-Muslims find new gendered ways of resituating themselves within that social space, appropriate the public space of the mosque, and negotiate their identities both as immigrants and Muslims within the context of the immigrant neighborhood. Spain also views the houses of worship and asserts that these "alternative places" straddle the divide between private and public while providing a platform to battle marginalization (2016). The Turkish diaspora mosques in Germany, whether they are adapted or purpose built, present excellent examples of these alternative publics by overlaying the material structure of the mosque with the social dynamics of identity politics.

Unlike their counterparts in Turkey, where are familiar elements of the urban landscape, the diaspora mosques in Germany function differently. Although mosques design in Germany is heavily influenced by trends in Turkish stylistically, the meaning and use of the mosques differ substantially in these two contexts. While mosques in Turkey only serve the purpose of religious practice, their counterparts in Europe become social and physical spaces where Turkish immigrants can organize around a common identity (Tol 2008). Muslims in Europe often redefine themselves as minorities which in turn changes the religious practices and subjectivities of Muslims and repositions them in secular Europe. From the point of view of certain European collectives, this process is far from a quiet process of immigration, adaptation and accommodation and the increasing Islamic presence in public life changes their collective memories and self-perceptions. Islamic signs and symbols in the European landscape become more and more visible, and become major sources of cultural and political controversy as they connote a visible expression of a local Muslim community spatially transgressing the invisible cultural boundaries of the German public sphere (Allievi 2009; Göle 2011). Disputes surrounding the increasing visibility of Islam in the urban landscape through the construction of diaspora mosques signals the reterritorialization of Muslims and reveals how the European public deals with cultural and religious difference (Göle 2011). This visibility of Islam is occasionally seen as shocking and shifts the public discourse from social and economically related problems to religion and citizenship issues. It is exactly this visibility of the purpose-built mosque that makes it the material symbol and center for conflict over whether Islam can ever be a part of European public life (Landler 2006).

With the increased visibility of mosques in European public space over the last three decades, the conflict over the place and meaning of mosques stems from the politics of visibility (Göle 2011, Jonker 2005, Bowen 2007). In the past, the religious activities of Muslims in Europe were confined to invisible and private prayer rooms, while today mosques publicly and visibly mark the presence of Islam (Es 2012). The public visibility of Muslims is informed by negative cultural associations related to Islam (Fekete 2004). Cheng's research on the discussions of minaret bans in Swiss parliament shows how these negative feelings attached to Islamophobia combines with national identity (2015). Islamophobia has been analyzed through paradigms of radicalization to explain cultural differentiation between Europe's Muslim religious minorities and its mainstream (Becker

2017, Bayoumi 2006, Elver 2012, Meer 2013). According to recent studies, the fear of Islam and Muslims among certain European citizens stems from a number of notions: presumed failure of prioritizing democratic values and ideals (Tyrer & Sayyid 2012, Romeyn 2014), different and unequal understandings of gender (Ewing 2008) and expected inclination towards extremism (Fekete 2004). In media, representations of Islam are dominated by these notions, creating a "publicly available" and shared grammar that might be understood as equating Islam with threat (Becker 2017, Said 1981, de Galembert 2005).

Although for Muslims, a mosque is not only a place of worship but also a cultural space of religiosity and sociability that is reminiscent of a familiar landscape, Göle refers to the "loss of innocence" of the mosques. Politicization of the mosque, especially after the 1979 Revolution in Iran, from where the revolutionary fervor spread, made mosques visible sites for the contestation of urbanism, pious politics and political Islam. In other words, mosques as religious public spaces cannot be confined to the boundaries of its community of believers. The mosque claims its visibility both in national and global contexts, contesting the existing separation between private religious and secular public fields; "between personal piousness and secular publicness" (2011). To conclude, mosques and their visibility signify a process of spatial transgression of Muslims into the European public which contests the secular and cultural norms of the host country. In this context, Islam does not only cross the geographical boundaries through immigration but also transgresses the invisible cultural borders of the European public space.

The following case studies of the Marxloher Merkez Mosque in Duisburg and Cologne Central Mosque show the complicated nature of the notion of visibility, demonstrating how the local context, public staging and performance of mosques within can have a very important effect on the reception of the mosque and become a symbol of inclusion or exclusion. Becker states that, although all mosques have a heavy symbolic weight on the society, what matters is their performance and concludes that "not all mosques are considered equal" (2017). While some mosques cause serious and lasting conflict, others blend smoothly into the existing social and physical pattern of the city. In this paper, by using two case studies in Germany, I discuss the factors that influence the public reception of the mosque. I argue that public acceptance of the diaspora mosque into the mainstream depends upon three factors: (1) the architecture and local context, which contributes to the visibility of the mosque (2) urban design process of the mosque, which plays a role bringing different actors together and (3) the politics of visibility which relates to how the mosque project was framed by the media and presented by the mosque organization itself and effected by their communication with the mainstream society.

2. The "Miracle of Duisburg": Marxloher Merkez Mosque

Marxloher Merkez Mosque (*Marxloh Merkez Camii*), located in the northern section of the Marxloh neighborhood of Duisburg, is the largest mosque in the city built partly in classic Ottoman style (Fig. 1). Although the area where the mosque is situated is very accessible via the main business street, Weselerstrasse, the overall area has been faced with urban decline.

Marxloher Merkez Mosque, designed by the Turkish - German architect Cavit Şahin, is a much more direct depiction of the Ottoman style compared to other Turkish mosques in Germany. The external structure of the mosque is dominated by a dome structure that includes a central dome and four half-domes around it. The entrance hall is covered by five small domes placed relatively lower than the level of the central dome structure. The 23-meter-high dome is complemented with a single 34-meter-high "pencil form" minaret typical of the Ottoman period (Korn 2013).

Fig. 1. Marxloher Merkez Mosque, ("Merkez Moschee, Marxloh", 2011)

Inside the mosque, there is a 40x28m praying area surrounded by a second-level mezzanine (Korn 2013) (Fig. 2). This second level mezzanine, *mahfil*, is reserved for the use of women for daily prayers and at important religious days, when attendance to the mosque by the congregation is much higher, it used by the men. The prayer room can accommodate 1200 people, 800 in the main prayer area downstairs and 400 in the women's section upstairs.

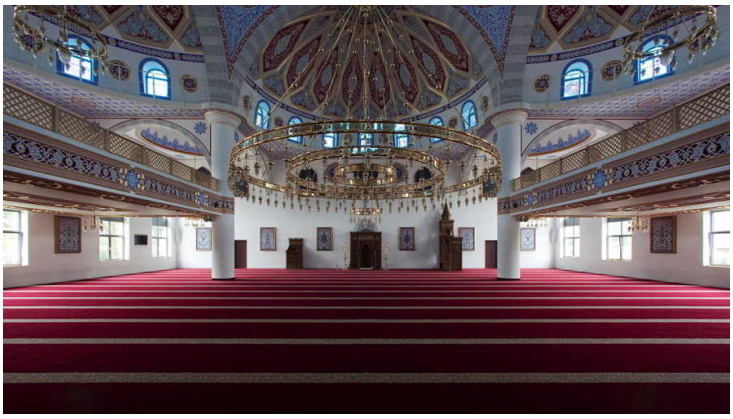

Fig. 2. Marxloher Merkez Mosque ("Merkez Moschee, Marxloh", 2011)

Due to its foreign style, the mosque stands out from the rest of Marxloh's urban landscape with its minaret and ensemble of domes and half-domes. Although mosques are becoming a more familiar element in German cities, according to Gorzewski three characteristics of the Merkez Mosque make it a unique one (2015). The first feature is related to the size of the mosque. At the time of its opening in 2008, Merkez Camii was the largest mosque in Germany with its capacity of 1200-people.

The second characteristic of the mosque is related to the double character of the building, serving both as a place to practice Islam and as a community center. Although both of these functions are accommodated within the same space, they are run by organizations independent from each other. The building has a total usable area of 2500 m^2, 55% of which is used by the DITIB mosque organization for praying and the rest is attributed to the community center. While the community center functions to promote interfaith dialogue, it also serves as a community center for the local Turkish population, offering homework support for students, language courses and intercultural seminars (Gorzewski 2015). This establishment the mosque as an educational and meeting place along with its religious functions, signals the opening up of the Turkish community and Islam to the general population (Yılmaz 2010).

The third characteristic of the mosque that sets it apart from other mosque projects in Germany is related to its funding. The 7.5 million Euro budget of the construction project was equally shared between donations made to the local DITIB and the EU and the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) (Yılmaz 2010). Due to the fact that the construction of the mosque was financed partially by the subsidies of NRW and the EU (especially for the community center), the mosque project became one of the very few projects undertaken by an urban development agency (Winkel 2012). Since Islam is not legally recognized by the German government, to overcome the legal issues, the construction of the mosque was funded by DITIB and donations from the congregation while local authorities and the EU incorporated the project into the urban and regional development plan and funded the construction of the community center (Topçu 2009).

As one of the largest construction projects of DITIB, the Merkez Camii has a long history. Marxloh is characterized by its high immigrant population which is predominantly Turkish. Out of 20,500 people living in Marxloh, it is estimated that 13,500 of them have a Turkish background (Uslar 2017). The small backyard mosques, the former DITIB mosque which was established in an unused cafeteria space, was regularly overcrowded on public holidays (Gorzewski 2015), making it a not very favorable for religious use (Jenker 2008) and was becoming insufficient for the use of approximately 500 households (Ehrkamp 2007). The local DITIB was active in the area since its establishment in 1984, and decided that these makeshift prayer rooms were too small and they needed a new building. In 1997, DITIB proposed the construction of a classical Ottoman style mosque with the support of the local Turkish community. Being aware that such construction projects may become a source of anxiety in the district, the association's board of directors in Marxloh sought for cooperation with local administration, the Duisburg Development Union (*der Entwicklungsgesellschaft Duisburg* – EG DU), churches and other institutions. By 2002, an advisory council for the project was established with representatives from political parties, churches, local associations, neighborhood residents and businesses (Topçu 2009). The ultimate aim was transparency and openness. During the construction phase alone the project received 40.000 visitors, who wanted to learn more about Islam and the Muslim population of Marxloh. Although in 2006, this friendly and peaceful process was clouded by media reports on the involvement of the construction company's members in right-wing circles, the incident was almost forgotten by the time the mosque was opened in 2008 (Gorzewski 2015). Despite these problems related to its administration, Merkez Camii still functions as a religious, cultural and social meeting place, and continues to provide educational and interfaith dialogue programs to bring together people from different backgrounds.

3. DITIB's Mega-Mosque: Cologne Central Mosque

Cologne Central Mosque (*Marxloh Merkez Camii*), located in the north-western section of the Cologne city center, is the largest mosque in Germany built in non-Ottoman style with glass walls, two minarets and a dome (Fig. 3). The area where the mosque is situated is very accessible via the main business streets, Innere

Kanalstrasse and Venloer Strasse, which is the main reason of the controversy revolving around the construction of the mosque. The designer of the Cologne Central mosque, German architect Paul Böhm who specializes in building churches, planned the building as a domed structure with two minarets. The five-story domed-structure covers an area of 4500 m^2, which includes a bazaar, lecture and seminar halls and an Islam library in addition to the praying area. The praying area can accommodate up to 4000 people and includes a *mahfil* area in the gallery for the use of women. The 35-meter-high dome of the mosque is complemented with 55-meter-high stylized pencil minarets. Unlike the other DITIB commissioned mosques in Germany, the mosque does not mimic the traditional Ottoman mosque. Böhm aimed for an "open", "inviting" and "light" mosque and designed the massive dome broken by glass shells to achieve this aim.

Although the Cologne Central Mosque project was initiated around the same time when Marxloher Merkez Mosque was started, the controversy surrounding the mega-mosque has delayed both its construction and opening. Just like in the case of Marxloh, the planning process of the Cologne Central Mosque has an even longer history which starts with the request of DITIB in 2001 and ends with the opening of the mosque in June, 2017. Cologne has the highest number of Muslims in Germany and usually referred to as the capital of Islam in Germany. Although there existed more than 40 backyard mosques and prayer rooms in the area, the lack of a large representative mosque caused small Islamic associations to be spread out in the city. In 2001, DITIB decided to demolish the old pharmaceutical factory that was used as mosque and served as the headquarters of the association and build a new mosque in the Ehrenfeld district that would answer the increasing demands of the mosque congregation. Unlike the approach that was adopted in the design of the Marxloher Mosque, DITIB opted for a different approach in 2005 and decided to organize an architectural competition with the support of the Cologne city government. The 30.000 Euro award competition required a modern urban building, not imitating the Ottoman mosque and had a jury that included DITIB chairs, Cologne Cathedral project architect Barbara Schock and politicians from the major parties in Cologne. As soon as it was announced that Böhm's design was the winner, the debates about the mosque has begun (Gorzewski 2015).

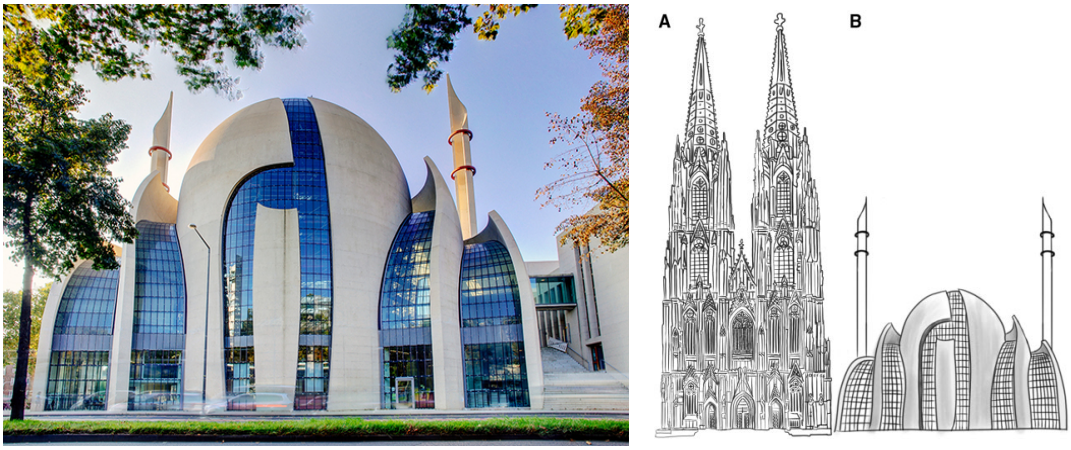

Fig. 3 and 4. Cologne Central Mosque and the sketch portraying its size in relation to Cologne cathedral (Becker, 2017)

The first round of oppositions was about the architectural design of the mosque. The size of the dome and the height of the minarets ignited the criticism on the grounds that the mosques appears too strong in the Cologne urban landscape and feared that it would cast a shadow on the Cologne Cathedral (Fig. 4). Böhm and DITIB opposed to those criticism by claiming that the office buildings and the nearby TV tower are much higher than the minarets. Over the years, the shape of the minarets and the dome has changed but the height of the minaret remained the same. The second round of oppositions came from the author Ralph Giordano, the district mayor Jörg Uckermann, right-wing groups and Pro-Cologne group on the grounds that construction of the mosque would transform the neighborhood into a Turkish ghetto and empower the Muslim population (Haeusler 2008). By 2007, the tone of the conflict was shifted from a debate on the Cologne Mosque towards debate on Islam in German society. While Uckermann voiced his belief that the residents should reject the mosque as Cologne is a "Christian city", Giordano claimed that the mosque represents "the creeping Islamization" of Germany (Harris 2007). The protest of these authors and politicians were effective to arouse emotion among the Cologne people to have a mosque built in their Christian city. The surveys showed that only 30% of the population of Cologne was in favor of the mosque.

By 2007, in the face of possible right-wing extremist protests, to ameliorate the heavy criticisms, a mosque advisory council was formed in Cologne as well. It included the then-mayor Schramma, representatives of the

churches and Jewish community, members of the city administration and the political parties. Together with DITIB chairs, a decision was taken to build a smaller mosque which is in line with German democratic ideal, which gave way to the beginning of the construction phase in November, 2009. Unlike the ground-breaking ceremony of the Marxloher Mosque, German politicians refused to take part in the ceremony, showing their opposition and clearly distancing themselves from the project (Gorzewski 2015). After the start of the construction, the project was first suffered from financial problems, as the costs got out of hand. Unlike Marxloher Merkez Mosque, Cologne Central Mosque was funded fully by DITIB itself, not relying on any public funds from Germany or Turkey. The project also suffered from DITIB's attempts to scapegoat Böhm with the allegations that he caused massive constructed defects responsible for bankrupting the project, drew further media attention to the failed public status of the project. The mosque project was finally completed by 2016 and the mosque was opened in the June of 2017 (Becker 2017).

4. Discussion: What makes a miracle? Or an illusion?

Today, in Germany, the increasing number and visibility of mosques has become an undeniable phenomenon. The minarets of the mosques have started to join the cathedral towers and high-rise buildings in the German landscape and become a part of the urban silhouette. So far, this paper has presented the stories of the Marxloher Merkez Mosque and Cologne Central Mosque, both located deep in the belly of North Rhine Westphalia, and present exceptional examples of how Muslim identity became (in)compatible with the German mainstream. Here the actors included in the design process accomplished a politics of positive visibility through three main factors.

The first factor that contributed to positive visibility of the Marxloher Mosque is related to the local context and architecture. Although the mosque is much larger compared to other Turkish mosques in Germany, physically it remains quite invisible due to its location. Being located in an isolated area inhabited by a Turkish majority population undergoing a rapid urban decline contributed to the lack of public reaction (Alder 2008). On the other hand, Cologne Central Mosque has been located in a central area which would provide high levels of urban rent (Gorzewski 2015), the seemingly unprofitable location of the Marxloher Merkez Mosque did not raise any questions from the public. One of the main debates about the Cologne Central Mosque was related to the disputes over where the money gained from the shops and bazaar inside the mosque complex would be spent. On the other hand, the main issue that caused problems in the case of Cologne Central Mosque was related to symbolic decision of building an Islamic dome in the "Rome of the North", in the city that houses the most significant Catholic religious structure in Germany (Becker 2017, Lander 2006). The main cause of the debate was the fear of the dome of Cologne Central Mosque to cast shadows over the Cologne Cathedral which materializes in the height of the minarets of the mosque (Becker 2017). Furthermore, the architecture of the Marxloher mosque proved to be a tool of integration as it became symbol of openness and transparency, thereby contributing to the positive public reception. The mosque provided transparency through very large windows on its façade, a detail that diverges from traditional Anatolian style. Unlike disputes over the architecture of Cologne Central Mosque, whose dome and minarets would symbolically cast shadows over the Köln Dom and whose central location would start a process of "ghettoization" of the neighborhood (Becker 2017). The construction of Merkez Mosque in Duisburg became an exemplar project showing successful planning and communication, which can also be seen from lack of resistance and reservations from local German population, making the mosque "the miracle of Marxloh".

The second factor that made the Marxloher Mosque a successful project is related to its design process. According to Küçük, the participatory work of the advisory board, the "transparent funding" and the endorsement of the project by different parties created a friendly atmosphere and a sympathetic attitude around the construction project, in contrast to the ongoing mosque project in Cologne (Gorzewski 2005). According to Becker, during the design process of the mosque, neither a clear leader came forward to present the mosque project to the public, nor did the planning board engage in public debates to address to the public concerns that might arise from perceived differences (extremism, ethnic exclusion and the role of women). Becker (2017) even addresses the difficulties she encountered related to the "opaqueness" of this design process while researching. She failed to find any information related to the controversy around the Cologne Central Mosque and whenever she could, the failure of the mosque was blamed entirely on outsiders, especially on the architect, Paul Böhm who was dismissed as the project construction manager in 2011. As can be seen, while the participatory design process of Marxloher Merkez Mosque made it a successful one, the reluctance to include representative actors from different segments of the community caused the failure of the Cologne Central Mosque. This second factor is also related to the funding process. Marxloher Mosque, became almost an urban project that brings the local-government and DITIB together, as it received funding from both however, Cologne Mosque relied solely on the funding from DITIB itself, raising further suspicions on DITIB being the long-arm of the Turkish government.

The last factor that contributed to the social cohesion framed around Marxloher Merkez Mosque is related to the media reception and self-presentation. At the time of its opening, city marketing also contributed to bringing the community together by a media campaign and the slogan “Made in Marxloh” referring to the participatory planning process that brought different coexisting groups in Marxloh together (Winkel 2012). Although the reaction that Merkez Camii received from the public and politicians was a positive one, as mentioned before this peaceful process was shadowed by the conflicts within the mosque association itself in the later years. The rising conflict between conservatives and liberals in Turkey also caused tension within the Turkish diaspora in Germany and the mosque association itself, resulting in the resignation of the chairman of the mosque association, Özay, and dismissal of the press representative Küçük in 2009. Özay’s view of liberal Islam was criticized extensively by the conservative group within DITIB (Gorzewski 2015). By 2010, DITIB declared that the conflict within the administration was settled (Klinkhardt 2010). The effective staging and performance of civic ideals – loyalty, participation and transparency – in the case of Marxloher Merkez Mosque highlights the absence of these ideals in the case of Cologne Central Mosque even more. By being open about the disputes even within the advisory board of the Marxloher Mosque and its transparent self-presentation, the design process did not encounter much negative reaction from the media and public. On the other hand, the opaque approach of the Cologne Mosque board, the dispute between the board and Böhm, show the absence of the German civil ideals, loyalty, participation and transparency, that were effectively performed in the case of Marxloher Mosque (Becker 2017).

Although the Marxloher Merkez Mosque project is perceived as a successful effort that managed to overcome the risks associated with social conflict, I argue the “alternative public” that “Miracle” of Duisburg creates, only provides social cohesion on the surface and leads to what Batuman defines as “self-orientalism” (2016). With its distinctive architectural style, the mosque stands out in the urban landscape, working as a signifier of the Turkish-Muslim presence in the area. The architecture of the building with strong references to 16th century Ottoman mosques has major implications for the people living in the area. For the Turkish people, the mosque connotes a Turkish-Muslim identity, not a Turkish-German one and due to its performative nature, the mosque causes Turkish people to identify themselves with their old Turkish and Islamic characters, not with the Turkish-German identity which was aimed to be achieved through integration, resulting in a self-othering process. In this way, rather than becoming a symbol of integration as intended, it remains a representation of Turkishness, causing Turks to identify themselves as others in the Marxloh landscape. The other implication is related to the perception of the mosque by the German population living in the area. Although the mosque was designed to promote integration, because it embodies only Turkish elements in its design, it pushes the German population further away as it fails to address the German audience. For the German people living in the area, the mosque remains a foreign building due to the lack of familiar architectural elements. Such a distinct representation is only attractive for the Turkish population living in the area, pushing the German population further away both physically and socially. In addition to this, because the mosque represents a conscious identification with the stereotypical Turkish Muslim identity it disrupts the shared collective imaginaries and self-perception of Germans (Göle 2011). Seyran Ateş, a Turkish born lawyer and women’s right activist also warns against the exaggerated expectations regarding the integration-promoting effect of the mosque in Duisburg. Parallel to Batuman’s argument on self-Orientalism, she expresses her fear that such a community center would function as a socialization center among Turkish people, thereby contributing to the consolidation of a parallel Turkish society through the “alternative spaces” constructed by the mosque and provide no social and cultural exchange with Germans.

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