OUT ON THE SCENE
Queer Migrant Clubbing and Urban Diversity

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This article develops a critique of identity-focused approaches to ethno-cultural diversity in urban settings by shifting attention from categorical identities to the question of socialities. Taking the example of a queer migrant club night as its point of departure, it shows how a focus on the forms of social engagement that are particular to migrant club scenes can contextualize identity claims but also go beyond them by highlighting the complexity of shifting affiliations and interactions that makes for the appeal of such scenes. Rather than seeing queer migrant club scenes as a protected refuge for a doubly discriminated minority, the consideration of socialities allows to reveal their functioning as semi-public urban formations.

Keywords: urban socialities, sexuality, ethnicity, diversity, leisure

The setting is Berlin Kreuzberg, late-night Saturday, with scores of people queuing down the block hoping to eventually make their way past the club doors in order to join the party. Over the course of an average *Gayhane* club night, more than one thousand people will have joined in, dancing to a mix of Turkish pop music with tunes from the Balkans, Israel, and translocal sounds between Hyderabad and London thrown in. The musical mix reflects its audience – not just in terms of its migrant origins, but in terms of its sexual ambiguities and gender expressions as well. The *Gayhane* club night has been created as an event to predominantly attract a 'queer'[1] Turkish-German crowd, though the party has become immensely popular among self-identified 'straight'

Turkish-German clubbers. Queers without migrant backgrounds and other aficionados of Turkish pop music complement the picture, to form what enthusiastic journalists at Berlin's public-service radio station *Radio MultiKulti* and other media reporting have invariably termed something along the lines of a 'colourful celebration of diversity' or a 'multicultural paradise'. Other reports have instead stressed the functioning of *Gayhane* as a place of refuge for a doubly discriminated minority community: one that has a tough standing both in heteronormative Turkish environments and in a gay and lesbian scene in Berlin that entails different forms of racism.

The above paragraph more or less colludes with such mass media descriptions of *Gayhane* as a con-

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text of self-chosen urban diversity, naming as it does the dominant cultural schemes of classification that are linked to identity categories usually associated with such diversity: gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background. This article, however, tries to problematize this understanding of diversity, an understanding that is dominant not just in media reporting but also in academic approaches, by shifting attention from the problem of identity to one of sociality. What happens – theoretically, methodologically, politically – when we try to pay attention not to the categorical identities, claimed and ascribed, of the *Gayhane* crowd, but to the forms of sociality that are produced there? What if the interesting aspect of the event is not its classificatory composition, but what actually happens in terms of engagements between people in and around the club space?

Gayhane, I argue in the following, offers a good example of how a reductive understanding of the social and an exclusive focus on identity categories can blind us to the crucial social dynamics of a phenomenon. Club scenes like *Gayhane* point to different processes of sociality that rarely emerge in classical research on the social parameters of migrant and minority life. But neither do they emerge in culturalist, identity-focused perspectives that often neglect the question of the social altogether.

In the Mix

In the ten-year successful history of the club night, achieving the right 'mix' of the *Gayhane* audience has not been left to chance. Quite the contrary, its organizers have had to be continually concerned with what they have perceived as various audience imbalances and their related threats. Intended as a space in which queers with particular immigrant backgrounds would dominate, if not in numbers then at least in spirit, *Gayhane* functions as a public event, not as a club with restricted membership. Welcoming the participation of non-queers and non-immigrants, organizers have nevertheless had to contend with problems related to the shifting attraction of different audiences over the course of *Gayhane*'s existence. Having moved to Berlin in 1998 after several extended spells of living and working in

Turkey's largest city Istanbul, a time during which I was active in the local Lambda organization and became part of queer transnational friendship circles that included some *Gayhane* organizers, I witnessed the different phases and dynamics of the club night as a regular visitor and friend.

During the first few years, it was the growing presence of gay men without immigrant backgrounds that was seen to threaten the character of the event. Attending the club night had become hip in certain non-immigrant gay circles, and many visitors with immigrant backgrounds began to feel uncomfortable with the former's orientalist expectations of finding certain kinds of erotic encounters in its wake. The door policy was adapted accordingly, in order to ensure that the main target group could still feel comfortable and not be pushed out. A few years later, the problem had transformed into one of securing the queer character of the *Gayhane* club night. This had partly to do with the fact that straight-identified Turkish-German and Kurdish-German women had discovered *Gayhane* as a place where they could dance to music they liked and enjoy themselves without the unwanted attention of men. However, it was just these self-identified straight men that began to attend in larger numbers once the women were there.

While straight-identified people had once attended because of their connection to members of the queer *Gayhane* audience, the club night increasingly attracted a straight clientele that in parts had little sympathy or tolerance for queers. Homophobic, sexist and especially transphobic incidents and violence in and outside the club space threatened to bring *Gayhane* to an end. After some discussion, the organizers responded by simultaneously trying to limit the access of straight-identified people, and starting an alternative Turkish club night that was not queer in character. *Hahane*, as the party was called, lasted merely a few months – not a single night passed without violent incidents,[2] and thus the organizing team discontinued the party. It had served its original partial purpose, though, in the sense that some pressure was taken off the *Gayhane* nights. Door policies are still in place today, how-

ever, to make sure that those entering the club space are mostly queer-identified.

An Eye for It

Various strategies have been employed to secure this composition inside the club, but most of the burden rests with the staff at the door. It is indeed partly a matter of categorical identifications here that determines the practical task at hand, and while gender expression and immigrant backgrounds can more easily be 'read off' the phenotypical/stylistic appearance of people in the queue,[3] finding out if someone fits the queer profile is a somewhat more difficult undertaking. Patricia, a lesbian African-German woman[4] who has worked at the door for years, told me:

> It gets incredibly difficult. But you can partly tell from their entire act, well, we are positioned pretty far outside, on the upper staircase. We look down the street and check out how people move about. Some of them show up, a heterosexual couple, smooching, to get in the queue and then to claim that they are gay and lesbian when they get to the door. And then I say, right, I can see that. Go to some other club. Or how someone behaves more generally, the way they gesture, how they walk, join in conversations and such. With guys, you can easily find out this way, in my opinion, how they interact with each other. With women it can be more difficult, but whoever comes along extremely done up, well, I'm sorry. (Kosnick 2005: 128)

Rather than simply relying on dominant cultural schemes of classification that associate gays and lesbians with stereotypical types of appearance and behaviour, discernable to a 'knowing' gaze, Patricia also refers to forms of perception that relate to particular queer sensibilities and cultural competencies. Being able to sense if someone shares queer identifications and/or desires is a crucial (and sometimes life-saving) competence for queers, especially in heteronormative environments, requiring the ability to pick up on subtle forms of comportment, of voice modulation, of self-presentation and aesthetics, of gait and attentiveness that easily go unnoticed

by non-queers. These competences should of course not be assumed to share the same interpretive 'vocabulary' across different geopolitical and cultural spaces and contexts, as if queer subjectivities and practices were uniform in their expressive and communicative dimensions (Fortier 2002).

Yet, it is crucial to note here that this assessment of other people's queerness (as identification and/or desire) does not simply operate with dominant stereotypical indicators of classification. What in the Anglo-American context is often referred to as subculturally as 'gaydar', a blending of 'gay' and 'radar' that has come to stand for the intuitive assessment of another person's queer identification or interest, entails multiple overlapping codes and sensory competences for different queer subcultures (Halberstam 2005), but most certainly differs from dominant stereotypical categorizations in terms of interpretive sophistication and intent. Importantly, assessment tends to involve more than observation, such as making eye contact and holding someone's gaze for a few seconds longer than a casual glance would warrant (Nicholas 2004). This form of assessment is also an act of engagement – the mutuality of a gaze that provides the basis for recognition – and thus always involves a form of minimal contact, and not simply of identification/categorization. The reciprocated gaze constitutes a form of interaction, and reveals in the mutuality of recognition something about the person who seeks the eye contact, not only about the person that meets and sustains the interaction.

This last method of assessment is of course of limited use to members of the door staff, who are easily identified by those who queue as gatekeepers in a literal sense. But Patricia and her colleagues use other forms of engagement as well if they are unsure as to a person's 'queer factor'. Engaging people in conversation provides an additional communicative terrain to interpret cues. 'So first you test it, a couple of questions, if you are not sure, start a conversation.' The best question to ask is not always the most direct one, Patricia states, such as asking whether people were gay or lesbian. '… the problem is that lots of people are not out there, and they still have a hard time to name it.' While the underlying assumption

that there is a definite 'it' to be named and the expectation that there should be a temporal progression towards a naming can certainly be criticized (see Fortier 2002), what emerges here is a recognition that sexual practices and desires cannot be translated directly into modes of self-constitution and -presentation. Conversely, 'passing'[5] as queer can and does take place at the *Gayhane* door, but given that self-identified straight people rarely encounter situations that require explicit forms of dissimulation with regard to their sexual orientation, this is likely to happen less frequently than with queer-identified people in heteronormative clubbing environments. Less practice, less exigency. The border between queer and straight does not look the same from either side of the divide.[6]

Migrant Identities

Noting that the processes of identification at the club door involve complex forms of engagement and interpretation rather than just stereotypical categorizations on the part of staff members offers an opportunity to ground identity claims and ascriptions in the context of concrete communicative practices and performative action. Such contextualization, despite the well-rehearsed contemporary claims across academic disciplines that identities are always somehow constructed, occurs surprisingly rarely in the growing body of literature investigating the cultural identifications of migrants and their descendents across the social sciences and humanities.

What is at stake in this literature is most often the issue of ethnic, national or possibly diasporic identification, seen as an important indicator of cultural integration in countries of residence. With regard to academic work on second- or third-generation migrant youth in particular, older paradigms of young people 'being caught between two cultures' have given way to sophisticated discussions of cultural hybridity. Different intellectual and political precursors for this 'hybridity turn' in migration studies can be singled out, such as the anthropological critique of the culture concept in the 1990s (Abu-Lughod 1991), the earlier Caribbeanist and linguistic anthropology-led debates on creolization (see Palmié

2006), the postcolonial interventions of Bhabha and others (Bhabha 1994), and the feminist theorizations of intersectionality and location in the 1980s that problematized different axes of oppression (e.g. Moraga & Anzaldúa 1983).[7]

Questions of cultural identity have thus gained more prominence in migration studies, and continue to be fruitfully explored across different disciplines and in recently emergent trends towards transnationalist and diasporic approaches. A shared feature of many identity debates and studies, however, is what might be called a 'culturalist' concern with migrant orientations and identifications that focuses on the articulation and representation of migrants and diasporas in the context of cultural production (music, festivals, cultural organizations, media publications) or in the context of verbalized statements gathered as data in individual and group interviews. The latter provide probably the most widespread methodological tool to investigate questions of identity in migration studies today, not least because they tend to be easier to conduct than fieldwork methods that aim at examining the situated production of identity claims and cultural orientations in daily life contexts.[8] 'Culturalism' in migration studies has been described by anthropologists as the tendency to firmly tie back the ways in which migrants make sense of the world to an assumed cultural belonging that usually references nation-state origins (Çağlar 1990; Sökefeld 2004). The culprit in such accounts has usually been made out to be some form of cultural essentialism that reduces migrants to bearers of standard ethno-national qualities and proclivities.

However, it is not just cultural essentialism that feeds the culturalism of much work on migrant identities. It is also the common failure to situate the production of identity claims and ascriptions as part of social and institutional practices that contributes to culturalism, in the sense of separating identification as meaningful self- and other-description from their contexts of occurrence. The relevance, for example, of 'passing' as queer at the door of a Berlin nightclub would remain unintelligible without contextualizing it and explaining both why it is important and how a particular type of interaction unfolds. And

it would be unlikely to even surface in research approaches that gather data on identity claims which are removed from concrete practices and events in migrants' lives. When people are asked to produce data/knowledge about themselves in the context of research interviews or surveys, their response will quite obviously be conditioned by the concrete demands and constraints of the informant situation. While this point seems hardly in need of pointing out to an ethnographically skilled audience, it is surprising how little critical reflection exists cross-disciplinary on the consequences of different methodological repertoires for researching migrant identifications. Instead, migrant articulations of cultural orientations and self-identifications are often taken as a form of evidence that exists in some kind of de-contextualized state, simply to be verbalized whenever migrants are called upon to deliver statements for scientific perusal. As a consequence, the question of how such articulations are related to concrete social practices and engagements often cannot even arise (see Mannitz 2006).

Migrant Socialities

The considerable sophistication of current debates on the concepts of migrant culture and cultural identity has no parallel where the social dimensions of migrant lives are concerned, the ways in which migrants engage in social practices and form part of social formations. Possibly the most striking tribute to the poverty of the cross-disciplinary vocabulary when it comes to migrant socialities[9] is the notorious concept of community (Alleyne 2002; Amit & Rapport 2002). The community concept has come to function as a kind of placeholder for all kinds of migrant social groupings, and is endemic in both political debates and academic discourses. It is conveniently used to stand in for groupings produced through external classificatory practices – such as urban census measures that count the numbers of foreign nationals – and just as conveniently (if usually for quite different purposes) mobilized to support political-representational claims from 'within' minority groups, allowing such representatives to 'speak for' the group in question.

Glossing over the differences between the production of groups via classificatory practices and actual social-collective engagement can have various sorts of political effects, and not all of them negative.[10] Yet, what it precludes is any consideration of how different kinds of migrant sociality actually come into being, and what their relationship is to particular identity categories and claims. Instead, the concept of community carries with it the conceptual baggage it has been burdened with ever since the founding father of German sociology, Ferdinand Tönnies, posited it as a premodern, 'organic' form of social grouping that predates the rise of modern society (Tönnies [1887]1912). Tight-knit bonds, shared genealogy, clearly defined membership, temporal continuity and lack of individual autonomy are the most prominent elements of what Tönnies and later Max Weber have described as the features of community as a basic type of social formation (Weber [1922]1980). What are the implications, then, of the widespread standard formula by which migrant communities are taken to exist within particular societies, into which they integrate or not? It is a different form of essentialism that lurks here, one that links dominant schemes of classification to the assumption of an inescapable form of sociality, and is tinged with more than a hint of European social evolutionism (Stocking 1982) that associates non-European migrants with premodernity. It is striking that even quite sophisticated contemporary attempts to address questions of migration and identity in non-essentializing ways tend to take quick and unreflected recourse to the notion of community when referring to migrant social groupings.[11]

Efforts to demonstrate the malleability of cultural identifications are unfortunately rarely linked to examining the dynamics of social practices and emerging social formations. Dealing with the social is instead often left to the 'hard' social sciences that define migrant social parameters with regard to 'structural' data pertaining to labour markets, educational degrees, household statistics, residence patterns and the like. Levels of structural integration are then measured mostly by comparing quantitative information on educational performance,

unemployment, crime and income statistics. The social life of migrants thus tends to be addressed only through the research prism of conventional institutions such as schooling, labour markets, family, or 'community' organizing on religious and ethnic grounds.[12]

The widespread differentiation between cultural integration on the one hand, referring to identifications and outlooks, and social integration on the other, measured via statistical data on structural factors, is in danger of sedimenting into an unfortunate division of labour – one in which the investigation of meaning production including identity claims, while seen as related to the analysis of social (read structural) factors, is taken to constitute a separate project. What easily disappears in the void between these divisions is any interest in the social beyond predictable structural categories. Instead of examining the relations between cultural expressions and diverse social practices that characterize migrants' lives, information on structural social factors is often provided only as static background information, separate from the analysis of identities and orientations.

The prevalent focus on 'structural' factors with regard to the social has dire consequences for the range and complexity of social forms and practices that can be considered relevant to migrants' lives. Practices that are not linked to formal institutions or leave traces that can be measured statistically by state agencies, academic or market surveys are much less likely to receive research attention.[13] Bruno Latour's scathing critique of what he calls the 'sociology of societies' (Latour 2005) can thus quite fruitfully be applied to the treatment of socialities in much contemporary migration research. By taking for granted what kinds of social structures are relevant to the study of migration, the question of just how migrants are involved in diverse practices and forms of social affiliation can no longer be asked. What would it mean, however, to try and posit the issue of migrant socialities as an open question?

Scenes of Club Culture

In the remainder of this article, I return to *Gayhane* and other migrant clubbing scenes in order to explore how a non-reductive understanding of the social could provide a different perspective on urban diversity. To repeat the question asked at the beginning, what happens – theoretically, methodologically, politically – when we try to pay attention not to the categorical identities, claimed and ascribed, of the *Gayhane* crowd, but to the forms of sociality that emerge in this context?

I became aware of this crucial distinction in the course of research at other Turkish club nights in Berlin, club nights where I tended to be one of very few visitors without a background from Turkey, as far as I could estimate. I conducted this research as a postdoctoral research fellow for the EU Fifth Framework Project 'Changing City Spaces: New Challenges to Cultural Policy in Europe'.[14] Carrying out comparative research on the impact of migration on cultural developments in a number of European metropolitan centres, our initial approach was mainly ethnocentric, in the sense that we focused on cultural developments that were closely related to particular immigrant groups that constituted important ethnic minorities within the respective cities. Seen from such an 'outside' analytical perspective, what seemed most interesting about most Turkish clubbing events was their apparent ethnically exclusive character – the fact that the vast majority of visitors seemed to share the same ethno-national background.[15] Could this be taken as an indicator of what in the German context has been dubbed *Parallelgesellschaften* (Worbs 2007), a development towards a more or less self-chosen form of immigrant segregation?

In the course of attending events and talking to visitors and organizers, it became clear that the ethnic composition of the audience was of very little concern to those involved. Organizers were far more concerned with attracting what they regarded as the right kind of target group as their audience, defining it with shifting emphases in terms of age, attitude, styling, 'class', and gender balance. While some organizers reflected upon the difficulties young immigrant men often used to have (and in places still have) when trying to get past the door at non-immigrant 'mainstream' clubs, and seeing this

as a factor in the development of a Turkish-German club scene, the doors of their own clubs were by no means open to just anyone with the respective kind of ethno-national background: without proper attire – often meaning no trainers, hoodies etc. – and without female company, young men would still find themselves turned away at the door, albeit with different grounds for discrimination. Club audiences similarly described their scenes not in terms of ethnic criteria, but stressed factors such as age, attitude and style.

While these descriptions again hinge upon certain kinds of categorizations that have for other clubbing crowds been insightfully linked to (sub)cultural practices of distinction (Thornton 1995), they still cannot fully capture the allure that particular clubbing events hold for their respective audiences. What is it that makes for an exciting night out? While answers certainly differ across distinct groups of clubbers, one shared element emerged in the course of fieldwork that was rarely explicitly mentioned as such, yet invariably proved indispensible to the success of a club night in the implicit understandings of visitors and organizers.

I was attending a 'Sosyete' club night hosted at the *Oxymoron* venue in Berlin-Mitte, a sophisticated and relatively expensive club location in the heart of the gentrified city centre, when a young woman sat down next to me and we started talking. She said it was nice to see a new face, and she felt that this particular party was starting to get boring because it was always the same group of people who showed up. She was contemplating a change. What the young woman meant was not that she wanted more people without Turkish background there. She was merely making an observation that is key to the success of the vast majority of clubbing scenes: they lose their appeal once they fail to attract new visitors and lose their semi-public character. If you can no longer run into strange faces – the young woman thought and I agreed immediately – you might as well stay at home and invite your friends over. 'Going out' thus has to do with more than seeking the presence of particular kinds of people, it has to do with particular forms and possibilities of encountering strangers.

A clubbing scene is in this sense emphatically not about community, it is about particular kinds of urban publics. While it is nice to meet or run into people one knows when going clubbing, the 'kick' of going out has to do with these encounters taking place against the backdrop of an urban public that consists at least partially of strangers. Strangers with whom we might share a sexual orientation, gender expression or ethnic background, but people who are strangers none the less. They are most likely to remain strangers in the course of the night, but there are also all kinds of possibilities of encounter and social engagement. We might see through people, dance in their proximity, make eye contact, smile or talk to them, go home with them, and so on. The potential for specific encounters with strangers is what urban researcher Alan Blum has described as the essential quality and allure of urban scenes as contexts of selective association. While on the one hand, scenes are invariably specialized with regard to knowledge, taste, access and association, they simultaneously require a degree of openness in order to function:

> It sounds as if the scene confirms something about the associational life of the city, the ways its web of groups, societies and sects endow the city with a fraternal spirit, but this imagines the scene as a *Gemeinschaft*, whereas, in contrast, it is the mix of *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* and their impossible reconciliation that makes for the lure and excitement of the scene. (Blum 2001: 20)

Scenes are neither purely intimate, exclusive social formations with clear-cut membership, nor accidental gatherings where people are thrown together anonymously and by and large unintentionally, to re-rehearse the two poles of community and society as defined by the founding fathers of German sociology. Youth researchers have described scenes as temporary forms of association that have a thematic focus, but a low degree of obligation and commitment (Hitzler 2003; Pfadenhauer 2005). For Blum, co-presence in a particular location and face-to-face encounters also form central elements of scenes, in-

sofar as they thrive on the reciprocity of seeing and being seen:

> If public life invites us to enjoy being with others in an undemanding way, the public would be best conceived not as an incipient dialogue but as the erotic intensification of what is most intimate and exclusive that is produced by the activity of viewing and being viewed by the other. (Blum 2001: 24)

What interests Blum here is the social relationship that is produced in the mutuality of viewing in the context of scenes, one that might take quite different forms and carry various intentions, but always involves mutual engagement. The point is not to be a disinterested observer, but to participate, to make contact. Clubbing environments provide very particular contexts for social engagement with the carefully designed sensory stimulation they provide: the relative darkness, the level of noise which often renders verbal communication difficult, the close proximity of others, and the architectural design of spaces to dance, to sit, to mingle, to withdraw, to space out, to tune in. They thus encourage communication via eye contact and body movements, while offering ample room for experimentation and ambiguity: regarding the intentionality of moving into somebody's proximity, of casting a glance, of offering a smile, of copying dance moves, of brushing against someone. Often heightened via the consumption of various kinds of stimulants, different clubbing scenes and clubbers will seek to produce different sensory and emotional experiences, many of which might not be primarily oriented towards mutual engagement.[16] However, the 'scenic' forms of sociality provide a crucial context for these experiences, which are deliberately sought out in qualified public settings.

The importance of socialities rarely surfaces in interview-based data on people's clubbing habits. If asked why someone frequents a particular club night, respondents tend to refer to the same indicators – the hipness factor of people, the music, the venue. The social dimensions of their clubbing experience are much more likely to emerge in the context

of participant observation, when different factors come to the fore: questions of how to present oneself to whom, where to go within the venue, what to do when and how to engage with whom. This is not to claim that participant observation offers transparent and authoritative access to ethnographic truths – observing as a sensory practice, method of object construction and knowledge production in anthropology obviously comes with its own heavy historical baggage, a baggage that has accumulated in the debates over the status of anthropology as a science and form of representation (Atkinson & Hammersley 1994). Rather, the point is to note that observation as a practice of world engagement and interpretation (Schürmann 2008) allows to pay attention to the nuances of situated and often non-verbal acts that tend to be screened out in other methodological repertoires.

Very interesting aspects emerge also when observing and engaging the experts on collective practice in the context of clubbing, the DJs. They are themselves the keenest observers of particular social dynamics within the vicinity of the dance floor, since they have to 'know' how their audience ticks in order to produce a positive dance experience and atmosphere. In many explicitly dance-oriented clubs, DJs try to build up a collective sense of excitement that has often been described as a 'tribal' or 'fraternal' spirit among frenzied dancers that can peak several times in the course of a successful DJ set (Lawrence 2003).

Noting the origins of modern dance club scenes in the social circles of queer ethnic/racial minority subcultures in the United States, Tim Lawrence has described how an underground club scene in the 1960s helped to create safe public spaces for queer socialities, for people whose supposed minority 'communities' offered anything but a place to belong (ibid.). While belonging was certainly a concern for some – important to note here is the emergence of so-called 'houses' that modelled themselves on extended family structures to offer binding social ties, practical help and solidarity to queer minority men (Zea 2000) – underground clubs thrived only when their audience functioned as a scene, with access limited to those in the know, but never restricted

to a clearly demarcated group of people. It was not just about being in the presence of particular kinds of people but about engaging with them in different ways that made for the appeal of these clubs.

It would be highly reductive, then, to regard clubbing audiences merely as a group of people that have features in common such as age, musical taste, style, (sub)cultural capital, class positions, possibly ethnic backgrounds, gender expressions or sexual orientations. While Sarah Thornton has charged that club-cultural crowds '… generally congregate on the basis of their shared taste in music, their consumption of common media and, most importantly, their preference for people with similar tastes to themselves' (Thornton 1995: 200), this does not suffice to explain the social dynamics that characterize clubbing as event and club scenes as social formations. The dimensions of sociality that form part of clubbing events cannot be explained exclusively with reference to cultural schemes of classification or possibilities for cultural distinction, they have to be understood as properly social phenomena in their own right. An effort has to be made to understand how people actually engage with each other, and to describe the quality and dynamics of their affiliatory practices and the social formations they (re-)produce or transform.[17]

This point has similarly been made by critics of the subcultural studies paradigm developed out of the Birmingham school of cultural studies, where the study of youth subcultures formed an important focus for analyzing the cultural dynamics of class conflicts. Subcultures, David Muggleton has charged, are too often regarded as homogeneous and static systems, partly because the classical cultural studies approaches have primarily sought to determine their 'authenticity' with regard to a 'proper' class base rather than understanding their dynamic qualities (Muggleton 2005; see also Bennett 2003).

Conclusion

The implications of focusing on the social dimensions and dynamics of club scenes emerge with greater clarity when we return to the *Gayhane* club night and the perspectives that have been cast upon it

as either multicultural paradise or protected refuge. The description of its history and the analysis of its door politics have shown that in some aspects *Gayhane* can be considered a protected space, but not as a communal refuge of a doubly oppressed minority.

Being identified as not conforming to heteronormative standards can often imply acute danger in urban public settings. Kissing one's partner or lover in public, a taken-for-granted privilege of heterosexual couples in many European metropolitan public spaces, can elicit various threatening and unwanted responses in those very same spaces for same-sex couples (Mason 2002). While queer club spaces offer relative protection from such responses, just as do non-homophobic 'private' spaces, it is not just protection but the public character of the environment that counts. *Gayhane* is not a safe haven, nor a 'homelike space' (Petzen 2004), it is foremost a qualified face-to-face public gathering. Being in the presence of strangers that find one's doings and appearance unremarkable or affirmative is, in fact, remarkable in this context, and quite a different experience than being part of a 'community' implies. It is here that the political implications of shifting attention from identity to sociality begin to emerge: what does it mean for visitors to participate in and experience public gatherings that are not heteronormatively coded? For those who find their desires, affections and identifications at odds with dominant heteronormative and ethno-national standards, the experience of 'queer' and 'oriental' publics might suggest a different potential for change than that afforded by the experience of community belonging.

People who go to *Gayhane* do not simply want to be among people like themselves. Their interest is rather to be in a queer and Turkish-identified space where it is possible to participate in qualified publics – in this case in publics where one's presence is *not* reduced to subordinated categories of identity. The point is that what is most noticeable from a dominant heteronormative and ethnically unmarked perspective – the queer 'oriental' classification – can move to the background for participants, precisely because it structures the space in the first place. In order to understand, though, that there is more to

Gayhane than happily mixed minoritarian identities, one has to pay attention to the social dynamics and qualities of the club night as a scene.

What does this tell us about urban diversity? Urban space does not automatically bring forth 'cross-fertilization' and mixing just by virtue of being home to diverse populations, diverse in the sense of ethnic or sexual categories. Neither does the mere spatial co-presence of people that can be classified along multiple categories of identity tell us much about how these people relate to each other in social terms. The urgent (political as well as academic) question is rather how different forms of sociality and association arise, and under what conditions – particularly with regard to different forms of public life (Warner 2002). That is the very antithesis to the notion of community that always already knows who and what it is speaking of – the 'Turkish community', the 'gay community' and so on. There is no pre-constituted group here, no pregiven solidarity that can be assumed, no predetermined way of life that seeks preservation, celebration, or integration into the wider imagined consensus of 'society'. Positing the issue of migrant socialities in urban spaces as an open question thus opens up a new terrain of inquiry: one that does not prioritize questions of identity but rather asks about social practices and forms of affiliation that tend to go unnoticed in the current division of labour between cultural and social sciences.

Notes

1 The term is used here to refer to sexual orientations as well as gender identifications and expressions that do not conform to heteronormative expectations.

2 Conflicts ensued mostly between straight men and without homophobic background, as far as I was told, and some of them appear to have been related to drugs.

3 These readings are of course anything but 'straight'forward, themselves mobilizing dominant and subaltern cultural schemes of classification that have been partially naturalized. At the *Gayhane* door, however, a failure to easily 'read' and categorize someone as either male or female will enhance rather than diminish that person's chances of being granted access to the club space.

4 Her own self-descriptive terms for the purpose of this discussion.

5 Passing has been described both for racialized and sexual minorities, whereby 'members' of oppressed minority groups successfully hide or manage not to disclose their minority status vis-à-vis dominant groups and institutions (Robinson 1994).

6 It is interesting here to draw a parallel between Frederik Barth's famous discussion of ethnic boundary maintenance and the case at hand (thanks to the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this point). It was Barth's contribution to highlight the political character of ethnic identity in the context of constructing and maintaining boundaries and role differentiation between groups (Barth 1970). In this case, the very construction of 'queer' as other is a result of historically specific heteronormative paradigms that have used a variety of different mechanisms to produce subaltern subjects as deviant, unnatural, sick or immoral, without conceding the same visibility to 'heterosexual' as a category of identification. Given that the identification/construction of sexual minorities is in these constellations inseparable from various forms of violence and dominance, it might be more productive to compare (yet not liken) the maintenance and policing of normative heterosexuality to the policing of whiteness as invisible norm in certain historical contexts of racial politics, where different degrees of visibility and knowledge are attached to dominant and subaltern positions (Hartigan 2005; hooks 1992; Williams 1989).

7 Further non-academic factors that deserve mentioning involve for example the transformation of capitalist markets that increasingly rely on the circulation of signs (Lash & Urry 1994), and mobilize cultural processes of hybridization in the interest of an unlimited commodification of cultural differences (e.g. Nghi Ha 2005).

8 Various major studies of immigrant youth identities in Europe have relied and continue to rely on interview methods to gather their data (e.g. Vertovec & Rogers 1998; Heitmeyer et al. 1997; see Miller 2006).

9 I use this concept here in a wide sense to denote all forms of social engagement and affiliations between people.

10 There is no doubt that such forms of representational claims have been crucial to different kinds of emancipatory projects, for gay and lesbian politics as much as for 'racial' and ethnic minority empowerment. The downside is, of course, the instrumentalization of representational politics in the interest of non-emancipatory politics, such as when the British government calls upon the British Muslim 'community' to fight extremism in 'its' midst by reigning in its angry young men, whose occasional proclivity to become suicide bombers must surely be linked to educational failures in said 'community'.

11 Witness, for example, the use of the concept in the

2005 British Arts and Humanities Research Council programme specification for a new research initiative on diasporas, migration and identities, intended to produce cutting-edge research.

12 It would be too cumbersome here to try and provide a representative list of references for 'hard' social science approaches that work with the above-mentioned indicators.

13 There are, of course, very notable exceptions: the paradigm shift towards the study of transnational social formations and spaces, for example, has helped to unsettle engrained orthodox expectations regarding not just cultural orientations of migrants but also social practices and new institutions.

14 www.citynexus.com.

15 This is without regard here to the ethnic heterogeneity present among immigrants from Turkey, including but not limited to the Kurdish-Turkish divide.

16 It would be important here of course to look in more detail at specific drugs and their impact with regard to particular forms of sociability, noted for ecstasy as a drug of choice in rave and techno scenes, for crystal meth in gay sex party scenes, and so on (see Hitzler 2002; Slavin 2004).

17 This is not just a question of micro- and macro-approaches either, as might seem opportune from a sociology perspective that is used to treating questions of interpersonal engagement as a matter of micro-analysis, while treating 'structure' as a macro-affair. The 'structural' macro-approaches risk to miss out on precisely those social formations and dynamics that do not have a high degree of visibility, that cannot be easily demarcated, that seem ephemeral and fleeting.

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Author's Comment on the Reprint
Reflecting back on the article that was written almost ten years ago, there are two issues that I would address differently if I had the chance. One pertains to the rather cheap dismissal of the Birmingham school of cultural studies, which did in fact contribute so much more to the study of subcultures than I allege in the article – most notably with Stuart Hall, Angela McRobbie and Paul Gilroy all having provided crucial interventions with regard to race and gender beyond and in articulation with class. Secondly, I would aim for a more complex discussion and use of the term queer, as my deployment too easily glosses over the different histories of activism and struggles around identities and politics in and across lesbian, feminist, transgender, intersex and gay male circles – histories and struggles that matter also in the context of nightlife that I have discussed in the article.

Kira Kosnick is now Professor of Sociology at Goethe University Frankfurt, and co-director of the university's Cornelia Goethe Center for Women and Gender Studies. She has expanded her work on sexuality and postmigrant nightlife scenes in the context of an ERC Starting Grant project, and in 2015 published some of the results in the book *Postmigrant Club Cultures in Urban Europe* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang).
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