

Study Protocol

# Transnational Influences on Migrant Identities and Social Cohesion: A Study Protocol

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**Abstract:** This project examines how Turkish postmigrants in Germany position themselves against the influences of the German state's integration and the Turkish government's diasporic policies. We argue that the double influx of host and home states lures Turkish postmigrants into an *identity trap* subjecting their in-between position to exploitation in transnational negotiations. As their own perspective is poorly addressed in literature, this study fills this gap by reference to postmigrants' standpoint. We hypothesize that the positioning of Turkish postmigrants in Germany is reflected through identity expressions and priority of belongings. We will carry out an exploratory assessment with three work packages. Study 1 will decode the Turkish postmigrant figure addressed by both states. Major media outlets most attended by postmigrants will be analyzed to display the imagined figure. Study 2 will inform the trajectory of the Turkish national identity narrative across important milestones over the migration chronology. A structured archival study will unearth the discursive mutations through political leaders' speeches. Finally, Study 3 will exclusively confer postmigrants' viewpoints against both influences. The project consults a conceptual framework in terms of diaspora generating, diaspora shaping, collective nostalgia, and social cohesion to expand on understanding how Turkish postmigrants express their identities and prioritize their belongings across their in-between existence.

**Keywords:** transnationalism; Turkish postmigrants; identity expression; belonging; social cohesion



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## 1. Background

Social cohesion is a hard-to-deliver service for decision-makers when endorsing participatory democracy in a society where major and minor issues of conflict among discernible communities is a matter of fact. Conceptually, it refers to a multidimensional and multilevel construct pronouncing a peaceful coexistence of diverse sociocultural groups (Schiefer and van der Noll 2017; Watters et al. 2020) and characterized by positive attitudes, trust, belonging, and interconnectedness between the majority and minority groups (Zick and Rees 2020). Paradoxically, since the majority perspective tends to equalize the idea of social cohesion to a homogeneous unity, diversity could be perceived as a concurrent threat (Hewstone 2015; Putnam 2007; Zick and Küpper 2012). In response to the majority perspective, a closer examination from a pluralistic angle allows us to see that disengagement of minorities from the majority constitutes an acute obstacle to cohesion (Braddock and Gonzalez 2010; Uslaner 2012).

This emphasis illuminates the need to pay systematic attention to the positioning of minority groups in a society in order to arrive at a holistic understanding of social cohesion. On the other hand, our definition of minority is undergoing significant modifications because of the transnational understanding of migration and altering tendencies of migrants to settle in destination countries. Migrant populations grow increasingly more formatively into the society they live in, more cogently than ever. Nevertheless, minorities who are migrants do not readily pull away from their pre-existing attachments and affiliations,

whether cognitive, affective, or simply pragmatic. Consequently, due regard must be given to the fact that migration-background populations are under the influence of effective actors (primarily, home and host states) and factors (primarily, integration and citizenship policies) that make their position precarious and negotiable all the time. More importantly, and in conformity with the reasons to initiate the present study, migrants are exposed to diasporic processes influencing their positioning themselves in the society and form a basis to have their say apropos their precarity and negotiability.

In our current state of knowledge, despite a strong body of literature investigating and explicating the transnational positioning and identities (for example, [Abadan-Unat 2011](#); [Bozdağ 2014](#); [Duru et al. 2019](#); [Ehrkamp 2005](#); [Kaya 2007](#); [Kastoryano 2002, 2013](#); [Østergaard-Nielsen 2003a](#)), migrants' own experiences of identification–separation with their home and host countries and their attitudes towards coexistence with the majority and other communities in the society have not been adequately investigated from their standpoint, particularly from a social psychological perspective.

Historically speaking, migrant populations have gone through a multi-layered chronicle of adjustment to their country of emigration while keeping a complex pattern of ties with their country of origin ([Amelina and Faist 2008](#); [Østergaard-Nielsen 2003b](#); [Schiller et al. 1995](#)). It is our intent in this study to cast a broader light on the area situated between the home and host states, in which migrant-minorities have a hard time positioning themselves against the demands of both. We observe that there is a considerable need to examine this in-between area through the voices of migrants that could be heard properly by an interdisciplinary approach.

### *1.1. The In-Between Lifeworld of a Migrant-Minority*

Notwithstanding the complexities of the notion of a migrant-minority in a European nation-state, our study focuses on the Turkey-origin<sup>1</sup> population in Germany (hereafter Turkish postmigrants, where applicable) for practical, chronological, and symbolic reasons. Practically, Turkish postmigrants constitute one of the largest migrant-minority groups across Europe and the largest in Germany. As of 2021, approximately one in every 35 people living in Germany (2.8%) has their roots in Turkey ([Mediendienst-Integration 2021](#)). However, the landscape of Turkish postmigrants fragmented across the history and geography of labor and political migration to Germany. The heterogeneity of Turkish postmigrants could not be decoded without taking into account their arrival periods, social class ties, ethnic affiliations, political orientations, and religious convictions (see, for example, [Sezgin 2008](#)).

Chronologically, demand for workforce from Turkey dates back to 1961, and Germany was officially the first country to receive guest workers from Turkey in accordance with the labor recruitment agreement between the Federal Republic of Germany and Turkey. How *Türkische Gastarbeiter* and their descendants continued to stay and live in Germany since then, despite contrary expectations, and how subsequent arrivals of migrants, including ones due to political reasons, reached Germany as their destination of residence, are decently documented by a variety of sources ([Abadan-Unat 2002](#); [Alkan 2019](#); [Kaya and Kentel 2004](#); [Kaya 2019](#); [Sirkeci 2002](#)).

In the course of the shift from the international to the transnational era, Turkish postmigrants were also called transnational migrants ([Yildirim-Sungur and Schwarz 2021](#)). However, those who were naturalized were defined differentially and named “Euro-Turks” ([Kaya and Kentel 2004](#)). At any rate, attempts to understand the perspective of the agents themselves were rare and it is not yet well understood how they prioritize their belongings and identification in a non-binary grey area between the host and home states (see [Çelik 2015](#) for an exception). For our purposes here, it should be emphasized that neither the heterogeneity of Turkish postmigrants nor their spatiotemporal characteristics were investigated in their entirety. Rather, we observe studies concentrating on unilateral and unidirectional integration policies, regulations, and processes amidst dramatic changes in both countries, not to mention grave socio-political transformations in the world at large.

In connection with practical and chronological reasons and due in part to a lack of comprehensive depiction in the literature, symbolic reasons deserve as much, if not more, attention. The presence of Turkish postmigrants in Germany encompasses many facets of the relational matrix co-created during the interplay between a minority and the majority in an increasingly transnational era. A Turkish postmigrant living in Germany represents everyone who left Turkey and emigrated to Europe, regardless of the reason, characteristics of the person, or the destination country in question. That is why this project hopes to shed light on a broader area than Germany by illuminating the transnational influences on social cohesion in its attempt to unearth the perspective of the population of Turkey—origin in Germany.

At the center of this study lies the proposition that the Turkey-origin population in Germany is caught in between the integration policies of the German state and the diasporic policies of the Turkish government. Yet, sketches of their previous positioning were not unambiguous, either. The in-betweenness of them is a recurring theme in works of art (for example, [Akin 2004](#); [Candan 2000](#)) and literary critics (for example, [Özdamar 1992](#); [Wallraff 1985](#)). Throughout the 60 years of history of migration to Germany, the challenge of constructing a cohesive society in which Turkish postmigrants could live in peaceful coexistence with the majority has not yet been sufficiently resolved ([Kaya 2019](#); [Loch 2014](#)). An illustrative example is the low rates of naturalization ever since. Only 22% of Turkish postmigrants have been naturalized to date ([Yildirim-Sungur and Schwarz 2021](#)), even though their average duration of stay (32.3 years) remains the highest among all other minority groups and enables 97.8% of them to fulfil the requirements of naturalization ([Destatis-Statistisches Bundesamt 2020](#)).

### 1.2. *Diaspora-Making Amidst Never-Ending Transnational Negotiations*

The existing strain of hovering in between reached the next level when the Turkish government officially launched a new diaspora policy in 2010 and fortified it with the establishment of Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (acronymized as YTB in Turkish) on 6 April of the same year ([YTB n.d.](#)). Until that moment, the term “diaspora” was exclusive to ethnically non-Turkish communities of Turkey-origin living outside of Turkey (see [Baser and Öztürk 2019](#) for an outline of Turkey’s new diaspora policy). Ironically, the term “diaspora” used to be associated mainly with the Armenian diaspora and occasionally with other minorities who were in one way or another exiled or ostracized from Turkey (see [Arkilic 2021](#); [Başer 2015](#) for Turkey’s conventional understanding of “diaspora” until 2010). In consequence, once an exclusive term, the term “diaspora” has been semantically engineered to mutate and exploited to denote the Turkey-origin migrant population in Europe for the first time in history.

As the categorization of Turkish postmigrants by the Turkish government shifted from promoting their international role to glorifying their Turkish identity ([Mencutek and Baser 2018](#); [Öktem 2014](#)), political attitude towards Turkish postmigrants in Germany tended to take their transnational ties with Turkey negatively ([Faist 1998](#); [Yildirim-Sungur and Schwarz 2021](#)). In the meantime, those who base their identity partially or highly on Turkey are, in a sense, caught in an *identity trap* or at least in a dilemma that might have an impact on the cohesion of the society. As expected, their positioning in the society is centered on a double pressure in the eyes of both bystanders and they themselves ([Sauer 2018](#)), though the latter’s gaze is not as well-known empirically. More precisely, having already been subjected to unilateral integration policies in Germany, Turkish postmigrants were exposed to a drastic policy change by the Turkish government asking them to keep loyal to Turkey, albeit with a caution to show respect to the laws of their state of residence. With these considerations in mind, this project engages itself in the stretch where Turkish postmigrants are torn between two political discourses and undertakes the task of linking this conflictual extent to the debates on social cohesion in Germany.

Nevertheless, despite a large body of literature on hows and whats of acculturation vis a vis Turkish postmigrants (for example, [Frankenberg et al. 2013](#); [Maehler et al. 2019](#))

and substantial media attention on discourses of Turkish government officials and political figures (for example, [Gezer and Reimann 2011](#); [Sydow 2016](#)), the impact of Turkey's remodeled diaspora policy on postmigrants is hardly reflected in scholarly discussions and research. It goes without saying that how postmigrants position themselves in response to compelling calls of integration by Germany and of loyalty by Turkey cannot be understood without resorting to their opinions. Contrary to expectations, existing studies concentrating on the significance of either German integration or Turkish diasporic policies hardly confer the immediate views of the people who are acutely subjected to them. The question of how social cohesion is expected to be attained in the absence of active consultation of the stakeholders awaits an answer.

### *1.3. The Elusive Relevance of Social Cohesion*

Studies sketching conceptual frameworks to cover the dynamic nature of social cohesion agree on the idea that it should be defined and explained in a multitude of domains ranging from individual attitudes to institutional recommendations and political discourses ([Chan et al. 2006](#); [Schiefer and van der Noll 2017](#); [Zick and Rees 2020](#)). In particular, the inclusion of migrants in European societies is seen a crucial challenge as Europe is committed to a larger and more global communication strategy in and out ([Schiefer and van der Noll 2017](#)).

Still lacking, however, are evidence-based action plans and programs connecting minorities and the majority together. Approaching social cohesion via macro factors depicted by political, economic, and demographic indicators ([European Commission 2017](#)) would be expected to become proportionately less relevant insomuch as the proportion of ethnic, cultural, or migrant minorities in the society increases, especially given that influences of transnational dynamics and diasporic efforts are gaining strength (see [Coleman 1988](#); [Putnam 2001](#) for theoretical frameworks considering social cohesion social capital). To compensate for this gap, at least in part, the present study proposes that social psychological dynamics such as identity, belonging, and mutual trust should be considered elemental in social cohesion research.

To underline the significance of minority–majority connection in social cohesion, our study intends to highlight a critically consequential but much neglected aspect of the issue at hand: convergences and divergences between inter-group and intra-group cohesion. A number of studies indicate that cohesiveness is a critical feature of communities that foster entitativity and ingroup attachment ([Carron and Brawley 2000](#); [Zick and Rees 2020](#)). On that account, it follows that ingroup cohesion may lead to negative or at least distant attitudes towards outgroups ([Castano et al. 2002](#); [Efron and Knowles 2015](#)). Therefore, studying social cohesion within the domain of migrant-minority and majority relations calls for relevant conceptual and methodological refinements acknowledging inter-group and intra-group cohesion, along with framing the common ground.

One requisite step towards understanding the interplay between inter-group and in-group cohesion would be to investigate the positioning of migrant minorities against prescriptions of coalescence issued by their countries of residence and origin. Curiously, the migrant-minority perspective is missing in existing policy reports and recommendations proclaiming to achieve a cohesive society (see [Ward et al. 2018](#) for a recent psychological framework). Even so, we have diaspora studies at our convenience to start with. Thus far, the relations between migrant minorities and the majority have been mentioned mainly in studies concerning the notion of the diaspora. Having an etymological origin denoting the loss of or expulsion from one's homeland ([Helly 2006](#)), a diaspora is now considered a multidimensional political dynamic capable of influencing policies in both home and host states ([Gamlen 2014](#)). [Adamson \(2019\)](#) recently described the paths of diaspora generating and diaspora shaping and made it clear how heavily the promise of social cohesion depends on transnational processes and home-state politics.

Studies show that members of a diaspora are vulnerable against the conflicts in their home states and face a kind of “diasporic battlespace” in their everyday lives ([Demir 2012](#)).

Such a condition might eventually lead these groups to become self-protective and internally cohesive, which would make the ideal of social cohesion in their country of residence more problematic than imagined (Dukes and Musterd 2012). Based on research that puts forward the influence of home-state politics on diasporic communities in their relationship with the majority of the country of residence (Adamson 2019; Mencutec and Baser 2018; Yildirim-Sungur and Schwarz 2021), we argue that the prospect of social cohesion is not only at the disposal of the host state but also severely impressed by the transnational discourse of the home state.

#### 1.4. *Reaching Out to the Voice of the Underrepresented*

As a matter of course, political discourses of host and home states targeting migrants have been mutating in accordance with the alterations in international relations, politics of integration, and diasporic proceedings. Transnational practices of postmigrants under the influence of various actors, structures, and processes (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003b) would inevitably affect these transformations. For this reason alone, exploring the perspective of the postmigrants gains increasing relevance to understanding the conflict between ingroup–outgroup cohesion and, for that matter, requisites of coexistence.

That being the case, it is the goal of the present project to arrive at an enlightened outlook on how migrant minorities perceive, receive, and respond to the couplet of integration and diasporic processes. In doing so, we aim to unfold their priority of belongings and associated identity expressions. Thereby, we aspire to obtain firsthand data that will allow us to make evidence-based inferences pointing out the place of migrant minorities in the quest to achieve feasible social cohesion.

To this end, the present project will examine how Turkish postmigrants position themselves in German society in response to two countries' principal yet conflicting policies of casting them into a designated figure: integrate into German society (Hertner 2021) or form a Turkish diaspora wherever they live and are (Erdoğan 2015). In this examination, we will assess Turkish postmigrants' (a) responses to promotions of integration and diasporization, (b) priority of belongings, (c) identity expressions displaying their priority of belongings, and (d) understanding of social cohesion. In addition, in the hope of illuminating empirical parts of our examination, we will dig into the changes in the meaning of being Turk/ish<sup>2</sup> since the arrival of the first guest workers to Germany, with a particular emphasis on the aftermath of the official diaspora policy launched by Turkey in 2010.

Our ultimate goal is to understand the potential share of Turkish postmigrants who would be willing to pledge for peaceful coexistence in Germany. In other words, the present project envisages to introduce Turkish postmigrants' perspective to the use of all stakeholders and interested parties, including scholars, civil society activists, educators, administrators, and policymakers. We also wish to contribute to the discussion on theoretical and methodological questions concerning research on social cohesion and coexistence.

## 2. Method

TransMIGZ will follow its goals by implementing three empirical studies. In Study 1, we will explore the Gestalt of Turkish postmigrants as depicted in German and Turkish media outlets. The particular aim of Study 1 is to decode the two versions of the same figure to highlight its gaze, first in the eye of the German integration policy and then in the eye of the Turkish diasporic workout.

Study 2 will trace the meaning of being Turk/ish back to the beginnings of migration to Germany by way of an archival excavation. With a special focus on the post-1980 era, Study 2 will put forward the changes in the understanding of being Turk/ish as articulated by political leaders. Relying on archival data, this phase will dig into the roots of the current symbolic politics (Aslan 2020) based on an augmented ethnoreligious discourse by means of nostalgia (Karakaya 2020; Yavuz 2020). The notion of collective nostalgia, the members' motivation to bring about cohesion and stability to the group through a sentimental reflection of the group's past (Cheung et al. 2017), will be at the theoretical

base. This way, we will examine master narratives of the national identity as constructed by the home state and communicated transnationally to the diaspora.

Study 3, on the other hand, will obtain firsthand information on the perspectives of Turkish postmigrants regarding integration processes and diasporic proceedings through extensive field work. One-to-one interviews will be the primary tool for obtaining qualitative data from Turkish postmigrants about their positioning and their understanding of social cohesion in between these two conflicting ventures. Triangulation of all three studies will allow us to figure out (a) characteristics of the agent about whom integration and diasporic actions call out, (b) the importance of being Turk/ish in response to German and Turkish political discourses, and (c) the locus of Turkish postmigrants in prioritizing their belongings and identification between Germany and Turkey. Thereafter, we hope to execute relevant analyses to make inferences with reference to the viability and sustainability of social cohesion and coexistence.

### *2.1. Study 1: Media Analysis—German and Turkish Media Coverage Addressing Turkish Postmigrants*

It is foreseeable that Turkey's new diaspora policy will resonate in both German and Turkish media. Also expected is discordance between the two, which will be noticed not only in frequency and pitch but also in the main theme. We anticipate differing media coverage depending on whether the message is intended to support, hinder, or simply relay further critique of the diasporic campaign. Notwithstanding the content, it has been indicated that migrants build a bridge to their home country via the media in their mother tongue (Kosnick 2003). As the mobility between the country of residence and country of origin is now easier than ever and the means of communication are expanded and digitalized, postmigrants have attained a variety of channels to attach themselves strongly to their home states (Bilecen et al. 2015). On top of that, it is crucial to unravel the type of identity construct fabricated and disseminated for Turkish postmigrants by their host and home states since nation states not only communicate but also act as identity entrepreneurs to reframe the desired characteristics of the targeted people through narration and depiction (Reicher and Hopkins 2001).

In Study 1, we will focus on the most frequently consumed media outlets by Turkish postmigrants to capture media coverage on both integration and diasporic processes addressing them. In line with this focus, we identified the six most popular media outlets from Turkey (3) and from Germany (3) and screened the content relevant to the diaspora context between the years 2010 and 2021. Our initial screening yielded over 3000 entries consisting of news and opinion columns. Following the Qualitative Content Analysis framework (Schreier 2012), we will collapse the entries into summarizing categories for the purpose of exploring the way Turkish postmigrants are approached by German and Turkish media outlets.

In order to clearly extricate the influence of the current home and host state political discourses, we will focus on the most recent decade, during which Turkey's current ruling party implemented important legal and discursive changes to the country's foreign policy (see Aydin 2014; Öktem 2014 for details).

Since 2010, Turkish postmigrants in Germany have been referred as diaspora members by a rhetoric centralizing a nostalgic sentiment and accentuating a unifying identity predicated on a missionary future. We expect to observe significant differences not only in the content they are exposed to but also in the ways they are imagined to be. More explicitly, we expect to discern the two characteristically divergent figures embedded in the same Gestalt of the Turkish postmigrant. We will present our results by following the principles of situational analysis put forward by Clarke et al. (2016).

### *2.2. Study 2: Chronology of Diaspora Shaping by the Trajectory of Turkish Identity Narrative*

The dissolution of the Gestalt affixed onto the Turkish postmigrant calls for an understanding of who they are, and more precisely, who their home and host states think they are.

The current changes in domestic politics in Turkey found its reflection in its foreign policy and resulted in a redefinition of diaspora, and thus, the identity of diaspora members. Evidently, Turkish postmigrants in Germany are now being asked to take the shape that the current government's policies prescribe (Aslan 2020). For example, Mencutek and Baser (2018) analyzed Turkey's diaspora policy and found that the Turkish government developed new strategies to maintain, cultivate, and deepen relations with emigrants in order to build a mobilized transnational community. In a similar vein, Goerres et al. (2018) analyzed the voting behavior of Turkish migrants and concluded that the political transformations in Turkey had mobilized a significant number of social democrats towards conservative pro-Turkish political parties in Germany. Finally, Sauer (2018) reported that the priority of belonging to Turkey among Turkish postmigrants had reached its highest level ever achieved in a representative sample of Turkish postmigrants. Taking this line of research into account, we suspect that an intensified priority of belonging to the country of origin potentially influences identification and affiliation with their country of residence and thus, their positioning of themselves in the society, which bears significant implications about social cohesion.

On the other hand, a major political tool known to be used by the current government since the early 2000s is the strategic use of the notion of collective nostalgia. Conceptually, it refers to a group-based emotion that expresses a common longing for the group's olden days and the belief that the group was doing much better in the past than it is now (Cheung et al. 2017; Wildschut et al. 2014). Apparently, assessing the extent to which collective nostalgia is propagated by Turkish diaspora politics is critical to understanding its influence on Turkish postmigrants' priority of belonging (Kaya 2019). Factors supporting this argument include the extreme use of symbolic politics underlining the country's imperial history (Aslan 2020) and purportedly shared sentimental references, including conspiracy narratives (Göknar 2020), myths, nostalgic stories (Karakaya 2020; Yavuz 2020), and emotional politics focusing on enmity, resentment, and anger (Tokdoğan 2019).

In Study 2, we will explore how the identity of the Turkish postmigrant is solicited by Turkish rulers from the start of the migration to Germany. We will keep track of themes tapping into collective nostalgia in conjunction with collective psychological ownership (Verkuyten and Martinovic 2017) in an attempt to unfold the changes in the meaning of being Turk/ish as conceived of and appealed by prominent Turkish political leaders' speeches. This way, we aim to sketch the path chronologically to pinpoint the trajectory of the identity narrative, arriving at the current diasporic space. We will also take into account the argument of a possible culturalist and essentialist turn in the course of redefining Turkish national identity (Kaya 2019; Yavuz 2020). In case there is such an essential turn, it is expected to have adverse effects on social cohesion as it predicts outgroup-directed anger and contempt (Cheung et al. 2017).

Against this background, we will conduct an archival study to answer the questions of how national identity (being Turk/ish) has been defined and disseminated by political authorities during the history of migration to Germany and how the changes in this history overlap with changes in Turkish diaspora politics. The archival work will be constructed on a chronological trajectory trailing specifiable critical social and political milestones in Germany and Turkey since the beginning of the Labour Agreement. Selected milestones also include legislative regulations and bilateral agreements that are consequential for postmigrants' position and status. In doing so, we hope to disentangle the figure and the desired identity of the Turkish postmigrant from the perspective of the Turkish state. Therefore, Study 2 will make it possible to examine the degree to which the manufactured identity of the Turkish state is reflected in the identity expressions of Turkish postmigrants.

The archival study will include analyses of (a) speeches of leading and prominent political actors appealing to postmigrants and (b) statements from the same actors reflecting connotations of being Turk/ish. The domains from which we will extract the data were specified through a detailed review of Turkish postmigrants' migration chronology and interviews with experts in that area. We will sample the pertinent speeches of political

actors by conferring the transcribed reports in reliable archives such as the Turkish National Assembly Library, the National Library of Turkey, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey. We will apply thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) that will enable us to systematically extract relevant aspects of the documents we will examine.

### *2.3. Study 3: Turkish Postmigrants in between National Integration and Transnational Diasporic Policies*

The final phase constitutes the central study of the project. In Study 3, we will try to discern the ways postmigrants are influenced by the transnational political discourses of their home and host states. We will focus on the functions of identity expressions and examine their tendencies (a) to engage or disengage with the German state's integration policies and (b) to engage or disengage with the Turkish state's diasporic efforts, with an embedded aim of discerning their understanding and representation of social cohesion in Germany.

The authors are aware that social identities are not stable cognitive categories (for example, Spear 2001), but are expressions of group interests and norms in a given inter-group context. Prior research also shows that migrants do not passively choose a category; instead, in transnational settings where groups, cultures, and identities encounter one another, identities are discursively negotiated within and between categories (Ehrkamp and Leitner 2003; Hopkins and Blackwood 2011). Following the same rationale, the notion of identity will be taken not as a stable entity but rather as an expressed statement. Since the landscape of Turkey-origin communities is fragmented by their migration history, ethnopolitical conflicts, and religious orientations (Sezgin 2008), their identity expressions are also expected to be heterogeneous, despite a vast majority of them being called Turk/ish. Moreover, social cohesion cannot be reduced to a majority position, regardless of having been conceptualized from a multidimensional perspective (Chan et al. 2006; Loch 2014; Zick and Rees 2020). The position of minorities also plays a crucial role in achieving it, especially in a multi-layered society such as Germany. Therefore, it would be enlightening to reveal dissonant and consonant representations of social cohesion in Germany by Turkish postmigrants. Nonetheless, due to the fact that the understanding of a cohesive society is closely associated with group identification (Dukes and Musterd 2012; Watters et al. 2020), we will pay particular attention to overlapping findings and proximities between identity expressions, priority of belonging, and representation of social cohesion.

In Study 3, we will conduct semi-structured interviews with an adult sample living in North Rhine-Westphalia. Interviewees will be invited by appealing to a diverse pool of sub-communities of Turkey-origin in order to include different segments of the Turkish postmigrant universe as evenly as possible. Study 3 will be mainly based on transcribed texts of the interviews and the data will be evaluated through content analysis. The transcribed data will be stored in the cloud-based storage of Bielefeld University without any identifiable information about the interviewees and will be accessible only to the project team.

### **3. Discussion**

TransMIGZ aims to explore how Turkish postmigrants living in Germany position themselves in the middle of a double socio-political exposure: nationally broadcasted integration policies and transnationally disseminated home-state politics. Since the start of their migration to Germany in the 1960s, Turkish postmigrants have evolved from being the Gastarbeitern into full members of German society. Whether or in what proportion they have been integrated as demanded by Germany is yet to be answered. However, they have also been confronted with dramatic changes in Turkey, especially in recent years by the Turkish state's attempt to remind them of their origins and to call upon them, both explicitly and implicitly, to form a transnational diaspora.



Obviously, adopting the term “diaspora” to denominate Turkish postmigrants in Germany is a challenge for researchers, too. Heterogeneous composition of people of Turkey-origin, both in Turkey and in Germany, hardly justifies researchers to call them by an umbrella term encircling the wide array of worlds and lived experiences of postmigrants. It is equally hard to imagine that either the plea for integration to Germany or the call for a diasporic connection to Turkey should resonate uniformly across the fragmented environs of the postmigrant spectrum. At the very least, some could give ear only to one, some to both, and some to neither.

That is why we find it crucial to obtain postmigrants’ own perspective and, to this end, achieve a postmigrant-centered analysis rather than an analysis on the basis of the terms and terminology either country chooses to address them. In other words, the three studies (media, archive, and field study) incorporated in this project will make it possible to compare and contrast the imagined postmigrant figure by both countries with the echo of each other’s summon in the ears of the postmigrants. This intent is also the reason (a) why we do not concentrate on readily specifiable layers of postmigrant population, such as generational or ethnonational/ethnoreligious groups, and (b) why we had to sacrifice certain vital issues like gendered dynamics or political engagement. We also had to spare the topic of extraterritorial nationalism for later studies even though it is evidently an integral component tempering each country’s agendas. Our ultimate goal in this project is to discern the positioning of Turkish postmigrants in terms of social cohesion from a social psychological perspective by placing their standpoint at the center. Therefore, we intend to produce information on the stance of Turkish postmigrants with respect to the desired goal of social cohesion in Germany.

Taking these limitations as directions, we will focus on identifiable facilitators and inhibitors fashioning social cohesion in Germany from the perspective of the largest migrant-minority population in the country. We believe that the three-layered studies of our project will inform the interested audience about the influences of diverging and frequently conflicting policies put forward by postmigrants’ home and host states towards the solicited objective of achieving a cohesive society in Germany.

It is well known that obstacles to social cohesion could be rooted in structural discrimination, inequality of opportunity, and exclusionist civil society (for example, [Duru et al. 2019](#); [King and Kilinc 2013](#)). Recent literature agrees on the multidimensionality of social cohesion and the necessity to define it differently on micro, meso, and macro levels with a variety of indicators ([Baylis et al. 2019](#); [Fonseca et al. 2019](#); [Schiefer and van der Noll 2017](#)). The theoretical background of the designed studies intersects at a multidisciplinary comprehension of the issues of transnationalism, diaspora generation, and diaspora shaping. Alleviation of polarization and enabling of a peaceful coexistence of different groups in European nation states have been coming more into focus. However, despite well-documented evidence showing that social cohesion is crucial for societies comprising a multiplex of population groups including migrant-minorities, attempts to embrace its dynamics from a minority perspective are still rare. On top of that, both academic and policy-based studies of social cohesion are mostly generated from a majority-centered perspective, even though the gravity of inter-group dynamics in migrant-hosting societies is evident ([Watters et al. 2020](#)).

In contrast, the operationalization of social cohesion in both inter-group and intra-group levels is worth considering when minorities or diasporic communities and the majority are taken together ([Zick and Rees 2020](#)). Regarding the bonds and relations of Turkish postmigrants to their country of residence and country of origin, together with their expressions of who they are and precedence of where they belong, both Germany and Turkey obviously play significant roles, albeit with varying magnitudes all over. Our project is expected to contribute to the academic and institutional operationalization of social cohesion by providing a broader framework that includes how Turkish postmigrants position themselves in German society and prioritize their belonging along with their in-between existence.

#### 4. Expected Outputs and Dissemination of Research Findings

TransMIGZ is expected to produce practical implications on the question of social cohesion in Germany. In particular, this research will inform researchers, policymakers, and civil society actors about specific perceptions, expectations, and potential contributions of Turkish postmigrants to social cohesion in Germany by clarifying their positioning in German society through identity expressions and priority of belonging.

The results of each study will be reported separately. The communication of the results to the interested parties will be operated through relevant networks of the university, Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung—BMBF), German Center for Integration and Migration Research (Deutsches Zentrum für Integrations- und Migrationsforschung—DeZIM), etc. At the end of the project term, a national conference will be organized to share the results with both academic and non-academic audiences to ensure further collaboration with the relevant networks.

Even though the project focuses on the perspective of Turkish postmigrants, we plan to realize workshops with both German and Turkish communities in order to share the results and receive feedback on how this information could be made more useful in the context of civic engagement in and between communities. These workshops will be held in cooperation with municipal integration centers in North Rhine-Westphalia.

In the same strain, we will organize seminars in collaboration with civil society organizations and socio-political interest groups in order to open up a new perspective based on the current effects of political discourses prevalent in the countries of origin and residence. We wish to unearth their expectations and anticipations en route for the possibility of a peaceful coexistence.

#### 5. Plan B for the Field Research during the COVID-19 Pandemic

If the COVID-19 pandemic is prevalent by the time the interviews are conducted, online platforms will be used following the criteria set forth by the Datenschutz-Grundverordnung (DSGVO), dem Bundesdatenschutzgesetz sowie dem Datenschutzgesetz Nordrhein-Westfalens (the Basic Data Protection Regulation of the Federal Data Protection Act and the Data Protection Act of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia). The security of the platform will be independently verified by the data protection authority of Bielefeld University. Accordingly, the interviews will be saved to an external audio-recording device. No visual data will be recorded.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Ethics Committee of Bielefeld University (Date 14 September 2021; No. 2021-221-2021/09/13).

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent will be obtained from all participants to-be-involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** The datasets analyzed during the current study are not publicly available due to data protection restrictions, as individual privacy could be compromised due to the small number of participants and the high specificity of the study population. Data and questionnaires will be made accessible to researchers by the corresponding author on reasonable request and in line with data protection regulations.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The researchers of this project are informed that people who have migrated from Turkey comprise a heterogeneous population on a broad array of attributes including, but not limited to, ethnicity, religious orientation, political conviction, socioeconomic status, cultural adherence, cause or motive for migration, age and date of arrival, duration of stay, place of birth, generational cohort, and citizenship status. Therefore, we find it inclusive to describe them as “people of Turkey-origin living in Germany.” For practical reasons, we shorten this description to “people of Turkey-origin” wherever applicable. In the same frame, we avoid using the term Turkish. When we do, however, we mean Turkey-origin and use it in an attempt not to disturb the semantic flow of the text. On the other hand, since people of Turkey-origin are already a part of German society, inseparable from the national majority, and can only be considered inside the mainstream (Römhild 2018), we propose the term “postmigrants” to reflect their heterogeneity and to imply that referring to them as migrants is no longer applicable.
- <sup>2</sup> The authors express that they use “Turk/ish” as a term denoting prescribed or assumed identity rather than suggesting an ethnic descent. In most cases, people referred to as Turk/ish might have diverse sociological lineages, especially in the context of migration and minorities (see note 1). However, since Turk and Turkish are articulated both inside and outside of Turkey when pointing to national identity (contentiously, the common identity) of people of Turkey-origin (Turkish postmigrants), we find it practical to use “Turk/ish” in clarifying our arguments when examining national identity narratives.

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