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JOANNA PFAFF-CZARNECKA (*Bielefeld University*)

Multiple belonging and the challenges to biographic navigation

Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka
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MPI zur Erforschung multireligiöser und multiethnischer Gesellschaften
MPI for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen
Hermann-Föge-Weg 11, 37073 Göttingen, Germany
Tel.: +49 (551) 4956 - 0
Fax: +49 (551) 4956 - 170

www.mmg.mpg.de

info@mmg.mpg.de

Abstract

Social science research on migration reveals a strong groupist orientation. Numerous studies are prone to methodological ethnicization, constructing strong collective boundaries and implying homogenous collective identities embraced by 'migrant communities'. Migrants are usually perceived – if not from the systemic vantage point of 'societies of arrival' – then from *meso*-perspectives, inquiring into collective dynamics while taking 'ethno-national' boundary-lines for granted. This working paper reverses the perspective of observation, putting individual persons in the forefront. It deploys the lens of 'belonging', distinguishing between 'belonging to' and 'belonging together'. The analysis follows the individual migrants' politics of the self, studied against the backdrop of collective dynamics, i.e. combining interpersonal with collective dimensions. From the personal point of view, the superdiversity of contemporary societies renders belonging a complex, often contested and always a self-reflexive condition. Belonging today is ever multiple and the different components of belonging are often difficult to combine together. The biographical navigation is therefore full of challenges, but also bears new possibilities. The problematic of belonging and the entailed social boundary work are analysed drawing upon Fatih Akin's narratives - whose films and interviews have time and again portrayed migrants' complex pathways. The perspective suggested here is meant to complement the recent efforts challenging groupist assumptions in migration research while doing justice both to individualisation as well as to the dynamic processes of collective boundary-drawing and communitarian positionings.

Author

JOANNA PFAFF-CZARNECKA is a full professor of social anthropology at the University of Bielefeld. Her recent publications include *The Politics of Belonging in the Himalayas: Local Attachments and Boundary Dynamics* (New Delhi: Sage, 2011), ed. with G. Toffin; *'From 'identity' to 'belonging' in Social Research: Plurality, Social Boundaries, and the Politics of the Self'*, in: Ethnicity, Citizenship and Belonging: Practices, Theory and Spatial Dimensions, ed. by S. Albiez/N. Castro/L. Jüssen/E. Youkhana (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2011) and *,Zugehörigkeit in der mobilen Welt. Politiken der Verortung'* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012).

joanna.pfaff@uni-bielefeld.de
Website: **www.uni-bielefeld.de/(en)/tdrc/ag_sozanth/team/pfaff/**

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Introduction

Preoccupations with migrant accommodation reveal a predominantly groupist orientation.[1] The public and also the academic debates on migration abound in collectivising generalisations when speaking of 'ethnic groups', of 'parallel societies', of 'migrants', or 'people of migrant background'. Single 'ethnic or religious groups', 'Muslim women', or 'Turkish young men' are often taken as neat units of inquiry. This tendency has recently been the object of a pronounced critique that questions the collectivising *a priori* assumptions so omnipresent in social science (Brubaker 2002). Scholars also critically address the issue of units and levels of observation – see especially the critique of methodological nationalism as well as methodological ethnicisation (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; Glick Schiller 2007; Gellner 2012).

Proposed in the place of conventional approaches is the concept of 'ethnic boundary making' (Wimmer 2013) that helps us *not* to take bounded collective units for granted, but rather to acknowledge their situated and dynamic nature. The quest to select appropriate units of inquiry informs new avenues of social science research. In this vein, network analysis focuses upon interrelations rather than on any bounded units. The various strands of the 'conviviality' debate (Gilroy 2006) are interested in the modalities of creating togetherness across collective boundary-lines and suggest new perspectives of observation, including scalar considerations (Glick Schiller and Caglar 2011). The concept of 'superdiversity' (Vertovec 2010) concentrates on the scope of inter-mixing in social spaces of different nature and magnitude, for instance within national societies, market places or neighbourhoods. New methodological tools, such as intersectional analysis (Anthias 2006), point to 'internal' diversities within collective formations.

This new shift aimed at overcoming groupism tends to neglect one important dimension of migrant sociability, though. Current research perspectives rejecting groupism tend to adopt meso-perspectives, prioritising collective processes and searching for dynamics in collective patterns such as the closure of social boundaries or boundary-blurring or shifting (Zolberg and Woon 1999; Wimmer 2013). When

1 The author wishes to express her sincere thanks for the very thoughtful comments on the previous versions of this text to Noorman Abdullah, Irene Becci, David Gellner, Eva Gerharz, Kelvin Low, Raphael Susewind, and to the anonymous reviewer to these series. Important insights provided the discussions with the participants of colloquia at the MPI, Göttingen (24th November 2011), at Université de Lausanne (2nd October 2012) and at the University of Munich (5th November 2012). All shortcomings of this text are my own, of course.

following this path, there is little attention to the individual migrants' 'politics of the self' (Bauman 2011), studied against the backdrop of collective dynamics. Perspectives on individual pathways of life are vital, to be sure. But while biographical approaches abound in migration research (see Rosenthal and Bogner 2009 for an important contribution), their observation of the interplay between individual choices, commitments, practices, quests, hopes, desires, on one hand, and collective processes, on the other, concentrates upon positional movements of persons, while mostly taking collective constellations merely as context. Most biographical analyses lack any foregrounding of what belonging in its individual and collective dimensions entails and how collectivities readjust by responding to individual action (for instance, seeking to prevent their members from leaving their constituencies). The perspective suggested here is meant to complement the recent efforts to challenge groupist assumptions while doing justice both to individualisation as well as to the dynamic processes of collective boundary-drawing and communitarian positionings.

Conceptualising we / I – interactivity (Jensen 1998) is not new, of course. Norbert Elias' figuration theory saw social change as a continuous adjustment in the balance between collective and individual orientations of action, resulting in shifts in the modalities of coercion and power differentials. The tension between individualisation under the conditions of modernity, on one hand, and the binding force of ethnicity and religion – thought of as relicts of former times –,[2] on the other hand, has occupied numerous founders of social science theory such as Tönnies (1887), Weber (1972 /21), and Durkheim (1930). Recent debates on individual freedoms within minorities in liberal societies (Kymlicka 1995, Pfaff-Czarnecka 2010) have sharpened our awareness of the contested (from outside and from within) nature of collective orders within which minorities tend to guard their boundaries while positioning themselves vis-à-vis majoritarian forces. But these approaches also start off by choosing a perspective privileging the societal and / or collective constellations, leaving little space for actually following individual persons' movements within and across collective boundary-lines. Capturing belonging through the lens of biographical navigation through different social spaces has the merit of focussing on the interplay between individual and collective practices: on the nexus of positional movements and social boundary-work.

Henrik Vigh's reflection on the concept of 'social navigation' offers a fruitful avenue for grasping how people 'act in difficult and uncertain circumstances and

2 On critique, see E. Gellner (1964).

in describing how they disentangle themselves from confining structures, plot their escape and move towards better positions' (2009: 419). The notion of 'navigation', literally meaning 'to sail', defines 'a special form of movement: that is the way we move in a moving environment' (Vigh 2009: 420). 'Navigation' therefore addresses individual action and collective dynamics while inquiring how they interact. It stems from the idea that '(w)e are all constantly engaged in coping with social pressures and taking the influence of these pressures into consideration in relation to present possibilities and envisioned trajectories (ibid.). Social navigation as a practice of 'moving in a moving environment' enfolds in a myriad of confrontations with social boundaries, categorical exclusions (Tilly 1998) and different kinds of institutional pressures exerted through rules and regulations, group pressures as well as through moral blackmailing, as I shall discuss below.

This paper is an inquiry into the personal navigation between different constellations of social boundedness, and the resulting formations of belonging, that are more or less easy to combine in a life-course. Through this lens, particular facets of collective dynamics come to light, in particular when members guarding the collective boundary lines feel compelled to fight social 'movers' whom they often consider as 'intruders', but also to prevent their co-fellows from leaving their rank and file. The main thrust of this analysis is to show how diverse collective constellations are combined in individual life trajectories. It therefore opposes groupist approaches suggesting a compartmentalised nature of social life as consisting of distinct ethnonational 'immigrant social spaces'. The following example may illustrate how, from an ego-perspective, life enfolds across 'small life-worlds' (B. Luckmann 1978), i.e. though confrontations with a diversity of collective boundaries, challenging their binding force.

I shall start with an account of one migrant trajectory and proceed to explicating what I understand by the notion of 'belonging'. I shall then discuss 'multiple belonging' and the notion of 'biographic navigation' with the entailed problems, dilemmas, aspirations and possibilities. In the concluding part, I shall indicate how this approach adds to our understanding of diversity in contemporary immigrant societies and will end with some inferences suggesting options in creating belonging in the increasingly mobile world. The case selected here as the empirical underpinnings of my argument is particularly revealing since Fatih Akin himself has extensively reflected upon his migrant biography in numerous interviews while also having migration as a recurrent theme in his films. Both 'genres' of narration will be used here as materials for exploring my concept of 'biographic navigation'.

Fatih Akin and his biographic navigation

The widely acclaimed film-maker Fatih Akin – whose films ('Head on', 'The Edge of Heaven', 'Soul Kitchen', among others) narrate the multiple challenges migrants living in Germany face in their transnational existence – recently reflected in one interview[3] in which he discussed how he came to be an artist, instead of engaging in violence and ending up as a criminal. He spoke of his childhood and how that would have made the latter choice quite probable. Of Turkish origin himself and growing up in Hamburg-Altona, a suburb with a large number of immigrants of working class-background, there was a high likelihood that he would opt for finding his place in migrant self-exclusion, while making a violent gang his home. Fighting squads were omnipresent in his surroundings. For Akin, joining a gang was a necessity in order to protect himself and his peers against Neo-Nazi attacks. But his longing to acquire membership in such a band was also instigated by his fascination with the insignia of membership: the bomber-jackets displaying the name of the group as well as the ornamented leather belts highlighting commonality. It made all the more sense to engage in a fighting squad as he found a role model at home. His father frequently partook in fights, was highly successful in this matter, and had repeatedly made his son proud. This pathway seemed to be a natural course of things in a Turkish immigrant's biography with *this* upbringing and in *this* neighbourhood, given the general affinity to violence and the necessity to fight perpetrators.

That he eventually left the gang, denounced violence and started his artistic career, Fatih Akin attributes to his mother's efforts. She not only pulled him out of the gang, but also made sure that he found another place (another social location) where to engage, i.e. where to spend time and commit oneself. She took out membership for her son in a local library and made sure that over long months he actually remained there and read books, instead of sneaking out to meet friends and fight in unfriendly encounters. He found additional support in Islam that endowed him – as he expressed – with moral guidance.

Fatih Akin's narration reveals the multiple constitution of migrant life-worlds. These are often inaccurately depicted as consistent social milieus, or even as homogeneous social life-worlds. His story gives us an account of the complex structuration of the everyday realms consisting of multiple spheres of belonging that intersect in the here and now, and that are often likely to be incompatible. Akin talks about the

3 Die Zeit Magazin 11.12.2009.

challenges to his biographical navigation when diverse spaces of possible belonging emerge as options out of which to choose carefully (even if often not consciously), given the scarcity of time, the internal group, including one's own family[4] pressures as well as conflicts encountered in the individual search for purpose in life. The immigrant social realm of Hamburg-Altona appears as delineated by numerous social boundaries that need to be assessed (in a more or less deliberate manner), reflected upon, negotiated and crossed. Akin's account reveals his desires, longings and emotions and stresses the possibilities to choose … but also the restrictions on doing so. He doesn't seem to be interested in any solid identity constructions or in collective categorisations (though playing with them), but rather in the possibilities and impossibilities of his individual engagement with social boundedness, experience in boundary-crossing, and in the personal shaping of his life-choices as a result. In retrospect and knowing of Fatih Akin's success, this narration could be read as a cosmopolitan story experienced by a member of a transnational artistic élite. But looking at the early stages of his biographic navigation, it is apparent that this biography could have resulted in a completely different outcome: a constellation increasingly restricting his freedom of choice.

Akin's reflection puts at least three common assumptions into question, assumptions that often pop up in public media constructions and even in academic literature. First, a Turkish immigrant mother is described as a strong agent, able to formulate her own priorities, and fighting to realise her conviction. She invests a substantial amount of time for the sake of realising her vision for her son. Both parents appear as highly divergent role models, with the mother eventually prevailing. Second, Islam does not come across as a collectivising straitjacket, but as a reservoir informing a personal formation of moral knowledge and providing a person with some resources to follow one's own path of life. The protagonist doesn't tell us to what extent he saw himself as a member of his religious community, but I infer that faith provided a repertoire for his spiritual and moral education that helped to shape his (not merely conscious) self-fashioning and experimentation, and his social positioning. Third, this narration highlights the differentiated character of a migrant milieu.

The adolescent life of Fatih Akin (and that of his peers) is divided between the parental home, his school, the street, possibly the mosque, and the library (and most probably a number of other places.) These different social spaces bear upon the personal choices, all displaying a certain degree of social closure and collectivising self-representation reinforcing the salience of collective boundary lines. They all

4 On Family as 'group', see Neidhardt 1979 and Tyrell 2008.

are demanding: for time-allocation, for loyalty and engagement, and they all ask for specific prioritisation, knowledge, and skills. They offer different possibilities for not only conscious self-fashioning and experimentation. Social life-worlds, including their collectivising pressures, bear upon individual biographies, while the personal choices impact upon the – ever dynamic nature of – social life-worlds. They are mutually constitutive, as I shall argue below. As much as the migrant social milieu (as any other social milieu) is more or less subtly structured by this multiplicity of life-worlds, it is also internally differentiated by personal predilections and a broad range of social positionings actualised in different contexts. Akin's parents already provide a wonderful example of the diverse visions, aspirations, and commitments that shape the adolescence of a 'Muslim Turk' in Hamburg-Altona.

This observation leads me to the nub of this paper. While inquiring into the internal differentiation of 'ethno-national communities', I propose to analyse migrant experiences through the constellations of multiple belonging. Constructs such as 'migrant social spaces', 'ethnic group' or 'religious community' always comprise internal complexities and categorical intersections. Drawing upon these intersections, it is my aim to reflect upon the social constructions of the social life-worlds of belonging that shape and affect social boundaries from outside and from within. The individual sense of belonging is confronted here with interpersonal negotiations of collective boundary lines as well as with institutional orders. The rationale for this search is to find new analytical tools for studying social mobility in the broadest sense of the term,[5] that is, combining individual as well as collective perspectives – in vertical (i.e. shifting between constellations not differentiated by wealth or status, but by categorical and / or normative underpinnings) as well as in horizontal dimensions (i.e. 'climbing up' or 'down' with regards to wealth, status and the possibilities to unfold one's own capabilities). The methodology of this new approach follows the individual navigations through ever dynamic formations of collective boundedness. I distinguish here between constellations in collective patterns of normality, salient categories and codes-of-conduct on one hand and the individual choices, games, preferences, longings and resistances on the other hand. They interact closely in the inter-subjective constellations of belonging as Fatih Akin's example revealed: while studying individual life trajectories we learn much about the dynamics in collective constellations – which should enable us to grasp how collective dynamics evolve in action and communication. In order to do so, I resort to the theory of the social

5 On a critique of this notion, see Tilly 1998.

world or worlds as envisaged by Schütz (1972), and Berger and Luckmann (1980), which I reflect through the lens of belonging.[6] Fatih Akin's reflection on his own biography expressed in numerous interviews as well as his films will provide empirical avenues into the conceptualisation enfolded here.

Belonging – its three dimensions

What is belonging?[7] Belonging is an emotionally charged, ever dynamic social location – that is: a position in social structure, experienced through identification, embeddedness, connectedness and attachments. As Anthias (2006) puts it, people belong together when they share values, relations (in my view, also including attachments to artefacts and landscapes, often tacit, but also stabilised by rules and regulations), and practices. According to Hage (2002), belonging is the combined result of trust, feeling safe, community, and the sense of possibility. Belonging is a combination of individually acquired, interpersonally negotiated and structurally affected knowledge and life-experience. It is a central dimension of life that is easily felt and tacitly undergone … and that is very difficult to capture through analytical categories, given its situated nature and multi-dimensionality. But given the growing scholarly interest in this notion, it is worth trying to do so.

Before proceeding, I should like to differentiate between the individual's relation to a collective, on the one hand, and collective belonging on the other. The German language makes a clear-cut distinction that is not immediately discernible in the English word 'belonging'. The German term *'Zugehörigkeit'* denotes an individual's belonging to a collective (as does the French term *'appartenance'*), whereas *'Zusammengehörigkeit'* stands for 'togetherness'. This distinction becomes of interest when

6 In this paper, I shall not be able to delve into the notion of 'subject' – a notion that is currently fiercely embattled in the social sciences and in the humanities. The approach proposed here obviously assumes that human subjects exist (vis-à-vis approaches postulating that subjects either do not exist or have vanished). Rather than seeing the subject as '*entgrenzt*' or *hybrid* (Reckwitz), the focus lies here on two constellations, in particular: first, the relational dimension between the subject and its peers, but also between the subjects and collectivities (Zima 2010); second, the combination between parameters of belonging of very different nature resulting in specific positionalities, according to circumstances. The effects of norms, powers and institutions bearing upon the subject are crucial for grasping the concept of biographical navigation.

7 For are more though discussion, see my 'Zugehörigkeit in der mobilen Welt' (2013).

we shift our perspective from group dynamics geared at maintaining the collective status quo to a consideration of (first) an individual's embeddedness in a collective, (second) an individual's seeking access to collectivities that jealously guard their boundaries vis-à-vis possible social trespassers … or (third) an individual's trying to abandon her or his peer-group. 'Belonging to' is experienced individually while affected by collective constellations, hence, socially negotiated. 'Belonging together' draws upon and results in both intersubjectivity in the sense of a person's feeling / enacting / experimenting the sense of common belonging as well as in collective practices and collective representations. While distinguishing 'belonging with' from 'belonging to', I should like to start with the former – which combines commonality, reciprocity and more or less formalized modalities of collective allegiance as well as the material and immaterial attachments that often result in a sense of entitlement. How these dimensions come to intersect, that is 'when do we belong?', is an empirical question, once we have agreed on their centrality for grasping this notion.

'Commonality' is a perception of sharing, notably sharing a common lot as well as cultural forms (language, religion, and life-style), values, experience, and memory constructions. Fatih Akin's newest film 'Polluting Paradise' ('Mühl im Garten Eden') is a perfect illustration for practising and experiencing commonality. Dwellers in the idyllic mountain village Camburnu have experienced commonality, over centuries, being interrelated by kinship ties, by sharing daily sorrows in their neighbourhood, by engaging in similar rural occupations and by enjoying their beautiful surroundings. Akin even speaks of a 'genetic pool', when seeing numerous faces similar to his own. Their tacit understandings of commonality have recently given way to a sense of collective endangerment and eventually resulted in collective action drawing upon collective self-representations – after the Turkish administration decided to establish a garbage dump immediately above Camburnu. Akin's documentary film shows a struggle embraced by people experiencing an alienation from their life-world, enduring horrible smells and poisonous substances leaking into the ground. A tacit property of being, i.e. a sense of commonality that does not need to be expressed, has given way to an increasingly politicised sense of belonging – as a commonality of suffering and commonality of purpose. Both the covert sense of being part in a communal setting as well as the process of drawing collective boundaries tight make for different forms of commonality in our contemporary world.

Commonality is individually felt and embodied while collectively negotiated and performed. As Brubaker (2004) puts it, collective constellations are forged through "categorisation" (an abstract, marker-based process), "groupness" (an emotional

feeling of unity) and a "self-understanding" (drawing upon a set of joint cognitive assumptions). Commonality is therefore a multi-dimensional phenomenon. It is often perceived as a social boundary-horizon that helps discern between the insiders and the outsiders. It thus relies on mental checkpoints (Migdal 2004), everyday life distinctions and public representations that often buttress collective boundary maintenance. This is precisely where commonality is likely to attain the form of collective identity that requires the other / the outside for engendering a perception of internal sameness. But we mustn't restrict our understanding of 'commonality' (i.e. the first dimension of belonging) to collective identity.

Let me highlight some major differences: 'Identity' is a categorical concept while belonging combines categorisation with social relating. Identity relies on sharp boundary-drawing ('we Camburnians' against the government, as in Akin's film), particularism, and is prone to buttressing social divisiveness (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Theoreticians may argue otherwise, for instance deploying the more flexible concept of 'identification' (Jenkins 1996), but identity politics have time and again revealed the exclusionary properties entailed in this notion. Fatik Akin himself repeatedly highlighted the problematic of the 'identity' notion, claiming that identities are always in motion and also stressing that perceptions of such phenomena like 'Istanbul's music scene' are necessarily narrowed down through ethnicisation when its transnational sources and the dynamics of youth culture are not considered as well. The politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2011; Kannabiran and Vieten 2006; Pfaff-Czarnecka and Toffin 2011) are equally prone to effecting social exclusion, but the opposite – widening borders, incorporating, defining new common grounds – has also often been the case. As I intend to show, these properties enfold in the multi-dimensional composition of belonging; in the 'thickness' of this term.

The academic preoccupation with collective identities has narrowed down our understanding of commonality as a multi-layered condition. Akins' films, but also a myriad of other examples bring this clearly to light. The concept of belonging underlines that people share significantly more than merely identity markers. Belonging together – whether sharing collective identity or not – entails sharing meanings, experience and the tacit self-evidence of being,[8] of what goes without saying while jointly taking things for granted. I am emphasising this point because shared meanings undergo continuous change – for instance when the joint experience of scenic beauty of your surroundings is threatened by external interventions – as in Akin's

8 On the difference between the tacit ‚being' and the explicit ‚belonging', see Glick Schiller 2007.

new film. Belonging evolves in social life-worlds where collective knowledge reservoirs are perennially recreated. They are realised in social practices of negotiation, conflict, compromise and accommodation, and also in a continuous overt and covert reflection about the validity of norms that hold in a given social world. Modalities of interaction shared in a social life-world aquire a high dergee of habitualisation, institutionalisation and legitimacy (Soeffner and Zifonun 2008).

Shared understandings significantly buttress the sense of reciprocity – the second dimension of belonging. Think of the dense webs of interrelations in any communal settings. Members of street gangs, as in Akin's youth, but also in collective action, as in Camburnu, continuously stabilise their relations by mutual acknowledgment as well as by ties of reciprocity that bind individuals together and eventually evolve to a collective pattern. Fatih Akin's film 'Soul Kitchen' displays a number of personal relations of reciprocity (including negative reciprocity) in a new space of belonging by choice, when persons meet and endure hardships in an improbable restaurant in Hamburg that – together with its neighbourhood – is threatened by the neoliberal forces of urban gentrification.

Norms steering mutual expectations and obligations create common horizons in the here and now, stabilising them to norms of reciprocity, loyalty, and commitment. Mutuality means acknowledging the other (Weber 1921; Tyrell 2008) and results in compliance to rules ordering – sometimes very unequal – social relations. Families expect obedience and loyalty as well as pooling of resources. Associations and organisations expect participation, acceptance of common goals, and a sufficient contribution of time and resources. Belonging to a nation means sharing in a given polity's well-being, accepting at least some of its cultural forms, and enjoying civic rights, while reciprocating by performing civic duties, in particular by paying taxes. The advantage of belonging to such a national collective goes hand-in-hand with high expectations. But also cliques and friends jealously monitor mutual allocation of obligations and debts. In a street gang, providing each other support in dangerous situations, sharing costs and sharing risks are objects of continuous scrutiny and assessment (see Akin's early film 'Short Sharp Shock', 1998). The ensuing calculations – that can be more overt or covert – result in what I call *'regimes of belonging'*[9] that is, in institutionalised patterns insisting upon investments of time and resources, loyalty and commitment – that are the price people have to pay for belonging together. Otherwise, most collectives can resort to sanctions – through exclusion or ostracism.

9 This concept draws upon Krasner 1982. Whether this concept is also influenced by Foucault's notion of 'dispositif', requires further conceptualisation.

For entering a national space and durably remaining, migrants need to present themselves as particularly 'deserving' (Sales 2002).

Attachments, the third dimension I delineate, follow yet other patterns in creating belonging. Attachments link people to material and immaterial worlds. Attachments make people belong to spaces and sites, to natural objects, landscapes, climate, and to material possessions (Appadurai 1986; bell hooks 2009). These are forged through such disparate links as embodiment, resonance (Rosa 2007) of smells and tastes (as with Marcel Proust's famous madeleine) as well as rights: citizenship and property rights, in particular. Growing up in a locality can create a strong sense of belonging – and so does the ownership of land or a house. Also, wherever we leave an airplane, we are told: 'take you belongings with you' – which nicely brings a property of material attachments to light. Entailed in this concept is among other things the possibility that people and things can *belong together*.

This state of affairs is aptly illustrated by the case of Camburnu ('Polluting Paradise'). Akin's own attachment to this village is simply explained by him as the 'village of my grandfather'. The villager's attachments to this place are given through the tombs of their ancestors – as he claims. Individual persons own plots of land here. Collectively, the villagers have shaped the landscape through their rural activities and by their neighbourly care, assistance and control. The links to the village space are therefore of a multiplex nature: they exist in the individual as well as in the collective appreciation of the beauty of the surroundings, in the experiences of shaping the natural environment, in the legal entitlements to land, pastures and forests, in the imaginaries of being shaped by the local topography and by the natural set-up as well as by the many experiences of performing commonality and mutuality through local practices. The recent struggles against the external trespassers and their harmful action in disposing garbage have instigated at the same time a sense of displacement as well as a sense of urgency for engaging in common action – probably rendering the local ties even stronger and more meaningful. As in many cases of external encroachments upon local life worlds, the idea of losing a local living space becomes all the more unbearable as migration as an option would not only mean abandoning possessions and the relationship to one's home area, but also losing dense social ties, solidarity and support. 'Home' becomes an object of longing (inherent in 'be-longing'), retrospectively (as though the loss of home), and prospectively while searching for a new home (underpinning most films of Akin). The potentiality of loss of a natural homeland goes hand-in-hand with (justified) apprehensions that finding a new living ground is usually very difficult to achieve.

It is difficult to forge new attachments – think of the exclusionary practices bearing upon newcomers, or of the sedimented nature of routines, commitments, communal emotions, embodiment and the salience of collective orders -, but they can be created. Religious sites such as cemeteries and places of worship can be conducive here. Muslim immigrants have, for instance, carved out for themselves such places of attachment in many European places, but they usually had to struggle hard for this. Denying immigrants the right to erect visible religious structures marking their durable presence in the places of their arrival – as happened through the Swiss federal vote against the minarets – indicated towards the Swiss majority's reluctance to accept that Muslims could make Switzerland their new home for good (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2009).

In their combination, commonality, reciprocity and attachments stabilise belonging, rendering collective sociability durable. They forge a strong and binding sense of naturalness, bearing upon co-fellows – that is obvious to the insiders and that keeps the outsiders at bay. Claims to normality / naturalness of a given social order reduce complexity, by discerning between the inside and the outside. And this state of affairs is likely to institutionalise power relations governing the social life between and also within any given collective. Shared knowledge, practices and norms build upon sometimes restrictive social orders and on unequally distributed chances and resources. Therefore, belonging often comes at the price of subjugation vis-à-vis norms guiding and guarding the collective life. To put it simply: belonging can be very cosy, but also really exclusionary and oppressive.

And there is yet another property of belonging – the one I am currently most interested in – namely, the possibility to forge new ties of collective boundedness and reciprocity across collective boundary-lines (see the 'conviviality-debate'). The concept of belonging, drawing upon the social boundary-making approach (Lamont and Molnar 2002; Wimmer 2008) provides us with a tool to inquire how horizons of togetherness are and can be widened in order to incorporate newcomers – how to extend collective we-understanding by including former strangers and how to enlarge our understanding of a broadened horizon encompassing our life-worlds (Fortier 1999; White 2004). Remember the former German President's Christian Wulff's widely debated sentence 'Islam belongs to Germany'. In the climate of politically charged passions about belonging (Geschiere 2009), social exclusion seems to be the norm. Nevertheless, throughout history, all around the world, new constellations of belonging have been forged and will come into existence in future. Bounded and exclusive belonging becomes increasingly problematic (Bauman 2011), given the

pluralising nature of contemporary societies and given the differentiated character of any given collective social space that the communitarian regimes of belonging seek to cover up.

Fatih Akin's film 'Soul Kitchen' speaks of yet another possibility of creating belonging, by assembling, nurturing and by protecting a new social space *together*.[10] Akin challenges in this oeuvre a number of stereotypes so frequent in depictions of migration. While a number of protagonists have migrated to Germany and have established themselves in Hamburg, the film does not discuss the (im)possibilities of their 'fitting into' 'German' social spaces, but rather discusses what Glick Schiller and Caglar conceptualise as 'rescaling cities' (2011), by establishing genuine and creative structures such as the run-down restaurant 'Soul Kitchen' in a previously industrial and now gentrifying area of Hamburg. In Akin's own words, this film is a new type of a 'Heimatfilm' (a sentimental film with regional background), devoid of patriotic pathos ('My heroes protect what is here'). As Akin claims for himself ('Meine Heimat ist Hamburg'), his protagonist (of Greek origin) seems to see Hamburg as his home, but also the restaurant is a home base for the whole neighborhood. Besides, it is an imaginary home for young and non-conformist young people. It is less about geography and more about friends, drinks, food, and intoxicating music; it is about a creative mood and a sense of possibility. The quest to protect this social space against the interests of investors speculating on the value of land (possibly raised by the charm of off-off-culture) combines all the facets of belonging: the sense of commonality between people sharing a somewhat marginal but meaningful existence ignoring bourgeois norms; the sense of reciprocity with many acts of help, support and generosity among friends, colleagues and former lovers as well as the sense of attachment to the city of Hamburg gradually falling prey – as Akin repeatedly decried – to global neoliberal forces.

Multiple belonging

The discussion centred so far on the collective spaces of belonging – this could be nation-states, localised life-worlds, ethnic groups, associations or families, street gangs, or sport clubs, all acting as *regimes of belonging*, i.e. having bearing upon indi-

10 See e.g. **http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/cinema/2010/09/06/100906crci_cinema_lane** (download January, 13th, 2013).

vidual persons. Exclusions, dichotomisations, particularist orientations and clearly delineated boundedness are important properties of such constellations, highly buttressed by identity politics. Until now, I have highlighted the bonding properties of belonging as they are found, for instance, in the common understanding of ethnic groups. But we need to distinguish between an ethnicity's (or a nation's or family's) self-representations (through their spokesmen), on one hand, and the differentiated nature of such constellations, on the other. The multifaceted and dense concept of belonging allows us to disentangle collectivising notions such as ethnicity that presuppose a sameness of ethnic members, often for instrumental reasons. There are at least three reasons for doing so. First, from the point of view of social actors, belonging is always multiple (see Calhoun 2003; Vieten 2006). Any given constellation of boundedness competes with other constellations of belonging that vie with each other for membership and their members' commitment. Zygmunt Bauman has observed a 'fading of the monopolistic ambitions of the entity of belonging' (2011: 434). Collectivities are increasingly losing their monopolies over their members. They increasingly (have to) accept that they must share their members with other entities and can no longer be jealous in the manner of 'monotheistic Gods' (ibid.).

Second, collectives are internally differentiated – as Fatih Akin's narration about his choices revealed. Ethno-national constellations in immigration societies are complex entities – if they are entities at all. Persons of the same ethnicity or nationality do not form one social life-world, for instance in the sense of a 'parallel society' (see Schiffauer 2008), but navigate between different life-worlds (see B. Luckmann 1978; Soeffner and Zifonun 2008) – which results in individual combinations of different forms of knowledge, orientations, and habitual forms. Taking ethnicity as one life-world is highly misleading, given the internal plurality that accompanies the intersections of socio-economic differentiation, gender, spatial distribution, and internal subdivisions by language, dialect or religion as well as all kinds of personal orientations such as political leaning or sexual orientation – that may collide with communitarian norms.

Third, coming back to my distinction between 'belonging with' and 'belonging to', it is crucial to conceptualise belonging as created by individual persons in their negotiating collective constellations, that is, how persons navigate through the diverse constellations of belonging they encounter in their course of life. An individual person leads his or her life, when we follow Strauss (1978) and B. Luckmann (1978: 285), in different social worlds, finding belonging simultaneously in different social constellations. They live in differently structured life-worlds 'to each of which owing only

partly allegiance' (ibid: 282). The diverse small life-worlds co-exist in somebody's life, compelling the individuals to combine different forms of knowledge and patterns of orientation. In order to understand how we-constellations widen their horizons and how they render their boundaries permissible, it is therefore important to reverse the point of observation from large- or middle-scale collective units to individuals and to grasp how persons navigate between the diverse constellations of belonging – in the course of their lives.

I repeat: from the point of view of individual persons, belonging is always multiple. In his or her life-course, everybody copes with the interplay between commonality, reciprocity and attachment, by living simultaneously and subsequently in diverse constellations of belonging. Some forms of collective boundedness are ascribed – such as within family or one's ethnic group. Others are acquired – such as belonging to a university, a class, or a profession. (And we know by now that our 'ascribed' properties are 'acquired' in the sense that we allot more importance to certain dimensions of ascription than to others.) Some are more exclusive (family, religion) than others (a hobby club). Some forms of belonging are easier to obtain than, say, naturalisation in a country of immigration. Some forms of intersectionality are easier to combine than others – a male White Anglo-Saxon American Protestant, on one hand, is a good example for an easy-going-combination; a scarf-wearing well educated Muslima in Dresden – I think of Marwa el-Shirbini who was killed three years ago – would appear at the other end of the spectrum – at least to her murderer.

In the course of time, my belonging will shift. I go to school, I study, I learn a profession, and enter a working place. I usually marry and from now on, less time is left for my friends and for the relatives in the parental home. I acquire a new status vis-à-vis my relatives and peers; I position myself anew. I may be compelled to do so by unexpected turns and crises in my life; otherwise, I may opt for new choices almost by coincidence. Some passages in the course of life demand abandoning a former location of belonging. In particular, it very frequently happens that persons of low socio-economic status are accused of treachery by their former peers while climbing the social ladder. For instance, after engaging in higher education, the habitual forms of a person may undergo such a thorough transformation that former peers may not feel at ease in one's presence any more. Elites usually don't suffer this kind of alienation. The socio-economic status, in particular, strongly impinges upon the scope of possibilities of choice. Among the privileges of being an elite-member is the ability to combine different small worlds to attractive ways of life – to which 'social climbers' aspire. Charles Tilly (1998 et al.) alerted us time and again to the power of

categorisations distinguishing between people of different gender, 'race', ethnicity or socio-economic status, often ethnicised, so that categories could be perceived as 'social location'. Social mobility is therefore not simply an incremental process, but has to be seen as a cumbersome trajectory of boundary crossing.

It goes without saying that different dimensions of belonging intersect with one another in a number of ways. In today's world, (1) people can simultaneously belong to two or more countries; they can combine different professions or even religions; (2) they can change belonging while going through different stages in life – changing age groups and passing through different stages of status. (3) There is a situational multiplicity – when people divide their time between home, school, friends, hobby club, or religious organisation. (4) There are also diverse horizons of belonging: family, ethnic group, nation-state, and the world – and these horizons can coexist in a mode full of tensions.

Fatih Akin's films in their entirety provide perfect illustrations for this state of affairs. 'The Edge of Heaven' explores the dimension of transnationality bearing upon migrants as much as upon persons of 'local origin' living in migrant societies, i.e. being confronted with mobility so thoroughly changing the life-circumstances, for instance in Germany. In this film, life-histories of persons moving between Germany and Turkey, Bremen and Istanbul come to intertwine. Personal longings, acts, tragedies and joys weave together into transnational patterns that fuel our imagination concerning the possibilities and impossibilities of adjusting local lives and distant interconnections and of perennially moving across diverse social spaces.

Biographic navigation

The personal navigation through the diverse constellations of belonging consists in more or less conscious choices when it comes to the constructions of the self, to new normative orientations, to negotiations and positionings. As much as it can be self-evident and cosy, belonging is also hard work, and means maintaining relations and displaying loyalty and commitment – that may clash with one another and be put into question. Entering a new social space requires mobilising a broad range of habitual forms fitting into the new constellation. A failure in negotiating the entry to a new social space can mean a serious drawback impeding the courage we all need when following our path of life. But boundary-crossing can also succeed. Contemporary societies, far from being 'open', nevertheless often offer new opportunities that go

hand-in-hand with transgressing boundaries that were previously impermissible. In the process of 'taking possession' of a new social space, new knowledge is acquired and additional experiences are gained. Our subjective knowledge reservoir comprises solutions to problems in previous actions (Schütz and Luckmann 2003: 37) that can be enabling. If one manages to make a new social space his or her own – as Fatih Akin eventually took possession of the world of books and art -, the resulting experience of individual empowerment (as Craig Calhoun puts it) is likely to enable the future successful negotiation of social boundary lines.

Individual success is usually scrutinised by peers, often with suspicion. But individual pathways leading out of collective confinement in marginalised social positions contribute to the change of objectified knowledge that stabilises collective certainties. Individual experience of successful social mobility can, on one hand, challenge social norms resulting in peers' resentment and the quest to keep the collective boundary tight from within. On the other hand, narratives of success can turn into role models and expand migrant networks. The interplay between the individual and collective determinants of one's social location therefore results in different possibilities in ethnic boundary work: either in a more pronounced crystallisation of the collective boundary line (Brubaker 2002), or in boundary blurring, or shifting (see Zolberg and Woon 1999 and Wimmer 2008).

Diverse social dimensions of belonging can and must be combined and are usually weighted against each other, even if often in a little conscious manner. Every person is confronted with the central question whether specific constellations of belonging create new possibilities, or rather have restrictive effects. And in consequence: how to weight new forms of belonging against the old ones? Is the cost of entering a new social space and remaining there not too high when you must abandon the former peers and the certainties of life you previously took for granted? Should we accept the internal pressures within one small world that endows us with accepted norms and accepted role-models (as in a gang, or in a family sticking to traditional values), or rather opt for an individual pathway requiring resourcefulness and own creativity – as scary as this may seem at the beginning (Bauman 2011; Ehrenberg 2004)? Today's societies are so heterogeneous that it is impossible to assess from the beginning which forms of collective boundedness open doors, or rather erect tight boundaries – have an 'enabling' or rather a 'constraining' bearing upon persons.

There is a myriad of more or less tight boundaries and restrictions impacting upon personal navigation, given how thoroughly social inclusion and exclusion work together (Luhmann 1997). Creating new belonging can be especially cumbersome.

William Crowley uses a disco to which people seek entry as a metaphor for belonging (see Crowley 1999). Outside at the door of a disco, people queue asking to be allowed inside. Similar imaginary queues can be found at the borders of immigration countries. The aspirants are to present documents, they will be assessed regarding their fitting in, and they will need some money. Whether they are deemed suitable will be evaluated through more or less explicit criteria. There is a significant disproportion between the 'inside' and the 'outside'. The more you cannot get in and have to stand in the cold, the more you desire access. And the opposite may be true as well. The Jewish film comedian Groucho Marx once joked that he wouldn't want to join a club that was desperate enough to accept people like him.

Literature abounds in examples of facing social boundaries from outside; the internal boundary-work is a less common theme. Fatih Akins 'Head On' speaks about the problem of crossing collective boundaries 'from within', i.e. of abandoning a restrictive social living space. The female protagonist Sibel rebels against her father and brother and against their traditional values by attempting suicide. She craves life, freedom of movement, dancing and having sexual intercourse 'with more than one man'. In order to break out from the conservative conventions, she deploys a conventional trick herself by marrying a man of Turkish origin who himself broke with his Turkish origins. This very impressive and intense film indicates the scope of social closures bearing upon the inner life-worlds of persons. The price for transgressing communal norms is very high, but the possibility of uncovering the desired location of the self in the world after crossing the communal boundary is promising.

On one hand, the desire to 'belong to' confronts persons with rules of collective boundedness, of 'belonging with'. On the other hand, it is through personal navigation that constellations of 'belonging with' change their shape and that collective boundaries come under stress. Recent research on processes of collective boundary maintenance (Wimmer 2008; 2013) has indicated how and when social boundaries are blurred and shifted, after individual mobility, for instance in immigrant contexts, has crystallised into collective patterns. The major value of the belonging approach lies in its not taking for granted collective boundedness. By combining the dimensions of commonality, reciprocity and attachments, it indicates social closures as well as possibilities of their opening-up, rather than falling prey to methodological collectivism. The belonging approach points to the tremendous tensions persons endure while navigating between social and spatial worlds, of course. It is obviously cosier and less dangerous to maintain your home where your religious or ethnic identity is not questioned. Marwa El-Shirbini, whom I mentioned above, paid with her life

for somebody else's insecurity and for her attacker's inability to acknowledge that belonging is nothing fixed.

Persons and collectivities in immigrant societies: Three approaches to studying diversity in immigrant societies

How does belonging and the concept of biographic navigation through the multiple spaces of belonging add to our conceptualisation of religious and ethnic diversity in contemporary migrant societies? The micro-perspective of the proposed approach is meant to complement but also challenge the existing approaches to studying contemporary migration. With 'groupism' prevailing in migration research, most of social science conceptualisation starts off from collective units and takes a predominantly large-scale, often systemic view of migrant constellations. The concepts of integration and assimilation take, furthermore, a top-down perspective of the national societies to which migrants 'arrive'. They describe, and frequently also prescribe the steps migrants (need to) take towards the cultural, social and civic rapprochement to the societal mainstream. Besides this, they conceptualise the necessary pathways towards becoming part and parcel in the social division of labour. Approaches to assimilation and integration take national boundedness as their point of departure. The national modalities of sociability, political cultures as well as identity constructions provide frameworks into which migrants are expected to 'fit in'. Their cultures, capabilities and resources – mostly conceived in collectivising ethno-national terms – have usually been assessed against the backdrop of national norms and expectations.

The collectivising self-representations of a national we-collective often instigate collectivising depictions of ethno-national migrant collectivities. Only recently have such top-down approaches been challenged by a range of debates, seeking to call ideas of national homogeneity into question and making – as in the multicultural debates – a strong point for acknowledging collective (minority) rights. In this vein, the methodological nationalism inherent in the former was replaced by an ethnicisation of the social world in the latter. Only the emphasis was shifted from top-down to middle range perspectives. At both levels, ideas and ideologies of cultural unity or sameness have coincided with sharp boundary-drawing, be it between nations, or between national societies and migrants (depicted as lacking key-characteristics seen as necessary in order to fit the national mainstream), be it between ethnic or religious 'groups'. A number of new approaches emerged from the critique of methodological

ethnicisation, however, as indicated in the introduction. The recent research interest in neighbourhoods and localities as well as that in the scalar dimensions of immigration (Glick Schiller and Caglar 2011) entails a critique of the ethnic lens through which migrants are usually observed. 'Not-ethnic' modes of migrant incorporation are increasingly being taken into consideration. Migrant resources, rationalities and agency are acquiring more and more academic attention. Such intersecting dimensions as social class, gender, profession, hobby club or sexual orientation allow for disentangling any collectivising notion of ethnic or religious unity (see Pfaff-Czarnecka 2010; Anthias 2006). Since the concept of superdiversity is interested in formations coming about through confrontations and intermixing, no single social category can be privileged anymore.

Yet, we still know little about the rationalities and modalities of combining different parameters of social belonging. We therefore lack insights into any of the micro-processes through which collective constellations are forged, reproduced, challenged and changed. The observation of micro-processes has to begin with individual persons making their biographies through more or less conscious choices between diverse constellations of belonging. While confronting individuals with collective constellations, the social boundary work results from collective dynamics as much as it does from individual positioning and action and affects both.

The belonging approach presented here reverses holistic and top-down perspectives and aligns itself to approaches analysing (super-)diversity in their complex and ever-changing constellations. It refers to the dynamics of collective boundary-making and to the constellations of conviviality in today's mobile world. It starts off from the personal dispositions, aspirations and resources while not losing sight of the manifold restrictions within institutional settings and structures of power restricting the individual rooms-for-manoeuvre within bounded collective entities. It inverts the national we-group perspective while following single persons through different spaces of belonging where constellations of commonality, reciprocity and attachments reinforce each other, or come to collide. But the observation of singular biographical navigations does not restrict the outcome to micro-scale social dimensions. The personal confrontations with constellations of collective boundedness reveal the modalities of how social boundaries and the possible resulting inequalities are changed or reproduced. In this vein, we learn more about the modalities of social closures as well as of the possibilities of lessening or shifting tight boundary-lines. The one-dimensional migrant – as he or she is often imagined in public communication – is thus replaced by the concept of a complex and resourceful persona who

shapes his or her own path of life. She navigates between different life-worlds more or less consciously and with more or less effort. She reflects, she elects, becomes engaged or lessens social ties, negotiates social boundaries and tries to make sense of this entire struggle.

Three alternative perspectives for studying migrant constellations

Systemic perspective (top down)	**Collective constellations in focus, their intersections and interactions**	**Ego-centric perspectives** - mobility through social spaces in here and now
Integration / assimilation as paradigm Well-being of the national 'we' as rationale Normativity dictated by the national we-group Power differentials in entitlements	*Belonging as 'Zusammengehörigkeit' (collective we-representations)* Multiculturalism How can we live together? Super-diversity Conviviality Towards new (we-) understandings of immigrant societies	Nexus of belonging, inequality, and mobility *Belonging as 'Zugehörigkeit' (individual perceptions)* Belonging as constraining and enabling Shaping capabilities Individual and collective dynamics interwoven

Conclusion

Rather than summarising, I should like to highlight the main assumptions underlying the approach presented here. Let me come back to the distinction between 'belonging with' and 'belonging to' that is based on and relates to two disparate paradigms. The concept of '*belonging with'*, on the one hand, is partly inspired by communitarian positions, paying attention to their normative stance. The communitarian perspective is crucial, here, for highlighting the strength of collective orientations, the power of norms and the practices of social boundary-making, effecting social closure. But collectivities – as Bauman (2011) convinced us – are increasingly losing the exclusive authority over their members. They increasingly accept sharing their members' loyalties with other realms of collective belonging, whether the communitarians – be they political philosophers or the actual bearers of minority 'traditions' – like it or not.

The 'rooted belonging' in communitarian settings tends to restrict the freedom of choice. Since so many people engage in minority constellations, the question emerges

of who needs to belong and why. What is at stake? Would belonging be more important and crucial for those with minority status, given there is more to lose (think of the constraints in majoritarian societies bearing upon minorities), but also of the restricted rooms for manoeuvre minority members such as uneducated women endure (see Pfaff-Czarnecka 2010)? Any reflection on social mobility needs to take the overwhelming power of categorisations and social boundaries into consideration. These are likely to 'locate' subjects in subordinate positions.

The notion of '*belonging to*', on the other hand, relates to the theory of individualisation – which clashes with communitarianism. As Ulrich Beck (1986) argued, in the process of individualisation persons are increasingly less conditioned by encompassing collective orders. Being a person in the contemporary world comprises the capacity to make one's own choices – differing with circumstances, of course. The pluralisation of social life-worlds can thus render belonging significantly more tailored to one's own longings and aspirations, while assigning, defining and attributing different relevance to its diverse dimensions according to one's own needs, desires, ambitions, allegiances and apprehensions. In sum, the work of belonging can be very exhausting,[11] but also opens up new possibilities.

Fatih Akin's own life trajectory and the themes of his films illustrated my assumption that belonging and social boundary-making are two sides of the same coin. The process of shifting between different life-worlds attaches new and very diverse experiences to such 'rooted' self-understandings as the one provided by ethno-national, familial, or religious belonging. In combination between rooted belonging with new forms of belonging that Zygmunt Bauman (2011) calls 'anchored', individual navigations combine old with new parameters of belonging. The social boundary-work can be very creative as any dealing with obstacles that persons or collectivities may face in situations dominated by others. 'Anchored belonging' can become a necessity for those who lost almost everything when forced into exile, but for many people in the contemporary world the possibility to create new belonging goes hand-in-hand with the capacity to influence one's own path of life. This capacity is usually paired with painful experiences of alienation when lessening the former ties. But the process of biographic navigation can render alienation productive.[12]

Fatih Akin's films have significantly contributed to bringing visions and aspirations drawing upon migrant experience home to wide audiences, whether in Ger-

11 See Ehrenberg 2004.

12 This idea was inspired by the lecture by Eva Geulen, held at the Institut für Sozialforschung, Frankfurt a.M. September 23rd 2012.

many or abroad. Through his films, Turkish cultural forms and his heroes' visions, projects and longings became part and parcel of German culture. Akin's individual biographic navigation has significantly enlarged his own room for manoeuvre. But we must not forget that this individual path also widened his audiences' perceptions of their transnational we-group horizons.

Internet links to interviews with Fatih Akin conducted in German and used for this paper:

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http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/kino/interview-mit-fatih-akin-keine-angst-vor-islamismus-in-der-tuerkei-1103163.html
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http://www.taz.de/1/archiv/?id=archivseite&dig=2004/03/11/a0212

Short CV and filmography in English:

http://www.filmportal.de/en/person/fatih-akin_efc0caa3dd7103c1e03053d50b372d46

The films by Fatih Akin mentioned in this paper:

'Head on' ('Gegen die Wand'), 2004 (**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head-On**)
‚The Edge of Heaven' (‚Auf der anderen Seite'), 2007 (**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Edge_of_Heaven_%28film%29**)
‚Soul Kitchen', 2009 (**http://www.soul-kitchen-film.com/**)
'Polluting Paradise' ('Müll im Garten Eden'), 2012 (**http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1205487/**)

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