

## **Women in the International Gardens: How subsistence production leads to new forms of intercultural communication**

by Christa Müller

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Integration versus parallel societies, assimilation versus ethnicization? These polarizations have increasingly tended to dominate recent debate on migration to Germany (1). Indeed, it has to be asked whether popular ideas of “integration” adequately reflect the true diversity of intercultural processes that already characterize German social reality. If, instead of focusing on outer attributes such as the number of headscarves or muezzin calls, one looks at everyday subsistence strategies, at the ways migrant women, children and men live their daily lives, it becomes evident that transnational and transcultural spaces have in fact long since been established. This is where new forms of ethnic and multiethnic identities are being invented and lived out.

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One example of this kind of new social space is the *International Gardens* association in Göttingen (Lower Saxonia, Germany), a self-organized grass-roots project run by migrants and Germans. The idea of having a garden originated with Bosnian women refugees in the Women’s Café in the Göttingen Refugee Advice Centre. The women felt that, in the long run, they needed to be doing more than simply drinking tea and making table decorations. They were eager to get out of institutions run by social workers, and take their everyday lives into their own hands again. The women themselves clearly pinpointed the importance of self-reliance and working for their own subsistence in order to lead what they perceived as a tolerable life in exile: “At home we had our gardens. That’s what we missed the most. We so much wanted to have gardens in Germany as well.”

That was in 1995. One year later the International Gardens project leased its first piece of land. Starting with a gardening project for Bosnian women, the concept of the International Gardens developed gradually from praxis. Today, 220 women, children and men from 19 nations use four gardens with a total area of approximately 12,000 square metres to produce organically grown fruit, vegetables and herbs. The Göttingen Gardens have also been the starting point for more than 50 intercultural garden projects up to now.

The significance of the gardens lies in the fact that they provide impulses for ways in which migrants could “put down roots” in future, as well as for an enriching cultural variety in Germany as a country of immigration. At the same time, the activities of this grass-roots project demonstrate that subsistence production (2) – embedded in the context of exile – not only encourages new forms of community-creating processes, but also sets the necessary conditions for re-negotiating gender relations. The combination of economic, ecological and socio-cultural elements in the International Gardens, the variety of methods of cultivation and of subsistence-oriented techniques and skills used, together with the emergence of new forms of intercultural communication that arise through working together, the public showing and practising of the cultures of origin - as opposed to their being hidden or forgotten – have a whole range of effects, both inner and outer, which transform the way migrants in Germany perceive themselves, and the way they are perceived. Simultaneously, these new forms of multi-ethnic identities lay the foundations for future lifestyles in which less dominant social groups such as migrants, and especially the women among them, become the path-breakers and decision-makers instead of occupying more familiar marginal positions.

The question posed somewhat dualistically in classical migration research - whether immigration tends to lead to integration, or instead to the formation of ethnic ghettos - is shown to be inadequate when migration processes are additionally analysed from the

perspectives of economic and environmental sociology as represented in the approach used in subsistence research. The thematization of gender relations in particular shows how many different forms of social networking arise from the ways women arrange and use the spaces available to them in everyday life. In other words, I am attempting to link the constructs “self” and “other” with the social conditions of the production of survival, since I assume that being in command of one’s situation plays a vital role in being able to recognize the self in the other and the other in the self, the necessary preconditions for intercultural communication. And to be in command of the situation one needs autonomy in the way one lives one’s life. Although the feeling of being in control is differently conveyed according to the respective culture, focusing on work which is essential to sustaining life highlights the significance of women in both material and socio-cultural subsistence production.

*Understanding oneself as the “other” is not just a task for the host society, but also one for the migrants themselves.*

Self-determination in the organization and conduct of their lives is something frequently denied to people in exile. There is no provision for their active participation in socially relevant activities; many feel they have been immobilized, and their lives are being managed for them. Treating migrants this way also conveys the message that the “majority” in the society has nothing to learn from them. The loss is thus a double one: exiles lose the power to organize their own lives, and the host society passes over the opportunity to be inspired by other cultures and ways of life. The most important condition for a different kind of treatment of migration and migrants would be to develop a different perspective, as Elisabeth Bronfen emphasizes:

The attitude that would seem appropriate to the modern phenomena of mass migration and the global circulation of signs is not so much one of regarding the “others” who suddenly appear in “our” midst as a problem which has to be dealt with for better or for worse, as one of understanding *oneself as the other* from the outset. (Bronfen et al. 1997: 6)

Understanding oneself as the “other” is not just a task for the host society, but also one for the migrants themselves. The International Gardens in Göttingen are based on individual migrations, not on the activities of more or less established, homogeneous ethnic communities. The actors in this case are refugees, whose future is often uncertain, and who have to react with great flexibility to the situation in exile. Understanding themselves as the “other” affords migrants the chance to recognize what is “self” in the supposedly “other”, and to discover their own experiences and emotional states in others. Subsistence-oriented strategies of the kind on which the praxis of the International Gardens is based are ideally suited to self-recognition processes of this nature. At the same time they enable the migrants to take their lives in their own hands once more. People from places where subsistence gardening still plays a major role in everyday life frequently find it degrading to sit at home, unable to support themselves in any way. Jamila Alidousti, a 44-year-old Persian woman, stresses how significant a person’s own work is for her or his sense of self-worth.

We are unemployed. That is not good. It is always better to have something to do. I come from Iran, I’m from a good family. Before the revolution, we had a large farm. And here I am like someone living on social security. That’s life, sometimes it’s good for me, sometimes bad. But just because I don’t have any money, I don’t want to think I’m not worth anything.

In the garden, the migrants plant what they are familiar with from home. Whether the seedlings take or not, how the plants grow, what they need and how they look later on; all this gives the refugees information about the soil on which they now live, and about the people settled here.

The experiments that the gardeners undertake with plants and seeds are thus always also social experiments. If Persian seeds are not able to germinate in heavy Lower Saxon loam or

Kurdish coriander is drowned by the watering-can, this also means the migrants are having interactive experiences with their new home.

Work in the gardens can be a way to transcend cultural differences and bind people together, not least in their shared contact with elemental things like earth and plants. By carrying on the daily agrarian pursuits of their culture of origin, the gardeners are establishing a link between the place they have left and the one they now live in. The familiar appearance of the plants gives substance to their own histories. Like the plants, the people gradually start to put down roots in the gardens, in Göttingen, in Germany.

One woman “garden-activist” described how, walking in the forest in Göttingen, she had discovered a herb which she previously assumed to grow only in Kurdistan:

We tried it, and it was delicious. Soon everyone got to hear of it. Now other Kurds phone me, and we all go into the forest and look for these herbs. We collect lots of them and freeze them, so we can eat them in winter too.

Not only do the migrants appreciate the processes of exchange that arise from the work connected with the gardens; they also value the produce. Ms. Abid, a 46-year-old founding member of the project, explained how important access to good-quality food is in order to lead a dignified life in exile:

At home, everything was organic, everything was fresh. Here, unfortunately, it isn't. Here there is a lot of poison in the food. In Baghdad, there are markets everywhere, and everything is brought in fresh every morning. The chickens are still alive on the market. Here, organic food is very expensive. I can't afford it. When my parents bought bread, they first chose the kind of wheat, and if the bread didn't taste good, we took the bread back and it was exchanged. Some Germans think we were poor, but we were not poor. Here we are poor. We cannot afford decent food.

The International Gardens project sees itself as a forum where new forms of communication can arise from many different languages, ways of working, skills and experiences of life (Shimeles 2000). Work is the most familiar form of community, and subsistence-oriented work plays a decisive role in developing new ways of being and living together. All the participants like it best when they grow, cook or show what they know from their culture of origin; and thus experience is exchanged and broadened among the migrants themselves. Ms. Abid elucidates:

When one woman has baked something, she brings it along; someone else brings tea, someone else coffee, home-made juices. We swap recipes. When there is a festivity, everyone cooks their own specialities, everyone brings their own music along. We show each other our dances, but also seeds, plants, herbs and fruit. We have seen a lot from the Bosnians in particular. They have shown us a lot in the garden, for example about digging, or how deep beans need to be planted.

In the winter months, the gardening activities in the International Gardens are more closely combined with other crafts and skills. Since 1999, a self-built middle-European style brick oven has stood in one of the four gardens. In spring 2000 the project women built an oriental oven of clay and straw. Tassew Shimeles, an immigrant from Ethiopia who is the project coordinator and agricultural advisor, views bread-baking from an intercultural perspective: “Almost all peoples have their own bread, and the way it is baked says something about that culture.”

The project demonstrates different aspects of bread baking in practice. Another dimension of the work done in the International Gardens becomes apparent here: it does not present museum-like tableaux of “different cultures”. Instead, things are actually done, and in this straightforward way the transfer or re-invention of cultural features is effected, mixing earth and culture, sense experience and economic necessity (the bread is eaten), and here too a piece of the culture of origin is created anew and linked with other cultures.

*Women quite clearly dominate in the new transcultural spaces.*

Practising and publicly demonstrating baking in ovens built by the participants themselves also means confronting the political history and economy of bread, providing tangible evidence of how the “lack of bread” can lead to wars, flight and migration – and providing an explanation for the fragmentation of the refugees’ own biographies. Simultaneously, the refugees, who are often people from “simple” backgrounds, develop an interest in world affairs: “I didn’t know anything about Sri Lanka before. Now, thanks to the Tamils here with us in the garden, I’ve learnt a lot about world politics”, said one gardener. Getting to know the world from a variety of ethnic, religious and political perspectives compensates perhaps to some degree for being uprooted from their own countries of origin. The involuntary journey to new worlds, often involving the trauma of a dramatic flight, can thus be reconstructed and understood in retrospect; the globalization of the migrants’ lives and the enormous personal challenges they face become manageable through communal forms of production and exchange.

In these transcultural spaces, women quite clearly dominate. It is striking that the International Gardens are not politicized in the sense of a power-oriented strategy, as is the case in many male-dominated refugee groups, associations or resistance movements. On the contrary, conflicts between Kurds and Turks or Croats and Serbs for example are successfully set aside. Although social praxis in the garden, like migration, is deliberately placed in a political context, the central focus of the activities is not the attempt to gain control over people and resources, but rather ensuring the continuity of material, social and cultural self-sufficiency. Against the background of the dominant division of labour between men and women, however, a subsistence-orientation will inevitably also be women-centred. In the gardens, women from all social strata become aware that subsistence labour is valuable work, and that they are the ones who uphold and create that social reciprocity which everyone holds so dear and which is often so painfully missed in exile.

The strength of the women is reflected in the culturally highly valued goods they produce; goods based on subsistence and not commodity production, and which, in exile, do not appear quasi “on their own” through the often “invisible” labour of women, but have to be fought for and won over and over again. The exceptional situation of migration makes it clearer than perhaps any other that women are the ones who create the daily conditions upon which life is based, and make these available to the community.

*Self-provision by taking control of one’s life conditions includes the reciprocal provision for one another’s needs.*

Related to the production of that which is necessary to life is the concept of self-determined work for one’s own needs (“*Eigenarbeit*”), which has emerged together with the idea of an “alternative economy”. *Eigenarbeit* implies satisfying one’s own needs through one’s own deeds; acting on one’s own initiative, either alone or with others, to make, repair or organize something. *Eigenarbeit* includes manual work as well as social and cultural activities. A central principle is that it should improve quality of life as well as heightening the autonomy of the individual. The aim is to achieve as great as possible an emancipation from consumption, not by means of abstinence and sacrifice, but rather the opposite: by contributing to a self-determined life through what one does oneself (Mittelsten Scheid 1995). What is practised for example in the *Eigenarbeit House* in Munich, shows that this concept allows forms of communication which cannot be arbitrarily or artificially created, but have a material basis. When people who are working together meet, they share a common topic. Here, the production of goods whose meaning is related to their use-value is embedded in social relations; in consequence, new forms of reciprocity can also be practised. Doing one’s own work also promotes social and cultural self-sustenance. What is being referred to here is by no means a question of being passively looked after: it implies self-provision by taking control of one’s life conditions, either alone or communally, and includes the reciprocal provision for one another’s needs (Schmid 1998).

In Germany, the starting point for promoting these kinds of subsistence-oriented strategies aimed at strengthening the autonomy of the individual is not primarily a situation where material supplies are scarce; on the contrary, it is one where there is an oversupply, albeit coupled with shortages of a different nature. The provision of life's necessities by others via the market is creating a situation of increasing emotional and cultural undersupply, with various results - such as the loss of subsistence capabilities and the sense of confidence and intrinsic value that goes with them, as well as tendencies towards rootlessness and social exclusion.

These "shortages" are an extra burden on migrants. Not only is the ambivalent situation of material oversupply often completely unknown to them; as newcomers from communities where social reciprocity is both a survival strategy and the epitome of quality of life, they experience the lack of reciprocal care and concern in the host country, Germany, as particularly oppressive. They feel a strong affinity for activities which are not demanded by the market, but by life itself. Ms. Abid described her life before becoming a refugee:

In Baghdad I was always with relatives, friends and neighbours. We celebrated together, we went to the holy areas, we were always together. No one ever just stayed at home. After the evening meal we were at the neighbours' until 11, 12 o'clock. Laughing, eating, drinking and so on. We talked about everything. Lots of us could play the drums or flute, and when there is a festivity, a wedding or a birth, then everyone comes along, puts out the furniture, puts lights on everywhere, and we all celebrate. Everyone together. Until the next morning. We are not used to being alone. At home, there are always lots of us. Still today, if someone phones up and I really have a lot to do, I can't say no. We don't do that where I come from. It's simply impossible.

The migrants in the gardens are aware that the past they remember is always the reconstructed past *before* the violent break they were forced to make with it. Gabriele Rosenthal points out that flight, being a biographical turning point, can create a reinterpretation of the past, and that lived and narrated life stories mutually (re)constitute one another in a reciprocal relationship (Rosenthal 1995: 20; 143). Nevertheless, it is precisely these varied forms of reconstruction of life stories which make the International Gardens a success. Ms. Ardjomani, a 51-year-old migrant from the Persian Gulf, explains that the gardens stand for continuity, because in their context social relationships enjoy a similar priority to the one they have in many of the refugees' cultures of origin:

It is a relief to go to the garden. You work, you talk, you laugh with the others. It is the way it is at home. For example, you are at home and you're cooking. And suddenly visitors arrive. Unexpectedly. Then you just make more to eat. Here in Germany it's different. You don't feel people greet you with open hearts. Maybe they will say, yes, come in, but when you're gone, they say, oh, she just dropped in, she obviously hasn't got anything to do.

Logically enough, in the context of the International Gardens, the "other" or the "alien" is presented differently from the way it is in the majority society. In every case it is noticeable that, besides the shared experience of a fragmented biography, the gardeners, with their different countries of origin, cultures, ethnic groups and religions, have things in common which, in their view, make them different from Germans. For instance, they are all united in the attempt to relocate decontextualized local knowledge, e.g. by practising reciprocal exchange. For the migrants in the gardens, reciprocity is right at the top of their scale of values: social reciprocity, the collection and distribution of social capital with the aim of organizing their time together, of avoiding being isolated themselves, and seeing to it that no-one else is left alone either, are elementary components of the community-forming process. It is in precisely this give-and-take that the intercultural communities in the International Gardens constitute themselves, as a direct reaction both to the loss of their native countries and to their experiences with the highly individualized German society; a society in which identity is constituted (*inter alia*) in terms of a hubristic belief that everything and anything is

realizable by means of technology and social engineering or by access to commodities. Nevertheless, there is a clear recognition that social relationships amongst the migrants, as well as the climate in homogeneous migrant groups, do not necessarily differ “naturally” from those in comparable German contexts. Ms. Ardjomandi, who has been in Germany for 30 years, describes the special atmosphere in the gardens:

I know a lot of people in Göttingen and also have a lot of friends, Germans and non-Germans. But in the gardens it's different. There's a special warmth there. Non-Germans also change over the years here, they become more European. When they meet, there is also envy. They look carefully at the clothes, the cars. But I can come to the gardens as I like. With sandals, with torn trousers, with a dirty T-shirt, nobody minds. Everyone feels free here. There isn't the same competition.

Many of the gardeners are guests in Germany. In the gardens, they can be the hosts for once. If one accompanies Ms. Abid on a walk through the city centre of Göttingen for instance, it may take quite a while before reaching one's destination. She meets acquaintances everywhere: Kurds, Arabs, Germans, Ethiopians, Sri Lankans and Kosovans. And if her bags are full of freshly harvested zucchinis, coriander or mint, she has usually given away half her harvest before she gets home. Ms. Abid has something to give. That is not something that can simply be taken for granted by a migrant in Germany. And it visibly gives her pleasure. Ms. Omar, 65-year-old wife of a famed Kurdish resistance fighter, also likes giving away her harvested produce. In Kurdistan, she had a garden with a lot of fruit. Here, she tries to grow everything she knows from home. She manages to raise mangel-roots, radishes, two sorts of beans, two sorts of zucchini, parsley, dill, spinach, coriander, mint and sunflowers. She gets her seeds from Kurdistan, even though the plants only increase her longing for her lost home. Before she got to know about the International Gardens, she always had chocolate in the house for the neighbours' children. Now she makes presents of produce from her garden. Ms. Omar makes jam, bakes date biscuits and preserves vegetables, the Kurdish way, naturally. She is proud when people taste her products. Her gifts carry the guarantee of reciprocity, the commitment to one another. They are simply friendly acts, but at the same time they uphold the connotations they had in the culture of origin: cooperation and concern as both emotional *and* economic necessities. The wish for functional social relationships is a deeply ingrained emotion, and essential to life; in exile too it needs to be realized.

*For migrants, being able to give something means being able to free themselves from their reduced status as refugees.*

Right into the 1970s many regions in Germany still had subsistence systems which existed alongside the world market for the provision of needs (Müller 1998). Older people in particular still know the meaning of symbolic capital and remember that taking is inextricably linked to the readiness to give in return. So if people don't want to enter into an exchange therefore reject gifts from the outset. This is an experience the activists in Göttingen have repeatedly with German neighbours in the gardens.

Intercultural communication by no means always functions smoothly, as the following anecdote from the International Gardens demonstrates. Because the gardeners are keen to have good relationships with neighbouring gardeners, they try to include them in their activities and regularly offer them fresh garden produce. One elderly man rejected the gifts categorically month after month, until one day it was made clear to him just how rude his persistent refusals appeared to the migrants. And so the mishap took its course: a few days later, a Lebanese woman held her basket full of food freshly harvested for the weekend over the fence, intending to offer the neighbour a few carrots. Eagerly, the man lifted the whole basket over the fence, and the woman watched open-mouthed as her entire stock of weekend provisions disappeared into the well-meaning neighbour's house.

For migrants, being able to give something means being able to free themselves from their reduced status as refugees. For many of them, being cut off from active work and assigned to a life as a *recipient* of social benefit constitutes an experience of renewed exclusion. Women are frequently doubly excluded, through both social ascription and existing power relations: their radius of movement is limited; their meeting-places are no longer public places, but rather cramped flats. The gardens however are located outside of culturally specific ideas about private and public domains. They are somewhere the women can go where they are not subject to the codes of honour of patriarchal family units. New social networks arising from female alliances develop in the gardens. Ms. Abid speaks of these “kinships” formed by choice:

Earlier, my daughter always said to me, Mama, let’s go out. And I said, where shall we go? If we go out of the flat, we’re in the street. We don’t know anyone whom we could visit. Now it is different. Now we have got the gardens and the people from the gardens. My daughter has lots of aunties now. She also calls the women her aunties. Aunty Hajat, Aunty Jamila, Aunty Tamdur. Ms. Omar is like a grandmother to my daughter, and she calls her that too. She wants us to spend the night at Ms. Omar’s. And as for me, I can tell you my feeling, and that is that this is the right way for us. Ms. Omar is just like my own mother for me. I have the same feelings towards her.

Being able to transfer familiar feelings into a new life is an indication that migrants have arrived; that they have managed to build a bridge between the old country and the present one. Particularly after the traumatic experience of fleeing as a refugee, having a home is absolutely fundamental for survival. “Without a home, one is worthless”, says Ms. Abid, revealing the therapeutic value of grasping “home” as a dynamic concept, one which even those who have lost theirs violently can conceive of in new ways.

When the women tell the stories of their flight, tears come quickly to their eyes. Dead relatives had to be abandoned in the mountains between Iraq and Iran; friends who had been tortured are still officially missing; they were unable to take leave of dying parents when permission to enter the country was withheld. The traumas caused by being driven out of their homes and countries, by having to flee, become daily nightmares that haunt socially isolated women in particular. In their memories, the heavily armed secret service men who forced their way into people’s houses every day in Kurdistan-Iraq to check the number of inhabitants. They remember how family members were dragged off and never seen again; fear was ever-present and leaves its mark, even after years in exile. Ms. Abid:

If I only stay at home, I feel ill. Then my back hurts and I don’t know why. Psychological, perhaps. Back home, we never had feelings like that. We just didn’t know them. Now, when I come home from work and I’m tired, then I like best of all to go to the garden straight away and meet the others. There I can recover. I have to go to the garden every day. It gives me strength. When I’m tired and worn out, the garden picks me up again: the peacefulness, the greenery, the pretty landscape, the growing plants. All that wakes me up again.

The gardens give the women the opportunity to “socialize” their paralysing fears, their longing for what has been lost and their otherwise private suffering by carrying them into the public space, which is thus constituted anew. Ms. Ardjomandi speaks about the comforting effect of the gardens.

Sometimes I sit at home and listen to Persian music. Then I think of old times, how it was back home with my mother, my sister. Then I become very sad and cry. But then when I go to the garden, my mind quickly turns to other things. Sometimes the garden is a comfort.

Ms. Alidousti confirms this assessment:

Many women are isolated, and sit alone at home. They cry a lot. When they become members of the gardens, this often changes. We’ve just got a new member. The woman said to me, I’m alone at home, what can I do with my time? Then I said, come to the International Gardens, you can put your time to use there.

“Putting your time to use” does not mean killing time or letting it rush by. Instead, spending time with other people is perceived as fundamentally meaningful. “At what moments are you happy?” I asked Ms. Omar. “When I’m amongst other people”, was her unequivocal answer. Ms. Omar has been living in Germany for more than ten years. She first learnt to read and write when she was over 60: in the International Gardens. Here too the necessity of learning a foreign language arose, and a vital one at that, since the lingua franca used by the gardeners is German. German is the language in which comments are made on how well the seeds are growing in their beds, or experiences at the Social Welfare Office exchanged. The German courses which the International Gardens project offers in cooperation with the Protestant Church’s adult education programme are unusually successful. Here a doctor’s wife from the Persian upper class sits side-by-side in class with an illiterate woman from Sri Lanka, after the two have finished digging the soil together. They can also try out their new language skills with the German members of the association, who often live in multi-cultural partnerships and want their children to have multi-cultural experiences. Some of them are knowledgeable about local soils and garden cultures. Exchanging information about these is a further motivation for many of the gardeners to open up to the host country, giving new impetus to the future ecological, economic and socio-cultural viability of the social reality they find here. In the International Gardens of Göttingen, dimensions of “foreigners’ reality” emerge which cannot be located between conventional poles of either assimilation into or rejection of the host culture. The continuity represented by subsistence strategies makes new forms of integration possible: ones which do not orient themselves by “German” norms and values, but for which migration itself is the starting point, retained and reconstructed by confronting the ruptures of expulsion and flight with continuity as a survival strategy. In this way, many migrants succeed in creating viable perspectives for a new life in exile. Yet the longing for that ever-present other aspect of themselves, the violently curtailed part of their live stories, never disappears:

We miss our home, the neighbours, the friends, the acquaintances. We miss our sun.  
We miss our sky. Clear weather, our stars, we miss it all. All of that is home.

Everyone in the garden is foreign, and close to one another at the same time. The International Gardeners are not bound together by any common origins or family traditions. What unites them is their disunity – and the wish to create a new context for their life together. There is no duality of “self” and “other”, but only a broad palette of the “other”, united in the wish to make a home for themselves. Unexpected forms of ethnic identity-formation are being realized here. Possibly, here in the International Gardens, and not in Kreuzberg (a famously multi-ethnic part of Berlin), where hopes for true ethnic diversity have long since been shattered, the first tendrils of a multi-cultural society are sprouting: a society resting above all upon women whose first aim is to provide people with material and socio-cultural goods, and whose dynamic is rooted in their interest in and caring for one another.

#### **FOOTNOTES**

(1) The discussion has centred particularly on the growing significance of Islam, although Klein-Hessling et al. (1999) have shown that Islamization processes by no means lead inexorably to cultural disintegration and the formation of “parallel societies”. Islamization in this context means the rising significance of Islam within the symbolics, the communication and the social reality of Western societies. The assumption that Islamization processes could possibly lead to “parallel societies” as segregated Islamic societies within the dominating Christian culture is part of the ideological discourse lead by more conservative elements in German society. These conservatives have strenuously and consistently denied that Germany is a country which routinely receives immigrants, although de facto this is quite evidently the case.

(2) Subsistence production is use-value oriented work, aimed at the immediate production and sustenance of life. One of the assumptions implicit in the popular ideas influenced by evolutionist modernization concepts is that, all over the world, subsistence production is

gradually giving way to commodity production as a result of advancing social developments; that as a “traditional” element of “backward” societies, it will disappear as 'productive forces' - i.e. world-wide industrialization - unfold. In contrast, the central tenet of the Bielefeld subsistence approach is that, in spite of the increasing destruction of independent regional subsistence *economies*, subsistence *production*, as the indispensable production of life as such, merely alters its character, to the extent that it is subordinated to commodity production (Mies/Werlhof/Bennholdt-Thomsen 1988).

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