

Mosques as Partners in Prevention

Rauf Ceylan und Michael Kiefer*

Abstract

For a long time, the potential of mosque communities in facilitating integration of migrants or in taking preventive measures in combating neo-Salafi movements was not fully recognised. In contrast to widespread belief, mosque communities do not provide a breeding ground for future extremists, since processes of radicalisation typically take place outside of mosque communities. They do, however, as authors Rauf Ceylan and Michael Kiefer are keen to point out, take a key role in prevention work, since they pool people and resources and their range of influence extends far into the often marginalised neighbourhoods. Besides, they provide a sound religious education, which, so theologians assume, has an immunising effect against processes of radicalisation. For this reason, mosque communities should be considered partners in prevention schemes, putting them on a par with state and social actors, and included into cooperative ventures. In this context, the authors present both effective and ineffective concepts and programmes – the former with involvement of mosque communities, the latter without – in counter-radicalisation and prevention work. These considerations are made against the backdrop of recapitulating the phases of guest workers (*Gastarbeiter*) arriving and settling down in Germany, leading to the establishment of (religious) self organisations. The last years have marked a shift in perspective regarding the integrative nature of these organisations, thus advancing from obstacles in integration to partners in integration; a change of heart also discernible in prevention work today.

Keywords

Salafism, neo-Salafism, neo-Salafi movements, prevention of radicalisation, deradicalisation, counter-radicalisation, (reversing) processes of radicalisation, prevention schemes, guest worker (*Gastarbeiter*), self organisations of migrants, othering discourse, religious stigma, anti-Muslim sentiment, Islamisation, collaborative projects, cooperation partner.

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1. Neo-Salafis in the “discursive field” of Islam and the role of mosque communities – The state of play

For nearly five years, the focus in German debates on the issue of Islam has been kept trained on a group that is considered to be one of the most active and potent amongst the estimated 4.2 million Muslims currently living in Germany and that must be located within the larger context of a global rise of religious fundamentalism: the neo-Salafis. By the present day, this rather vague generic term has come to refer to differing trends amongst fundamentalists attempting to radically transform the societies they live and take part in. Policymakers and scholars of Islamic studies typically group these movements into purist, political and jihadist currents, across which, despite the differences between them, several commonalities can be identified, including a dualist worldview, hostility to tradition, claims to totality and a monopoly of correctly interpreting questions of theology as well as their rejection of democratic systems.¹

While the term *salaf* has carried a positive connotation throughout the Islamic history of ideas and tradition, reminiscent of the first three exemplary generations of the early Muslim community – including the generation of the Prophet Muhammad – the prefix *neo* marks a breach with historical-theological tradition. On the one hand, Salafis draw heavily from early Islamic history in their endeavor to provide their religious orientation with a sound basis; on the other hand, this history is subject to considerable ideological and methodological change.² This is why, when defining the current fundamental movements, researchers speak of uprooted religions or even mutations. The reason for considering them uprooted or distorted is that, in a reaction to the ongoing process of secularisation, their followers decoupled from religion its cultural elements that have grown together over centuries in their attempt to create a "pure religion", which they stage in a collective of bigots. In this process, Roy identifies a potential threat to the political system.³

In the past years, people in Germany, too, have grown increasingly aware of this potential domestic threat – particularly since the escalation of the Syrian Civil War – and this has set the stage for discourse, on which, for several years now, intense and controversial debates have been played out. In the course of these controversies, policymakers, the media and academics have touched on and deliberated upon issues such as the genesis of radicalisation and its further progress, its ideology as well as effective countermeasures. Unable to provide precise numbers of Salafis and their organisations or to obtain reliable systematic

1 See Rauf Ceylan/Michael Kiefer, *Salafismus. Fundamentalistische Strömungen und Radikalisierungsprävention*, VS Verlag, Wiesbaden 2013, pp. 82ff.

2 See *ibid.*, p. 77.

3 See for example: Olivier Roy, *Heilige Einfalt. Über die politischen Gefahren entwurzelter Religionen*, Siedler Verlag, München 2010.

studies to these currents, the ongoing debates, to a great extent, lack the hard data to substantiate them. In publications of national security authorities, the estimated figure of these movements runs to about 5.500, without providing any means of reconstructing how this number was determined or measured. Unlike the standard classification undertaken in academia, the national security authorities divide the movement into no more than two categories, namely into political and jihadist movements.⁴

Over the years, in the long-lasting debates on how to best deal with these movements that, in especial, appeal to young people, policymakers have underestimated the role of mosque communities. The over 2.500 Islamic institutions existing in Germany today occupy a key position in the everyday life of Muslims. Their role in the context of deradicalisation, i.e. in reversing radicalisation processes, and as a partner in installing preventive measures, particularly in problematic and socially burdened neighbourhoods, could be a decisive factor in fighting Salafi movements. However, this understanding has long struggled to gain ground with the result that, as of now, prevention work is still in its infancy and mosque communities' full potential remains untapped. Without conceptual ideas for collaborating with one another, calls to take preventive action are exclusively levelled at Muslims – as is currently the case in connection with IS-followers. To this, prevention expert Michael Kiefer critically remarks:

Policymakers and the media have repeatedly called on Muslims to distance themselves from Salafism and jihadism. But what exactly are they supposed to distance themselves from? Neo-Salafism and the jihadism associated with it represent a crude and simpleminded ideology that randomly picks up elements of Islam and exploits them for its own end. Those bearing the brunt of this exploitation are, in every respect, the Muslims themselves. Moreover – and this too has so far not been sufficiently understood: Youth radicalisation processes typically take place outside of mosque communities. A considerable amount of people involved are converts from Christian faiths or other religions and ideological backgrounds. As a consequence, the possibilities available to Muslim communities to take preventive action are limited to non-existent. This is why those working in the new field of radicalisation prevention assume that neo-Salafi mobilisation and the IS-networks can only be combated in the long term through an agenda that is directed at society at large.⁵

With due regard to valid criticisms, the focus on mosque communities should shift from perceiving them as a breeding ground of radicalisation to treating them as a partner on equal footing in a network with other actors involved in the process of radicalisation prevention and deradicalisation of extremist-motivated youth. For already the first empirical studies examining self-organisations of migrants revealed that these NGOs that are run both professionally and semi-

4 See Bundesinnenministerium des Inneren [Federal Ministry of the Interior], *Verfassungsbericht 2013*, Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, Berlin 2014, pp. 221f.

5 Michael Kiefer, “*A Mutation of Religion*”, trans. by Jennifer Taylor (slightly altered), Qantara.de, April 28, 2015, see URL: <https://en.qantara.de/node/19804> (accessed April 12, 2016).

professionally on either a salaried or voluntary basis bring with them personal, social and cultural resources which prove indispensable for civic engagement. At this point, it needs to be strongly emphasised that radicalisation prevention is a matter of concern to society at large and must be addressed concertedly by all relevant partners.

2. Function of (religious) self-organisations of migrants in immigration countries

Throughout the history of immigration, religious organisations were generally considered as those institutions that first emerged as elements of migrants' self-organisations and were born out of their efforts to establish their own ethnic structures. While migration was thought to constitute a break with the country of origin, by contrast, the churches represented a continuum. They acted as places of remembrance and refuge and provided emotional security. By this means, norms and values hailing from the context of the home country were reproduced, passed on and further developed according to the material and social challenges migrants were facing in the host country. The churches' integrative role is exemplified by the history of immigration to the United States. For example, as early as in the time of the "discovery" of the New World and the following three centuries, the Roman Catholic Church served as a key instrument in the social integration of Portuguese immigrants. The international Roman Catholic Church always paid particular attention to migration movements and the foundation of churches.⁶ Offering socio-cultural activities to Polish immigrants to ward off the dangers of social isolation and exclusion, further illustrates the churches' function in furthering integration.⁷ In this regard, the Roman Catholic churches – shaped by ethnic groups all round – have managed to maintain their significance far into the 20th century.⁸

It was not until the turn of the 20th century in Chicago that the function of the migrants' ethnic self-organisations attracted the attention of migration sociologists. Due to massive immigration processes and uncontrolled growth of migration structures, empirical research was conducted to systematically study this role of self-organisation. In the course of these field studies, the idea of "Integration through Segregation" was first formulated at a time when the negative ef-

6 See Caroline Brettel, *Anthropology and Migration. Essays on Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and Identity*, Alta Mira Press, Walnut Creek 2003, p. 75.

7 See Krystyna Belszynska/Marek Szopski, "Polish-Catholic Religiosity in California", in: Glenda Tibe Bonfacio/Vivienne S. M. Angeles (eds.), *Gender, Religion, and Migration. Pathways of Integration*, Lexington Book, Maryland 2010, pp. 183-198, here pp. 194f.

8 See Wilhelm Damberg, „Wer ist die Ausnahme? Katholiken in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in den Vereinigten Staaten. Komparative Religionsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert“, in: Friedrich Wilhelm Graf/Klaus Große Kracht (eds.), *Religion und Gesellschaft. Europa im 20. Jahrhundert*, Böhlau Verlag, Köln 2007, pp. 105-124, here p. 110ff.

fects of immigration, such as rising crime rates or moral decline, were diagnosed as a sign of malfunctioning ethnic community structures. Social control could only be achieved by forming organisational structures. At the same time, spatial segregation was considered a possibility to overcome the potential for conflict between different groups of migrants. Therefore, these "natural areas" also acted as a kind of social buffer zone. To the present day, the act of ethnic self-organisation is generally looked upon favourably in the United States and other classical immigration countries, such as Canada, Australia or New Zealand, where it is regarded as a keystone in the process of integration, in particular for newly arrived immigrants.⁹

In Germany, the scholarly debate on this matter first arose with the beginning of the ghettoisation of migrants after the Second World War. Even though metropolises containing several million inhabitants did not develop in Germany, as had, for instance, in Chicago, the problem of small-scale segregation should increase and exacerbate. From the 1970s onwards, migration studies began conducting empirical studies that turned their focus of attention to the situation migrants were facing in the host country, how migrants were shaped by the economic, political, social and cultural situation in their home countries with regard to its influences on urban development, and their integration into society at large.¹⁰ The social-ecological thesis of how internal integration and integration into the whole of society correlate with each other, as was observed in the United States, was picked up by an increasing number of scholars, in particular Georg Elwert. By supporting this thesis, Elwert pitted himself against controversial debates and scandalisation of migrants' supposed ghettoisation, seeking to bring about a change in perspective with regard to the effect of ethnic-cultural organisations.¹¹ Over the course of time, special emphasis was placed on the functions of ethnic-religious organisations to provide support and express solidarity, which are assigned a central role in the migration context – of far greater importance than their function of preserving culture and traditions.¹²

9 For further details on the history of immigration and on important pioneer work in sociological research, see Martin Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology: Institutionalization, Diversity, and the Rise of Sociological Research*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1984.

10 See Michael Krummacher, „Zuwanderung, Migration“, in: Hartmut Häußermann (ed.), *Großstadt. Soziologische Stichworte*, Leske and Budrich, Opladen 2000, pp. 320-331, here p. 322.

11 See Georg Elwert, „Probleme der Ausländerintegration. Gesellschaftliche Integration durch Binnenintegration?“, in: *Arbeitsberichte und Forschungsmaterialien der Fakultät für Soziologie*, Universität Bielefeld, no. 30, July 1982, p. 4.

12 See Josef Kohlbacher/Ursula Reeger, „Ethnische Segregation aus der Perspektive der Migranten – gruppenspezifische Einstellungen, Wahrnehmungen und Erfahrungen von Ausländern in Wien“, in: Heinz Fassmann/Josef Kohlbacher/Ursula Reeger (eds.), *Zuwanderung und Segregation. Europäische Metropolen im Vergleich, Publikationsreihe des Bundesministeriums für Wissenschaft und Verkehr zum Forschungsschwerpunkt Fremdenfeindlichkeit*, vol. 7, Drava, Klagenfurt 2002, pp. 233-255, here p. 240.

By contrast, in the political debates arising on this matter, socio-spatial segregation and self-organisations of migrants were long regarded as an obstacle in the process of integration. By recruiting the so-called *Gastarbeiter* – guest workers – from 1955 onwards, four distinct phases in the process of self-organisation and the political debates on this matter can be observed. According to Rauf Ceylan, these can be distinguished in the following way:¹³

- a) 1955 to 1973: In the first phase of recruitment, arriving migrants did not organise themselves due to their initial intentions to stay only temporarily, which is why the federal government coined the term "guest workers" to refer to them. These people were housed in company housing at the worksite and attempted to meet religious or social needs by making use of makeshift rooms. Because of the plans of the guest workers to return to their home country, their level of organisation remained low, which meant that political debates on the issue of integration arose only on the rare occasion.
- b) 1973 to 1984: In 1973, at the beginning of this second phase, the Federal State of Germany imposed a recruitment freeze in light of the economic recession. For the guest workers, who had, in most cases, hitherto lead a single life in Germany and still bore intentions to return to their home countries, this marked the first key step towards settling down permanently. It was generally known that migrants' return to their home country would render re-entry into Germany impossible. Failure to fulfil their economic goals or on account of the partly unstable political situation prevailing, for instance, in Turkey constituted the main reasons why many pioneer migrants decided to extend their stay in Germany. Owing to this decision, they resolved to have their family members join them, and only now did the former guest workers first turn into immigrants in the destination country. Following the family reunification, religious, social and cultural challenges surfaced and, as a consequence, the number of migrants' self-organisations increased rapidly. Most notably, hundreds of mosque communities were founded in order to ensure the religious education of migrants' families. Even though Germany was objectively beginning to develop into an immigration country, policymakers still refused to acknowledge the de facto situation – also for fear of alienating voters – and still broadly applied the terms "foreigners" or "guests". The negative consequences of this cardinal error are still apparent to the present day.
- c) 1984 to 1998: The refusal to accept the current situation was still clearly evident in the 1980s when the government attempted to entice migrants to

13 For a more detailed description of the developments in the four distinct phases, see: Rauf Ceylan, *Ethnische Kolonien. Entstehung, Funktion und Wandel am Beispiel türkischer Moscheen und Cafés*, VS Verlag, Wiesbaden 2006, pp. 26ff.

return to their home countries by offering them financial incentives. As most migrants did not accept these offers, this marked the second key step towards permanent residence. Although the first and also the second generation of migrants continued to harbour illusions of returning to their home countries for an extended period of time, the early 1980s ushered in a phase of consolidation with regard to the established structures of migrants. Integration policymakers regarded migrants' self-organisations negatively and saw their dissolution as a sign of forthcoming integration. In general, the politics resorted to in dealing with the effects of immigration was defensive in nature.

- d) 1998 to the present day: The late 1990s witnessed a change of paradigm. Henceforth, naturalisation of migrants and their full social participation is required and encouraged. At the same time, numerous civil society players instigate a reappraisal of migrants' self-organisations. In keeping with the motto "Integration takes place locally", they attempt to gain these as fellow partners in integrating migrants in different city districts and to benefit stronger from their function to bridge the gap to the migrant community. A further aim within this framework is to formulate ideas and concepts that help to professionalise the structures of migrants. A parallel development is the rise of controversies in political and media debates. This is, amongst other things, aptly demonstrated by the debate on whether or not a "German Leitkultur" [guiding or core culture] is necessary.

Taking stock of the past fifty years of immigration, it can be deemed a positive development. However, a remaining challenge presents the overcoming of opposition in the population since the communication between migrants and their organisations was mainly conducted with the political elite. Today, the Islamisation of the whole integration debate in the wake of the 9/11 attacks poses a challenge of a far greater order. In this context, José Casanova puts into a nutshell the consequences resulting from merging the debates on Islam and integration:

This causes the different dimensions of "Otherness" to overlap and thus to heat up the debate over demarcation, adaptation and integration. The immigrant, the religiously, the ethnically and the socio-economically disadvantaged "Other", they all tend to fall together. Moreover, all these dimensions of "Otherness" are now thrust onto Islam, by which means Islam is transformed into the complete "Other".¹⁴

This is why those engaged in the critical discourse of Islam within politics and media are keen to employ the term "Islamisation" and warn with prognoses to the "disproportionate" increase in the Muslim population due to demographic developments, conversions, construction of mosques etc. In his study to deter-

14 José Casanova, *Europas Angst vor der Religion*, Berlin University Press, Berlin 2009, p. 61, trans. by C. Küster.

mine the image of Islam in the German society, Detlef Pollack comes to the result that it is, essentially, a negatively-biased one. What causes this poor image is, amongst other things, the lopsided nature of the debating culture, which will only pick up on topics that depict Muslims in a negative way, besides German natives having little to no interaction with Muslims.¹⁵ Those holding poor views of Muslims also project their perspective onto Muslims' institutions. Even though Muslims have managed to establish themselves as an integral part of the religious landscape in Germany, the prejudices against these institutions continue to exist in no small measure. Most non-Muslims only possess little information of what life is actually like inside the communities, while the process of policy-makers' realising their full potential for promoting integration, particular in the context of deradicalisation processes, is tedious and advances at a slow pace.

3. Mosque communities in Germany: Partners in cooperation or obstacles in integration?

The development of nearly 2.500 Muslim communities must be seen in perspective to the phases of integration outlined above. In the first phase, the pioneer Muslims did not establish Mosque communities, but converted attic floors or basement rooms into prayer rooms, enabling them to attend to their religious needs. They lacked theologically-trained staff, religious literature as well as religious advice in all matters of life.¹⁶ This situation changed after families reunited in the 1970s, when the so-called "backyard mosques" were established. Typically, these mosques were lodged in converted warehouses or on former restaurant or shop premises in residential districts that were located in close proximity to the industrial estates where Muslims, too, had their workplaces. In this phase, the function of these mosques was mainly confined to religious education and religious worship. In particular, the wish to safeguard their children's religious education was at the forefront of considerations, since the danger of assimilation was believed to pose a very potential threat in the diaspora.¹⁷ However, this one-dimensionality should soon dissolve in face of local problems emerging in the respective city districts, whereupon the mosques developed into multifunctional community centres. Driving this development forward was the continuing downward spiral of these districts that were situated in close proximity to the industrial estates triggered by deindustrialisation, unemployment, departure of population groups with strong purchasing power and coupled with an influx of low-income families and educational problems. The mosque communi-

15 Detlef Pollack, „*Öffentliche Wahrnehmung des Islam in Deutschland*“, in: Dirk Halm/Hendrik Meyer (eds.), *Islam und die deutsche Gesellschaft*, Springer VS, Wiesbaden 2013, pp. 89-118, here pp. 89ff.

16 See Ceylan, *Ethnische Kolonien*, pp. 127ff.

17 See *ibid.*, pp. 133ff.

ties attempted to mitigate this aggravation of social problems by offering socio-cultural activities and providing Muslims with an environment to practice their religion. Eventually, in the late 1990s a phase was entered which is also known to mark the true beginning of "diaspora Islam". A growing number of representative buildings with domes and minarets emerged, increasing multifunctionality on account of improved spatial possibilities. As Muslims' buildings became more visible to the public eye, the legitimisation of these buildings has been fiercely debated in public debates.¹⁸

While attempting to define the function of these religious institutions, the focus has been sharpened on their potential to cause separation: representing, on the one hand, migrants' self-organisations or, on the other hand, institutions of Islam. In the latter case, stereotypes born out of the historical-collective memory, prevailing global conflicts in Muslim-majority countries, as, for example, currently in Syria, and the quantitative growth of the Muslim population and its structures in native Germany play a decisive role. This explains why for a long time the potential of mosque communities for promoting integration was not duly recognised – on account of their allegedly "orthodox" nature and supposed "hostility to integration". Only hesitantly does the view lodge itself into the public consciousness that mosque communities must be considered as cooperation partners where socio-spatial approaches for intervening in situations of conflict find application, since – as points of crystallization – they pool people and resources and already provide a significant number of socio-pedagogical and voluntary programmes.

4. In between helplessness and taking impulsive action: The question of radicalisation in Germany and ineffective countermeasures

Failure to recognise mosque communities' potential to promote integration does not carry so much weight in any other field than in the struggle to grapple with the phenomenon of neo-Salafism. Even though this youth movement considers itself a cultural counter-enclave to the firmly-established mosque communities, breaking the mould of religious tradition upheld by their parents' and grandparents' generation, it has long been sought to detect the causes for this new form of fundamentalism in the mosque communities. Beside the aforementioned factors in determining mosque communities' function, it must be added that on account of people's withdrawal from the institutionalised form of church-related religion in the course of the process of secularisation, which, since the 1960s has seen an ongoing alienation from church, a decline in church attendances as well as a fading significance of practicing religion in accordance with the rules of life advanced by the church, every form of religiosity is sweepingly perceived as

18 See *ibid.*, pp. 145ff.

"fundamental". This is why religious garments, a pious lifestyle and religious rituals are put on a level with extremist-political movements without wasting much effort to differentiate between boundless manifestations of faith. Ultimately, two principal errors have been committed in dealing with the issue of Salafism, which can be attributed to this homogenisation. First, Muslims are placed under general suspicion – even secularised persons who were "Muslimized" at a later stage – and, secondly, it brings forth hasty, ill-conceived "half-concepts" in dealing with neo-Salafism. These experiences can be summarised as follows:

- a) Exit programmes: Modelled on the exit programmes for dropouts from left-wing or right-wing extremist milieus, the scheme „*Heraus aus Terrorismus und islamistischen Fanatismus (HATIF)*“ [A Way Out of Terrorism and Islamist Fanatism] was conceived for Salafis. Phone-hotlines were set up to reach out to Salafi youths. However, since these met with little response, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution was forced to abandon this scheme.¹⁹
- b) Campaign „*Vermisst*“ [Gone Missing]: The Federal Ministry of the Interior published postcards showing photos of people that were obviously meant to depict Muslims (beard, headscarf etc.), intending to call attention to the advice centre of the „*Initiative Sicherheitspartnerschaft*“ [Campaign Security Partnership]. By labelling the campaign „*Vermisst*“, it was attempted to point out that these young people had fallen into the clutches of radicals and were therefore no longer available in the social sphere. Without doubt, it had been the intention of the intellectual fathers of this campaign to alert the population to fellow members of the society who might be susceptible to join Salafi circles.²⁰ The Muslim communities announced that they would not support this campaign and openly disapproved of it on account of its nature and contents that, in particular, carried the risk of stigmatising Muslims.²¹

19 See Islami^Q, „*Gescheitert. Verfassungsschutz hat Aussteigerprogramm für ‚Islamisten‘ eingestellt*“, URL:

<http://www.islamiq.de/2014/09/10/verfassungsschutz-hat-aussteigerprogramm-fuer-islamisten-eingestellt/> (accessed April 12, 2016).

20 See Bundesministerium des Inneren, „*Kampagne der Beratungsstelle Radikalisierung gestartet*“, September 4, 2012, URL:

<http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Kurzmeldungen/DE/2012/08/kampagne-sicherheitspartnerschaft.html> (accessed April 12, 2016).

21 Deutsch-Türkische Nachrichten, „*Projekt gescheitert: Muslimische Verbände beenden Partnerschaft mit dem Innenministerium*“, August 31, 2012, URL: <http://www.deutsch-tuerkische-nachrichten.de/2012/08/459587/projekt-gescheitert-muslimische-verbaende-beenden-arbeit-mit-dem-innenministerium/> (accessed April 12, 2016).

- c) Check Lists: The Office for the Protection of the Constitution of the Federal State Lower Saxony published an information brochure to sensitise disseminators working in the education sector or with young people to the issue of radicalisation. A check list was compiled, as a sort of early warning system, which, amongst other things, listed following developments shown by young adults that might suggest radicalisation – albeit a critically-chosen selection of numerous other signs:

[...]

- Abidance to an ever-increasingly strict moral code;
- Increasingly narrow interpretation of religion;
- Incessant talk of religion, religion is used as an explanation for everything (for instance incessant talk of the alleged oppression and persecution of Muslims worldwide);
- Changes in social environment; alienation from family and former circle of friends; turn towards new environment clearly defined by religion;
- Noticeable change in physical and outward appearance (clothing, behaviour, weight loss through modification of eating habits etc.);
- To be considered together with other indicators: frequent visits to and/or extended stays in Muslim-majority countries; attendance of special language courses; attendance of paramilitary training camps;
- Attempts to conceal particular lifestyle habits or leisure time activities (e.g. feigning loss of identification papers following travel abroad);
- Intensive preoccupation with life after death or martyrdom;
- Change of financial situation (inexplicable income or sudden debts). [...]²²

Again, Muslim communities in Germany felt that this characterisation cast blanket suspicion on Muslims and openly condemned this campaign. By the same token, various political parties passed criticism on this campaign.²³

- d) Unmotivated mosque checks: A particular drastic measure was carried out in the Federal State of Lower Saxony. In 2010, mosque attendees were requested to show their identification papers to police officers before admittance to the Friday prayer – regardless of any suspicion. After a wave of protests, the mosque checks were only performed if there was enough reason to suspect persons' connection to terrorism.²⁴

On the one hand, the exemplary measures listed above reflect the political helplessness in dealing with neo-Salafism and, on the other hand, the lack of

22 Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Inneres und Sport/Verfassungsschutz, *ISLAMISMUS. Entwicklungen – Gefahren – Gegenmaßnahmen*, Hannover 2012, p. 71f, trans. C. Küster.

23 See taz, „Islamisten Checkliste‘ in Niedersachsen. Gute Muslime haben dick zu sein“, URL: <http://www.taz.de/!96300/>, June 18, 2012 (accessed April 12, 2016).

24 See Migazin, „Verdachtsunabhängige Moscheekontrollen sind rechtsmissbräuchlich und grundgesetzwidrig“, URL: <http://www.migazin.de/2010/01/29/verdachtsunabhängige-moscheekontrollen-sind-rechtsmissbrauchlich-und-grundgesetzwidrig/>, January 29, 2010, (accessed April 12, 2016).

knowledge about the Muslim community. Not only do these concepts fail to produce any effect in deradicalisation, they have also abused the trust of Muslims in cooperating with state authorities. What it boils down to is that these knee-jerk reactions have achieved little more than sweepingly associating Muslims and mosques with the phenomenon of Salafism. That this poor image can have far-reaching consequences has been shown by the anti-Muslim movement PEGIDA²⁵ by picking up on Muslims' presence – taken as a whole and without further differentiation – in a populist way, declaring it to pose a threat to German society and thus exploiting the irrational fears of the non-Muslim population.

5. Role of mosque communities as partners in deradicalisation schemes

In light of current events, in particular the ongoing conflict in Syria and the danger resulting from returning foreign fighters and "homegrown terrorism", the debate on neo-Salafis has intensified and thus increased the pressure on state authorities and the government to take preventive action in the form of deradicalisation and prevention measures. These discussions were reinforced by academic discourse. These debates have instigated a change in perspective, which can be given as follows:

- Role of the state: The duty of deradicalisation no longer falls under the purview of regulatory or security authorities, but, as is the current practice in some Federal States (*Länder*), was reassigned to the Ministries for Social Affairs²⁶. The focus of the Ministry of the Interior lies upon combating Salafis, that is to say, once radicalisation has occurred. On the other hand, the Ministries for Social Affairs and Youth Affairs commit themselves to prevention work in concerted action with numerous other players.
- Muslim communities as partners: The belief has taken hold that mosque communities can exert a positive influence on deradicalisation efforts. In this regard, plenty of theologians have suggested that receiving a sound religious education in mosque communities will already produce an immunising effect against radicalisation processes.²⁷ By contrast, experiences have shown that, for the most part, those Muslim youth fall into the clutches of neo-Salafis who hail from secular or "religiously-illiterate" families. What also runs afoul of the assumption that radicalisation takes place within mosque communities, are the number of converts amongst Salafis who were not religiously socialised in mosques.

25 PEGIDA is an acronym for „*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*“ [Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident].

26 In the Federal State of Lower Saxony, radicalisation prevention is under the purview of the Ministry for Social Affairs. In the neighbouring state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the responsibility lies with the Ministry of the Interior.

27 However, it is not yet possible to scientifically prove this assumption.

- Academic significance: The Institute of Islamic Theology at Osnabrück University promotes conferences and publications to deal with this subject matter in a scholarly and factual manner. In addition to this, the Institute offers higher education programmes for imams in order to qualify these disseminators to pre-empt and counteract radicalisation more effectively in their day-to-day life.²⁸

In the meantime, as a product of this shifting perspective in the deradicalisation debate, examples of best-practices have been established in a number of cities. A pioneer of such a cooperative venture represents the project „Wegweiser“ [Signpost/Waymarker], which is carried through in seven cities in North Rhine-Westphalia and attempts to throw light on the matter of neo-Salafism by giving factual information about its ideology, aims to "strengthen resilience-ability (immunisation against approaches from persons affiliated to neo-Salafi groups) and empowerment" and in especially wishes to provide "comprehensive information on neo-Salafi movements prepared to commit acts of violence (contents, structures and recruitment strategies)". The means by which these objectives are meant to be achieved are professional advice, networking, targeted support, advanced training etc. Alongside schools and institutions of the youth welfare service, particularly mosque communities are designated as partners.²⁹ Hence, this project upgrades mosques' position by placing them on the same level with state authorities and non-religious, civil-society players, since measures of radicalisation prevention only bear prospects of success if all relevant actors, such as the community, school, youth welfare services connect themselves. What is more, trust-building measures have proven to be of vital significance for anyone attempting to take (preventive) action in the field of neo-Salafism. In this context, it can be relied upon mosque communities to reach out to and spread trust within families.³⁰

Another positive example that should be brought attention to, alongside the North-Rhine-Westphalian „Wegweiser“-Programme, is the advice scheme of Lower Saxony supervised and provided for by the (body) association „Verein für jugend- und familienpädagogische Beratung Niedersachsen – beRATen e.V.“ [Association for Youth and Family Advice in Lower Saxony – COUNSELLING, reg. assoc.]. Since 2014, the association lends advice to affected persons in the whole of Lower Saxony and offers, as can be learned from the following list, a considerable number of support measures:

28 See for example: Rauf Ceylan/Benjamin Jokisch, *Salafismus in Deutschland. Entstehung, Radikalisierung und Prävention*, Peter Lang Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2014.

29 See Kiefer, „Positionen. Grundsätzliche Überlegungen zum Umgang mit dem Phänomen Neo-salafismus“, URL: <http://www.wegweiser-duesseldorf.de/positionen/> (accessed April 12, 2016).

30 See Ceylan/Kiefer, *Salafismus*, p. 168.

- Gives information and lends advice to parents, relatives and other members of the social environment of youth and young adults affected by neo-Salafi radicalisation
- In-house or outreach consultations
- Individual consultations
- Builds and strengthens local actors' networks on a case-by-case basis
- Prevention work
- Disseminates expert advice and support to teachers, social workers and other social sphere actors
- Refers to further tailored help and support services; offers information and education programmes³¹

In its function as the central provider of this service in Lower Saxony, the association *beRATen e.V.* is a stellar example throughout Europe for the successful collaboration with organised mosque communities. For the first time, state and Islamic religious community have embarked on a process of discussion of lengthy yet constructive nature in the challenging field of radicalisation prevention, at the end of which the successful foundation of the conjoint service-providing association was realised. The trust of state authorities (precisely, the Ministry for Social Affairs of Lower Saxony) went so far as to leave the appointment of the chairman and vice chairman of the executive board to the Muslims of Lower Saxony. In this function, the full responsibility in managing the business, reaching decisions about human resources issues and determining key activities rests with DITIB³² and SCHURA³³. The association is advised by the Institute of Islamic Theology (IIT) of Osnabrück University. The Institute is considered one of the few academic institutions equipped with profound expertise in radicalisation prevention while meeting with a high level of acceptance on the part of mosque communities at the same time. A position was created specifically for offering this advisory service, which is funded by the Federal State of Lower Saxony. Compared with previous prevention concepts, this, too, marks a unique step. Other federal states have hitherto refrained from seeking advice from academic institutions on a long-term basis.

A further example for a project of effective cooperation with Muslim communities is offered by the federal scheme „*Demokratie leben*“³⁴ [Living Democracy]

31 URL: <http://beraten-niedersachsen.de/index.php?do=home>, trans. C. Küster (accessed April 12, 2016).

32 DITIB is the German acronym for the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs, one of the largest Islamic umbrella organisations in Germany.

33 SCHURA Niedersachsen is a registered association and represents the Muslims of Lower Saxony.

34 For more detailed information about the federal programme, see URL: <https://demokratie-leben.de> (accessed April 12, 2016).

since 2014. Holding a lot of promise as part of this scheme is the advice centre BAHIRA, whose services are provided for by the "Violence Prevention Network".

The advice centre BAHIRA is a joint project between the Violation Prevention Network, the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD) and the association DITIB-Şehitlik Turkish-Islamic community of Neukölln.

The counsellors apply the approach of responsible pedagogy to disrupt and reverse radicalisation processes of young people. Step by step, this approach includes their social environment. It seeks to provide continuous advice and support and believes that people will only acquire the requisite competencies through long-term relationship-work, which, in turn, enables them to turn away from inhuman ideologies. This process takes place in an atmosphere which is of appreciative nature and with a method that critically challenges the ideology. Flexible modules of biography work, civic education and anti-violence work find application.³⁵

BAHIRA is the first pilot scheme to provide a very close cooperation of community work and professionally-applied distancing work.

6. Prospects

In their role as socio-cultural centres, mosques serve an important function in segregated neighbourhoods throughout Germany. As points of crystallization, they bring together people and resources; therefore, their range of influence extends far into the communities. Since pioneer migrants founded first communities in the 1970s, the function of these religious institutions has expanded according to the present requirements and challenges of their day. However, the public has failed to recognise the significance that Muslims attach to these mosque communities and the potential they hold in promoting integration. Only in recent years, did a trend towards a more positive evaluation of their function manifest. In connection to the issue of neo-Salafism, policymakers, too, took far too long a time to become aware of and unlock mosque communities' potential in developing and implementing concepts of prevention work in a collective effort. In the meantime, however, a change in thinking has come underway. For the first time and as part of a range of pilot schemes, projects of mosque communities are promoted within the prevention programme „*Demokratie Leben*“ offered by the federal state. Similar developments can also be spotted in Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia. In both states, Muslim umbrella organisations play a key role in taking preventive measures. These examples demonstrate that both the state and the mosque communities have by now recognised the unavoidable necessity to take concerted action. Both sides face the task to develop prevention work of a long-lived and high-quality nature. On the part of the mosque commu-

35 URL: <https://www.demokratie-leben.de/programmpartner/modellprojekte/modellprojekte-zur-radikalisierungspraevention/bahira-beratungsstelle.html>, trans. as provided on the following site: URL: <http://www.violence-prevention-network.de/en/> (both sites accessed April 12, 2016).

nities, a process of opening-up into civil society constitutes a first premise. A further prerequisite is the sustained effort to raise the standards, i.e. professionalise, community education work across the board. On part of the federal state, breaking down prejudices is the first and foremost priority. It is not uncommon for organisations of Muslims attempting, for instance, to provide youth service work to encounter considerable reservations from municipal authorities, which can only be resolved through a, on occasion, tedious process of dialogue.