

Working paper

**Young Muslims in Auschwitz.**  
**How memorial projects encourage collective learning in a migration society**  
**in order to create a shared memory**

*A case study by Sophia Baur*

**1. A memorial project in a migration society**

The case study will show different approaches to the question of whether a common memory of Muslims in Germany of the second, third or fourth generation can be developed through collective learning from the past within the framework of a memorial project. Within the study the significance of a historical site like Auschwitz in educational work needs to be shown. Furthermore, the study questions the meaning of the learning process of young Muslims in going to historical sites and seeing places where German identities destroyed Jewish identities.

German Muslims of the second, third or fourth generation are born and raised in Germany. Thus, German history is part of their school curriculum, while their own historical background history is largely ignored. The question arises as how the migration society can be integrated with its historical knowledge. In addition, young Muslims grow up with hostile stereotypes against Jews in their families. They gain access to this issue through their religion and sometimes through dealing with the Middle East conflict. Therefore, they do not feel familiar with topics they hear in school, such as German history and the Holocaust, they don't feel part of the collective memory of "the Germans" and their history. The young Muslims share a kind of double identity and often feel insecure about their own past and the past of the country they live in.

**2. The project of Burak Yilmaz**

The core of the study deals with the project "Young Muslims in Auschwitz" initiated by Burak Yilmaz, which focuses on the topic of the study. In the project, Yilmaz tries to build up young multipliers for topics like anti-Semitism, culture of remembrance and racism but it can also be summarised as a memorial site project in which young male Muslims with Arab, Kurdish or Turkish family backgrounds visit the concentration camp in Auschwitz. Many of these young adults grew up with prejudices and conspiracy theories related to anti-Semitism related to the background stories of their families. The project attempts to shed light on the possibility for young adults to come to terms with their identity and self-image and the same time learn about anti-Semitism in Germany. These identities can often be maintained by hostile stereotypes passed on by friends and family.

After the visit to Auschwitz, it is important for the young adults to process the experiences and impressions within the group by linking the historical aspects with their personal background (including the middle east conflict). Together with Burak Yilmaz and other drama teachers, they created a theatre play entitled "Coexist".

The main challenge for Burak Yilmaz' project is to awaken an understanding among young German Muslims that they are part of the German History just like any other citizen. In this context, it is important that they realize that being a German also means dealing with their collective identity and experiencing that this also means having a shared history with other Germans that weighs in on their present and future lives.

### **3. Own research**

The study tries to deal with inherited enemy images and stereotypes of anti-Semitism and racism. It asks whether it is possible that young Muslims, inspired by the analysis of the German history and National Socialism, start facing anti-Semitism in their own community and in their families.

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