

Islamic Social Work within the Framework of the Welfare System: Observations from the German Case



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Abstract The development possibilities for Islamic social work are closely linked to the respective state's welfare framework. The German system provides an insightful example, as it is characterised by a significant incorporation of religious welfare providers. In the sense of an “affirmative genealogy” (Hans Joas), the German welfare system can be understood as open to religious pluralism and social change. This chapter analyses interactions between the state, existing welfare organisations and Muslim providers, focusing on their respective legitimation strategies. Inclusive and more exclusive interpretations are presented by different parties. The openness towards all beneficiaries demanded of Muslim welfare providers could perhaps lead to a secularisation of Islamic social work. However, theological reflection enables an Islamic profile to be reconciled with general social responsibility.

Keywords Islam · Social work · Welfare · Integration · Theology of liberation

Introduction

Many studies on Islamic social work either deal with the relationships between service providers and beneficiaries or with underlying religious motivations. A key factor, which often receives less attention, is the welfare system in which Islamic social work is situated. This framework and the interaction between the state and Islamic bodies are the subject of the following chapter. Despite tendencies towards globalisation and Europeanisation, national context remains central for the development of welfare states. According to Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, “the national development of welfare states in Europe remained highly idiosyncratic, in that development was driven by the interaction of national factors” (2012, 32). Among these are cultural, political and institutional factors: each welfare system regulates a division of responsibilities and tasks between the state and social bodies.

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H. Schmid, A. Sheikhzadegan (eds.), *Exploring Islamic Social Work*, Muslims in Global Societies Series 9, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95880-0_6

This analysis pertains to the German welfare state, which, contrary to “liberal” and “social-democratic” systems, has been classified as “conservative” and “corporatist”, with a strong focus on institutions and a delegation of tasks to non-governmental providers (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 27; Clegg, 2019). This enables those in need of assistance to choose from a plurality of offers from different providers. A significant place is attributed to non-statutory welfare organisations, which entails a high degree of state support and financing.

In Germany, six umbrella associations are represented in the Federal Working Group for Non-Statutory Welfare Work (BAGFW), which has existed in various forms since 1924 and represents a common platform and lobbying organisation (Zimmer et al., 2009). They form part of the state-regulated system and have different humanitarian or religious backgrounds. Besides the Red Cross, the workers’ welfare association *AWO (Arbeiterwohlfahrt)* and the independent humanitarian welfare association *Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband*, there are three organisations with a religious profile: the Roman-Catholic *Caritas*, the Protestant *Diakonie* and the central Jewish welfare organisation (ZWST). The services of the non-statutory welfare organisations are highly professionalised and are offered to all beneficiaries, independent of their religious affiliation. This particular constellation is easily transferable to other contexts, but it shows the effects of intensive interaction with the state.

Between 4.4 and 4.7 million Muslims live in Germany, of a total population of 83 million. More than half are of Turkish origin, with the Middle East and the Balkans being further important regions of origin (Stichs, 2016). As migratory waves have only occurred since the 1960s, Germany is not a classic country of immigration; as a result, integration policy efforts have been delayed. Nonetheless, dialogue and integration with the Muslim population have played a central role for around 20 years. Both local mosque associations and manifold umbrella organisations on a regional or national level are involved in these activities. As in the case of migrant organisations in general (Pries & Sezgin, 2012), the social services they offer can be seen as “self-help”, that is, as bodies of people in similar situations, or with similar problems and interests (Handel, 2017, 300). Their cultural sensitivity allows them to reach target groups which are not, or not primarily, the focus of established providers. In this way, the activities of Muslim associations have also come into the spotlight of state integration policy (Fülling, 2019). Today, this poses a double challenge in the German context: on one hand, there are emancipatory efforts on the part of Islamic bodies to make their self-help activities part of welfare work and to achieve recognition for a civic engagement that is usually not publicly visible (Peucker, 2016). On the other hand, there is a debate taking place as to how the German welfare system can be further developed in the light of the changing composition of the population (Ceylan & Kiefer, 2016; Khalfaoui, 2016; von Wensierski, 2016). This results in a double dynamic, emanating both from Muslim organisations and political efforts.

Since the central issue is the interrelation between Islamic bodies, the state and existing welfare providers, all these relationships will be examined. Social work activities within the welfare system are understood as institutionalised social

practices legitimated by discourses (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 79; Van Leeuwen, 2008, 20). Thereby a normative basis is provided: “Legitimation justifies the institutional order by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives.” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 111) Throughout the chapter there will be a focus on various legitimation discourses based on authority, value systems, rational arguments or narratives (Van Leeuwen, 2008, 105–123; Fairclough, 2004, 98). These legitimation discourses provide a rationale for the welfare system as a whole, or for specific actions of welfare providers, be it the state, established welfare organisations or Muslim associations. Beyond the analysis of interpretative patterns (Breuer, 2019, 315), this approach enables the different types of “construction of legitimation” to be distinguished (Van Leeuwen, 2008, 105). A comparison between types of discourses enables the identification of “strategies for legitimation” (Fairclough, 2004, 100) proper to the various protagonists and their mutual relationships.

The initial focus among the legitimation discourses will be on the German welfare system, from a historical and socio-ethical point of view, focussing on the significance of religion (section “[Genealogy and Value Orientation in the German Welfare System](#)”). Subsequently, the state’s religious and integration policy on a federal level is considered (section “[State Support – Between Integration and Religious Policy](#)”). In the next step, the role of existing welfare bodies is examined, focusing on their resources (section “[The Role of Established Welfare Providers](#)”). Finally, the focus shifts to Muslim organisations, with discussion of organisational developments and projects; then, the discourses surrounding their rationale are identified (section “[Welfare Activities and Legitimation Discourses of Muslim Organisations](#)”). In concluding the comparative discussion, consequences and perspectives for Islamic social work in the German welfare state are illustrated (section “[Conclusion: Perspectives for Islamic Social Work in a Plural Welfare System](#)”).

Genealogy and Value Orientation in the German Welfare System

In recent years, comparative welfare state research has rediscovered religion as a dynamic factor, but this has mainly been related to Western Christianity and its potential for modernisation. Summarising an anthology on religion and the welfare state in Europe, Gabriel et al. conclude:

In Western Christianity (...) two elements came together which culturally can be counted as being among the conditions of welfare state development: the collective assumption of responsibility for the well-being of individuals on the one hand and the esteem (...) of the individual or the person on the other hand. In the sphere of influence of Orthodoxy just the second element has remained weak until today. Something similar can be observed for the Islamic tradition. (Gabriel et al., 2013, 495)

According to this model, two specific features of Western Christianity have had a productive effect on the welfare state. These dynamics did not come to the fore in secular Turkey, which is treated in the above-mentioned volume (Celebi &

Göztepe-Celebi, 2013). But it cannot be excluded that comparable developments may also come about in Islam (Crisp, 2014, 26), reinforced by a welfare state open to religion, as is the case in Germany.

The genesis of the welfare state in Germany has led to an “institutional tradition” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 111, 186) based on a normative system, which can be better understood in analogy to Hans Joas’ genealogy of human rights (Schmid, 2017). This is also obvious insofar as the welfare state in Western contexts is built on the foundation of social human rights (Kaufmann, 2013, 37–38). Joas combines a historical and an existential approach. According to him, at the centre of the concept of “affirmative genealogy” lies a “call” or “appeal”, “because recourse to the processes of ideal formation, the genesis of values, (...) opens our minds to the way in which historically embodied meaning calls upon us” (Joas, 2013, 127). Genealogy is affirmative in the sense that viewing the genesis of values does not leave the subject indifferent, but rather places it in charge. This creates a context of meaning that extends from the past into the future: the starting point is initially a historical meaning that is generated in the past but points beyond its conditions of origin (Joas, 2013, 134–135). “We hear this appeal in a particular historical present and within this present it is oriented toward new action geared toward the future.” (Joas, 2013, 124) The historical sense is perceived and actualised in the specific context of the present. It offers new orientation and motivates future-oriented action, through which values are made real and history is brought to life (Joas, 2013, 126, 134–135). Thus, the history of welfare system development in Germany is not only a memory or a background for understanding the current situation, but also an impulse for the further development of this system.

As values are “upheld by institutions and embodied in practices” (Joas, 2013, 135) the function of the welfare system can be seen to conserve and keep alive the values of its historical origins. However, this does not mean sticking with the status quo. Conversely, the welfare system in Germany can be understood as an expression of a generalisation of values, a term going back to Talcott Parsons, in the sense “that value traditions may develop a more general and abstract understanding of their content, without being entirely uprooted from the specific traditions and experiences that are the source of affective binding force for the actors involved” (Joas, 2013, 180–181). General content on one hand, and specific roots and binding forces on the other, are therefore not contradictory. The generalisation of values is not only an expression of social change, but “extends across many stages and is frequently conflictual” (Joas, 2013, 179). Such considerations can also bear fruit when considering the welfare system.

As with human rights, welfare and its historical roots are also at risk of being perceived as a largely Christian exclusivity. However, early forms of charity and philanthropy have already been found in Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece (Handel, 2017, 42–45). The concepts of affirmative genealogy and the generalisation of values also enable a broader perspective. When looking at the history of the development of the German welfare state, several different roots can be identified, including the labour movement as well as Protestant, Catholic and Jewish activism (Stolleis, 2013). This seems to provide a basis for openness to different religious or

ideological orientations. In the nineteenth century, private welfare organisations, mostly in the form of associations, emerged, often compensating for the lack of state social measures. After the First World War, the major challenge of poverty arose. There was political discussion about the relationship between state responsibility and the participation of welfare organisations. Finally, in 1926, six organisations were recognised as umbrella organisations – a system that was maintained after the Second World War. Jewish welfare work was incorporated into the welfare system in 1926, but it occupied a distinct role taking care of Jewish people in need, as the Jews represented a social minority (Ceylan & Kiefer, 2016, 39; Hennings, 2008, 39–42). History therefore illustrates how different bodies were integrated into a system which was gradually being built and which has been characterised by religious and ideological openness.

Today, however, this system is often criticised. For instance, recognised welfare organisations are alleged to form a kind of cartel, lobbying only for their own interests. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether, with the differentiation and disintegration of traditional social milieus, established welfare organisations will still have the necessary binding force to perform client-oriented work. Critics also observe that the welfare associations have become more similar and that their specific value orientation is fading into the background (Boeßenecker, 2005, 35–36). In a recent article, sociologist Karl-Heinz Boeßenecker labels the German welfare system as outdated and does not see a solution in the establishment of a seventh welfare organisation to integrate Muslim communities (Boeßenecker, 2017, 33). This represents a rejection of any affirmative genealogy of the welfare system and is a plea for a complete paradigm change. Contrary to this view, however, the secularisation tendencies of existing welfare organisations can also be understood as an expression of the generalisation of values. In the sense of a future orientation rooted in values, further developments of the system are to be expected. Islamic bodies could give new impetus to awareness of such values. When welfare work was on the rise, church associations had great social influence; today, Muslim organisations do not by any means have a similar level of impact. Nevertheless, the dynamic genealogy of the welfare state indicates that further developments and adaptations of the system could certainly remain in line with its basic ideas. Its generalised values can form the basis for integrating new bodies and organisations.

State Support – Between Integration and Religious Policy

While in the system of non-statutory welfare work in Germany any state intervention is usually regarded as contradictory to the system (BAMF, 2015, 88), integration and religious policy actively intervene in this field. In its annual report for 2016, the Council of Experts of German Foundations for Integration and Migration speaks of “multiculturalism in religious policy” and explicitly mentions the “establishment of new, religiously-based welfare associations” as an expression of “parity claims” (Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration, 2016, 17).

While religious affairs in Germany fall under the responsibility of the 18 federal states, the German Islam Conference (*Deutsche Islam Konferenz*, DIK) has existed on a federal level since 2006, as a central platform for exchange on Islam and political issues affecting Muslims. DIK's approach is characterised by how it links issues of religion and integration (Fülling, 2019, 454). It is known for having established binding dialogue with key Muslim representatives at the highest political level. After DIK having dealt with various topics such as secularism, legal issues, media, security, religious education in schools, Islamic theology in universities and imam training, the topic of welfare was brought to the fore in the legislative period 2013–2017 (Charchira, 2017). As with previous topics, DIK's function can be seen as threefold: firstly, it provides data by mandating empirical studies; secondly, it enables discussion, consultation and strategy-development; thirdly, it contributes to strategy implementation through pilot projects. The whole process contributes substantially to political agenda-setting.

Beginning with DIK, new forms of project funding have emerged, initially for work with refugees, which makes use of the resources Muslim associations can offer and simultaneously assists these organisations to become more professional. The programme is based on the following credo:

The Federal Government considers it essential that the broadest possible spectrum of civil society groups in the Federal Republic of Germany continue to work for the integration of refugees. Islamic initiatives and institutions as well as organisations and initiatives of migrants represent an important contact point for many refugees and can serve as a bridge for integration and the promotion of social cohesion. (Deutsche Islam Konferenz, 2019)

Here, there are two underlying legitimations: (a) supporting civil society in a broad sense, which is a key characteristic of the German welfare state (Kaufmann, 2013, 176–177), and (b) integrating Muslim organisations in particular. The project *Moscheen für Integration* (Mosques for Integration), started in 2019 and linked to DIK, refers to the same legitimations: “The aim is to make their diverse social and civil society work more visible, more accessible and more strongly anchored in German society.” (BMI, 2019) The focus of this seven-million-euro programme is to provide support for local mosque associations, in order to foster their visibility, accessibility and anchorage in Germany.

The positions and intentions linked to social welfare are concisely summarised in the following extract from a longer 2015 document, which presents the results of a DIK steering committee session comprised of 11 state representatives, ten Muslim organisation representatives and four further experts in the field from research institutes or welfare associations. This jointly-formulated document presents the major guidelines of the political agenda:

The aim of this dialogue is to improve the religious and social participation of the Muslim population in Germany, to give greater recognition to existing contributions of Muslims and Islamic organisations to religious and cultural life and society in Germany, and to further develop the partnership between government and Islamic organisations. (...) Social welfare is a central issue for cooperation between government and religious communities. Muslims see Germany as their home. They are part of this country. For this reason, their increasing participation in society is both desirable and natural. Subsidiarity and freedom of choice are

fundamental principles of non-governmental welfare services. Like other religious groups, Muslims too have the right to organise social welfare services on a confessional basis. Government and society are called on to help establish Islamic non-profit social welfare organisations in Germany. Islamic social welfare institutions are open to all and thus have an integrative effect, helping ensure social cohesion. The mostly voluntary engagement of Islamic providers of social welfare and especially of Islamic congregations deserves greater recognition. (Deutsche Islam Konferenz, 2015, 1–2)

This quotation encapsulates some key terms for the whole document: “recognition/to be recognised” is used nine times in the document, “participation/to participate” 18 times and “cooperation” 16 times. There is an appreciation of already “existing contributions”, which are in most cases voluntary. The document makes a very clear statement concerning two disputed issues: Muslims are seen as an integral part of Germany; and the openness of Islamic welfare institutions “to all” as well as their “integrative effect” is emphasised in an authoritative way. Building on this foundation, the following aspects are highlighted: greater recognition and promotion (1); the “need for religiously sensitive social services for Muslims” (2); and creating awareness and understanding of Muslim contributions, which seem to have the “potential for social welfare in Germany” (3). In other words, the focus lies rather on what already exists than on deficits. The approach can therefore be characterised as positive and resource-oriented; it is the expression of a policy which is interested in promotion, cooperation and support for religions. As the German system of cooperation is characterised by government support (Fox, 2018, 134), the idea is to implement recognition processes through DIK, so that Muslim organisations can equally profit from state support. The text makes no explicit reference to historical arguments, but is focused on values like integration, participation and openness. Islamic bodies are not classified as deficient but are positively associated with such values, which results in obligations for the state.

From a critical discourse analysis perspective, DIK has also been interpreted as a racial discourse, shaping Muslim subjects according to a pre-defined hegemonic-state model, applying technologies of power (Hernández Aguilar, 2018). This discourse is based on “racial historicism, producing two different historical paths of development for Germans and Muslims” (44) and therefore expecting the assimilation of Muslims. DIK is positioned to assume the function of “guide in the historical development of Muslims” (228). Hernández Aguilar leaves a slight possibility for a positive emancipatory function: “The DIK itself can be used to channel and subvert hegemonic power. This institution can be set in motion to problematise the problematisation of Muslims itself” (234). Concerning the welfare system, the state disposes of regulatory powers over all providers. The emphasis on “recognition” in the cited DIK document can be seen as a sign of emancipation: DIK has institutionalised encounters between Muslim representatives and state officials on the highest level. This strengthens symbolic integration, contributing to the inclusion of “a particular group into the history and shared memory of a national community” (Cesari, 2015, 803). The discursive setting corresponds to the system of cooperation between state and religious communities in Germany; the dialogue also has some impact on legislation and further state measures.

To sum up, a certain ambivalence remains as to the assimilation required by Muslims in the DIK. However, there are strong elements of recognition and participation. This interpretation of the welfare system, making a strong appeal to include Muslims in the future, expresses the affirmative nature of this system's genealogy. Similar areas of cooperation, such as the introduction of confessional Islamic religious education in state schools, have previously been the subject of dialogue with Muslim organisations (Euchner, 2018). In each case, it is a matter of negotiating the modalities and framework conditions for cooperation between the state and Muslim organisations.

The Role of Established Welfare Providers

Besides the state, established welfare providers play a key intermediary role in the German subsidiary welfare system when it comes to Muslim welfare activities. A central question is thus whether established providers would rather defend their monopoly or become pioneers of pluralisation and advocates for Muslim organisations. As in other countries, varying degrees of openness to minorities among "majority religion welfare provisions" have been observed (Fokas, 2017, 285). The Experts Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration depicted this situation as follows:

Whether a new religiously (in this case: Muslim) oriented welfare association is necessary also depends on the extent to which the established associations are prepared to become interculturally open, in the sense that they take into consideration special needs. (Sachverständigenrat, 2016, 120)

In line with this statement, the less the specific needs of Muslims are taken into account by established welfare providers, the more likely it is that a Muslim welfare organisation will be required. However, Muslims' demand for professional services outside the family is likely to increase in the future and reinforce the need for a Muslim welfare association. Since such an organisation can only result from a long development process, the statement of the Experts Council could be paraphrased as follows: especially when there is intensive interaction between an interculturally and inter-religiously open-minded established association and Islamic bodies, it can pave the way for a Muslim welfare association. Therefore, empowerment strategies through partnerships with existing associations have been developed to integrate associations that are not (yet) established into existing communication structures (Strube & Koc, 2019, 26).

The increasing pluralisation of the population is accompanied by processes to promote intercultural and inter-religious sensitivity (Holm, 2012). Intercultural opening is understood here as a specific sensitivity for people with a history of migration (Fong, 2009), whereas interreligious opening focuses on the religious dimension of culture. Both can be seen as common challenges for all welfare providers, including Muslim and Christian ones (Nagel, 2019). For a long time, the

workers' welfare association AWO was particularly concerned with migrants from Islamic countries, while Christian migrants were supported by the churches. Besides economic pressure and secularisation (Gabriel, 2016; Hien, 2019), intercultural and interreligious issues represent a major challenge for *Caritas* and *Diakonie* as welfare associations with a Christian background. These issues encompass three dimensions (Schmid, 2017):

1. Welcoming beneficiaries from different cultural and religious backgrounds has become an integral part of the self-conception of *Caritas* and *Diakonie*. They refer to universal love and God's will to save all people. In some fields – such as pregnancy counselling – they reach a high proportion of Muslims (BAMF, 2015, 105–106). Nevertheless, there are barriers to migrants in general, and to Muslims in particular, making use of these services, even if such obstacles have been partly overcome in recent years (Ceylan & Kiefer, 2016, 52–53).
2. Working with a large spectrum of beneficiaries requires culturally- and religiously-sensitive attitudes from staff. Employees belonging to other religions can play an important bridging role (BAMF, 2015, 98–101). While this was originally ruled out due to the associations' confessional nature, currently nonetheless opening processes can be observed (Eurich, 2017, 147–148). Understanding charity with a Christian orientation in a broadly inclusive sense makes it possible to participate regardless of one's religious affiliation (Albrecht, 2013, 80).
3. On an institutional level, collaboration with Islamic organisations has been initiated. Asymmetries regarding the degree of professionalisation and available financial resources may represent a challenge to such collaboration. However, by working together, asymmetries may be reduced: in the meantime, several such collaborations have opened up an important space for encounters.

All three dimensions are intertwined: familiarity with Muslim clients and employees prepares organisations for cooperation and creates a basis for it. This cooperation can then form a bridge for Muslim organisations to the welfare system. However, since this can in turn create increased competition for Christian associations, the question arises as to what extent the latter are prepared to take such steps. This ambivalence will be illustrated in the following two examples:

On the basis of experiences collaborating with a Muslim welfare organisation, the Berlin *Caritas* director, Ulrike Kostka, insisted that: “The establishment of Islamic welfare associations at various levels would be an important step towards integration. But it would also be a prerequisite that their services are not only open to Muslims.” (Kostka, 2017, 200) In this, she formulates the condition that Islamic welfare associations have to adapt to general standards to legitimate state support. In her argument, “integration” plays a central role because it is “a constitutive characteristic of Christianity” (Kostka, 2017, 189) – an argument that is widely advocated in the political debate.

The statement of the president of *Caritas* Germany 3 years previously (in 2014) was more reluctant: *Caritas* can provide expertise, but Muslims have to become active themselves and all kinds of paternalism should be avoided: “Nor should existing welfare organisations want to interfere in a paternalistic helper-manner and

play the obstetrician.” (Neher, 2014) He also mentions that the access of Muslims to services provided by *Caritas* and other organisations has been self-evident for a long time and that Muslim associations would have to fulfil the same requirements concerning intercultural sensitivity. Regarding DIK, he warns, referring to the history of *Caritas*: “Never before have state institutions founded welfare associations – this must also apply today, because it would simply contradict the nature of free welfare work.” (Neher, 2014).

These two examples show how the development of Muslim welfare organisations is viewed with slightly different attitudes. In the first example, reference is made to the common value of integration, with an orientation towards the future – a value which plays a key role in the context of political debates linked to DIK. In the second example, reference is made to a historical narrative linked to a rational argument of analogy (“this must also apply”), in order to exclude strong external support and to legitimate the position of *Caritas*. This is an example of an argument based on affirmative genealogy, however limited to a more restrictive sense of independent self-organisation. Common to both is the expectation that Muslim welfare organisations should be open to all beneficiaries, independent of their religious orientation.

Welfare Activities and Legitimation Discourses of Muslim Organisations

In German Muslim welfare, there are both top-down and bottom-up processes, each with their own dynamics (Ceylan & Kiefer, 2016, 132–133). The following section focuses on Muslim welfare providers, in three parts: firstly, some light will be shed on welfare activities, with an emphasis on local associations (section “[Social Services Provided by Local Mosque Associations and Specialised Providers](#)”). This will be followed by an analysis of the legitimation discourses of selected umbrella organisations (section “[Legitimation Discourses of Muslim Umbrella Organisations](#)”). Finally, a link will be made to theological discourses which may provide further legitimation (section “[Islamic Theological Justifications for Universal Welfare](#)”).

Social Services Provided by Local Mosque Associations and Specialised Providers

Many mosques can be seen as multifunctional community centres, with a large range of activities going beyond religion in a narrow sense. As far as the social services of local mosque associations are concerned, the studies of the German Islam Conference provide a fairly solid data basis (Halm et al., 2012; Halm & Sauer,

2015). The studies show that religious and social services offered by mosque associations are not in competition, but rather complement each other (Halm et al., 2012, 78). According to their information, between 36.5 and 43.2% of local associations offer health, educational or social counselling (Halm et al., 2012, 77). In the field of services for young people, 78.8% offer homework assistance, 48% vocational orientation and 47.8% language support, thus contributing to school and vocational integration (Halm & Sauer, 2015, 49–50). In addition, there are often counselling services related to education, addiction, violence and discrimination (Halm & Sauer, 2015, 53). Muslim associations tend to have relatively few full-time staff, so the extent of voluntary work is often high and a large part of the services on offer can be regarded as “semi-professional” (Ceylan & Charchira, 2018, 191). In this sense, Muslim organisations are still far from the complex professional structure of professional umbrella organisations such as *Caritas* or *Diakonie*.

However, the largely quantitative data are only of limited value. The statement that a mosque association offers support and counselling services does not say anything about the quality, intensity, or organisational form of these services and therefore demonstrates the necessity for further analysis. It can be observed that Islamic associations provide a large number of different social services, but that in only a very few cases has public recognition or state funding been achieved. In many cases, the beneficiaries are Muslims. As research findings from Great Britain have shown, the opportunity to address religious issues and to be understood within one’s own culture are of decisive importance in this context (Warden et al., 2016, 8).

In the context of the large 2015 wave of refugees in Germany, numerous Muslim associations showed significant spontaneous commitment. While relying solely on their own resources and donations, they provided spiritual care, counselling services, language courses, accommodation, food and clothing to refugees (Ceylan & Charchira, 2018, 193–194; Nagel & El-Menouar, 2017). This led to strong public visibility for Muslim organisations as providers of social services (Nagel, 2019, 292). This type of engagement corresponds to similar observations on an international level that working with immigrants and refugees is a typical field of activity for religious welfare organisations (Crisp, 2014, 51–53).

In addition to mosque associations, which provide a wide range of religious and social services, many specialised Muslim social service providers have emerged in recent years. As no systematic survey has been done so far in this field, may it suffice to mention the following examples: the *Begegnungs- und Fortbildungszentrum muslimischer Frauen* (Muslim Women’s Meeting and Training Centre) (BFmF), in Cologne, can be considered a model of a highly professional organisation (see the contribution by Schröer and Ürek in this volume). Since 1998, the BFmF has been a member of the *Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband*, which has about 25 Alevi or Muslim member organisations (BAMF, 2015, 132–133). A further example is *Sozialdienst muslimischer Frauen* (SmF) (Social Service for Muslim Women), which has existed since 2017 and provides various consultation and support services for families (SmF, N.d.). Both organisations aim to build up local associations analogous to established welfare organisations, as well as strengthening and

connecting them under the auspices of an umbrella organisation. Muslim welfare service is proving itself to be a dynamic and diverse field.

Legitimation Discourses of Muslim Umbrella Organisations

Existing research has pointed out that it is sometimes difficult to clearly identify legitimisation discourses referring to welfare services, when social and religious activities overlap or are strongly intertwined. This also raises the question of the extent to which it makes sense or is possible for the state to support social services closely linked to religious issues (Kortmann, 2019, 443). To illustrate this, the Islamic Community Milli Görüş (IGMG) serves as an example. IGMG originally had an Islamist background, but has since adapted to the context of Germany's secular system. One of IGMG's goals is to train young people to take over positions in the organisation, which is also linked to promoting integration in school and the labour market, as well as to preventing addiction (Rosenow-Williams, 2012, 283–285; Schiffauer, 2008, 83). Not surprisingly, IGMG refers to social work in the context of internal organisational activities mentioning “demand-oriented offers for the target groups of women's, youth and young women's organisations in the education and social work fields” (IGMG, N.d.). Religious and social categories can be seen mixing and overlapping here in different ways. Against this background, the focus is now on two of the largest Muslim umbrella organisations in Germany (Rohe, 2020), which deal differently with the relationship between religious and social services:

The multi-ethnic Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD), established in 1994 and comprising 35 organisations (some of which are umbrella organisations themselves), is one of the key interlocutors for the state. In its self-presentation, it strongly emphasises the participation, dialogue and unity of the Muslim community:

Sharing a common faith and its cultivation lies at the core of our associational activities. We provide spiritual care for Muslims and help them to build up their social institutions within their communities, such as spiritual care in prisons or youth work. Family, women and parent counselling is particularly dear to us. For this reason, we are involved in the establishment and operation of day-care centres or kindergartens and participate in appropriate public committees. In addition to all-round Islamic education and general education, our educational work is also aimed at promoting and training responsible, mature Muslims who are able to take responsibility for themselves. (ZMD, N.d.)

Both religious services, such as spiritual care and religious education, and social work activities in the field of counselling are mentioned in this text. Keywords are “faith” and “community”. No religious legitimisation is given, and the pragmatic starting point for the organisation's activities is a specific need and the ability of Muslims to care for themselves. This is legitimated by the narrative of the umbrella association, in which supporting local communities is highlighted. However, no reference is made to society or the welfare system.

Among the umbrella organisations, the Turkish-Islamic Union of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DITIB) had initially pushed the institutionalisation of welfare the most. DITIB was established by the Turkish state in 1984 and comprises around 900 local mosque associations (Rosenow-Williams, 2012, 460). Projects in refugee aid played an important role, having already been preceded by projects in interreligious dialogue from 2005 and a counselling hotline project from 2008 (Rosenow-Williams, 2012, 222–226). DITIB created a specific website “DITIB Wohlfahrt” dedicated to welfare issues, which contains a lengthy legitimisation of the organisation’s commitment. The first sentence can be seen as a kind of guiding principle: “Qur’an teaches us how living together in our society is realisable. As DITIB, we contribute to the shaping of the future of our society and promote peaceful coexistence on the basis of Islamic values.” (DITIB, 2015) By referring to universal values such as justice, respect and solidarity, the organisation seeks to show that its Islamic horizon of reference is not in contradiction with German society. The document is structured in six sections: commitment, values, responsibility, inclusion, participation, and respect. Each section starts with a quotation from the Qur’an or the Sunna and is then followed by a secular interpretation including a list of keywords. On the principle of equality of all human beings, it states: “We see it as our duty to help people in need, regardless of their religion, ethnicity or gender and to stand by them in difficult situations.” The document shows a double legitimisation discourse, referring to traditional Islamic authority on one hand and to “moral evaluation legitimisation (...) based on values” (Van Leeuwen, 2008, 109) on the other. The text does not refer to community values, but to a shared “common morality”. The combination of Islamic and secular legitimations corresponds to the public context of welfare work.

Whereas the description of ZMD is strongly community-oriented, the DITIB text succeeds both in satisfying the demands of being a welfare provider and in indicating its own motivational roots. Whether the universal and humanistic approach developed in this document corresponds to the actions of the organisation and its officials is yet another issue, however. Due to its strong political ties with Turkey and a lack of independence (Hintz, 2019, 172), willingness in Germany to cooperate with DITIB is declining and collaboration on the refugee project was suspended in 2016. However, the question remains open as to what extent DITIB member associations or the whole umbrella organisation can emancipate from Turkey and transform itself into an independent civil society organisation.

Islamic Theological Justifications for Universal Welfare

The idea of the welfare system being based on generalised values does not exclude new bodies or approaches, but requires them to gain access to the system’s general values on the basis of their own values. This is also a matter of theological legitimations which are not placed in the foreground of umbrella organisation presentations. In Islam a tradition exists – analogous to Christianity and Judaism – of a religiously

motivated welfare service for the poor, based on the God-human relationship (Singer, 2008). A key issue for Islamic service providers within the German welfare system (referred to by DIK and established welfare organisations) is whether it is possible to build up a universal offer for all beneficiaries, including non-Muslims. As the Islamic-theological debate on this issue has so far been limited in Germany (Ceylan & Kiefer, 2016, 105; Khalfaoui, 2016, 285–286; von Wensierski, 2016, 538–539), two major voices from international research will be presented to address this question: Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Malaysia), from the field of Islamic legal studies, and Farid Esack (South Africa) from the field of Qur’anic studies and liberation theology.

Kamali is the author of numerous standard works and is considered as one of the most influential voices in global Islamic debates. The fact that he refers to the economic weakness of Muslim countries (Kamali, 2010, 258) illustrates that his focus is less on Muslim communities in Western contexts. He emphasises the possibility in Islam for a “welfare system for all citizens (...) independent of such considerations as race, colour and creed” (Kamali, 2010, 190). Following Surah 5:2, which speaks of cooperation in good works (“co-operate with one another in good work and righteousness”), Kamali emphasises an open framework for cooperation:

Cooperation as such is therefore not confined to a strictly religious framework. The address here is also to all people, Muslims and non-Muslims, and all Muslims can join hands in charitable and humanitarian work, indeed in all beneficial work. (Kamali, 2010, 193)

According to Kamali, the focus of assistance is on meeting the requirements of those in need and empowering them to take care of themselves, so that assistance becomes unnecessary (Kamali, 2010, 216). When referring to *zakāt*, Kamali stresses the inclusion of non-Muslims as receivers and emphasises that “no distinction need be made in the offer of help or hospitality to them” (Kamali, 2010, 238).

The Islamic liberation theological approach of Farid Esack starts from a priority option for the oppressed and marginalised (Esack, 1997, 99): “A theology of liberation, for me, is one that works towards freeing religion from social, political and religious structures and ideas based on uncritical obedience.” (Esack, 1997, 83) Thus Esack aims for a structural change of society. The “preferential option for the *mustaḍ’afūn* [oppressed]” (Esack, 1997, 99) is not limited to Muslims. This leads to an inter-religious approach, going beyond differences between religions: “we see an unarticulated solidarity with the marginalised and exploited that crosses narrow doctrinal lines” (Esack, 1997, 203). It is not religious boundaries but the social boundaries between the oppressors and the oppressed that separate people. This enables a humanistic and advocacy-based approach to welfare work, as a joint venture on an inter-religious level. As a liberation theological approach it requires tackling social problems in a structural way.

Both authors state that a universal opening of social services for all is possible in principle from a Muslim perspective and legitimate their position by referring to the Qur’an. Whereas Kamali’s approach is mainly textual, Esack’s is strongly linked to practical experiences of social movements and an analysis of the situation within society. Kamali’s approach could also build a bridge in the German context for

Muslims who are strongly oriented towards normative sources. Esack's position, on the other hand, requires a socio-critical attitude and points in the direction of a social-revolutionary movement. This calls for strong proponents and could cause tension with the cooperative German system, in which welfare organisations are highly dependent on the state and bound to it in loyalty. Meanwhile, Esack's position is being discussed in Germany (Tatari, 2016, 196–220), but not yet in the field of social work. It may contribute to a social-ethical reflection on Muslim legitimations of modern welfare systems, which remains a desideratum.

Conclusion: Perspectives for Islamic Social Work in a Plural Welfare System

The German welfare system has been chosen as an example as religious bodies play a highly institutionalised role in it. At best, the Dutch and Austrian welfare states are comparable, although the inclusion of Muslim welfare providers has so far remained rudimentary in both countries (Hoyer, 2016; Sengers & Noordegraaf, 2013, 263). However, the capacity of the German system to include Muslim organisations and to open spaces for Islamic social work has only begun to take effect. Debate on Muslim welfare activities in Germany within DIK and state-funded refugee aid projects represent the first steps of integration. As quite specific competences in relation to a target group of refugees were required here, support for this domain is unsurprising. The openness of the system towards other welfare activities of Muslim service providers is yet to be negotiated.

As the inclusion of new bodies into the welfare system is disputed, legitimisation discourses are becoming even more important (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 111). To summarise, the analyses in the various sections of this chapter have shown that the affirmative genealogy of the German welfare system can be interpreted in different ways. Besides a general rejection of this system and its qualification as outdated (as by the sociologist Karl-Heinz Boënecker), there are either more inclusive or more exclusive interpretations. Within the dialogical setting of the German Islam Conference (DIK), the participation and necessary recognition of Muslim welfare services are emphasised. This opening process can be interpreted as the “realisation of historically generated ideals and their unfulfilled potential” (Joas, 2013, 135), in a new situation with its particular challenges. In contrast to this, it remains controversial among established welfare organisations to what extent Muslim efforts should be supported. The two divergent positions within *Caritas*, which professes a strong “value commitment” (Joas, 2013, 178) to “openness” serve as an example of the spectrum of positions. Among Muslim umbrella associations, an example of a more self-referential and community-centred discourse (ZMD) and an example of an open discourse with both a religious and a secular basis were shown (DITIB). While the latter can be understood as fulfilling the requirement of openness, the former can be seen as the confirmation of reservations felt towards Islamic

organisations. Theological arguments still only form a minor part of that discourse within Germany, which is why reference has been made to two voices on an international level, Kamali and Esack. Since as a first step, an adaptation to existing standards of social services is expected, it is less likely that liberation-theological approaches, corresponding to a logic of resistance and non-conformity, will be applied at short notice in the German context.

For this reason, an ambivalence between support provided and adaptations required remains: while on the one hand Islamic social work can find space and be promoted within the plural German welfare system, in the long run this may happen at the price of far-reaching secularisation. The beginning of Islamic social work in Germany could thus at the same time herald its end. Hans Joas' concepts of affirmative genealogy and the generalisation of values provide an interpretation which overcomes the dichotomy between their universal validity and the different religious, as well as secular, legitimations of values. Applying these concepts could help Islamic social work to find its place in the plural welfare system without negating its specific profile.

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