Moral Economy and Knowledge Production in a Security Bureaucracy

The Case of the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution

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Germany's 1999/2000 citizenship law marked a shift in the country's self-definition from a non-immigration country to an immigration country. The general opening up of the German nation-state was soon followed by new closures, however. Discussions began on who should, and who should not be accepted as members of the re-invented nation-state. The debate centred on Muslim immigrants. How can Muslim immigrants become part of Germany when they adhere to a religion (and culture) with a long historical position as the quintessential other to European culture and society? What place, in particular, should be assigned to Muslim organisations that provide for doctrine and ritual? As the new Islamic presence in Germany was considered a key challenge for maintaining public security and order, the Ministry of the Interior took the lead in policy development. Within the ministry, security agencies, particularly the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Verfassungsschutz*) played a decisive role in generating knowledge about the newcomers and the structure and formation of Islamic politics.

In this paper, I analyse the ways in which security knowledge is produced in the Ämter für Verfassungsschutz, the "Offices for the Protection of the Constitution".[1] I apply an emic approach, asking how bureaucrats in this institution perceive and categorise Islam, to show how this knowledge constitutes the foundation for various security strategies. I begin by sketching the mission and the vision of the *Verfassungsschutz* and exploring how ideas

1 The offices for the Protection of the Constitution consist of one Federal Office (*Bundesamt*), part of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, and 16 state offices (*Länderämter*).

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about the work ethos and work ethics of office holders are derived from the tasks assigned to them. By analysing one specific product of the work of the *Verfassungsschutz* (a PowerPoint presentation), I show how its vision and mission are translated into a classificatory system characterised by impervious grids. The structural properties of this knowledge, as well as its limitations, are made visible by contrasting it to knowledge obtained by participant observation. Seen in this light, *Verfassungsschutz* classifications appear as categorical straightjackets that fail to capture the dynamics and complexities of Islamic and Islamist communities. This failure, however, remains largely unnoticed in the bureaucratic apparatus, as security knowledge and security practices – such as surveillance and discipline – are intertwined. Conflicts with other state agencies favouring more biopolitical or pedagogical approaches (my example is the field of "de-radicalisation" politics) and moves in favour of more qualitative approaches occasionally emerge, but most are "resolved" in favour of classical security knowledge.

The background to this paper was my constant irritation with the German state's view of Islamic communities as I carried out anthropological field research on the Cologne-based organisation self-described as *Kalifatstaat* ("Caliphate State") between 1990 and 2000 and on the Muslim community Millî Görüş between 2000 and 2010 (Schiffauer 2000; 2010). I was confronted with the fact that state agencies systematically interpreted identical observations differently than I did. This experience was the beginning of this research project aimed at an emic understanding of knowledge production in the security agencies. Since the security establishment proved to be largely inaccessible, direct participant observation was only possible for Islamic actors.

Ethos and ethics in bureaucracies

Ethics are a good point of departure if one wants to understand bureaucracies from an emic perspective. A focus on ethics means asking how moral ideas shape the work of civil servants. This allows access to the self-understanding of professional civil servants and provides an answer to the ques-

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tion: "What do they think they are doing?" (Eckert in this volume), and also: "What do they think they should be doing?"[2]

These questions are related to the vision and the mission of a bureaucracy, which specifies the services a bureaucracy owes society and clarifies the value society obtains from these particular services. Vision and mission are usually formulated by reference to the common good of the nation-state. The mandate of the office defines the ways in which it serves the common good, whether by collecting taxes,[3] organising school infrastructure, engaging in urban planning or providing security. The status of a bureaucracy, as reflected in its annual budget allocations, depends upon the answers to these questions.

The ethics of a specific bureaucracy are derived from these mission statements. They serve as a yardstick that distinguishes good from bad bureaucratic work. The former fulfils the mandate of the office and adds to its value; the latter does not. The ideal thus formulated is never realised completely, but an institution may not depart from it too much – otherwise it is called to order. The vision and the mission of an office are celebrated and regularly remembered at ceremonial events such as political receptions or the appointment of new directors.

Julia Eckert (in this volume) introduces a distinction between ethics and ethos. While the ethics of an office refers to its substantive goals, its ethos refers to its standards of implementation. The work has to be carried out in a way that corresponds to bureaucratic reason. The rationality proclaimed by all state bureaucracies is coherence and consistency; as well as regularity and calculability. Equal cases should be treated the same. This implies an idea of serving the public in an accountable, unbiased, verifiable and controlled, but also in efficient and reliable, way. Like ethics, the ethos of an office is specified by its mandate.

It should be mentioned here that state bureaucracies follow different ethics. Following Foucault's distinction of different types of governmentalities (Foucault 2006a), one can make a key distinction between bureaucracies practicing governmentalities of discipline and surveillance, and bureaucracies practic-

2 The case of the *Verfassungsschutzämter* is a particular case in point. The value of information provided by them was seriously called in question after the end of the Cold War in 1989. There were debates about abolishing them altogether. The Islamist challenge after September 11 enabled the agency to prove its usefulness in the post-Cold War period.

3 See David Foster Wallace's enlightening discussion of the ethos and ethics of a tax bureaucracy (Wallace 2011).

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ing "bio-political" governmentalities. The former see their task as maintaining security and order; the latter find their raison d'être in enabling positive developments, and emphasise control and regulation. This difference is reflected in their respective ethics. Ministries of the interior abide by strikingly different ethics from ministries of family and social affairs or ministries of education. The analysis of ethics allows us to overcome one serious problem of studies of the state: too often the unity of the state is overemphasised, and existing differences between bureaucracies are underestimated. Analysis of the different ethics allows us to conceive of the state as an arena of contestation over how to serve the public good meaningfully and effectively. Additionally, there can be contradictions between ethics and ethos, as Eckert has pointed out. Formally correct actions that are dictated by the work ethos can impede accomplishment of tasks demanded by the ethics of the office. Police officers complaining that legal prescriptions hinder them in carrying out their work in an efficient way are a good example. In these instances, conflicts regularly arise between those in the office demanding exceptions in order to cope with the challenges at hand (and thus do justice to the ethics of the office) and those who defend the ethos of orderly and consistent procedure that guarantees equal treatment of equal cases. While the former consider the latter to be inflexible and stubborn, the latter see the former as acting in an arbitrary fashion. Again, the terminology of ethics and ethos allows us to conceptualise a given bureaucracy as a field of contestation where tension between ethics and ethos is negotiated.

Ethos and ethics in the Offices for the Protection of the Constitution

The Offices for the Protection of the Constitution (*Verfassungsschutzämter*) are domestic intelligence agencies. Their task is to obtain knowledge of planned anti-constitutional activities at an early stage and provide this information to public authorities and (to a limited extent) the general public. The laws that regulate the duties of the *Verfassungsschutzämter* draw two ethical lessons from the traumas of German history. On the one hand, a lesson is drawn from the failure of the Weimar Republic. According to the dominant narrative of history, the democratic centre was crushed by mutually reinforcing radicalism on both left and right, culminating in the National Socialist takeover. Unlike the Weimar Republic, which gave too much space to the enemies

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of democracy, the Federal Republic is supposed to be a *wehrhafte Demokratie*, a "militant democracy" capable of actively defending its democratic substance.[4] The *Verfassungsschutzämter* consider themselves to be the institutional embodiment of this idea. But a lesson may be drawn from the second trauma, which is National Socialism itself. The *Verfassungsschutzämter* must never become a second secret state police (Gestapo). It should be powerful, but must not be in a position to abuse this power. This obvious dilemma is met, above all, by separating intelligence and police action. The *Verfassungsschutzämter* observe and produce knowledge, but refrain from taking action themselves. They have the power of definition, but not of coercion. As an "early warning system", they inform political authorities, other government agencies and the general public about their findings and enable them to take appropriate steps.[5] The connection between state knowledge production and state action is interrupted and an interface is installed, which should allow control of the office. In sum, the ethics of the *Verfassungsschutzämter* are derived from their self-understanding as intelligence agencies in the service of democracy and the rule of law, which is specified by the lessons drawn from the experience of Germany history.

Two further specifications resulting from this self-understanding deserve special mention. The first emphasises early or timely information. The idea is to produce knowledge about *potential* dangers: protecting the constitution requires not only observing groups whose danger is proven, but also those that could be dangerous in the future (ibid.). This ensures the effectiveness of the office. State and society must be informed about developments when they are still in a position to take effective measures. The second is an obligation that the information gathered be made public. This is put into practice through the publication of annual reports, and via exhibitions and special events. The agency must justify why certain groups appear in their reports. Disclosure implies accountability.

This knowledge production is now subject to a special ethos. Several aspects deserve to be mentioned in this context. In order to control the power of the *Verfassungsschutz*, the acquisition of information is subject to strong limitations. The *Verfassungsschützer* are not allowed to carry out inter-

4 This narrative structures the presentation of the history of the Federal Republic in schoolbooks (see, Baumann et. al 2002: 33ff).

5 Gesetz über den Verfassungsschutz in Berlin §5 (1).

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rogations (this is reserved for the police) or to conduct surveys. The office relies mostly on written analyses and informants. Other aspects of their ethos relate to the general observance of neutrality and impartiality characteristic of all public authorities. The demand is that different extremisms be treated analogously, that is, they should not be blind in the "right" eye, the "left" eye or the "Islamic" eye. Finally, the offices have developed a distinctive set of rules aimed at guaranteeing objectivity. Direct contact between evaluators and persons who are being monitored is forbidden in order to prevent identification and "going native". Field data can only be collected indirectly through informants. The co-operation of evaluators, providers and informants has been aptly described by Yassin Musharbash:

> [...] the employees are divided into two tribes: "providers" spend a lot of time outside the offices. They recruit and lead informants – these are mostly shady figures from extremist milieus, who sell information to the service[...] Their insider knowledge [...] sometimes also leads to arrests, the banning of an organisation or the thwarting of a crime[...] Evaluators live at the desk. They pass questions to the providers: Why is X no longer chairman? They transform the information that the providers produce into analytical notes [...] It would be wrong to imagine the providers and the evaluators as a team. Evaluators are not supposed to know informants' identities, providers cannot read the evaluations of the evaluators. They should not influence each other. Providers deliver pieces of a jigsaw [puzzle], evaluators put them together to form a picture. Superiors pass on the picture to policemen, prosecutors, civil servants in the Ministry of the Interior. (Musharbash 2013)

What does that mean for the production of knowledge?

A product delivered

Politicians, the public and the administration expect the *Verfassungsschutz* to provide an overview of groups and tendencies that threaten civil order in the Federal Republic. The Ämter are expected to provide information on the activities of foreign powers on the territory of the Federal Republic (such as espionage) and map the activity of left-wing, right-wing and Islamist extremists. A PowerPoint presentation by the *Verfassungsschutzamt* of

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North Rhine-Westphalia (VNR-W), entitled "Islam and Islamism. Attributes and Developments", produced around 2005 for a public audience, is a good example of how the agency tries to do justice to this expectation.[6] Figures 1a and 1b show how the VNR-W estimated the danger emanating from various Islamist groups, which it is required to do by its mandate.

Figure 1a: Risks according to the readiness to use violence.

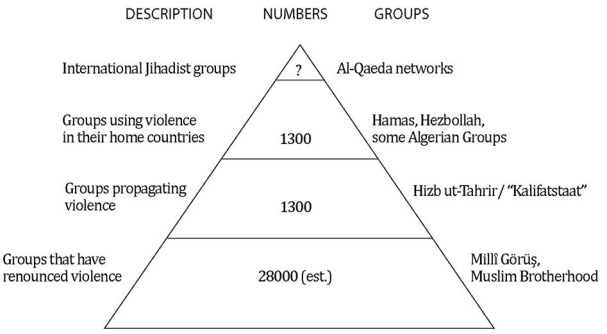
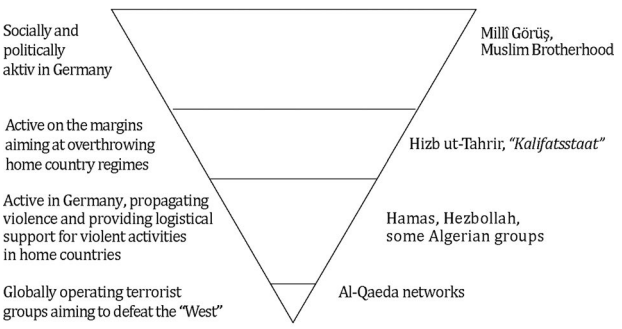


Figure 1b: Risks arranged according to long-term effects (adapted from "Islam and Islamism. Attributes and developments" [VNR-W 2007-8]).



6 It has meanwhile been taken off the internet, probably because it was too revealing of state activities.

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Although outdated (Salafism, very prominent today, did not then figure), it illustrates the kind of knowledge relating to Islam created in the *Verfassungsschutzämter*. It is also good for thinking about connections between ethos and knowledge production.

Knowledge about extremist Islamist groups is arranged in two pyramids according to the size and nature of the risk posed by each group. The presentation translates statements, which were contained in the annual reports, into a scheme. Fig 1a depicts short-term dangers resulting from acts of violence, while Fig 1b depicts long-term dangers for the societal order. Thus the configuration of the map displays the nature and size of the risk.

At the base of the pyramids, one finds violence-abjuring Islamist groups such as Millî Görüş or the Muslim Brotherhood, which are included because they supposedly work to overthrow the German constitution by legal means. Right above them are groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir and the "*Kalifatstaat*", which are nonviolent in Germany but promote the use of violence to liberate their respective homelands. Next come groups participating in armed struggles in their respective homelands, including Hamas and Hezbollah. At the apex, internationally operating terrorists such as Al-Qaeda are represented. The overall idea expressed in juxtaposing the two pyramids is that Millî Görüş and the Muslim Brotherhood pose the least risk with regard to violent attacks but the highest with regard to long-term effects on the societal order; whereas exactly the reverse is true for Al-Qaeda: It presents the greatest risk from terrorist attacks but the least risk relating to societal order.

A number of aspects of this representation deserve attention. First, it is limited to Islamist groups, which are distinguished from Islamic communities. According to the *Verfassungsschutz*, Islam is "religion" in the true sense, whereas Islamism is ideology, namely the "abuse of the religion of Islam for the political aims and purposes of the Islamists".[7] Since Islam as a religion is protected by the constitution, it does not appear in this classification. Second, the categories used to classify groups (nonviolent, violent, etc.) are derived for a very specific perspective, namely, the security of the German nation state. Methodological nationalism structures the presentation. Of course, this is the perspective state agencies have to take, but it must be remembered because there is a marked tendency to forget the positionality of the insights. Thirdly, groups active in Germany are sorted into

7 Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz 2019.

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different risk categories – Millî Görüş[8] and the Muslim Brotherhood are categorised as "renouncing violence" and "socially and politically active groups in Germany", while Hizb-ut Tahrir and the Caliphate State[9] find themselves labelled as "propagating violence", and "active on the margins of local society and struggling to overthrow regimes at home". Thus, the point of view taken differs systematically from one that, for example, a student of Islamic religion would assume, who, aiming at an emic view, might sort them according to schools of theological reasoning or according to genealogy.

The representation is a fine example of the form of state knowledge as a whole. In his lectures on the state, Pierre Bourdieu described the creation of official, public categories, which are generally accepted as valid, as a central act of statehood (2014: 33.34). Homogenous, quantifiable, static and bounded units are created and arranged. With such maps, society is made legible (Scott 1998).

Other authorities (such as integration offices) need and demand this type of knowledge in order to carry out their duties. The 2007-8 PowerPoint presentation acknowledges this by assigning specific administrative strategies to individual categories. While Al-Qaeda is to be fought using military means "such as the destruction of camps and weapons, targeted killing or arrest of fighters and supporters" (VNR-W 2007-8: slide 30), groups using violence in their home counties or otherwise propagating violence should be outlawed (VNR-W 2007-8: slides 31, 32), and groups operating seemingly within the law (which the *Verfassungsschutz* refers to, somewhat misleadingly, as "legalistic Islamist organisations") should be repressed using methods such as tax audits and investigations (VNR-W 2007-8: slide 33).

In *Verfassungsschutz* reports, the same categories that structure the representation of Islamism also structure the representation of right- and left-wing extremism. In all these domains, distinctions are made between groups that reject violence and work politically within society, and groups that directly confront society. Symmetry in representation is made possible by the concept of extremism. Following Backes and Jesse (1996), extremism is seen by the *Verfassungsschutz* as a "collective term for various political endeavours, which share the rejection of the democratic constitutional state and its fundamental values and rules of play" (Verfassungsschutzbericht

8 For Millî Görüş, see Schiffauer 2010.

9 For the "*Kalifatstaat*", see Schiffauer 2000.

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Berlin 2009: 144). This underlying worldview can be represented by several concentric circles. The centre of society is surrounded by a sphere of "soft" extremism (Jesse 2008), within nested spheres of tougher, more violent extremisms. Danger to society comes from the extremist edges.

This theory is attractive to state apparatuses for several reasons. It allows equal treatment of different groups, thus reinforcing the ethos of neutrality and the impartiality of state action. It identifies the State with the "centre of society" and thus stages its centrality. More practically, the theory of extremism assigns answers to threats developed on an earlier field of conflict (let's say, the fight against leftist radicalisation during the seventies) to threats emerging on other fields. The usual sequence of analysis and strategy development is turned upside down: strategy does not follow analysis, but analysis follows strategy. In other words, if strategies of policing have proven successful, it is tempting to organise knowledge production in a manner that fills the same primary categorical distinctions. The role of analysis, then, becomes less of a guide for strategy development, and more of a means to legitimise and rationalise existing strategies.

Translating the territory onto a map

Like all maps, the map discussed here reduces complexity. However, it is important to know what happens to raw data processed according to *Verfassungsschutz* ethics and ethos. Following Latour, I conceive of knowledge production as a multi-step process, in which concrete, object-oriented knowledge is elaborated upon and transformed in several steps, until it becomes cartographic, tabular or statistical knowledge in the end. In this process of reworking, the concreteness and abundance of low-level knowledge are lost. What is gained, however, is comparability and an overview. Latour conceived of this step-by-step reduction and abstraction as a translation process. In our case the steps of translation are from (1) the informant's oral report to the provider's written protocol, to (2) the evaluator's text, drawn from various sources, to (3) the synoptic representation that gives an abstract overview. Following Latour, our analysis consists of determining what is saved and what is lost at every transition. By focusing on translation, Latour places the discontinuities in data processing at the centre of the investigation. None of

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these steps follows automatically. Each requires conscious decision-making and active intervention.

Awareness of these transformation chains is crucial in understanding acquired knowledge. Latour insists that it is impossible to relate the final product of cognitive work – the maps, diagrams, and classifications – directly to the raw components (e.g. Latour 2014: 119 ff). Rather, one must revisit the chain of successive translations step by step. By conceiving of the process this way, he takes an intermediate position between a correspondence-theoretical realism and a constructivism that renounces truth-claims. Applying this insight to our field, we observe that an official report is neither: it is not matter of fact, nor is it deliberate construction. An analysis of the translation processes carried out when producing the reports allows us to understand the specific nature of the knowledge created.

To adequately grasp these processes, one would have to carry out participant observation among *Verfassungsschutz* officials similar to the research Bruno Latour carried out among the pedologists of Boa Vista (Latour 1999). As few other sectors in society are as secretive as the public sector (and intelligence services in particular), this is impossible. I suggest an alternative route that contrasts the *Verfassungsschutz*' scrutiny of the Islamic landscape from above and from a distance with an anthropologist's view from nearby and from the side. This is the view of an educated and trained participant observer. By contrasting the result of participant observation[10] with the map, we learn what is kept and what is lost during data processing.

Five reductions of complexity can be observed. The first concerns the internal plurality of the Islamic communities. When viewed from nearby, they no longer appear homogeneous. Rather, one gets the impression of arenas of intense discussion, with different factions striving to position their community in society at large and determine the course to pursue. The subtext of the debates is mostly the dilemma of continuity and change,[11] which is particularly intense in immigrant communities. Most comprehend that continuity is only possible through change – but one must avoid petrification,

10 Apart from my own research on Islamic communities in Germany (Schiffauer 2000, 2010) I refer to Klinkhammer (2000), Frese (2002) Jonker (2002, 2005, 2006), Tezcan (2002) and Thielmann (2013, 2014). While these scholars differ in their theoretical outlook, they agree on the empirical findings discussed here.

11 This is a basic problem for religions in general. See Ernst Troeltsch (1977/1925) and Latour (2014: 85ff.).

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on the one hand, and self-abandonment on the other. However, the need to achieve this balance in specific areas is controversial. Questions arise in terms of sexual morality and family ethics, political engagement and theological positioning, to name but a few contentious areas. One can observe that a conservative attitude towards sexual ethics does not necessarily correspond to a conservative attitude with regard to politics or theology.[12]

There are some attempts by the *Verfassungsschutz* to do justice to heterogeneity at the community level by introducing "cartographic" sub-divisions. For example, "traditionalists" were at one time distinguished from "reformers" within Millî Görüş; another time there was the attempt to differentiate "fundamentalism" from "extremism/Islamism" (Puschnerat 2006: 219). Nevertheless, such distinctions are too clumsy to do justice to the complexities of negotiation. This is because while categorisations may become more elaborate, they are not dynamic – no matter how intricate the category system becomes, it will always remain rigid. It freezes positions which are in a state of flux. Moreover, compulsory final evaluations are to be made in order to arrive at unequivocal policy recommendations. They necessitate the withdrawal of distinctions introduced earlier in order to make unambiguous knowledge available to decision-making authorities. Certainty is restored. An example of a summarising evaluation may illustrate this:

> Even if some reformers demand a reorientation of Millî Görüş-IGMG, key protagonists still stick to the dogmatic ideals of the original Millî Görüş. It is therefore doubtful whether reforms can be implemented in the organisation or made sustainable. (Verfassungsschutzbericht, 2009: 34)

The quotation shows how distinctions that were introduced (in this case, the demand for reform), are ultimately withdrawn. They remain, but are irrelevant to the overall assessment. The homogeneity thus reproduced has far-reaching consequences. When an IGMG member applied for citizenship, the application was generally denied. It was argued that individual members of an organisation hostile to the constitution could be held responsible for

12 The post-Islamist generation in Millî Görüş communities may serve as an example: their members are religious, frequently stricter than their parents, and at the same time politically more open to the secular rule of law and democracy than their parents (Schiffauer 2010: 158-225).

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the group doctrine. An exception was made only if the applicant could convincingly prove membership of the reformist wing. Thus, the burden of proof was laid on the applicant.

In this context, the rhetoric of numbers deserves attention. A central function of categorisation is to facilitate quantification. Digitisation is a central technique of governmentality (Porter 2015): only what can be expressed numerically "counts" in politics. Every child learns at school that apples and pears should not be counted together unless they are grouped as "fruit". Numbers imply homogeneity, uniformity. They play a crucial role in risk assessment, in evaluation procedures, and in justifying interventions. If the number of members of a category, such as that of "legalistic Islamist organisations", is set at 2900 (in Berlin), readers assume that 2900 individuals have corresponding orientations. In this context, the 2014 report of the Verfassungsschutz carried out a telling turnaround. It states that:

> Meanwhile, some IGMG supporters in Berlin are no longer pursuing extremist goals. Overall, a process of change is to be seen, which shows a growing distance from the extremist ideology of [Necmettin] Erbakan. Internal positions are increasingly occupied by reform-oriented officials. To take this into account, we no longer judge the IGMG as a whole to be extremist, but only those who hold the extremist, "Millî Görüş" ideology. Berlin's *Verfassungsschutz* therefore focuses on those organisations and aspirations whose aims are the implementation of the "Millî Görüş" ideology. This reduces the potential ["legalistic Islamists", WS] in Berlin from 2900 individuals in the IGMG to the 500 IGMG members who support the Millî Görüş movement. (Verfassungsschutzbericht Berlin 2014:66)

Obviously, this drastic change in assessment from one year to the next does not correspond to a sudden reshuffling in organisational membership. Rather, it reflects a gradual, long-term shift that was not represented in the reports for many years. Only when the old figures were no longer tenable was the assessment abruptly re-adjusted.

Constructing indices of attribution is another knowledge problem of sociological interest.[13] As a rule, a verbal statement favouring Erbakan or an

13 On the anthropology of indices, see Rottenburg et al., 2015.

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affirmative reference to Qaradawi[14] (for example, in the context of the European Council for Fatwa and Research) can assign a subgroup or individuals to the "legalistic" group within Millî Görüş. We can observe a double reduction of complexity. On the one hand, people holding a wide range of positions are reduced to a single position (Erbakan on *Adil Düzen* [*Just Order*],[15] Qaradawi on his fatwa related to suicide bombings). On the other hand, the variety of reasons that may inspire personal or group admiration are not taken into account. Someone may revere Erbakan for purely religious reasons, while disregarding his political work. Such veneration may well be compatible with a deeply democratic spirit.

Reduction of complexity also occurs when boundaries are crosscutting and overlap. A close look shows that boundaries between Islamic organisations are anything but clear. In fact, local differences are sometimes greater than disparities between umbrella organisations. By no means is a "liberal spirit" or "greater worldliness" more common in a DİTİB community[16] than in a Millî Görüş community. At close range, seemingly clear boundaries dissolve and are replaced by continuities, overlaps and transitions.

The clear boundary the *Verfassungsschutz* draws between Islam (religion) and Islamism (political ideology) is by no means as distinct as the *Amt* suggests. The question of how far religion is political – and must be political – cannot easily be answered. It constitutes an open search leading to provisional answers. Religions put God, man, nature and society in a relationship that cannot be reduced to a private relationship between God and the believer. Yet, all religions define worldly tasks from their basic understanding of these relationships. Many believers are faced by the dilemma of how much

14 Yusuf Abdallah al-Qaradawi is an Islamic legal scholar, television preacher and author. In the context of the "European Council for Fatwa and Research", he has spoken out for the further development of Islamic jurisprudence in order to into take account the situation in Europe. From an internal Islamic perspective, he is seen as one of the legal scholars practicing a liberal interpretation of Islamic law (Caeiro 2003 and Schiffauer 2010, 233ff., on the relationship between Millî Görüş and the Council). Qaradawi became a target of the *Verfassungsschutz*, because he defended suicide bombings in Palestine, arguing that otherwise an equality of arms would not exist (Schiffauer 2010: 237).

15 Adil Düzen: "Just Order" is a document in which Necmettin Erbakan laid down his vision of an Islamic state in 1993. For more on Adil Düzen, see Schiffauer 2010: 69ff.

16 The DİTİB is an Islamic umbrella organisation affiliated with the State Office of Religious Affairs (DIYANET) of the Turkish Republic. Officially it stands for a secular interpretation of Islam.

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compromise can be made in dealing with the world. Where must one draw the line? Like the aforementioned dilemma of continuity and change, this challenge opens up ways of manoeuvring between an ethics of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik)* and an ethics of conscience (*Gesinnungsethik*),[17] and leads to novel – usually provisional – answers that may redefine community boundaries. One example is a movement in the Millî Görüş community away from what I called populist Islamism towards a mainly post-Islamist religious community (Schiffauer 2010). Here, the relationship to the world was constantly renegotiated. Of course, some communities emphasise the borders that separate them from the outside, maintaining an internal cohesion and consciously creating a far-reaching consensus.[18] However, these communities are minoritarian. Most Muslim believers would condemn them as sectarian, since the emphasis on boundaries is divisive and abhorrent to the Islamic quest for unity.

State authorities' desire for clear boundaries also reflects a widespread fear of public scandals or legal objections. The need to justify political decisions leads to a tendency to emphasise the boundaries between categories, and to exaggerate the differences between them. If a politician "categorically" refuses an invitation by a particular organisation, he has to give good reasons as to why he makes this distinction. The "legalist", violence-advocating, or violence-promoting categories of Islamism must be clearly distinguished so that differential treatments can be justified and will stand up in court decisions. In other words, political reasons require "discriminatory distinctions" (Farschid 2015: 143). These political considerations, however, have to remain hidden, and it is instead claimed that these distinctions arise from the nature of things.

Another reduction of complexity relates to the apprehension of temporality. We have already discussed this in the context of homogenisation. Categorical knowledge is sluggish. This is probably due to the fact that categorical knowledge produces fixed "identities". Categorical thinking starts with continuity and considers change as exceptional or requiring an explanation. This differs from hermeneutic-procedural thinking, which takes its depar-

17 The dilemma between an ethics of responsibility and an ethics of conscience was developed by Max Weber in his essay on "Politics as profession" (*Politik als Beruf*) (1919/1994).

18 See, e.g. my description of the "*Kalifatstaat*" (Schiffauer 2000).

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ture from change, and considers the emergence of continuity or the consolidation of "identities" as phenomena requiring explanation.

As mentioned above, complexity reduction also results from the symmetrical treatment of different kinds of extremisms. Criticism of the distortions that arise from the analogous treatment of left- and right-wing extremisms has recently been voiced, especially by left-wing social scientists.[19] In this context, the distortions are even greater when the categorical apparatus is applied to Islamism. This is because left-wing and right-wing extremisms are secular movements, whereas Islamism is grounded in religion. The motivations, debates, and developmental logic of Islamism cannot be understood when it is marked as a "political ideology". Here, too, it suffices to illustrate this with a single example: if one takes Islamism as a political ideology, one considers the ramifications of the Muhammad cartoons essentially from the standpoint of political mobilisation. The Islamist appears to "instrumentalise" and "abuse" religious feelings. The fact of a genuinely felt religious harm is withdrawn from consideration and is no longer seen as a motive for political action.

Finally, complexity reduction results from the imperative to make findings public. This implies accountability. The *Verfassungsschutz* has to justify why it observes one group but not another with a similar outlook. In order to legitimise and rationalise decision-making, the office must stress the differences between them. Idiosyncrasies become emphasised as essential attributes. This has to be done in a manner that withstands court challenges. In other words: groupings are made more different than they appear on ground. Continuities that exist in reality are replaced by discontinuities.

To summarise: When processing the data in order to map the field of Islamic communities, the *Verfassungschutz* saves the content but discards the structure. All the positions mentioned in the reports exist; the problem lies in sorting them into fixed categories. In the translation process, an extremely complex, heterogeneous and dynamic field comes to be represented in a static map. That which is fluid is fixed; the porous is made water-tight; the heterogenous made homogenous. In short, a categorical fiction is produced.

Differences between bureaucratic and everyday knowledge have been emphasised by other ethnographers of state apparatuses, notably James Scott (1998), David Graeber (2015) and Michael Herzfeld (1993). All three

19 See the debate in *Politik und Zeitgeschehen*, Heft 47/2008.

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formulate a sweeping criticism of bureaucratic knowledge and demand its replacement with practical knowledge, *metis* (Scott), or hermeneutics (Graeber). What they do not see is that categorical knowledge cannot be replaced by other forms of knowledge because it is (also) an expression of administrative rationality. State action requires categorical knowledge to fulfil the state's mandate to carry out and enforce decisions that have been reached democratically. There is no administration without categorisation. Hermeneutical knowledge does play a role in administrative practice: it comes into play in discretionary practice,[20] or in potential challenges to administrative decisions. But doing justice to individual cases must remain the exception in administrative practice. It is time consuming, costly and inefficient.

Categorical knowledge is also required when security issues are involved. While hermeneutical knowledge allows qualitative insights (for example, into the nature of radicalisation), it cannot be used to estimate how many violent Islamists are around. Although it concedes that there *are* violent Islamists, it insists that the phenomenon cannot be clearly defined and that numbers are illusionary. This type of knowledge does not allow the administration of security, nor the planning or legitimisation of security measures.

Categorical knowledge is thus double faced – it permits repression, on the one hand, but limits government action, on the other. The principle of proportionality, crucial for security policy in the democratic state, cannot be based on hermeneutical knowledge that emphasises transitions and processes. Ultimately, with a security policy based on hermeneutical knowledge, anybody or nobody could come under suspicion. Categorical knowledge, by contrast, promises to limit, isolate and then "combat" problematic phenomena in an almost surgical manner. For good or bad, security agencies focus on some, but leave the rest in (relative) peace. Finally, hermeneutic knowledge makes it very difficult to establish legal responsibilities and accountability. Thus, categorical knowledge undergirds state governance and the maintenance of social order. When the ability to distinguish and to differentiate disappears, totalitarianism results.

Much of governance is based on categorical fictions. One must act "as if" it were possible to draw clear boundaries and separate categories. The issue is not to do away with the maps, as Scott and Graeber demand, but rather, to

20 This has been intensively discussed in the literature on street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky 1980, Evans and Harris 2004, Hupe 2013, Buffat 2015, Evans 2015).

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reflect on the process of knowledge production out of which a map is produced. Awareness of this "as if", of the contingent character of the knowledge base, is crucial for good administrative practice. Only if civil servants apprehend that the map is not the territory will they avoid problematic and unintended consequences. This, however, is difficult, as I will show in the next section.

Five mechanisms for confusing the map and the territory

Five mechanisms work to conceal the fact that categorical knowledge only partly grasps the complexities and temporalities of facts on the ground.

First, the constructedness of categorical knowledge often escapes its architects. Two aspects seem to be central to this operational blindness. One lies in the practice of boundary-drawing itself. Setting and drawing boundaries are acts of "de-fining" (literally, "setting limits") a phenomenon. One establishes its "essence", what it is, by setting it apart from what it is not. The act of definition is a decisive step towards the essentialisation of the phenomenon. Not only are limits defined, the suggestion is that they relate to substance. This suggestion is reinforced because each definition also structures perception. It constitutes a paradigm (Kuhn 1962/1976) and exhibits all the mechanisms captured so well in Kuhn's analysis. One sees what one expects to see and takes this as a proof that things are actually as represented. But the practical organisation of intelligence work also contributes to operational blindness. The separation of informants, providers and evaluators required by *Verfassungsschutz* ethics may guarantee "objectivity" to some degree, but it also systematically reduces the information that appears in the reports. As evaluators receive only second-hand information, they cannot access the contradictions and complexities that arise in face-to-face interactions. They get no "feel" of the situation, which might help them to question or contextualise indexical clarity.

A second mechanism derives from the interface management required by institutional ethos. The *Verfassungsschutz* does not take on an operational role itself. It "only observes" and informs other authorities, who operate based on knowledge the *Verfassungsschutz* provides. On the one hand, this process limits their offices' field of activity (which is wanted); on the other hand, it solidifies and objectivises knowledge.

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Mapmakers – in this case *Verfassungsschutz* evaluators – are at least partly aware of the problems related to mapping. They know what difficulties arise when sorting phenomena into categories transforms continuities into discontinuities; they also understand the difficulties arising when phenomena do not fit. However, this perspective-granting insight disappears when knowledge is transferred to another place.

This became very clear to me when I reconstructed a security hearing held in Munich in 2012 concerning a citizenship application from a member of Millî Görüş. These hearings are required when somebody admits to membership in a group classified as extremist (from a list provided to them) during the application process. A section head (*Sachgebietsleiterin*) in the office responsible for foreigners (*Ausländeramt)*, a civil servant who did not belong to the *Verfassungsschutz*, conducted the hearing. She was briefed by a letter from the *Verfassungsschutz* summarising information in the reports. What constituted the endpoint for the *Verfassungsschutz* was the starting point for the interlocutor in charge of the hearing. She had no knowledge of the complex processing of information underlying the summary given to her. The civil servant had to take the statements literally – as a reality upon which to act. On this basis, the security hearing was conducted and developed its own dynamics. The applicant was confronted with "objective" information that portrayed the Millî Görüş as political, whereas she herself had experienced it as religious. Faced with this, she had two choices: either to state that she had been deceived by her co-believers and her first-hand knowledge was wrong, or to insist that all she had seen and experienced in the community was purely religious. She opted for the latter and her testimony was interpreted as the claims of a clever Islamist. How could she not have realised the organisation's political character? The hearing turned into a farce, with its very purpose (to do justice to the specific features of the case) thereby undermined.[21] The case shows how an operational structure based on an ethical principle – the separation of knowledge gathering and official implementa-

21 The relevance of this point became particularly clear when she appealed to the courts. In the court hearing, which I was able to attend, it became transparently obvious that the presiding judge was in a situation similar to that of the section head described above. He formed his opinion based on documents prepared by the *Verfassungsschutz*. He was blatantly in the proverbial situation of the blind man hearing a description of the colour red. In this case, the *Verfassungsschutz* representative felt compelled to point out that the specific culture of mosque communities had to be taken into account in order to arrive at

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tion – can work in reverse. What was meant as a restriction of *Verfassungsschutz* power (it only observes), in fact reinforces its power of definition. Its knowledge is regarded as absolute because the construction of knowledge has been obscured.

A third mechanism derives from the logic of security politics. The fact that the security services analyse hazards means that information provided by the *Verfassungsschutz* is taken seriously and given great weight. In particular, it is tempting for politicians to accept the *Verfassungsschutz* reports uncritically and act accordingly. If nothing happens, this can be attributed to the implementation of expert recommendations. If something does happen, blame can be laid at the feet of the *Verfassungsschutz*. By making the knowledge provided by the Verfassungsschutz the basis of action, it is solidified and re-affirmed.[22]

The secretiveness that characterises the work of the *Verfassungsschutz* is a fourth, powerful mechanism justified by the fact that "that the office's role in constitutional protection requires it to protect its sources". This may be so, but it also obscures the production of evidence. While other knowledge producers, such as the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) or university departments, generate data from which conclusions are drawn transparently and which are therefore open to review, this is not the case with the *Verfassungsschutz*. The risky translations that guide any process of knowledge production remain hidden. Ultimately, the *Verfassungsschutz* demands unconditional faith in its findings – and thus trust in the state. It is remarkable how well this technique works: reference to esoteric knowledge, accessible only to initiates, triggers a kind of theological reflex. Remarkably, its obscurity increases, rather than diminishes, the willingness to believe it.

Finally, a fifth mechanism relates to the fact that administrative categories are highly self-fulfilling. Individuals and groups subjected to categorisation have very few options other than to play along and thus affirm the labels. Even if they feel they are wrongly represented, they have no effective

a proper understanding. He thus pointed out cognitive gaps in the paperwork, of which he was aware, but which were not evident to an outsider.

22 It should be mentioned some prominent politicians, like the former senator of the interior of Berlin, Erhart Körting, criticised this tendency of political actors as a refusal of political responsibility. A negotiation process in which security arguments are weighed against integration arguments and the basis of knowledge from the *Verfassungsschutz* is checked would enhance political responsibility.

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alternative but to defend themselves in those terms ("We are not Islamists"), or to partner in dialogues (such as the *Islamkonferenz*) or on boards (like those set up for Islamic Theology). The fact that people who are classified also use the classifications, *nolens volens*, only insisting that they are put in the wrong box, confirms their validity. As everybody agrees on the script, it becomes the basis for interaction and its artificiality tends to be forgotten.

All these mechanisms contribute to the ever-increasing consolidation of *Verfassungschutz* knowledge. In the end, map and territory become indistinguishable. The "as if" character of categorical knowledge remains deeply hidden.

Biopolitical challenges

As long as the state apparatus is administering, surveilling and disciplining, the mapping itself is largely self-affirming. Only when dealing with exceptions, as in discretionary practice, do differences between map and territory become visible. But these exceptions confirm the rule rather than question it.

However, ethical conflicts exist with biopolitically oriented state agencies that see their task less as administrative, and more as focused on finding proactive solutions to societal problems through the organisation of dialogue and participation. Departments and initiatives involved in the area of integration policy do not differ from security agencies in their vision of the common good. But they arrive at other strategies to pursue their aims. While security agencies see their task as surveilling and disciplining, integration agencies see their task as the organisation of *living* together. In this case, they set up a framework for Islamic *life* in Germany. Following Foucault, the logic of integration policies is the logic of control and regulation aimed at bringing forth subjects who rule themselves.[23] State agencies and initiatives active in the field of biopolitics often find the mapping developed by the *Verfassungsschutz* too rigid and misleading.

23 This formulation draws heavily on Foucault's work on governmentality and biopolitics. I don't see this in terms of a regime based on surveilling and disciplining being replaced by one characterized by control and regulation. The different techniques work side by side, at least in the security apparatus, however there are tensions between the different logics of governance (Foucault 2006a/2006b).

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Examples of biopolitical initiatives concerning Islam in Germany include the Islam Conference (Tezcan 2012), the establishment of Islamic theological programs at universities in the Federal Republic, as well as various deradicalisation policies and all kinds of pedagogical intervention. The idea is to create consensus and identification through dialogue, involvement and persuasion (Friedrich Ebert Foundation 2015). Here, the emphasis on soft control and encouragement implies quite a different ethics and ethos from that of the security agencies. Integration agencies represent a benevolent authoritarianism. Their task is to domesticate. Their ethics and ethos resemble those of good teachers. They are committed to openness, respect and understanding while never forgetting the asymmetrical character of their relationships. They share with the security agencies the conviction that it is necessary to set limits and to be completely clear about what is acceptable and what not. But whereas categorical knowledge is the basis of action for security agencies and qualitative knowledge becomes important when dealing with exceptions, biopolitical approaches reverse this order. They generally rely on qualitative knowledge of the particular; categorical knowledge only comes in play when drawing red lines.

When dealing with Islam, the two ethics clash from time to time. Departments and individuals in charge of integration, for example, are in favour of community initiatives signalling support for an open society. Building up self-regulatory mechanisms is what they're looking for. For example, the project "Isl'amour – hand in hand against forced marriage" by Muslim Youth (2009)[24] was supported by the local District Office of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg of Berlin, whose civil servants knew the activists personally and assumed that the most effective interventions came from the communities themselves. Despite strong support, the Federal Ministry of Family and Social Affairs rejected their request for funding, arguing that some cooperation partners were listed as extremists in the *Verfassungsschutzbericht* (the Muslim brotherhood and Millî Görüş). What the District Office construed as an argument in favour of the project (initiatives coming from within conservative communities themselves) was a no-go for the security agencies (sup-

24 Others include the "Dialogue – Young People for Human Rights" project (2009) and the "Youth against Violence" project (2010) in Braunschweig, which tried to foster cooperation with the police against street violence.

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port would blur boundaries and legitimise legalist Islamist organisations). The security agencies had the final say.

Civil servants at the local District Office felt that they were relegated to second-class status and expressed serious dissatisfaction with the procedure. They felt particularly bitter because they received no more detailed knowledge justifying the denial of funding than did their Muslim clients. All they learned was that the two organisations concerned were under surveillance by the *Verfassungsschutz*, information they already possessed. No concrete evidence was given about individuals involved in the project. They felt that the verdict, based on schematic categorical knowledge, stigmatised precisely the group that they had tried to win over for the development of civil society. They argued that promoting these projects would have improved the standing of progressive activists in their communities. Refusal would weaken progressive circles, justifying the views of community members who regard such initiatives as illusionary, "because society does not want Islam anyway". Finally, the civil servants expressed regret that they could not articulate their dissatisfaction about the decision in public. All comments were "off the record".

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined knowledge production in the *Verfassungsschutzämter* to show how it is structured by the ethics and ethos of the office as the institutionalisation of *wehrhafte Demokratie*. Taking Islamist communities as my example, I demonstrated that the knowledge produced certainly reflects the landscape of production but reflects it in a special way. It is a scientific-ethical hybrid – and an adequate understanding of it has to take into account its hybridity. It cannot be criticised in a purely scientific way, in terms of the validity and reliability of its insights. If one questions the validity of a clear categorical distinction between Islamism and Islam, one is told that this question is beside the point because there are ethical reasons that necessitate making it and upholding it. Or if one points to distortions arising from the division of work between "providers" and "evaluators", one us informed that the applicable work-ethos discourages seriously questioning this, given the specific historical precedent of the *Gestapo*.

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Of course, categorical knowledge has serious shortcomings. It provides static maps of a highly fluid field. This becomes a problem for other state agencies that share the same idea of the common good but derive other strategies – i.e. biopolitical ones – to achieve it. This results in a clash of ethics and ethos among different state agencies. It is the clash between juridico-political ethics and ethos aiming at controlling bodies, and biopolitical-pedagogical ethics and ethos aiming at winning hearts. It would be possible in principle to solve this contradiction by emphasising the constructedness and artificiality of *Verfassungsschutz* knowledge. This is not easy, and we have pointed out the obstacles. The result is, however, that the map is taken as the territory. And this causes state agencies to stumble and trip when it comes to dealing with Muslim communities.

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