Own or foreign heritage? Young Muslims in Auschwitz (2012–2021)

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Introduction

The *Young Muslims in Auschwitz* project (Young Muslims in Auschwitz), that was carried out in Duisburg from 2012 to 2021, deals with antisemitism among young male Muslims in Germany. For the investigation of this project, however, this study formulates a broader thesis: antisemitism is the common legacy of different groups in Germany. It also advocates the idea that antisemitism is a heritage that links, often unconsciously, German history with current identity constructions of Muslim immigrants who have a nationalistic or religious background.

Antisemitism, understood as a form of exclusion, disparagement, and demonization of the "Jewish" Other, is still very present thoughout Germany (Messerschmidt 2007). The reasons for this phenomenon are as diverse as the forms of antisemitism itself. In addition to an antisemitism of European origin, an antisemitism among immigrant Muslims can be detected, partly due to religious and political reasons (Mansour 2022). Both forms of antisemitism have common roots, at least to a certain extent. Even if this research focuses on the antisemitism among Muslims, it does not neglect its links to other forms of Jew hatred in Germany.

The legacy of antisemitism is considered not a positive but a negative one, and it collides with the official German self-image of today. Ideally, this heritage (as an idea) should not be passed on. Places to become aware of the (negative) legacy of the Holocaust are the former concentration camps, the largest of which is Auschwitz. The question of the extent to which German Nazi memorials can also serve as places of anti-racist education for migrants to learn about German history has occupied the memorial education system for some time. On the one hand, there is an awareness that in a migration society the narratives for teaching the Holocaust have to be differentiated; on the other hand, educators experience that some migrants (or Germans with a migration background) are openly antisemitic. This is where Young Muslims in Auschwitz comes in: it was initiated by the Duisburg Germanist and educator Burak Yılmaz in 2011. Yılmaz conducted the memorial trips to Auschwitz with

young male Muslims between the ages of 16 and 20 from a youth center in his hometown and then worked through their experiences by using theatrical pedagogy. In 2018, Yılmaz received the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for his commitment against antisemitism.

Based on the theoretical model of divergent "memory frames" (Assmann 2018, p. 157),[1] it will be shown how antisemitism is passed on in the memory of families. In this way, family memories actively contribute to identity constructions that reproduce various current forms of antisemitism. To examine this phenomenon in the Young Muslims in Auschwitz project, the research evaluates different sources, including Burak Yılmaz' autobiography, media documentations, and an interview conducted with him. It attempts to answer the question of whether a visit to memorial sites can contribute to breaking down antisemitic narratives, create new paradigms and strengthen the perspective of a common heritage, even if it is a negative one that Germans share with some groups of Muslime migrants.

Plural remembering? Forms of collective memory

There are numerous approaches to the study of memory and remembrance. This research will draw on the notions of Harald Welzer (Welzer et al. 2002; 2011) and Aleida Assmann (2007; 2008; 2016; 2018). Both are based on the theory of collective memory by Maurice Halbwachs and describe forms of memory in groups. The "frames of reference" (Halbwachs 1985, p. 143) that Halbwachs had identified for such collective commemoration can be social, religious, or societal in nature. In any case, they strive for an alignment of remembering and commemoration (Halbwachs 1985). This suggests that collective remembering does not take place freely, but "under the pressure of society" (Halbwachs 1985, p. 158).

Modern societies develop different forms of collective memory (Assmann 2016), which also span different ranges. National memory has a large scope. It refers to the form of collective memory through which the nation assures itself of its history (Assmann 2018). The social and political framings that construct a national memory are communicated through a public culture of memory and lay the foundation for the identity of an "imagined nation" (Anderson 2005). This national memory is represented by institutions and bodies responsible for processes of education and transmission, such as cultural heritage. In this sense, national memory is strategic in nature and "no longer has involuntary moments because it is deliberately and

1 For better readability, quotations from German literature have been translated into English. Unless otherwise indicated, these are the author's own translations. German sources are marked as such in the bibliography.

symbolically constructed. It is a memory of will and calculated choice" (Assmann 2008).[2]

Private memory is less strategic, but all the more dynamic. It is integrated into relationships with various groups in which the individual locates himself or herself. Welzer speaks of "milieus" or "we-groups" (Welzer 2011, p. 170), among which the family, religion, or social classes are the most prominent. With regard to family memory, the term already names the scope: it is constituted intergenerationally in that personal memories are repeated, often in fragmentary form, within the family. It is thus based on narratives that have been handed down, which contain subjective descriptions and toward which the listeners adopt an empathetic attitude.

Welzer has used German family memory to illustrate how narratives (for example of the family's Nazi past) are modified and often given their own meaning through trading, listening, commenting, and retelling: "families celebrate their history as a community of interaction in 'conversational remembering', in talking together about the past, and this is about confirming the social identity of the we-group" (Welzer 2011, p. 165). Loyalty to stories is therefore an essential value in family memory, which results in each narrator "co-thematizing and perpetuating his family's self-design in each of his memory narratives" (Welzer 2011, p. 171).

Assmann also sees in family memory "an important but still largely underestimated part of world history that enables new approaches to it" (2007, p. 90). The question of whether and to what extent the contents of family and national memories coincide or diverge is not easy to answer. Divergent memories usually indicate a lack of congruence between group memories and public memory culture. This is also true in migration societies, which include groups whose family memories are based on different narratives than the public memory culture. This will now be tested on the topic of antisemitism.

Common heritage? Forms of antisemitism

Wolfgang Benz (2005) distinguishes between four categories of hatred against Jews, that occur in both historical and contemporary form: Christian anti-Judaism, racist antisemitism, secondary antisemitism,[3] and Israel-related antisemitism.

2 The question to what extent history, i.e. historiography, should be seen as separate from collective memory is controversial. For Burke, history is a "social memory", while Assmann argues for emphasizing the time and interest-related dependencies of historiography, but not for equating memory and historiography (Moller 2010).

3 Secondary antisemitism is closely related to the German culture of remembrance after 1945. It articulates itself as a defense strategy against responsibility for the Holocaust and practices a perpetrator-victim reversal, according to which the Jews "are themselves to blame […] for not being liked" (Benz 2005, p. 59).

Currently, all four categories of antisemitism can be identified in Germany, often in hybridized form (Gruberová and Zeller 2021; Mansour 2022).

For the present study, forms of racist antisemitism and Israel-related antisemitism are of particular importance. Historically, racist antisemitism, which disqualifies "the Jew" as the Other, goes back to homogenization tendencies of European nations in the 19th century, and is based on culturalist and biologistic arguments as well as on well-known stereotypes and conspiracy theories. In Germany, it comes in the varieties of classical right-wing radicalism and Islamist antisemitism. Since German right-wing radicalism is directed against both Jews and Muslims (most recently in the Halle and Hanau attacks), the phenomena of racism and antisemitism are sometimes equated in public debates. However, researchers of migration and antisemitism reject such a "victim-identified" perspective. Muslims as well as Jews have experienced discrimination, but under different circumstances. While racism manifests itself exterritorialy as a consequence of imagined civilizational superiority or towards the outwardly "foreign", hatred against Jews is triggered by a projected inferiority directed at people without differential characteristics in their own country (Messerschmidt 2007).[4]

In the Arab world, too, antisemitism has diffused religious, cultural, and political roots. As Georges Bensoussan (2019) has shown, it goes back to the Middle Ages, thus invalidating the myth of a peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Jews. However, it was only through European influence on the colonized Arab countries in the 19th century that a specific racist antisemitism developed there as well, following the European model in its characteristics and stereotypes (Grigat 2019). Becker also shows that Germany played a special role in the formation of "Islamist" antisemitism. For example, a program was broadcasted from Berlin to the Arab countries between 1939 and 1945 "whose content consisted largely of antisemitic propaganda. [...] In cooperation with Arab antisemites in German exile (such as the Mufti of Jerusalem), 'a National Socialist reading of the Koran' was produced [...]" (2020, p. 80). In view of such an export of European antisemitism with a racist tint, its assimilation by Arab nationalism, and finally its reimport by migration from Turkey and Arab states to Germany, it is fair to speak of a common heritage of racist antisemitism.

Israel-related antisemitism is more recent, has its origins in anti-Zionism and is directed against the Jewish state of Israel, which denies its right to exist by attempting to delegitimize it politically. This antisemitism is handed down not only

4 The fact that this differentiation is possibly relativized by the flight and expulsion of Jewish fellow citizens from the countries of Europe and also from almost all Arab countries since the Second World War, as well as by the founding of the state of Israel, since the countries mentioned have deprived themselves "of the concrete projection surface within" (Grigat 2019, p. 25), may play into the hands of the recently frequent equation of racism and antisemitism.

by Arab states and currently by Turkey, but also by representatives of the German left who declare their solidarity with Palestine and demand a right of return for the displaced population (Schu 2017). While the legacy of antisemitism is seen as negative in the official European culture of remembrance, strategically deployed antisemitism in some Islamic countries creates positive self-images (Mansour 2022). Racist antisemitism of a nationalist character is often mixed with an antisemitism critical of Israel, which is an "ideal" projection surface for antisemitic conspiracy theories. In migrant households from Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria, it is supported by narratives that preserve experiences of flight, violence, and expulsion.

National remembrance? National Socialist memorials and the Holocaust

For German memory culture, the Holocaust is one of the major, if not the major topic. In this function, it represents not only the "main reference point of all post-national German identity constructions" (Boldt 2019, p. 49), but also of European memory. Numerous Nazi memorials across Europe provide authentic testimony of the Holocaust; in this respect, they are materialized expressions of a collective memory and an institutionalized culture of remembrance of a negative legacy. The fact that access to the message of Nazi memorials can be different for individual visitor groups has been emphasized by Assmann (2021). For three of these groups she has named a paradigm, i.e., an approach of learning, which will be briefly outlined here. These paradigms will later be valuable as a frame of reference for the identity work of the adolescents in the Young Muslims in Auschwitz project.

According to Assmann (ibid), the paradigm of identification, that is victim-identified learning from history, is relevant for the victims of the Holocaust. For them, the camps represent sites of suffering and cemeteries. By visiting memorials such as Auschwitz, they "identify with the persecuted and dead of the Shoah and become part of their history through their memory" (Assmann 2021, p. 95). Thus, the paradigm of identification frames and actualizes the collective memory of the descendants: "with the Holocaust all Jews were hit, therefore the descendants are also part of this collective of victims; in their memory they take the dead with them into their future" (Assmann 2021, p. 95).

The paradigm of ethics, on the other hand, is relevant for the heirs of the perpetrators, who see the camps primarily as the "crime scenes" (Reemtsma 2010, p. 4) of their ancestors. The paradigm of ethics formulated by the Allies after the Second World War as a requirement consisted in the "condemnation of the deeds as well as in remorse and mourning in the face of this violent excess of one's own history" (Assmann 2021, p. 96). It called Germans not only to confront their past, but also to reflect, remorse, and transform their collective identity: "The ethical paradigm culmi-

nates in an emphatic 'Never again!'" (ibid).[5] Although the newly founded Federal Republic immediately joined this paradigm on the official level, it took decades before the majority of the civilian population was also ready to come to terms with the Holocaust (Assmann 2016; Werker 2016). This attitude slowly changed in the 1980s, when Nazi memorials were increasingly in demand as historical learning sites. Schools and the media perceived them as "places of historical-political, ethical education with a certain devotional character" (Knigge 2010, p. 11). However, it took a major historical event such as German reunification to anchor the commemoration of the Holocaust centrally in the collective memory and make it a "hallmark of political culture in Germany" (Messerschmidt 2009, p. 30). In the unique situation of bringing together two German states, the actors of reunification saw the opportunity to present Germany as a nation that was aware of its responsibility for the Holocaust and that formulated a new identity on this basis (Levy and Sznaider 2007). The all-German identity was thus based on the paradigm of ethics and a negative commemoration (Knigge 2010), which offered both the chance for an intense reappraisal of the past and the danger of a state-imposed memory imperative and of popularization: "Learning from negative pasts quickly reduces to moral appeals" (Knigge 2010, p. 14).

The third paradigm, the paradigm of empathy, stems from the fact that shortly after the final incorporation of the Holocaust into national memory, Germany acknowledged its status as a country of immigration. This was accompanied by a pluralization of memories and of official memory frames. Even as reunified Germans were forming themselves as "members of a memory community" (Werker 2016, p. 35) in commemorating the Holocaust, Germans with an immigrant background were asking themselves the question of their belonging to this historical memory frame – after all, they generally did not have Nazi perpetrators in their families and thus did not feel committed to the paradigm of ethics. The national memory frame of the unified Germany, as soon as it was formed, thus excluded those Germans who could not define their belonging through a Nazi past. In this context, the "ethnicization" (Assmann 2016, p. 128) of the collective memory frame, or, in the words of Meseth, its "tendency toward the exclusive" (Meseth 2002, p. 16), became evident. With it, despite all immigration, the notion of belonging qua origin prevailed. The resulting moments of Othering were also evident in institutionalized educational work, for example in history classes. Thus, Jewish students reported that they were considered by their teachers to be predestined for a presentation on the Holocaust (Gruberová and Zeller 2021). Muslim students, on the other hand, were assumed to be disinterested in the topic (Völkel 2017).

5 Reemtsma emphasize that this narrative did not apply to the GDR, "which cultivated an exclusively heroic memory of the heroes of the communist resistance and therefore saw no reason for a reversal or ethical turn" (2010, p. 5).

The new memory framework also affected the work of memorial sites for Nazi crimes, which in the migration society had to ask themselves what value a visit to a memorial site could have for people who were German, but as immigrants without a Nazi past (Thimm, Kößler and Ulrich 2010). As a new pedagogical approach, critical historical scholarship formulated the function of memorial sites for Nazi crimes as "contact zones" (Sternfeld 2016), or as places of "relational history" (Messerschmidt 2009), describing them as "social spaces where different social and cultural positions meet" (Sternfeld 2016, p. 82). In these "contact zones", access via empathy should help. Empathy, understood as an "emotional and cognitive resource innate to all human beings" (Assmann 2021, p. 96), was meant to provide access to the subject beyond the developed victim-perpetrator discourse in which roles were already (ethnically) distributed. The paradigm of empathy seemed thus suitable for groups of visitors who "have no historical connection to the trauma" (ibid). These included people with a migration background (Georgi 2003; Gryglewski 2013; Georgi et al. 2022). However, they had to face a different challenge: they had to match their national memory frame with their family memory and negotiate their own belonging to German society (Werker 2016). How complex this process can be will now be shown.

Methods

The following study primarily conducts secondary research by qualitatively evaluating various documents (books, articles, documentaries, interviews) on the project. Particularly relevant are Burak Yılmaz's autobiography *Ehrensache. Kämpfen gegen Judenhass* (A Question of Honor: Fighting against Jew Hatred) (2021) and a documentation of the project by the *Center for Civic Education of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia* (2016, 2021). In addition, there are contributions by and interviews with Yilmaz (Jewish Forum 2018; Yılmaz 2020a; 2020b). A 90-minute interview that the author conducted with Yılmaz in August 2020 was also used. The interview took place in English and was recorded as a video via Zoom. The interviewee was informed about the use of the interview as well as the nature of the study. The subsequent analysis follows the structure of the interview, in which Yılmaz was asked about the origins of the project and the situation of the young people before, during, and after the memorial visit, as well as Werker's phase scheme of a memorial site visit (Werker 2016). Where it was considered relevant, the findings were compared with other studies (Gryglewski 2013, 2017; Schu 2017).

Analysis

Young Muslims in Auschwitz was initiated by Burak Yılmaz in the context of his work as an educator in a Duisburg youth center. Yılmaz cites two personal experiences as responsible for its genesis: first, a Hitler salute made by young people at the Duisburg-Marxloh youth center (Yılmaz 2021); second, a few years later, the exclusion of students with an immigrant background from visiting a concentration camp memorial site because antisemitic behavior was feared on site (ibid). Both in the interview and in his autobiography, Yılmaz describes how the idea of traveling to Auschwitz with ten young people was initially conceived as a way to compensate for and complement this rejection at school. After the first memorial trip in 2012, which was also intensive for him, the desire arose to develop the project further and to make it permanent, with the support of the Antisemitism Commissioner of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. The pedagogical concept designed for this purpose was linked to various questions and given the name *Young Muslims in Auschwitz* in 2014. It was intended to offer ten male youths per trip the opportunity to deal with their identity as Germans with a migration background and to reflect on the topic of antisemitism. Likewise, the project pursued the intention of providing the young people with individual access to the Holocaust as a central component of German remembrance culture. The analysis presents the person and motivation of the project leader, the pedagogical concept, the initial conditions of the participants, and their reactions after the memorial visit.

The project initiator and manager

Firstly, there is the question of the project leader's motivation: what motivated Yılmaz to take up the topic of Jew hatred in this form and to work with it in his own community? In his autobiography *Ehrensache* (A Question of Honor), he makes it clear that family memory was central for him too. However, the values he was taught, and his parental home differed from those of many of the young people he mentors. He owes it to this circumstance that he was able to critically reflect on structures in his community.

Yılmaz, born in 1987 in Duisburg-Marxloh, comes from a liberal family. From his mother's side, he learned about a modern, self-confident image of women; from his father's side, he got to know a liberal self-image. This parental home marked borders with German society not through isolation, but through fears – for example, that the son could lose his faith if he attends a Catholic high school: "I feel that my parents are afraid that I could move away from my religion" (Yılmaz 2021). However, the desire to provide the son with a good education prevails (ibid). Yilmaz's family also has another peculiarity: his father is of Turkish and his mother of Kurdish origin, which sensitizes him early on to the problems of minorities in Turkish nationalism (ibid).

In his parental home, patriarchal narratives are not taught (Yılmaz 2020b), nor is violence prevalent. Therefore, Yilmaz reacts in horror when he observes an acquaintance beating his sister in the street in the name of honor: "Ahmed's violence does something to me. I never want to be like that, I swear to myself" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 22). He questions the narrative of "honor" that is common in conservative, strictly religious, or patriarchal circles early on, and later explicitly distances himself from it: for him, it is "cheap talk" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 95). He is also critical of the Imam's exercise of violence in the *madrassa* (Arabic for place of study); Yılmaz sees this as violating the children's human rights (Yılmaz 2021). He also finds the antisemitism he experiences in the Imam's religious education classes and on Turkish television programs alienating. The conspiracy myths propagated by fellow students seem illogical to him. Overall, it becomes clear that Yılmaz owes his resilience primarily to his parental home (ibid). When he is briefly tempted to join an ideologized Islam during puberty after the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, the protest of his parents, who deconstruct the conspiracy myths circulating in the Islamist community, and their open culture of conversation keep him from doing so (ibid).

In addition to his family, it is the German education system that makes Yılmaz think and distances him from certain values of his community. Admittedly, like many other Germans with an immigrant background, he is exposed to discrimination and racist insults and thus experiences how stereotypes are attributed to him. These apparently include the idea that as a Muslim he is an antisemite. He thus witnesses open German antisemitism on several occasions: his interlocutors open up to him because they expect his ideological solidarity due to his origin (ibid).

However, he experiences not only Germans who repress their past, but also those who represent the paradigm of ethics. In school, his interest in the Nazi era is piqued when he hears in Catholic religion class about Germans' responsibility for their history and actions in the present – a thesis he likes and can identify with. "It's as if this still foreign country becomes more familiar to me. The more I learn about the Nazi era, the better I understand the Germans" (Yılmaz 2020a, p. 94). In history class, he learns about an approach to the Nazi era that he later makes fruitful in his own pedagogical work. His teacher brings documents from his own family, showing that history affects every individual (Yılmaz 2021). This leads Yılmaz, after the paradigm of ethics, to the paradigm of empathy: biographical testimonies trigger compassion and help in envisioning and in taking responsibility.

The conclusion that emerges from Yilmaz's biographical work is this: the young German with a migration background is caught in the middle, but the impulse of the parental home to be critical is encouraged and methodically shaped by education. Thus, the biography represents a commitment to education as a solution to social and cultural problems, and shows how participation in German memory culture, and self-description as a German, becomes possible through it. Turning to German

society thus presupposes two things: a de-ideologization of family memory, and a readiness of national memory to think history in terms of plural approaches.

The concept of the memorial trip

Young Muslims in Auschwitz follows the three-step pedagogical process for memorial site trips: the preparation, the trip, and its follow-up (Werker 2016). In comparison with other memorial trips, for example by German youths, not only the variety of methods, but also the project's intensive six-month preparation phase is striking. It included biographical work by the participants, research into Jewish traces in their own neighborhood, and a meeting with a Jewish youth group. Better knowledge of one's own family history pursued the goal of learning more about one's own origins and being able to better classify the narratives of one's parents; Yılmaz had noticed that many young people hardly knew anything about this. Exploring the history of one's own neighborhood in cooperation with the *Duisburg Center for Remembrance Culture* was intended to create personal access to the topic and to a "first deeper understanding of the Nazi era" (Yilmaz 2020b, p. 281).[6] Researching Jewish victims' biographies in the city archives and comparing old photographs with contemporary views of the city were intended to make participants aware that the Holocaust had taken place on their own doorstep (Center for Civic Education 2021). The conversation with Jewish youth groups also conveyed to the participants what contemporary Jewish life in Germany was like and what parallels might have arisen to their own lives (Jewish Forum 2018; Yılmaz 2021, 2020b).

The one-week memorial trip included a three-day stay at the memorial site with guided tours of the individual camps. Here, too, the focus was on personal observation. During their stay, the participants kept a group diary in which they could record thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Jewish Forum 2018). After the visits, discussion groups took place to reflect on the day's experiences. In doing so, Yılmaz made sure that the meetings took place in a protected space so that the participants could articulate themselves freely (Yılmaz 2020b). The trip itself created a distance from everyday life, which helped the young people to reflect on the sources of their previous knowledge and where contradictions arose.

In the six- to nine-month follow-up phase, the young men then had the opportunity to process their experiences on the basis of their group diary with a theater pedagogue (Center for Civic Education 2016; Yilmaz 2020b). Role plays or entire plays were created. The participants were free in their choice of topics, as well as in taking

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6 See also the documentation *Ruhrgebietskinder* (Ruhr area children) by Wolf-Graaf and Presnück (Center for Civic Education 2021) on the explorations of their own neighborhood and of Jewish life in Duisburg.

on the individual roles. Slipping into a different skin was meant to provide the opportunity to playfully change perspectives and deal with views that in reality were rejected for ideological reasons (Yılmaz 2020b). The subsequent performances (some up to 30 times) dispensed with costumes and a stage set and took place in schools or theaters in front of an audience that, in turn, was composed of students with an immigrant background. The visibility on a stage and the reward of applause offered the performers a recognition that they often did not experience in their everyday lives (ibid). It was important to Yılmaz that the participants passed on the knowledge they had gained through the memorial trip to their families and peer groups, and thus became multipliers. Yılmaz speaks of "history ambassadors" (Yılmaz 2020b, p. 281). In this way, the project was intended to have an impact not only on individuals, but on the entire community.

The participants of the project

Like Yılmaz, most of the project's participants live in Duisburg-Marxloh – a district in which the proportion of migrants from Turkey and Arab countries is over 76 percent (Staff Office for Elections 2020). Their living environment is thus defined as a social hot spot. In Duisburg, where unemployment has been rising since the 1970s due to structural change caused by the steel crisis, the ghettoization of migrants is evident in entire neighborhoods, which are often characterized by poverty. Duisburg is also considered a "stronghold for Turkish right-wingers and right-wing extremists" (Yılmaz 2020b, p. 275). Nationalist and Islamist structures have been built up here since the 1980s and have power within the community. They are so well networked that even Turkish prime ministers come to Duisburg and meet with approval there (Yılmaz 2020b).

This nationalism is flanked by mosques in the region, where a theology of Islamist-nationalist character is taught. It falls on fertile ground in families where traditional and religious worldviews prevail. In these families, young people are usually exposed to patriarchal structures and ideas of masculinity that go hand in hand with concepts such as "respect" or "honor". In this context, antisemitism also plays a role (ibid). Many young people in the district are also affected by discrimination at school, but also in the labor market. Their chances of participation, social advancement, and integration into networks of the so-called majority society are low overall; rather the "stigma of 'Marxloh' or 'Upper Marxloh' makes everyday life difficult for them" (Yılmaz 2020b, p. 276), and their job search. For their part, many young people respond to the "deficit-oriented view" (Yılmaz 2020b, p. 277) of them with a disinterest in German society. Instead, they orient themselves to their family structures, from which they do not break away and which give them support and identity. In this way, most young people have constructed an identity (Schu 2017) that compen-

sates for a lack of self-confidence and orientation by imitating patriarchal patterns. In this way, antisemitism is also "inherited" intergenerationally.

Participation in the memorial trip

The following presentation of the participants' reactions is oriented toward the three outlined phases of a memorial site trip and uses statements about the memorial site trips in 2012, 2014, and 2015 to examine how constructions of identity are negotiated against the background of family and national memory, and what role antisemitism plays in this process. The goal is to make visible both the initial conditions of the young people and the effect of the memorial on them and their thinking. This will yield insights about the function of memorial sites in the mediation of history.

(1) The preparation phase: Young people with Turkish, Iraqi, Palestinian, Lebanese, and Syrian roots took part in the workshops on biographical work. Not all of them came from nationalist or Islamist families; some came from liberal families. In view of their national, cultural, and political diversity, a lively discussion developed around the core topics of religion and masculinity (Yılmaz 2021). It was noted that there was a direct link between the construction of masculinity and the perpetration of violence: "they tell each other stories about how they are beaten by their fathers" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 110). In this context, the term "Jew" also came up as a swear word: it marked the position of the weak and feminine here, constructing it as the antithesis of the masculine: "the strong man and the feminine Jew" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 116). That this marking is antisemitic and has its roots in Islamic culture, is latently recognized by some young people; others merely use it to exhibit their masculinity. In this capacity, Islamic antisemitism mixes with both overt German radical right-wing attitudes and anti-Israel antisemitism: "We are antisemites. You can't change that!" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 7). Anti-Israel antisemitism is especially the case with those boys who have a Palestinian background, such as Jamal: "He only knows the Jews as enemies, he says" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 135). The trauma of flight and expulsion from one's homeland is reproduced in family memory and kept alive through images of the enemy – sometimes in extremist form. For example, there are young people "who learned about the Hamas charter when they were young and all the religious fanaticism that goes with it". It is not uncommon for families with radicalized memories to also interpret Young Muslims in Auschwitz as a conspiracy: "They do not understand why their own child is concerned with the history of the Jews instead of the suffering of their own family. […] In their logic, Auschwitz equals Jew, Jew equals Israel, and Israel is the enemy" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 135). Breaking down these antisemitic beliefs is difficult because they are tied to emotions and loyalties.

The workshops show just how overpowering family memory is for some young people; what parents and grandparents tell is considered "historical truth" (Yılmaz 2020b, p. 278). On the other hand, no connection is made to German national mem-

ory: "When we talk about being German, we very quickly end up with the topic of the Holocaust and then directly with the Middle East conflict" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 121). This is not only due to family memory, but also due to a lack of knowledge about the Holocaust: "[T]hey don't understand any connections and the meaning of the Holocaust remains unclear to them" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 122). Both condition them to see themselves not as Germans but as victims of the majority society (Schu 2017). From this perspective, they even solidarize in a certain way with the role of "the Jews": "'There is never a word about how we Muslims are treated. It's always about the Jews!' complains one [...]" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 121). This self-image equates racism, which all participants know, with antisemitism, but also blurs the distinctions between Jews and Muslims (Yılmaz 2021).

(2) The memorial trip: The visit to Auschwitz confronts the participants with the historical consequences of antisemitism at the authentic site. The young people react to what they see by becoming emotional. Yusuf (19) says: "I saw the pictures, I wonder how I'm going to sleep now [...]." And Samed admits (19): "I felt hatred, against the Nazis, I was angry, but I was also sad" (Center for Civic Education 2016). The approach that young people take to the topic of the concentration camp memorial and the Holocaust represents the paradigm of empathy. For those participants who are familiar with antisemitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories, the consternation goes so far that they are immediately ready to deconstruct these myths. Abdul (21) emphasizes that it is now "very, very difficult [...] to deny anything else," and Mehmet (19) tells of the effect of what he saw had on him: "I wouldn't have thought that it would shock me so much in that sense, because the fact that I am also – hm – German, I'll say, and [...] my parents have an Arab migration background, I thought I could handle it better" (Center for Civic Education 2016).

For other young people, the visit arouses a desire to identify themselves. The Yazidi Hüseyin (19), however, connects this desire less with the German perspective than with the memory of the genocide of his own countrymen. He thus develops less of a "victim-centered" perspective, and more of a "victim-identified" perspective that follows the paradigm of identification:

> With me it was like this: from the religious background I belong to Yazidism. And it is also like that, similar to the Jews now. There were 73 genocides perpetrated against Yazidism, and attempts were made to eradicate this race, this religion (Center for Civic Education 2016).

The genocides of the Yazidis, which are alive in his family memory, lead to solidarity with the Jewish victims in Auschwitz – a process that, as Assmann notes, is not uncommon in the migration society, but which is not unproblematic without further

differentiation (Assmann 2016).[7] At the same time, participants in the Auschwitz trip encounter Israelis for whom the paradigm of identification forms the adequate access. Recognizing and understanding this is not immediately possible for the participants. While project leader Yılmaz finds the encounter with the Israelis enriching from a remembrance culture perspective – he himself had so far focused primarily on the paradigm of ethics – some participants with Palestinian roots see their "enemy" in Auschwitz for the first time. Jamal (17), who does not yet link the Holocaust with Israel, does not understand the Israeli approach, and asks: "Why do Jews come here? To mourn? To process? Out of respect? Why do they visit this place where so many of them were killed?" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 139). The encounter triggers confusion about the motivation of the Others, anger at himself, and inner conflicts of loyalty. Like other Palestinians, Jamal fears betraying the "heritage" in the family memory with his "new" knowledge. Nevertheless, he tries to understand:

> Yesterday I realized that there are many victims on the Israeli side as well. Israelis have also experienced a lot of suffering. Not only my parents. I somehow couldn't cope with it at all. It makes me sad that we will never have peace with them (Jamal, in: Yılmaz 2021, p. 144).

While most young people intuitively choose the paradigm of empathy for themselves as an approach, and in individual cases the paradigm of identification, the paradigm of ethics is foreign to them. In Auschwitz, they are confronted with it from the outside. Here they are seen as Germans – a perception they are otherwise unfamiliar with, and which disturbs them. Their "Germanness" is revealed in the memorial site of Auschwitz through the language they choose to use during their visit. However, German is also the language of the perpetrators, which is why Abdul (21) suddenly feels uncomfortable with it: "We speak German, walk through there, and I feel that, I see the looks and I totally perceive that." Yusuf (19) shows empathy for the Israeli and comes close to taking responsibility, to identify with the paradigm of ethics – after all, he is German, even if he himself is not quite clear what that is: "That is understandable that the Jews, so to speak, do not feel comfortable when we come here as Germans […]" (Center for Civic Education 2016). Overall, the participants approach the paradigm of ethics only hesitantly: "When I ask the boys if they noticed that we were seen and perceived as Germans today, there is silence for a moment. […] Then we are Germans in Auschwitz and foreigners in Germany […]" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 134). The quote shows that most young people have not developed a connection to their being German, nor do they have a culture of remembrance in Auschwitz that would

7 Huseyin remains true to this "victim-identified" perspective in the follow-up, but emphasizes that he is concerned with eliminating hatred: "If I participate at all, I think I'm also doing it for my people" (Center for Civic Education 2016).

give them personal access to German history. Rather, this notion plunges them into "identity chaos" (ibid). Especially those participants who grew up with nationalist or Islamist narratives find it difficult to identify with a negative legacy such as the Holocaust and to accept this legacy for themselves. "In Auschwitz we experienced for the first time and understood why Germans are often so ashamed" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 150).

(3) The follow-up: In the conversations after the trip, the memorial trip shows two direct effects: first, the confrontation with family memory and second, the question of one's own "Germanness". Both lead to a deepened interest in an examination of German memory culture, but also to conflicts. Thus, after one of these lessons, a participant asks his seminar leader insecurely: "Am I still a Muslim if I don't hate Israel anymore?" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 156). The follow-up to the memorial trip aims both to process emotions and to apply new knowledge. Both are to take place playfully in a theater play. It offers the young people the chance to fictionally test themselves. In this process, Samed (17) experiences a challenge being someone different on stage than in real life: "It's such a weird feeling that I'm now in the role of the Nazi, because that's so completely against my human attitude […]" (Center for Civic Education 2016). Hüseyin (19), on the other hand, feels good about it, even if he "still needs to practice awakening this evil in me" (Center for Civic Education 2016). The preoccupation with the origin of stereotypes and their deconstruction forms the basis for the play in 2016. The approach to the Holocaust shifts the horizon – on the one hand towards the German national memory and, on the other hand, to the question of values of education. For example, Mehmet (19) reflects on his community's propensity for violence against Jews. In his role as son, he tries to realize what meaning this violence has for himself:

> [T]his readiness to use violence against […] Jewish people, that was very close to me, I have to say, it affected me in the sense that I always thought about it and questioned: is what I was brought up with correct, are these prejudices correct that one has received […]? (Center for Civic Education 2016).

This also applies to Abdul (21), who plays the patriarchal father: "My focus is simply to make clear that a lot of hate is transmitted, transmitted […]" (ibid). The fact that this mental and emotional change does not take place without criticism from the families of the young people can be seen in several statements. Some of the participants get into a confrontation with their families. Al-Harit (17), who has Turkish-Iraqi roots, tells how critical his mother was "when I said, yes, I'll play the Jew" (ibid). Mehmet (19) also reports: "When I came back from Auschwitz, the big discussion came up, why did you do that, what for, and, look at what they're doing to us" (ibid). Since there is no historical knowledge in the family, the adolescent enlightens his parents: "And there was just a big silence at first, and that was just not an

embarrassing silence, as you might know it now, but that was just such a pause for thought" (ibid).

The participants are supported in this process by their families in different ways, and many are also criticized. The relatives feel that the trip changed the young people. Adnan, a participant in the 2018 memorial trip, sums up just how far this change can go: "This is Germany's history! This is our history too, man! Do you think I can go back to Germany now and pretend that none of this concerns me?" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 200). With this shift in perspective, the young people approach the paradigm of ethics. It completes the largest possible form of learning, the victim-centered view of German history in terms of public national memory. The young people's view, as the evaluation of the project shows, does not follow the paradigm of ethics in all facets, but it does so in one central respect: responsibility.

Shared history, common heritage? A preliminary conclusion

Antisemitism is a common heritage of European and Arab states, especially in its racist manifestation. While German educational institutions are slowly becoming aware of this fact, Young Muslims in Auschwitz is attempting from the midst of the migrant community to build a bridge between family and national memory and to bridge the gap between the two forms of remembering. However, when it comes to recognizing and dealing with antisemitism as a common heritage, there are hurdles not only on the part of German educational institutions, but also in migrant civil society. The institutions of religion (through Imams with antisemitic attitudes), the media (through antisemitic reports by foreign broadcasters) and family memory are particularly resistant (Becker 2020). Young people who are exposed to these influences often do not have the chance to recognize and critically question the causes for their Jew hatred (Schu 2017). However, migration researcher Naika Fouroutan emphasizes that more and more people with a migration background want to belong to German culture (Foroutan 2019). It is articulated in particular by Muslims who feel they are transcultural Germans and who are visible as such (ibid).

Cultural heritage, like that of the Nazi's, is a negative legacy. It has the function of authentically conveying the historical facts, but also of appealing to a moral responsibility for the future. In view of its internationality, the *Auschwitz Concentration Camp Memorial* fulfills these functions in many ways. Not only are all three paradigms activated here as approaches to the Holocaust, but spaces are also created for current encounters. In this sense, the memorial functions as a "contact zone", according to the rules of history and of the present. From this perspective, the memorial becomes important for the deconstruction of images of enemies. It is a place of dialogue and thus, above the rubble of the past, of potential reconciliation in the present. On the basis of Young Muslims in Auschwitz it can be stated that the approaches to the

Holocaust as a central moment of German remembrance culture are pluralizing. In view of a resurgent antisemitism, which moreover knows many forms of hybridization, this is an important fact if memorial sites are to contribute to learning from history in the future as well. The paradigm of empathy offers possibilities to create first accesses to a "foreign" history (Gryglewski 2017). Finally, the paradigm of ethics invites young Germans with migration background to connect their personal experiences with the history of the country where they live today. Memorial work in this sense is integration work.

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