Struggles for Horizontal Identification: Muslims, Jews, and the Civil Sphere in Germany

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Abstract

Muslims across Europe have been labeled as uncivil since the migration waves of postcolonial and guestworker migrants in the mid-20th century. In this paper, I bring the Muslim experience in the German capital into conversation with Civil Sphere Theory (CST), which analyzes how senses of cultural boundedness are supported, shaped, and contested through the interrelations between the institutions of civil society and social movements aimed at expanding civic inclusion. Drawing on two years of ethnographic research in a Berlin mosque, I move from Muslim associations with incivility to the actions these associations provoke in relation to the civil sphere: exploring how those deemed uncivil exert agency in response to, and also in spite of a civil/uncivil divide. Through the voices and experiences of my interlocutors, I show that Muslims are not simply a victimized out-group excluded from the German civil sphere, but are also agents of change who actively seek to gain full inclusion within it. Specifically, I trace how my German Muslim interlocutors contend with their negative social status by drawing on narratives, and enlivening connections that link them to the German Jewish experience: seeking incorporation in the civil sphere through identifications with another "Other," and through this other, also mainstream society.

The Uncivil Muslim: Seeking Inclusion in the Civil Sphere

Across Europe today, a binary discourse casts diverse Muslims together as a wholly uncivil form, suggesting that they are incompatible with civil European societies. This uncivil cultural status comes to the fore not only in the language and visible representations of Muslims, but also in related cultural and political struggles over when

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and where mosques are permitted to mark cityscapes; what religious symbols can be worn in civic positions and public spaces; and in the extreme and enduring securitization of Muslim bodies and institutions by so-called 'anti-terror' regimes of governance (Becker, 2021; Bowen, 2006; Elver, 2012).

Most Muslims in contemporary Europe migrated there, or are the children/grandchildren of those who migrated as guestworkers and postcolonial migrants in the 1960s and 1970s, called to rebuild shattered societies in the aftermath of World War II (Castles, 2006). The employment of a civility/incivility binary to distinguish Europe's insiders from Muslim outsiders did not begin with this migration, however, as a divisive discourse of civility proliferated during the colonial and imperial encounters that preceded it (Bhabha, 1994; Ewing, 2008; Roy, 2005). The movement of postcolonial/postimperial bodies demarcated as uncivil from the so-called periphery to the European core has thus at once extended and deepened a perception of Muslims as dangerous to the integrity of European societies. The growing presence of Muslims in Europe has since been described by politicians from across the political spectrum, as well as other public figures, as threatening to erode the democratic foundations and values of numerous European nation-states (Becker, 2021; Cesari, 2006; Davis, 2011; Fernando, 2014). In the words of late German Jewish writer Ralph Giordano, 'The Islamic side threatens this democracy. And even at the risk of being misunderstood as an enemy of foreigners and a xenophobe, I turn against the forces from the Muslim minority in Germany who, according to my criteria, threaten this republic and—if they could, as they wanted –would make something different of it' (Compass, 2009, translation by author).

This potential of Muslims to 'make something different,' signals a fear that they— labeled as 'unenlightened' and antagonistic to 'progress'— threaten to *unmake* liberal democratic orders (Becker, 2021; Bhabha, 1985). Yet while today invoked in such modern contexts and terms, the exclusion of ethnoreligious minorities through binary discourses is far from new. From the late Middle Ages to the early modern period, before Europe was imagined as such, purity/impurity binaries were used to assert cultural boundaries of belonging (for example, in the blood purity laws that distinguished Christians from Muslims and Jews in Reconquista Spain) (Martínez, 2008). The idea of Jewish incivility long centered on an internal other that Europe had to purify itself from, leading to pogroms, ghettos, and ultimately the Holocaust (Gay, 1992). Since the Reconquista, Muslim incivility, on the other hand, largely focused on physical and cultural defense against an external other, namely, the encroaching Islamic empire or uncivil Muslims outside of the core of Europe: even when part of colonial and imperial European terrain (Hammer, 2020; Martínez, 2008). In the modern German empire, for instance, the civil/uncivil divide centered on German-Ottoman relations, with Turks/Muslims portrayed by Germany as threats to enlightenment values into the early 20th century (Ewing, 2008; Hammer, 2020). By bringing uncivil Muslim bodies to the continent and its core metropoles, the largescale migration of Muslims to Europe in the mid-20th century thus unsettled a geographical divide that long dominated the historical imaginary of Europe's relationship to Muslims (Schiffauer, 2006).

In this article, I turn specifically to an agentive and potentially transformative response of Muslims in Berlin to their labeling with incivility: identification with German Jews. The German sociocultural landscape reflects the broader European othering of Muslims

as uncivil, while coloring and adapting this othering in relation to a particular national history, in which the tragic past—and tentative present—of German Jews features prominently. Following centuries of persecution, a shift towards Jewish emancipation first occurred with the Prussian Edict of Toleration of 1812, although it was not fully accomplished until the German Republic formed in 1871 (Gay, 1992; Poppel, 1980). This promise, half a century later shattered by the Holocaust, has been re-invoked with a new urgency in the post-World War II era, and led to what I term a bracketed form of belonging: a discourse on Jews characterized by brackets—'(Judeo)Christian'—and hyphens—'Judeo-Christian'—placing them nominally inside of Germany while also continuing to reinforce their distinction within it (Topolski, 2016).

The very civility of a 'new' post-war Germany is linked to the fate of German Jews, no longer seen as uncivil, but instead a measure of Germany's redemptive potentiality (Neiman, 2019). The collapsing of boundaries between Germany and Jews has specifically occurred since the 'social construction of the Holocaust' in the 1960s and 1970s, with German identity colored by a sense of guilt and shame for perpetrating abuses against, and thereby feeling responsible for protecting, Jewish life (Alexander, 2016: 3). Today, a prosperous democracy in Germany is described by politicians across the political spectrum as one that ensures thriving Jewish culture, institutions, and everyday life (Özyürek and Dekel, 2021). The position of Jews in Germany is thus one of renewed incorporation—through institutional recognition, e.g. with the Central Council of Jews in Germany, the official Jewish interlocutor for the German state—and yet continued otherness, with a special status that entails the protection of Jewish individuals, communities, and even Israel; for instance, in 2019, the German Parliament passed a non-binding resolution that equates the support of BDS (the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Palestinian-led movement aimed at sanctioning the Israeli state for its mistreatment of Palestinians and occupation of Palestinian territories) with anti-Semitism in Germany (Hauenstein, 2020).

The support of Israel and the now-normalized language describing Germany as a 'Judeo-Christian nation' has, however, done more than link the civil redemption of Germany to the 'Jewish Question' (Gay, 1992; Norton, 2013; Topolski, 2016). Both have been used to deepen cleavages between Muslims and Jews in Germany, with Muslims seen as the primary uncivil other against which Germany, as a whole, and German Jews, in particular, define themselves (Norton, 2013; Özyurek and Dekel, 2021; Topolski, 2016). Yet sociologists have argued that the uncivil status of Muslims in contemporary Germany, seen as part of and yet set negatively apart from society, is not constructed in opposition to Jews, but rather reflects a position similar to Jews prior (Becker, 2021; Langer, 2014, 2016). Not only scholars, but also ordinary Muslims have invoked these parallels in order to make sense of the enduring marginalities that they and their communities face today in German society (Bodemann and Yurdakul, 2008).

In this article, I draw from research with constituents of the Sehitlik Mosque community in Berlin to go one step further, showing how Muslims not only make sense of, but also contend with their uncivil status through emotional and strategic identifications with Jews. The Sehitlik Mosque, a purpose-built Neo-Ottoman style mosque in the Neukölln neighborhood of Berlin, was built at the turn of the 21st century by those who migrated as guest workers from Turkey in the mid-20th century. Today it is a community

largely led by the children of Turkish immigrants who seek to maintain cultural and religious linkages to Turkey, while rooting themselves in Berlin. At the same time, under the leadership of these youth, it is a community that has actively contended with their uncivil status as Muslims through outreach, public events, and teaching, including daily tours of the mosque for city-denizens of all backgrounds—among them groups of students, retirees, parolees, and police officers—with reflections on liberal democratic values and on the experiences of Jews in Germany (Becker, 2021).

Civil Sphere Theory: Contesting the Civil/Uncivil Divide

The concept and language of civility matters deeply as it shapes shared cultural imaginaries and grammars that together determine who belongs to contemporary European societies. When I reference civility here, I draw on notions of coherence inherent to the modern European, post-Enlightenment order, as laid out by James Holston and invoked in the work of Zygmunt Bauman. As Holston (2010: 53) writes, in this time-space continuum of contemporary Europe, 'Civility refers to the standards of behavior and common "measure"—to the "etiquettes, manner, and virtues"—that make public life coherent and thus possible.' In his critical analysis of modern cultural structures privileging coherence, Bauman (1991) refers to the 'gardening state,' a state that seeks to unroot and destroy social groups deemed threatening to the social order (Schiel, 2005). He cautions that such states seek harmony at the cost of human lives; if or when assimilation cannot be achieved, individuals and groups are 'weeded' out (Schiel, 2005: 81). The most extreme example of such order-making in European modernity is the Holocaust, where the pure/impure distinction was animated by the German state in order to entirely eliminate Jewry from Europe (Bauman, 1991, 2001). Yet other, less extreme examples of order/disorder distinctions that map onto civil/uncivil distinctions (i.e. the German/Muslim divide) continue to shape the cultural narratives and boundaries of the civil sphere in Germany.

As Jewish incivility prior, Muslim incivility has proliferated in mainstream discourses in Germany and become embedded in social institutions, from media to law. Symbolic boundaries to polluting potentiality are seen, in particular, in media representations that call into question the belonging of Muslims in Germany (Saeed, 2007; Sutkute, 2019). And they can be seen across regulatory institutions, as well, in laws that both implicitly and explicitly target Muslims. For instance, the headscarf debates in Germany that first gained traction at the end of the 20th century have revealed a societal obsession with regulating the Muslim body in public life, leading to bans on the headscarf for women in civil service positions across various German states, and most recently those employed as legal trainees in the German courts (Bundesverfassungsgericht, 2020; Joppke, 2007; Korteweg and Yurdakul, 2021). And the temporary outlawing of circumcision in 2012 exposed how a ritual act shared by Muslims and Jews became cast in the language of incivility: described as violent, traumatic and violating the rights of the individual (Amir-Moazami, 2016; Yurdakul, 2016). This debate again revealed the bracketed or hyphenated nature of Jewish inclusion, with Jews still in some respects set apart from the mainstream (Alexander and Adams, 2021).

The most evocative example of the narrative of the uncivil Muslim in Germany was put forth by former Social Democratic politician Thilo Sarrazin, who in 2010 wrote a

bestselling book by the name of *Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab* (*Germany is Undoing Itself)*, blaming the downfall of German society on the growing presence of morally and biologically inferior Muslims. In this provocative and derogatory text, Sarrazin (2010) scapegoated Muslims who migrated as guestworkers in the 1950s-1970s and their children/grandchildren for the moral decay of Germany. These symbolic boundaries of exclusion built on associations with incivility have also emerged in recent debates over building the Cologne Mosque, the largest purpose-built mosque in Germany, harshly critiqued for its lack of physical transparency. While its construction plans were revised to include larger windows that let more light into the structure, it has remained a contested site, illuminating that such critiques relate to notions of cultural, rather than material incompatibility with Germany (Becker, 2017).

In this article, I bring Muslim contestations over their uncivil positionality in Germany into conversation with Civil Sphere Theory (CST), which analyzes how senses of cultural boundedness are supported and shaped through the interrelations between the institutions of civil society and social movements aimed at expanding civic inclusion (Alexander, 2006). Social Theorist Jeffrey Alexander wrote *The Civil Sphere* in order to shed light on the cultural forces—rather than purely economic or social explanations—that create societal cohesion in modernity. He defines the civil sphere as a 'solidary sphere, in which a certain kind of community comes to be culturally defined and to some degree institutionally enforced' (Alexander, 2006: 31). CST thus allows a window into the meanings of subjugation by showing that societies are not 'governed by power alone,' but also by feelings of solidarity that undergird, and the many institutions (e.g. media, law) that communicate and regulate civil society (Alexander, 2006: 3). It allows insight into the agentive struggles of Muslim Berliners engaged in contesting their civic exclusion. Even though it entails the creation and maintenance of cultural boundaries and their institutionalization based on a civil/uncivil divide, the civil sphere is never fixed; it is both dynamic and malleable, that is it responds to cultural contestations and demands from collectivities both inside and outside of its bounds (Alexander, 2006).[1] The relative autonomy of the civil sphere from structures of power in fact forges opportunities for contestation by the marginalized, like Muslims in today's Germany, who use shared social grammars—the very same binary discourses that exclude them—to invoke civil repair. Civil repair entails the expansion of symbolic and legal boundaries such that groups once deemed uncivil become understood as part of the civil realm (Alexander, 2006; Schall, 2019).

The premise of out-group agency that responds to the dynamism, malleability, and potential for repair inherent to the civil sphere, together color my subsequent analysis of the Sehitlik Mosque community in Berlin. Specifically, I trace how Muslim Berliners in this community contend with their negative social status by drawing on narratives, and enlivening connections that link them to the German Jewish experience: seeking incorporation in the civil sphere through identifications with another 'Other,' and through this other, also mainstream society. Civil Sphere Theory (CST) illuminates how a desire to be part of the civil sphere, which results in inclusion, equality, and respect, motivates identifications with the Jewish experience present and past. Through this framing, Muslims identify themselves horizontally with—not the same as, but similar and equal to—another ethnoreligious minority that has shifted from an uncivil to a civil status in Germany.

Muslims in Berlin are far from the first group to contest their exclusion from the civil sphere, whether in Germany, Europe, or other locales across the globe. I thus build on earlier analyses of social movements aimed at achieving incorporation into the civil sphere, beginning with those laid out in the foundational text on CST, *The Civil Sphere* (Alexander, 2006). In this book, Alexander (2006) illustrates how outgroups deemed uncivil, such as Jews in the United States in the post-World War II era and Black Americans during the Civil Rights Movement, actively participated in processes of civil repair by contending with the demarcation of not only individual persons (which Alexander terms an assimilative mode of incorporation) but also their collective traits (which Alexander terms a multicultural mode of incorporation) as uncivil, and how this, in turn, reshapes their representation and inclusion in the civil sphere. While Alexander (2006) and subsequently other scholars of CST (e.g. Lund and Voyer, 2019) focus on the out-group contestation of boundaries to civic belonging vis-à-vis their relationality to the mainstream, the contestation of boundaries through horizontal relationships has been analyzed in scholarship outside of this subfield. For instance, Becker (2014) has shown how Albanians assume Italian ethnicity in New York City's little Italy and Ivory (2017) has illuminated the strategic ethnic performance of African American identities by Sub-Saharan African clothing merchants in Japan: both shedding light on strategies of affiliation with other, positively-coded minorities in order to gain recognition and inclusion in civic life.

Jews were once seen as supremely uncivil in Germany and now are seen as civil, providing an exemplar to Muslims, another ethnoreligious minority branded with incivility, seeking to transform their negative social status. Through the narratives and experiences of my Muslim research participants in Berlin, I thus theorize *struggles for horizontal identification* with German Jews. I show that struggles for incorporation into the civil sphere are not simply two-way exchanges between in-and-out-groups, but rather efforts of identification. This identification is *horizontal*, as these Muslim Berliners seek parity with German Jews, today part of the civil sphere, while remaining in various ways distinct from the mainstream (in both 'positive' terms, i.e. their unique protection, and 'negative' terms, for instance in the temporary banning of circumcision). It entails a drive to see oneself and be seen by Jews and non-Jews alike as similar in experience, struggles, and therefore basic civility to Jews.

Whereas Michael Bodemann and Gokce Yurdakul (2008) show the ways in which Turkish immigrant associations replicated the strategies of Jewish associations to claim belonging in Germany, I instead focus on how Muslim Berliners foster *identifications* with German Jews to make claims on their own civility. That is, my research participants do not replicate the strategies that Jews used to gain incorporation but rather demonstrate their similarities to Jews as marginalized ethnoreligious minorities in Germany. These identification processes are at once emotive, based in empathy for the German Jewish experience, and strategic, employed as a means of claims-making in a society that deems Muslims uncivil.

This framing of Muslim identities is particularly noteworthy because Muslims in the German capital describe and enact their experiences in relation to a group with whom they are assumed to have an antagonistic relationship (due to the Israel-Palestine conflict) and because a very foundational narrative of Muslim incivility in Germany is that

Muslims are anti-Semitic, blamed for 'importing' a 'new' anti-Semitism (Özyurek, 2016; Özyurek and Dekel, 2021). Guided by ethnographic insights that expose a complex web of inter-relationality that transcends such taken-for-granted binaries, I build on the conceptualization of incorporation put forth by CST, while countering claims that the civil sphere is static and simply reproduces colonial/imperial inequalities (which is argued by Hammer in her 2020 critique of CST). Instead, I demonstrate how out-groups harness the power of narratives, sentiments, and institutional representations that have laid the paths to incorporation for other 'Others' in struggles for inclusion.

Muslim, Jew, German: Struggles for Horizontal Identification in a Berlin Mosque

The Sehitlik Mosque, while a physically representative mosque, is not a space representative of Muslim life in Germany. In fact, its exceptionality has been stressed by political representatives and security personnel alike: termed a 'model mosque' because of its openness, transparency, and focus on signaling democratic values. This nominalization is of course highly problematic, suggesting that some mosques are 'good' and others 'bad,' reflecting the 'good Muslim'/'bad Muslim' binary that indicates incorporation may only be achieved through the assimilation of individual Muslims and never through their 'uncivil' collective qualities into Germany (Alexander, 2006; Becker, 2017; Mamdani, 2002). While not representative of mosques writ large in Berlin or Germany, the Sehitlik Mosque is a uniquely productive research site for examining how various narratives of civility are employed and enlivened by an out-group both aware of, and yet unwilling to succumb to, a superimposed uncivil status in the German capital.

My research was rooted in this mosque community, where I attended events and classes, as well as engaged with daily activities over a non-consecutive period of two years from 2013-2017. I further moved with my research participants outwards into their neighborhoods, local establishments, and homes. These multiple and layered encounters provided me with a lens into their experiences resulting from this labeling as uncivil, and the myriad ways in which some Muslim Berliners agentively break down their imagined incivility. My own ethnographic positionality in the mosque, as a Jewish American woman who is part of a Jewish-Muslim family, created an insider-outsider position, where I was able to actively participate in, while not being fully part of the mosque community. As a cultural sociologist and ethnographer, my interpretive framework was grounded in the ethical turn in anthropology, led by Talal Asad and echoed in the work of his students, including Saba Mahmood, Charles Hirschkind, and Mayanthi Fernando (Fernando, 2014; Hirschkind, 2020; Mahmood, 2005). The ethical turn entails a focus on the interlinked formation and experience of the moral subject. I thus took seriously my research participants' learning and social activities both within—and beyond—the mosque, focusing on how they at once shaped and became emplaced as moral subjects in the plural metropolis of Berlin. At the same time, I centered my analytical gaze on how cultural understandings and frameworks shape notions of the self and the Muslim community, more broadly.

During my research, Sehitlik Mosque community members contended with images of Muslim life as uncivil through an invocation of shared democratic values in their

learning circles and in public engagement, a process written about extensively elsewhere (Becker, 2018, 2021). They not only described, but also demonstrated their compatibility with German society through mainstream engagement in the mosque, where Islamic values were shown to coalesce with German democratic values like 'freedom,' 'equality,' and environmental concerns. The most notable form of such engagement were twice daily mosque tours that focused on bringing diverse groups of local visitors into the mosque to learn about Muslims in Berlin, and Islam, in general. During these tours, guides drew on notions of gender and racial equality in Islam, beginning with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, and a deep concern for the environment (Becker, 2021).

It was not only shared values, argued to be inherent both to German democracy and the religion of Islam, however, but also Jewish-Muslim identifications, the formation of the self in relation to another ethnoreligious Other in German society, that became visible to me in my interactions with Sehitlik Mosque constituents. Some tour guides drew on an association with Jewish community/culture/history in their tours. One guide, Yusuf, led a tour with school children in which he described the presence of the Star of David as a symbol in mosques and Muslim culture, including the mosque in his grandparents' hometown in Turkey. While the description of the presence of the Jewish star in mosques, and its demarcation not only as a Jewish, but also a Muslim symbol, is a factual statement, it also reflects the guide's choice to bring attention to specific symbols, thereby creating associations in the minds of mosque visitors. Such symbolic invocations can have powerful effects, as seen in the work of Paul Lopes (2000), who traces the 20th-century sociocultural transformation of Jazz from low-brow to high-brow culture, with the symbolic strategies of Jazz musicians, in discursive framing (invoking high-brow terms like 'orchestra') and material symbols (suits, tuxedos) accounting for this shift.

As Alexander (2007: 23) argues, struggles for solidarity and justice 'are nested within the discourse of civil society' and ultimately create/reconstitute the boundaries of who belongs to a given society. Many second-generation mosque leaders—those born in Berlin—including, but not exclusively, individuals who worked as tour guides, moved beyond descriptions of symbolic associations or affiliations to the enlivenment of a new solidarity with the Jewish community in and through the struggles for belonging in the city. Following the Holocaust, Jews have understandably come to occupy what my research participants termed a 'special' position within German society: one characterized by both protection and continued unsettledness, as society struggles to deal with its past (Neiman, 2019). One of my research participants, Harun, described the police protection provided to synagogues as evidence of this 'special' position, that is, explicit protection by the state (which he contrasted with the surveilling police presence in mosques), while at the same time illuminating the continued societal threat that necessitates such protection. Although arguably part of Germany's civil sphere, rising anti-Semitism, and legal debates such as the circumcision ban in 2012 have again brought into question the positionality of Jews in Germany (Amir-Moazami, 2016).

The presence of the tense modern history of German Jewry, filled with brackets, hyphens, and contradictions, marks the Berlin cityscape, where the Neue Synagogue—built during German Jewish emancipation—joins Sehitlik among many domes in the sky. The city is filled both with new Jewish life, and with memorials, large and small, built from the ground to the clouds. The presence of this past, its fusion with the many

cultural and material layers of the city has been orchestrated through a concerted and official effort of *Vergangenheitsbewaeltigung* ('coping with the past') (Neiman 2019). Myriad institutional efforts have aimed at making this history both visible and known, the latter specifically accomplished through school curriculums. These efforts are meant to imbue new generations with knowledge of the Holocaust, and also a sense of collective guilt/responsibility (Carrington and Short, 1997; Özyürek, 2018). However, such educational endeavors have largely failed to consider the complex and intersecting ways in which new ethnoreligious minority groups—Muslims, in particular—grapple with their own relationality to mainstream society when facing this past (Özyürek, 2018; Vitale and Clothey, 2019). As Esra Özyürek (2018) illuminates in her work on school visits to concentration camp sites, young German Muslims do not feel responsibility, but rather a keen sense of empathy—the ability to imagine themselves in another 'Other's' shoes—when confronting this past. That is, encounters with the Jewish experience foster a sense of solidarity with those other 'strangers' who once inhabited German society, as they are imbued with the knowledge of a shared positionality, in space if not time.

Rooted in these layered and complex social schemes, in the ethnographic narratives that follow, I trace my research participants' *horizontal struggles for identification* with Jewish life present and past. These can be seen to varying extents in three interlinked identification processes: 1) identification by Muslims with Jews, 2) co-identification by Jews with Muslims, and 3) identification of Muslims with Jews by the mainstream.

Contesting Incivility

On a brisk winter afternoon in 2015, I took Berlin's subway to central Neukölln, the once-largely Turkish neighborhood where the Sehitlik Mosque stands. I had been invited to an exhibition led by Salaam-Schalom, a Jewish-Muslim initiative that seeks to foster solidarity between Muslims and Jews living in Berlin through their shared experiences in the city, many of its initial meetings taking place at the Sehitlik Mosque. The Salaam-Schalom Initiative was founded in 2013 by Armin Langer, a Jewish Neukölln resident, when Berliner Rabbi Daniel Alter publicly asserted that the neighborhood—with its large Turkish and also growing Arab populace—was a 'no-go zone' for Jews (Langer, 2016). It is thus not by chance that Neukölln lay at the center of these ongoing encounters, from talks at the Sehitlik Mosque to brunches in local cafes. Since the turn of the 21st century, Neukölln has undergone a transformation from a Turkish immigrant neighborhood into one of plural populaces, including students and artists (Juhnke, 2015). Notably, this neighborhood also became home to a growing Israeli populace over the past two decades, some Israelis half-joking that they took the 'Aaliyah in reverse': migrating to Germany in protest of the increasingly nationalist Israeli government.

The winter exhibition instated by Salaam-Schalom invited interested city denizens to visit the unidentified homes of Muslims and Jews in Neukölln. The home that I visited on that particularly gray day sat above an old Turkish teahouse, one of many remnants of the early years of guestworker migration. It was reached by a narrow, winding staircase, releasing visitors at the entrance of an apartment, outside of which both Quranic verse and a mezuzah marked the doorway. The entire apartment—scenes from a mixed Israeli neighborhood playing on the television screen, comic book sketches portraying

discrimination against Muslims in Berlin, a Jewish star, Arabic letters, Muslims and Jews smoking together on the balcony—blurred the boundaries between these two groups, both at home in Neukölln. I could not help but ask, even knowing that I would not receive a definitive reply, to whom the apartment belonged. 'It is ours,' a young woman asserted from that balcony, 'just as the city is ours.'

In this moment, I both witnessed and felt the solidarity forged by these young Muslims and Jews who live together in Neukölln. This was the most intimate instantiation of this specific form of identification with another, Other, that I witnessed throughout my research, fostered by an initiative that drew on, and drew out, a shared positionality of Jews' past (and increasingly present) and Muslims in Berlin. The most publicly visible display of this same horizontal identification, however, took place a year earlier at an event entitled 'My Head, My Choice.' In 2014, Betul Ülusoy, one of the young mosque leaders and tour guides at Sehitlik, had a job offer in Neukölln's civil office rescinded because she donned a headscarf. Following this incident, Salaam-Schalom members gathered outside of Neukölln's City Hall, where they held signs inscribed with the words 'My Head, My Choice.' This very public moment, covered in the local, national, and even international news, showcased the horizontal identification with Jews through which Muslim Berliners made claims on their own civil belonging; Muslims standing together with Jews outside of City Hall also invoked a universally legible liberal democratic language of gender equality and individual rights. Here Muslim Berliners not only refuted their perceived incivility by invoking democratic values and drawing on established Muslim-Jewish affinities, but also by relating *to* the mainstream *through* their at-once emotive and strategic identification with Jews.[2]

Two years prior, in 2012, a remarkable moment had drawn Muslims and Jews together on both a local and national level, when Germany temporarily banned circumcision. This ban was instated in response to complications experienced by a young Muslim boy following his circumcision by a Muslim doctor in Cologne. While both Muslims and Jews immediately expressed outrage at the targeting of their shared religious ritual—justified in the ruling primarily as a violation of individual rights—Jewish leaders responded with shock. Harun, a Sehitlik Mosque constituent, PhD student, and Muslim tour guide at the Jewish Museum, described the hierarchy of belonging that these different reactions revealed:

> I have a lot of [Jewish] friends who said, 'This is something we never expected, never in Germany with this past,' and this was a disappointment for them and *unfathomable*. On the Muslim side, it was somewhat different. Muslims have had many such experiences in the last years, prohibitions by the state, the majority society, mosque building, *halal*, everything is a problem . . . the shock moment was not so big.

That the ban had followed a complication from the procedure on a Muslim body, a procedure undertaken by a Muslim doctor, was not surprising, Harun explained; it was 'only a Muslim' who could invoke such a response. The ban emerged from fundamental and shared cultural assumptions about Muslim incivility.

> What was very significant is that this practice was portrayed as a barbaric practice and ok, now we teach you what to do, we Christian society, we German society, we have overcome certain barbaric traditions, we have modernized with the Enlightenment and everything, we have left things behind, you know we have overcome this. So now it's time for you guys to do this and you know, to *arrive* here.

The language of differentiation employed by Harun was one recognizing the externalization of Muslims from the civil sphere (having not 'arrived here'), relegating them instead to the imagined uncivil sphere, there where barbarity reigns. That the ban also affected Jewish bodies, however, essentially made it 'untenable,' in Harun's words, because of the 'special,' protected position of Jews in Germany. Under pressure from both German Jews and Jewish organizations worldwide, the ban was soon after overturned by the German Federal Court (Amir-Moazami, 2016). While aware of anti-Semitic social currents that contributed to support for the ban ('you have this notion of the cruel Jew, barbaric Jew and then stereotypes are just confirmed and then some with their anti-Semitic views they come and somehow hide behind this circumcision debate'), Harun asserted without pause: 'If the Jews had not also been affected, circumcision would have remained forbidden.'

The Jewish positionality in Germany thus emerged in conversations with my research participants as a point of self-identification and inflection, albeit an enduringly unsettled one. While it entailed greater civic inclusion than that of Muslims, this inclusion remained bracketed, hyphenated, incomplete. Such dynamism, or incomplete inclusion, was a point of interest and also concern for Sehitlik Mosque constituents, in general, and those who worked as tour guides at the Jewish Museum, in particular, as they delved deeply into Germany's Jewish past. Identifications with this past were not only imagined, or discursively described, but also transferred into material forms. For instance, Sehitlik Mosque members helped to design the Jewish Museum Berlin tour that brought the Jewish experience into conversation with the contemporary Muslim experience in Germany (in 2006), and worked as consultants on the creation of a similar tour at the Frankfurt Jewish Museum (in 2012).

In CST, civic solidarity is recognized as 'a key dimension of social life' and throughout my research, solidarity was a central point around which Muslim-Jewish identifications orbited (Alexander, 2006; Sciortino and Kivisto, 2015: 15). Such solidarity between Muslims and Jews in Berlin was described by my research participants as fostered by both a felt affinity and also strategic identification with a societal outsider of the country's past: one who had long struggled for inclusion in the civil sphere. Relating to this positionality entailed a recognition of difference between the Muslim present, the Jewish present, and the Jewish past, and yet at the same time entailed relating to Germany *through* identifying with the Jewish experience both present and past: while making these identifications known. My research participants in the Sehitlik Mosque community, both in their discourses and their actions, thus suggested that struggles for civic inclusion, for civil repair that would result in a truly plural society, do and must include an explicit identification with the German Jewish life that is everywhere. Such incorporation of this past, as well as the Jewish present into the self, included unifying, public identification strategies—i.e. allegiances in protest of regulation of Muslim and Jewish

bodies—and emotions—e.g. shared disappointments with regulations, like the circumcision ban—that shape demands for full inclusion in Germany's civil sphere.

Yet Muslims do not only identify with Jews, but Jews with Muslims too; Jewish identification with Muslims is another process by which the civil sphere may be expanded through civil repair, thereby including those deemed uncivil. As noted above, Salaam-Schalom was founded by a Jewish Berliner who saw Muslims facing similar injustices to prior Jews. Langer explained to me that it was his responsibility *as a Jew* in Germany to uphold justice for all: 'I think that I as a Jew have certain responsibilities. And I don't see any other option. I won't sit at home and watch the country going down.' This recognition of Jewish-Muslim overlaps, as well as the more privileged positionality of Jews in today's Germany was echoed by other Jewish members of Salaam-Schalom, who found themselves emotionally and strategically identifying with another 'Other' facing exclusions in public life. In the words of Mara, a young mother:

> I remember two years ago when friends, as Muslims, were treated as how I imagine Jews were treated in the twenties of the last century, that was my motivation to take part in [the Salaam-Shalom Initiative]. It is like, 'OK, Muslim, that explains everything.' I don't want to say that there is a Holocaust or signs that it is going this direction but I think the atmosphere in the streets is maybe what happened here a hundred years ago towards Jews.

While among the first, the Salaam-Schalom Initiative is not the only formalized instantiation of Muslim-Jewish intersection in Berlin. Over the last two years, New Jewish 'salons' have emerged in the city that notably grapple with themes of Muslim/Jewish overlap, instigated by the Kreuzberg Initiative Against Semitism (KIGA), a non-profit organization largely led by Turkish German activists and Jewish Berliners. This effort is symbolically-potent, with the Jewish salon the first instantiation of a recognized space in which Jewish women held equal status with Christian intellectual elites in (18th-19th century) Berlin (Hertz, 1988). A re-instantiation of the space of the salon, in both name and aim, elucidates not only a longing for, but also the fostering of tangible places in which Muslims may be set on equal footing with the German mainstream through their togetherness with Jews. And another initiative, Meet2Respect, today brings Muslim and Jewish leaders together in Berlin to teach about anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment in the city's schools, and hosts events like an annual tandem bike-ride that pairs rabbis and imams, who traverse the city's streets together on two wheels. In all of these cases—from Salaam-Schalom protests to new Jewish salons and the Meet2Respect tandem bike-rides—one might argue that Jews lend their civil position to purify and recode Muslims as civil.

Still, the participation of Jews in such activities is not without its risks. Some Jews who too closely and publicly identify with Muslims in Germany have been increasingly excluded from the sphere of civility, and even deemed anti-Semitic by German institutions and politicians. Armin Langer was dismissed from the School of Jewish Theology at the University of Potsdam, where he was enrolled in rabbinical training in September 2014, after writing an op-ed for the *Tagesspiegel* that described Muslims as 'the New Jews' in Germany. In December 2020, Jewish philosopher Susan Neiman, Director of the Einstein Forum in Berlin, asserted that public institutions should continue to foster dialogue with BDS supporters, rather than equate this position with anti-Semitism (the latter

is now embedded in German law) (Özyürek and Dekel, 2021). In at once universalist and theological terms, she argued that 'neither Hannah Arendt nor Albert Einstein would be able to speak under these laws today' (Hauenstein, 2020). Jurgen Kaube, editor-in-chief of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, attacked Neiman, claiming that she had desecrated the memory of these German Jewish intellectuals while making unfounded assumptions of censorship (Kaube, 2020). These instances suggest that a stark co-identification of Jews with Muslims may in fact lead to a contracted civil sphere, deeming these specific Jews uncivil.

Finally, while it is clear that many of my research participants have come to affectively identify with the Jewish experience present and past, and have also experienced identification in the other direction, of Jews with Muslims, it appears that the third process of identification—of mainstream German society identifying Muslims with Jews—is occurring only in a few discrete cases. The above-noted integration of tours comparing Jewish and Muslim religious traditions in the Jewish Museum Berlin and the Jewish Museum Frankfurt speak to a recognition of intersections between Muslim and Jewish life in Germany by major cultural institutions. And following the 'My Head, My Choice' campaign by the Salaam-Schalom Initiative, Betul Ülusoy was—subsequent to protests—again offered a job by the Neukölln government, showing that public demonstrations of affinities can have tangible effects on social life. Yet, the power of dominant narratives remains stark even in the face of these possibilities. Muslims remain largely portrayed as uncivil, at times due to their perceived incompatibility with Jews (again, they are blamed for rising anti-Semitism despite 90% of anti-Semitic attacks being carried out by the right wing) (Özyürek and Dekel, 2021).

In the case of the Jewish Museum Berlin, the increasing alignment of Jewish and Muslim positionalities (in exhibitions like *Snip It*, which explained circumcision rituals and *Jerusalem*, portraying the layered Abrahamic claims on the holy city) spurred controversy, and contributed to a complete reconfiguration of the museum (Thiel, 2019). Additionally, Muslim school children have been deeply critiqued for expressing empathy with German Jews +' past, rather than guilt for Germany's past (Özyurek, 2018). Finally, the possibility for Jews who identify with Muslims to be seen as uncivil points to the potential polluting force of such identifications for Jews. Perhaps these denials of identifications between Muslims and Jews occur because in this 'horizontal' model of civil identification, Muslim Berliners, and Muslim Germans, more broadly do not directly appeal to audiences in their public performances of identification, but rather assume that they will gain public attention since the same public has so strongly responded to the party (German Jews) they are modelling themselves on. Or perhaps it is because the German Jewish experience is seen as so exceptional that any parallels made with it—whether by Muslims or others, including Jews, themselves—are deemed uncivil.

Conclusion

This paper sheds light on the complex and layered ways in which those cast as uncivil—Muslims in today's Germany—negotiate cultural divides as they strive for inclusion in the German civil sphere. Specifically, it centers on a struggle for horizontal identification forged in struggles for inclusion, in processes of civil repair, here by Muslims with Jews

in the German capital that they both call home. The identification of the Muslim self with Jews present and past in relating to mainstream German society thus teaches us important lessons about the shifting nature of civic inclusions and exclusions beyond this single case; the dynamic and unfinished project of the civil sphere; and the centrality of a shared imaginary in expanding solidarity spheres in modern society. It has also led, at a very grounded level, to the expansion of initiatives that unite Muslims and Jews in Germany's capital.

Although research on the civil sphere has tended to focus on out-group-mainstream relations, some CST scholars have turned towards other forms of relationality aimed at civil repair. In his essay on the cultural construction of the Holocaust, Alexander (2016) shows how the Civil Rights Movement drew on the emancipatory language and symbols of the Jewish struggle for inclusion in the United States. And Carly Schall (2019) illuminates the identification practices that occur between minoritized Swedish hip hop artists and a historically black musical form, as they at once illuminate the coding of both their bodies and hip hop as uncivil forms, and make claims on belonging to Sweden's Civil Sphere. The recently edited volume *The Courage for Civil Repair: Narrating the Righteous in International Migration* has further illuminated the role of 'cross-group solidarity' in affecting boundaries of belonging to the civil sphere through the performance of righteousness (Tognato et al., 2020; see specifically the chapter by Binder and Mijic, 2020). While not explicitly CST scholarship, historians have traced similar processes in the case of postcolonial Europe, and thereby exposed transnational linkages in claims-making on civic inclusion. For instance, Tadjer (2015) traces French and Francophone-African calls for liberation from French racism that draw on the language of the US Civil Rights Movement. Across all of these cases, struggles for horizontal identification seek to instigate processes of civil repair, replacing what Alexander (2006: 411) terms 'exclusionary solidarity' with more inclusionary solidarities that expand the civil sphere.

The performative aspect of these identifications cannot and should not be overlooked.

New narratives or images of Muslims together with Jews in the German capital forge a counter-narrative, images alternative to those that seek to divide them: such as the many positing Muslims as the source of a 'new anti-Semitism,' in spite of statistics evidencing right-wing forces responsible for the resurgence of this xenophobic form (a powerful projection of the uncivil Muslim form) (Ben-Moshe 2015; Özyurek and Dekel 2021; Schroeter 2018). Horizontal identification is a way of seeking a new imaginary, new sentiments and views of inclusion, and even new material forms, as Muslims articulate their claims of belonging to German society. The narratives and images that struggles for horizontal identification produce, whether of a rabbi and imam balanced on a bicycle, a Muslim woman and Jewish woman embracing on the turquoise carpets of the Sehitlik Mosque, or a museum tour that guides the visitor through the Jewish and Muslim experience in Germany, together, make these alternatives not only possible but visible, contending with the discourse and images of incivility that continue to dominate the mainstream imaginary of Muslims. Here we see the struggle for civil repair, exposing tensions over who and what constitutes German society, happening in real time, shaped by the demands of both Muslims and Jews for a truly inclusive civil sphere in Germany.

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Notes

1. The malleability of the civil sphere in Germany has been highlighted by Esra Özyurek (2022) in her recent work on German converts to Islam, some of whom claim that if Germans could become seen as civil in the post-WWII era, so can Muslims today.
2. Volker Heins (2020) suggests that Salaam-Schalom enacts civil repair by breaking down assumptions of what constitutes Jewish and Muslim groupness. Yet at the same time, it calls for the recognition and equality for these groups *as groups*—a form of multicultural incorporation that recognizes and respects difference within the "we" (Alexander, 2006).

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