

# FORGET ISRAEL—THE FUTURE IS IN BERLIN! LOCAL JEWS, RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS, AND ISRAELI JEWS IN BERLIN AND ACROSS GERMANY

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## ABSTRACT

It goes against the intuition of some, triggers strong responses from others, and still raises the eyebrows of many: not only did Jewish Displaced Persons (DPs) and German Jews withstand attempts to entice them to make aliyah from Germany post-Shoah and become "local Jews," but also Russian Jews immigrated in higher numbers to Germany than to Israel for a while, and now Israeli Jews are immigrating to Germany, too. Yet do Jews in Germany see themselves in exile from Israel, or has Germany become their home of choice? This paper explores the life-worlds of a select number of individuals who fall into the age cohort of the Third Generation, and who form part of the three numerically largest groups: German Jews and Displaced Persons (DPs) and their descendants ("local Jews"); Russian Jews and their children who came to Germany in the 1990s; and Israelis who started arriving in significant numbers in the 2000s. By depicting their life-worlds, the paper sheds light onto how Jews in the country structure, live, do, experience, and contend their Jewishness collectiveness, and express *Jewishness* individually, and how, effectively, they create diasporic life-worlds, and have a special relationship to Israel but do not feel in exile from Israel.

It goes against the intuition of some, triggers strong responses from others, and still raises the eyebrows of many: not only did Jewish Displaced Persons (DPs) and German Jews withstand attempts to entice them to make aliyah from Germany post-Shoah and become "local Jews," but Russian Jews immigrated in higher numbers to Germany than to Israel for a while, and now Israeli Jews are immigrating to Germany, too. In other words, the country that planned the Shoah—executed by itself and its willing handmaidens—the country that by way of *prat le'germania* could not be entered on Israeli passports until 1956, and which for many Jews still constitutes a no-go zone, has become a new center of Jewish life.

Or perhaps not. Do Jews in Germany see themselves in exile from Israel, or has Germany become their home of choice and, in the final words of the *Hagadah l'Pessach*—‘*ba'shana ha'ba'a be'yerushalaim*’, form part of a ritualistic, annual

repetition, with little bearing on them living, structuring, and performing their Jewishness in Germany? This paper explores the worlds of a select number of characters who fall into the age cohort of the Third Generation<sup>1</sup> and who form part of the three numerically largest groups: German Jews and Displaced Persons (DPs) and their descendants ("local Jews"); Russian Jews and their children who came to Germany in the 1990s; and Israelis who started arriving in significant numbers in the 2000s. By depicting their life-worlds, this paper endeavors to shed light onto how Jews in the country structure, live, do, experience, and contend their Jewishness collectiveness, and express *Jewishness* (*sic*) individually.<sup>2</sup> The majority of the characters in this paper are ordinary Jews—Jewish commoners, one might say—because it is also my undertaking to show "Jewish normalcy," rather than join the problematic discourse concerning how far Jewish intellectuals of the Third Generation exist in Germany, whether Russian Jews are per se part of the intelligentsia, or if Israelis migrants are artists, academics, or start up entrepreneurs. This discourse remains a key feature of "anormalizing" Jews in Germany. It is not just a discourse of German non-Jews about Jews, but of Jews about Jews too. Paradoxically, by this token some Jews comply with the stereotypes of Jews as special and unique, and contributing something indispensable to Germany, thus still implicitly defending that they live in Germany if they are "local Jews,"<sup>3</sup> or if they are Russian or Israeli immigrants.<sup>4</sup>

In tackling these questions, this paper draws on fieldwork conducted in Germany, Israel, the UK and the US since 2003. Methodologically, it centers on thick descriptions<sup>5</sup> and a participant centered, life-worldly approach.<sup>6</sup> It is not concerned with theories and meta-theories of exile in general, Jewish exile specifically, cosmologies, or Jewish religious thought.<sup>7</sup> It is only implicitly concerned with the question, "Why Germany of all countries?" This question has been dealt with comprehensively for "local Jews"<sup>8</sup> as well as for Russian Jews,<sup>9</sup> and it maintains only some novelty value for Israeli immigrants,<sup>10</sup> the latest significant group to arrive in Germany. By this token, this paper pulls the different strands of my work together. So far, my output in each single contribution had always been focused on one specific subgroup of Jews, thus reflecting the existing diversity of Jews in Germany as well as the significant cleavages between the different Jewish groups.

In order to show the existing diversity, I will "follow" the key characters through Berlin and other cities; I will also introduce some characters from the "off" as they have left Germany to round off the picture. My key characters intersected only marginally, if they intersect at all. Jewish diversity—or hetero-

genicity—allows for rather different life-worlds to develop. This seems evidence that Jews in Germany are not a marginal group squeezed to the periphery of society, but rather a group of individuals who happen to share an ethnoreligion: sometimes, they wish to live in a community with fellow co-ethnics/coreligionists,<sup>11</sup> but at other times are absorbed into things with little or no relationship to their individual Jewishness. This poses seemingly banal questions, such as whether a dinner of two Jews together in Germany means they "do" Jewish, or remember being in "exile." According to my fieldwork, these two issues—being (diasporically) Jewish, and being in exile—need to be separated: it is fallacious to assume that Jews in Germany see themselves as in exile from Israel while being Jewish. Thus, "doing" Jewish is both an interpretive effort and an undertaking, reflected in the diverse activities that they might engage in to varying degrees.<sup>12</sup>

For community officials, the latter turns into the conundrum of how to keep a barely existing "community" together: "I am afraid we can't offer enough hats to fit all of the Jewish heads we wish to fit to attract a significant number of attendees to our events," opined one community organizer. This assessment was replicated by a rabbi: "I have no idea if 5 or 50 people will turn up, it is . . . frustrating." Another rabbi said, "Now that I heard your presentation [the author's] on Israelis in Berlin, I know it wasn't about me: Israelis are not attracted to Jewish communities, I told my board we waste resources on outreach to them." What the community organizer and the rabbis described as problematic in their endeavors to create a "Jewish community" is evidence of the diversity of their potential target group who, as part of living actively in Germany, pursue a wide range of activities, a range of activities too wide to be incorporated under the umbrella of one Jewish community.<sup>13</sup> The level of religious diversity of the target group complicates the matter further: it reaches from *haredi* to *hiloni*—even though a local Jew would not call themselves *hiloni* but a three-day-a-year Jew; their birth places vary from Buenos Aires to Novo Sibirsk, and their ideas of the cultural aspect of their Jewishness spans the present-day *haskalah* (and hence Ashkenazi) inspired *ha'gimnasia* in Berlin to the Mizrahi driven *laila yisraeli* in Cologne.

It is thus my intention to depict how an ethnoreligious group, which had entered the mainstream of German society pre-Shoah, and remained and returned despite all odds post-Shoah, and which cannot and should not be divorced from the historical past of Germans, Jews, and Israelis, goes about their lives, creating, debating, and arguing about Jewishness within the very distinct locale that they made their—diasporic—home. I seek to question, by way of the characters

that populate my research, whether Jewish diversity in Germany can be seen as evidence that the notion of exile from Israel—as a physical reality—is still an issue, or if an active pursuit of local, diasporic lifestyles has been reached. Being "diasporic" might well be an active choice, but it certainly was not a superimposed condition upon any of the participants in this research.<sup>14</sup> In order to tackle the issue of creating and debating their—diasporic—Jewishness in Germany, and to follow up on the notion of Germany as exile or as a diasporic choice, I will move along the chronological timeline of the arrival of the main Jewish groups in Germany, post-Shoah. I will begin with the "local Jews," that is, the longest established group of Jews in Germany, mainly consisting of German Jews and their descendants, and Eastern European Jews who came to Germany as Displaced Persons (DPs) and their descendants. The next significant immigration wave was constituted of Jews from countries of the Former Soviet Union (FSU), who entered Germany under the legal provision *Kontingentflüchtling* (quota refugee) in the 1990s and up to 2004, when Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia joined the EU and the legal framework for Jewish immigration from the remainder of the FSU was tightened. So far, the last numerically significant arrivals of Jews to Germany consists of Israeli Jews, who began to emigrate to Germany from 2000 in growing numbers.<sup>15</sup> Besides these three major groups, smaller immigrant groups of Jews have arrived in Germany in sporadic intervals since 1945. These include Polish Jews who fled to Germany in the wake of the 1968 crisis in Poland; Russian Jews in the 1970s and 1980s; Persian Jews who left postrevolutionary Iran; some Maghrebian Jews who opted for Germany instead of France; and, numerically, the very small numbers of American, British, French, or other Western European Jews who came to Germany for reasons of marriage, partnership, business and, increasingly, lifestyle. Individuals hailing from these smaller groups were either subsumed into, or joined, existing communities and their structures, or they remained unattached.

### THE "LOCAL" JEWS

Before the immigration of Jews from the FSU—referred to as Russian Jewish immigration in local discourse—about 30,000 Jews were registered across the Jewish communities in West Germany.<sup>16</sup> The amount of Jews in the former east was significantly lower,<sup>17</sup> due to the fact that most Jews in West Germany were DPs from Eastern Europe or their descendants, which raised the total number of Jews in the west. East Germany barely attracted DPs. Actual German Jews—that is, Jews who had lived in Germany before 1933—were in the minority in

the Jewish communities in the west of the country,<sup>18</sup> but formed the majority in the east.<sup>19</sup> The precise number of Jews that lived and are living in Germany can only be estimated, because community membership in West Germany, and accordance with the law of the reunited Germany, is voluntary. The Jewish communities that are part of the *Einheitsgemeinde* (Unified Community) collect figures and report these to the Central Council of the Jews of Germany, which presides over the *Einheitsgemeinde*. The Central Council in turn reports these figures to the Federal Statistical Office of Germany. This total figure should be treated with caution, as not all Jews in Germany are members of Jewish communities that exist under this umbrella: they might belong to communities which are part of other organizations, such as the World Union of Progressive Judaism. On an individual level, Jews might not want to be members of any Jewish community; others cannot be members because they do not meet the criteria that would make them eligible, although they personally define themselves as Jews.

Oftentimes, German Jews who survived the Shoah had been at the periphery of the pre-Shoah communities, nonreligious, married to German non-Jews, or children of intermarriage. This native survivor group showed a tendency to decide against membership in the Jewish communities post-Shoah,<sup>20</sup> while the membership of DPs was more common. DPs needed the Jewish communities as a religious, cultural, and social center, and also as a help desk.<sup>21</sup> German Jews, on the contrary, were not in need of these services, as they held native knowledge and remained, at least partially, integrated into German mainstream society.<sup>22</sup> Yet, despite nonmembership, these Jews might maintain their personal investments in their Jewishness, and might self-identify as Jews or feel Jewish, as a vignette of one of the Third Generations depicted below shows.<sup>23</sup> While the Third Generations speak for themselves, their identity constructions underline why I put "local" in quotes: only some feel local, while others bear the scars of transgenerational trauma transmission<sup>24</sup> and do not feel "local," but exilic. Yet, this exile does not necessarily refer to being in exile from Israel, as, for example, David<sup>25</sup> mentioned. Coming across him in London during fieldwork on Jewish/non-Jewish relationships in Germany, he outlined in detail how happy he was in London. London was his place—and not Israel. Having grown up in Germany, and within the confines of an *Einheitsgemeinde* community, he had been geared toward making aliyah by way of the *Zionistische Jugend Deutschland* (ZJD, Zionist Youth Germany).<sup>26</sup> Leaving for Israel immediately after graduation from school, he realized there that he and Israel were a mismatch: he could not stand what he described as "the mentality." His account of his time in Israel—a year

only, but the year was spent as an *oleh*, and he acquired Israeli citizenship—was scathing: "If you do business with Germans you know what you get, they keep their word. In Israel . . . they screw you over." David entered Israel with hopes and assumptions that had been nurtured within a specific setting, but with little realism and—most importantly—he overlooked the fact that Israelis are mere humans like everyone else: some kind, others less so. He had been brought up within a Jewish community that was made up of traumatized survivors at its core;<sup>27</sup> he came from a Polish survivor family<sup>28</sup> that did not develop any belonging to Germany. He had been geared toward the promised land, and had been raised with the idea that Jews relate to Jews and that he was out of place in Germany.<sup>29</sup> His disappointment when he realized he was not received as special in Israel ran deep, yet going back to Germany was not for him either: David needed to make a home for himself in a place that was neither the disappointing, formerly idealized Israel nor the problematic German soil.

Lars, however, never left Germany, and neither did his sister. He is the child of an intermarried Romanian, but natively German-speaking, Jewish mother, who came to Germany as a teenager,<sup>30</sup> and a German, non-Jewish father. Lars feels in place in Germany. His mother, in turn, only became a member of a Jewish community late in her life, and neither he nor his sister were raised as part of a Jewish community or within the discourses that impacted on individuals like David. Unlike David, Lars does not hold several passports; also unlike David, he does not harbor resentment towards Israelis or Israel. He is happy to go to Israel and to visit his family. Yet, moving to Israel was a nonissue for him, and he was puzzled when I asked him if he ever thought about making aliyah. "No. Why do you ask?" Lars recounted how it just never occurred to him, as his life developed differently. He was an active football player in a local team during his youth, and competed in matches every weekend. After school, he duly took a degree at a university in a major German city, where he met his non-Jewish girlfriend whom he subsequently married. His relationship to the Jewish community had been minimal throughout. To alleviate the potential burden of the mitzvah of aliyah from Germany<sup>31</sup> even further, his non-community member mother had returned from Israel to Germany in the early 1970s. She transgressed various unwritten rules in terms of membership, marriage, and aliyah. Thus, not living in Israel, or leaving again, marrying a non-Jew, having children with one, and feeling content in Germany was not alien to him. Neither had he been raised with the ideology that he is not German—like many Third Generations like David—or geared towards making aliyah. Yet, while David and Lars do

not know each other, both knew other Jews by default: even "marginal Jews" like Lars, his mother, or his sister randomly attended services or community activities and encountered other Jews. Even so, these three did not seek out this proximity by default.

This issue of seeking the proximity of other Jews in Germany, and by way of aliyah, is a shared quality of David and the siblings, Roni and Orit. As opposed to David, these two have one Israeli and one DP parent, giving them access to a close-knit family network in Israel. Roni described her alienation from Germany, but it took her until her late 20s to "return" to Israel: as an Israeli citizen by way of birth, she did not count as an immigrant but as a returning citizen. Roni remains in Israel, with a job and a partner, while Orit left again. Orit had moved to Israel before her sister, and unlike her sister had to learn Hebrew from scratch. Her father had not passed the language on to his younger child. Orit managed in Israel for about four years before leaving for London, a pattern that resembles that of David. She did not manage to make Israel her home, and found the struggle to survive in the country impossible to sustain in the long run. However, she did not want to return to Germany either. Roni, with the advantage of native Hebrew skills, did not encounter significant obstacles in her career path. She works for a high-tech company and strongly benefits from her multilingualism. Going back to Germany is not an option for Roni. It would mean going back to a place where, she says, "a part of me always lived in inner exile."

These four characters are indicative of the pronounced differences among locally raised Third Generation Jews. The differences between them are certainly partly due to their individual family constellations,<sup>32</sup> although it is important to bear in mind that the pre-Russian immigration local Jews were much more heterogeneous than commonly assumed.<sup>33</sup> The heterogeneous diversity—and often the utter disagreement between factions—was most often kept under wraps, and behind closed doors.<sup>34</sup> On the one hand, one did not want to open a front to the outside;<sup>35</sup> but on the other hand, discussions would have touched on the raw nerve that some Jews had made Germany their permanent home and debated being in Germany, and by "doing" Jewish in Germany were thus investing in being diasporic Jews in Germany.<sup>36</sup> These issues disturbed the master narrative, one that rested on the pillar that one "only sojourned in Germany," and that one always stands, unanimously, unquestionably, and united behind Israel. On an official level, the Jewish community has sided with Israel to date, and criticism towards Israel can still be perceived as treason.<sup>37</sup> This creates an obvious rift between the "locals" and the "Israeli newcomers" who are often

outspoken in their criticism and realism concerning Israel. Especially for the latter, realism remains an issue for the local Jewish population across generations: having grown up in ambiguity, geared towards making aliyah, suffering from transmitted trauma, and furthermore lacking the knowledge and Hebrew language skills, supporting Israel serves as a smoke screen to divert local (Jewish) problems. Anthony Kauders (*Unmögliche Heimat*) outlined in detail how this state of mind led to a historically clouded view of Israel from the point of view of Jews in Germany. Yet, Meron Mendel ("Jungsein—Judesein—Dasein?") and Dani Kranz ("Where to Stay and Where to Go?") found that aliyah is not perceived as imperative anymore by the majority of their respondents of the Third Generation, while ambiguities towards Germany continues to persist individually at different levels, which might support the notion of being in exile, and with time turns into immigration to Israel.<sup>38</sup>

## THE RUSSIAN JEWS

Russian Jews have arrived in large numbers to Germany since the beginning of the 1990s. They arrived under a legal provision that allowed for Jews to emigrate to Germany and obtain refugee status. Given the societal turmoil and escalating violence in the FSU countries and provinces in the 1990s, Jews left mainly for Germany, the US, and Israel. As it turned out, in some years more Russian Jews and their families opted for Germany than for Israel.<sup>39</sup> According to German statistics, 219,604 quota refugees and their families immigrated until 2004.<sup>40</sup> This scenario caused pressure from the Israeli government. From 2005, the legal framework became much more stringent, and furthermore, the Baltic countries joined the EU, which voided "refugee immigration" from these countries. The figure is nevertheless problematic: Jews and their families from the FSU entered Germany at the same time as more than one million ethnic Germans and their families arrived as *Spätaussiedler* (ethnic German repatriates) from Eastern Europe. The sheer magnitude of numbers and the different way of registering and classifying citizens in the FSU caused bureaucratic problems in Germany. Family members could have different visa statuses: an ethnic German could not be a Jew at the same time or vice versa within the realms of German bureaucratic categories.<sup>41</sup> Of the immigrants that fell within the bracket of quota refugees, more than 70,000 became members of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, bringing the total of membership to 100,437 in 2014, the last available year.<sup>42</sup> A much smaller number joined the communities of the Union of Progressive Judaism.



The remainder did not seek community membership (which comes with a tax burden or a fee in Germany), or were not eligible for membership because they had no Jewish mother, lacked proof of their Jewish status, or were comprised of non-Jewish family members. With this enormous diversity, Russian Jews were made up of no less of a rainbow than the previous local residents, as the four individuals that follow evidence.

Ivan is secular, highly educated, and is politically active. While both—secularism and a high level of education—are common among Russian Jews,<sup>43</sup> political activism is less common. Besides his secular political activities, Ivan is also active in a Jewish community, which he wishes to shape. To date, his attempts have failed, and the old elite remains in power. He is not ambiguous about his immigration to Germany. By virtue of the legal provisions it was relatively easy to immigrate to Germany, making it an attractive destination. There was a high standard of living, it was culturally more similar to Russia than to Israel, and also—in his opinion—was less dangerous to live in. Ivan likes Israel from afar and to visit, but he has no intentions of making aliyah: the center of his life is in Germany, and the utter lack of a sense of being in exile is exemplified in his multiple, Germany-based activities.

Danger alongside culture was a rational mentioned by Manya too. While her parents had considered immigration to Israel in the mid-1990s, another war in the country was on the horizon, making it less attractive and economically less stable than Germany. Manya is secular like Ivan, and furthermore, her mother is not Jewish. This causes her little anguish. Yet, at times she still feels out of place in Germany and foreign, but she has no intentions of making aliyah either. She, too, is aware how much the parts of her family who did made aliyah struggle in Israel. Owing to her own experiences in the country, she has a clear and realistic pictures of Israel. This sets her notably apart from individuals like David, who had a vast investment in an imaginary Israel and who suffered from a reality shock once they physically arrived. Thinking about the issue of feeling foreign, Manya gathers that if she lived in Berlin, things would be different. Berlin strikes her as less German and more multicultural than the German-dominated south of the country where her parents settled, and where she subsequently continued her education. It is of course questionable if this Berlin Manya imagines is not a conceptualized space for her, as it for many Israeli and other incomers.

Alexander is religious. He was one of the few Russian Jews I encountered who came to a public event outside of the confines of a Jewish setting wearing

a *kippa*, thus displaying his religious Jewishness outside of a synagogue. Typically, Jews in Germany will only wear religious garb in a synagogue. This is usually not based on fear<sup>44</sup> of antisemitic violence but owes to the fact that the vast majority of the community is secular. Alexander is an active and actively practicing member of a Jewish community, active in the Jewish association at his university, and overall interested in learning about Judaism and acquiring religious knowledge alongside secular knowledge. Natasha follows a similar strategy. She comes from a secular family but became religious and remains the only religious member of her family, which causes more problems with her family than with her surroundings. To her parents, this religious shift came as a surprise, and it puzzles them. In particular, their daughter's new habits, such as keeping kosher and becoming *shomer shabbat* (Shabbat observant), is problematic within a secular family. Natasha explained, "I have the option to practice Judaism in Germany," indicating that she, as well as Alexander, feel at ease exploring their Jewishness also in religious terms in Germany, and even more interestingly not out of a sense of being marginal or in exile, but because they can.<sup>45</sup> While Alexander visited Israel before, Natasha has never been to Israel: it remains a conceptualized, imaginary space to her, one which she might visit.

## THE ISRAELI JEWS

Israeli Jews started to arrive in Germany in significant numbers in the late 2000s. Since about 2009, they have regularly featured in German and Israeli news.<sup>46</sup> The reactions toward these immigrants/emigrants constitutes a near binary. The reports of Israelis in Germany from the side of the German media, even though shrouded in myth and awash with preconceptions, is overwhelmingly positive, underpinned by curiosity about these least expected of immigrants. The question concerning why Israeli Jews would immigrate to Germany, of all countries, is tangible. Israeli media, in particular in its Hebrew editions, shows a different picture. Criticism of the emigrants to Germany, as well as of emigrants in general, has been rife in the newspapers and magazines that engage with the political arena. Lately, a controversy between emigrants<sup>47</sup> and "stayers"—which surprisingly left Israel not only geographically but linguistically—broke out;<sup>48</sup> the original missives were partly authored in English.<sup>49</sup>

Previous newspaper reports that centered on the immigrant experience, and not on policy and ideology, depicted the struggle that Orit encountered—the Third Generation from Germany who left Israel again—as central.<sup>50</sup> Another

central issue that emerges concerns generational shifts that stem from the increased mobility of Israeli Jews, and also, in some cases, a very pronounced criticism of Zionism.<sup>51</sup> The latter in particular grew in importance, as the current "2016 Berlin controversy" indicates.

By virtue of a grant from the German Israeli Foundation for Scientific Research and Development (GIF), my colleagues Heinz Sünker, Uzi Rebhun, and I have been able to collect quantitative and qualitative data sets on this group of immigrants,<sup>52</sup> which is to say, data sets that do not exist in such a comprehensive form for any of the other Jewish group in Germany. Thus, the criticism of Levinson ("Religiöse Richtungen") and Haug & Schimany<sup>53</sup> hold: representative, quantitative datasets lack. Maor's (Über den Wiederaufbau) research remains the only, and by now historical, document that covers the "local Jews," for whom after this date no national comprehensive data exist.<sup>54</sup>

Speaking in quantitative terms, the overwhelming majority of all Israeli immigrants to Germany were born after 1974; they are on average highly educated, secular, and express moderate to politically left-leaning opinions, which means they would form the minority of all Israeli Jews in Israel itself.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the vast majority defined themselves as Ashkenazi, with or without a EU passport, and they are culturally attracted to Europe in general, or Germany specifically.<sup>56</sup> These quantitative findings seeped through interviews and as well through ethnographic fieldwork, but it should not cloud the view of the individual Israeli Jews, who, unsurprisingly, are not any less diverse than the individuals of the other two major groups. But, as Israeli Jews, do they feel in exile? They are the only Jews who grew up as part of a majority, and who come from the country that allegedly ended Jewish exile. It is thus the more surprising that neither of the persons I will introduce, nor any of the Israeli Jews we encountered, related to their experience in Germany as "being in exile." Certainly, the immigrants expressed longing for home, and homesickness (*ga'aguim*, literally yearning) for Israel, but their notions compared to those of other immigrant groups. What sets Israeli emigrants apart was their repeated encounter with the specific Israeli reproach expressed at them that they should not have left—that is, betrayed—Israel, and in consequence, the question when they will return.<sup>57</sup>

Being faced with this question time and again, Ran reacted impatiently, although he did not rule out returning to Israel. With one child in kindergarten, one in school, and a German wife, the return to Israel might be complicated, although his wife had lived with him in Israel before and became a naturalized citizen. This constellation of one German/one Israel part of a couple was rather

common, a "love migration," a regular occurrence in both directions.<sup>58</sup> Ran and his wife Monica had left Israel for economic reasons, mainly because they had not managed to make ends meet. Monica recounted, "I could not work more due to the kids, and he could not work more either. I felt trapped as a housewife, and we did not make enough." Yet, Monica, the naturalized Israeli, stressed that she misses Israel. Germany seemed like a good opportunity and Berlin in particular seemed to offer professional options for both of them. Since arriving in Berlin nearly three years ago, Ran set off to pursue a successful career in the creative industries, while his wife pursued several small projects. Generally, Ran likes the freedom and diversity of Berlin and he is content with his social and professional life. His profession affords him opportunities to travel to Israel regularly. Missing Israel or feeling in exile are two emotions that he does not relate to. Owing to cheap air travel and a high level of education, and hence earning power, the overwhelming majority of all Israeli immigrants can afford a somehow transnational lifestyle, which supports the lack of feeling in exile, and which diminishes the feeling of homesickness.

Dan shares the lack of feeling in exile with Ran. He is based in Munich, a city that has a substantial Israeli population, albeit it a numerically smaller one compared to Berlin. He had initially moved to Germany to pursue undergraduate studies in the city where he spent part of his childhood, due to his father having been expatriated by his Israeli employer. After finishing his army service, Dan realized that he might use his still-existing German language skills and attend the tuition-free German universities, at the same time developing skills that would make him more marketable. After finishing his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, he decided to pursue a PhD and was lucky to join the first cohort of "gifted" Jewish students in a specific scholarship program aimed at Jewish students and students in Jewish Studies. The program extended his professional network, and along the way he met his wife, who was pursuing a postgraduate degree at the same university. Dan, bit by bit, established himself into Munich's Jewish scene, an outcome he had not anticipated when he decided to pursue a free-of-charge degree more than a decade ago. Thinking about his decision, he came to the realization that coming to Germany was also about his identity, and more specifically about his secular, Ashkenazi identity: Germany, and in particular Bavaria, felt like home to him, to such an extent that he speaks German with a Bavarian accent, and he eventually naturalized as a German citizen.

Idan and Moran did not manage as well as Ran or Dan. Unlike either of these two, Idan held German citizenship, which gave him and his family ad-

vantages in terms of access to the social security system of the country, still based on the logic of an ethnonationalistic immigration regime.<sup>59</sup> Like most Third Generation Israelis, he lacked German language skills. Even more problematic, he learned on location that he did not possess local knowledge, and that being a *Yekke* descendant in Israel and a German in Germany were two different issues.<sup>60</sup> Somewhat naively, he and his wife had assumed that things would fall efficiently into place in Germany and work *tshik tshak* (quickly, in Hebrew slang). As it turned out, this was not the case. Idan's qualifications could only be recognized after he passed the final exam for his profession in German because any individual practicing in any subfield of the medical profession must satisfy German requirements, and must be able to conduct their business in German. His wife, a trained teacher, realized that without German language skills she could barely get any jobs besides private Hebrew tutoring. Like her husband, she would have to re-take her final exam and might be required to take more courses; like him, she needed to pass the exams in German. Until they were able to pass their exams, the family had to get by on welfare, an entitlement that comes with German citizenship for any citizen and their immediate family. Idan and Moran were puzzled; they had imagined Germany as a place of an "inverse aliyah." After struggling for a year, they decided to return to Israel, not based on being in exile in Germany but because they felt unable to manage in a country that was very different from what they had imagined and assumed, and where indeed—give or take Idan's German citizenship—the descendants of *Yekkes* are immigrants in most cases too.<sup>61</sup>

#### GERMAN JEWRY 2.0: BETWEEN INNER EXILE, DELIBERATE EXILE AND THE CREATION OF NUANCED DIASPORIC LIFE-WORLDS

For a significant amount of time, Jewish existence in post-Shoah Germany was questioned as Jewish presence, and existence in Germany as such was disputed not just by Jews abroad,<sup>62</sup> but also among Jews in the country itself.<sup>63</sup> This ambiguity is reflected in strong boundaries between Jews and non-Jews for the population that was to become the "local" Jews post-Shoah.<sup>64</sup> These Jews not only passed on aspects of their own Jewishness, but also transmitted their own, substantial trauma to their descendants (Grünberg, *Folgen des Holocaust; Contaminated Generativity* for the Second Generation; Freker, *Junge Juden in Deutschland*; Kranz, "Where to Stay and Where to Go?"; and Ranan, *Die Schatten der Vergangenheit* for the Third Generation). These factors reflect in the vignettes of "local" Jews, who felt ambiguous about Germany and being in

Germany, but underlined at the same time that this ambiguity did not necessarily morph into becoming an exilee from Israel, or into a smooth immigration (let alone settling in) in Israel. Cluttered with this amount of ambiguity, it is hardly surprising that the integration of Russian Jews into the Jewish communities were beset with a multitude of problems: how should an ambiguous minority integrate a majority who, to complicate matters, saw themselves as victors over Nazism and not as victims of Nazism?<sup>65</sup> And furthermore, how would the local Jews who hid behind what Moshe Zimmermann described as the life-time lie of being in stuck in "exile in Germany"<sup>66</sup> welcome Jewish immigrants who chose to come to Germany on their own account, and chose it above making aliyah to Israel? The anthropologist Franziska Becker (*Ankommen in Deutschland*) exemplified how adult Russian immigrants matched their biographies to fit the German discourse, while another anthropologist, Sveta Roberman (*Sweet Burdens*) showed how this age group of Russian Jews offered rational explanations for why they opted for Germany instead of Israel. These finds replicate what Yvonne Schütze ("Warum Deutschland") had found nearly two decades earlier. Yet, the four young Russian Jews who came to Germany as part of an immigrant family and not on their account do not fit within this pattern anymore, and neither did the research participants discussed by Alina Gromova (*Generation "koscher light"*). Dmitrij Belkin (*Germanija*), who depicts his own physical and identity journey in great detail, aligns with Gromova's and my research participants. These "Russian Jews" have grown to feel at home in Germany, and show less ambiguities about being in the country compared to local Jews of the same age cohort (Third Generation). Gromova goes as far as to refer to their approach of Jewishness to creating time-limited, experience focused, interest groups,<sup>67</sup> which is miles apart from the "local" Jews of the same age, who in many ways remain part of a community of fate,<sup>68</sup> and who see it as their obligation to carry Jewishness and Jewish life on.<sup>69</sup> Yet, similar to their ambiguous "local counterparts," the "Russians" do not feel in exile from Israel. Some create religious diasporic life-worlds even though some cannot shed the feeling of being foreign, but still not in exile, in Germany.

Unlike the local Third Generation Jews and the children of Russian Jewish immigrants, Israeli Jews of the same age cohort opted to come to Germany of their own free will. While some, like Idan and Moran, returned to Israel, this return migration is not based on the feeling of exile from Israel. Needless to say, homesickness is expressed among Israeli immigrants, and while it might sound trite, a common metaphor for expressing the longing for Israel is often

the cold and harsh first winter in Germany.<sup>70</sup> The notion of being in exile from *eretz yisrael* was not used in our fieldwork, while the notion of having become diasporic was given some thought in terms of having become a minority. The underlying reasons are multiple. Some are based on the fact that Israeli immigrants in Germany belong to a specific, increasingly marginal group among Israeli Jews who feel that their identity space in Israel is being snuffed out.<sup>71</sup> Some of the immigrants rejected Zionism *ab initio*,<sup>72</sup> while others define their emigration as a political act,<sup>73</sup> or as creating a new "radical" Hebrew culture.<sup>74</sup> Yet others, less political, such as Ran and Idan, among many others, see Germany as a country of opportunities.<sup>75</sup>

The vignettes indicate that the question mark surrounding Jewish existence in Germany might finally be replaced by a full stop, and the idea of being in exile from Israel should be treated with the utmost caution. "Exile" most often captures the feeling of "unhomeliness" of Germany-raised Third Generations, but it does not necessarily relate to being in exile from Israel.<sup>76</sup> Jews live in Germany; they are diverse, they live in contestation of what to do with, within, and outside of their communities, but most importantly they are in the country to stay regardless if they are local Third Generations, the children of Russian Jewish immigrants, or Israeli Jews. This is evidenced most clearly by the fact that all three main groups are raising children—Jewish children—in the country. Inasmuch as it would constitute a paradox to even attempt to write a conclusion, as there cannot be any, no books are closing, and Jewish life in Germany is developing in ever more diverse ways, relieved of the burden, the *mitzvah*, the trauma, or pretence of being in exile in Germany and living only half a Jewish life. On the contrary, the diverse Jewish population of the country explicates that they are an increasingly self-confident minority group who might at times relate to themselves as a diasporic minority. By this token, I agree with my former colleague, Dmitrij Belkin, who argues that German Judaism 2.0 has arrived,<sup>77</sup> although I'd call it—in the tradition of two Jews, three opinions, and reflecting the identity processes of a *Kontingentflüchtling* who discovered his Judaism in Germany, in contrast to a "local Third Generation" who arrived home, in her native country—German Jewry 2.0.

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## NOTES

1. A Third Generation Jew, in German discourse, is a grandchild of Shoah-surviving Jews. The term "Third Generation" is used among Israelis both inside and outside of Israel, but the Russian Jews I encountered during fieldwork did not use the term as a self-description. The term "Third Generation," in this paper, carries a double meaning: it carries the meaning of the German and Israeli Shoah discourses, and also carries the meaning of a generational cohort, in the sociological sense. All characters mentioned explicitly in this paper fall within the generational cohort.

2. I coined the term "Jewishness" to emphasize the individualism of identity configurations, which overlap only ever so slightly between individual Jews. I first coined the term in regard to Third Generations (Kranz, "Notes on Embodiment"). They are typically lumped together and their very individual Jewishness is overshadowed by the Shoah (Ranan, *Die Schatten der Vergangenheit sind noch lang*). Concerning Third Generations, I argue that Jewish identity appears like a double helix, with Jewish culture/religion as one strand and trauma as the other strand, but that individual differences are so significant that it is fallacious to speak of the "Jewishness" of Third Generations.

3. The last round of this debate was triggered by Maxim Biller (Second Generation) who contended that there were no more Jewish intellectuals in Germany, prompting a response by Mirna Funk (Third Generation; Funk, "Wir lebenden Juden."). Paradoxically, both Biller and Funk confirm the "anormalizing discourse" of Jews in Germany by their line of arguments as either "there are no more Jewish intellectuals in Germany" and "there are plenty of Jewish intellectuals in Germany." While beyond the scope of this paper, this specific discourse underlines the notion that Jews in Germany need to be special, intellectuals, or artists, while being "a common Jew" still constitutes an issue.

4. The discussion of the "Berlin controversy" in this paper bears witness to this trend: it is a discussion between Israelis only. The German-language media was meanwhile preoccupied with features about Israelis artists, academics, intellectuals, and start-up entrepreneurs, replicating the stereotype of Jews as special, clever, and gifted. The feature film *Was machen Israelis in Berlin* (What Are Israelis Doing in Berlin?), first shown November 21, 2015, and later rerun as *Zion an der Spree* (Zion on the Spree) by the former Israel correspondent of the public broadcast service ARD, Richard Chaim Schneider, focuses on "these special" Israelis only. The possibly most interesting, and indicative find—albeit one that the film does not follow up on—is the statement of DJ Aviv Netter that he is an Israeli first, and thus does not related to the "local Jews," and neither is he overtly concerned with the Shoah. The other participants do not engage with discourses of Jewishness versus Israeliness but rather with the Shoah: since the film was made for a German audi-



ence, this discourse is given much more space. Netter, like many of the Israelis featured in our research work, defies this "German master narrative" concerning Israelis in Berlin.

5. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

6. Honer, *Kleine Leiblichkeiten*.

7. Jews in Germany, regardless of country of origin or inner ethnic subgroup, do not, as an absolute majority, adhere to an orthodox lifestyle. They might belong to an orthodox synagogue due to the absence of any other option. Generally, discussions about Judaism were rare during fieldwork and discussions about Jewish thought even rarer, but Jewish identity was a key issue that came up regularly.

8. Brumlik, *Zuhause, keine Heimat?*; Freker, *Junge Juden in Deutschland*; Geis, "Gehen oder Bleiben?"; Kranz, "Where to Stay and Where to Go?"; Maor, *Über den Wiederaufbau*; Oppenheimer, *Jüdische Jugend in Deutschland*; Ranan, *Die Schatten der Vergangenheit sind noch lang*.

9. Roberman, *Sweet Burdens*; Schoeps et. al., *Russische Juden in Deutschland; Ein neues Judentum in Deutschland?*; Schütze, "Warum Deutschland und nicht Israel?"

10. Kranz, Rebhun, and Sünker, "The Most Comprehensive Survey."

11. See Gromova, *Generation "koscher light"* for "young Russian speaking Jews."

12. Ibid.

13. See Mendel, 2010 [\*\*\*\*WHICH ONE, PLEASE\*\*\*\*] for the issue of diversity for Jewish youth work.

14. Data has been collected since 2003 by way of a multisited ethnography. The amount of participants number in the hundreds. Anthropologists collect data on a constant basis; we are "data opportunists," as Bridget Anderson (*Us & Them?*) noted poignantly.

15. Kranz, *Israelis in Berlin*.

16. Haug and Schimany, *Jüdische Zuwanderer in Deutschland*.

17. Ostow, *Juden aus der DDR*; Simon, *Untergetaucht*.

18. Geller, *Jews in Post-Holocaust Germany*.

19. Ostow, *Juden aus der DDR*.

20. Geller, *Jews in Post-Holocaust Germany*.

21. Brenner, *Nach dem Holocaust*; Königseder and Wetzell, *Lebensmut im Wartesaal*.

22. Geller, *Jews in Post-Holocaust Germany*; Geis, "Gehen oder Bleiben?"; Webster, "Jüdische Rückkehrer."

23. Much more comprehensive ethnographies of the group "local Jews" are contained in Kranz, "Where to Stay and Where to Go?" and "Notes on Embodiment." Some of the key characters reappear in this paper; others have been added in the attempt to do justice to the enormous trust and patience that local First, Second, and Third Generation Jews offered me as a researcher since 2003.

24. Freker, *Junge Juden in Deutschland*; Kranz, "Where to Stay and Where to Go?"; Ranan, *Die Schatten der Vergangenheit sind noch lang*.

25. All names are aliases, although the theme of the single name was kept. A biblical name was replaced by another one, a modern Hebrew Israeli name by another modern Hebrew Israeli name; a German, Russian, French or other name by other German, Russian, or French name, for example.

26. According to the interview partners of David Ranan (*Die Schatten der Vergangenheit sind noch lang*), the *ZJD* has meanwhile changed focus and aims at creating a

tie—umbilical cord—to Israel but it does not lobby for aliyah. My research participants, on the contrary, stressed the aliyah focus in interview and conversations.

27. Bodemann, "A Jewish Cultural Renaissance in Germany?"; Kugelmann, "Die Identität"; Quast, *Nach der Befreiung*; Strathmann, *Auswandern oder Hierbleiben?*; Zieher, *Im Schatten von Antisemitismus*.

28. Mendel (*Jüdische Jugendliche in Deutschland*) and Kranz ("Notes on Embodiment") found that the Jewishness of the "local" Third Generations was imperatively shaped within the family, which sets them apart from "Russians" of the same age group, for whom the institutions of the Jewish community were more important in the development of their Jewish identities.

29. See Kranz, "Where to Stay and Where to Go?" 194.

30. Kranz, *Shades of Jewishness*.

31. Schütze, "Warum Deutschland und nicht Israel?"

32. Kranz, "Notes on Embodiment"; Mendel, *Jüdische Jugendliche in Deutschland*.

33. Levinson, "Religiöse Richtungen."

34. Bodemann, "A Jewish Cultural Renaissance in Germany?"

35. Kugelmann, "Die Identität."

36. Geis, "Gehen oder Bleiben?"

37. Ranan, *Die Schatten der Vergangenheit sind noch lang*.

38. Ibid.

39. Haug and Schimany, *Jüdische Zuwanderer in Deutschland*, 4.

40. Ibid., 6.

41. See Panagiotidis, "The Oberkreisdirektor Decides Who Is a German."

42. Statistisches Bundesamt, *Statistisches Jahrbuch 2014*, 63.

43. Otto Benecke Stiftung, *Qualifizierte Zuwanderinnen*; Roberman, *Sweet Burdens*.

44. Ranan, *Die Schatten der Vergangenheit sind noch lang*, outlines fear and anxiety as a reason why local Third Generations will not wear any sign of their Jewishness in public. While some individual might feel this way, their anxiety needs to be put in direct context to transmitted trauma which often included issues of the visibility vs. invisibility ("passing as") among non-Jews (Kranz, "Where to Stay and Where to Go?").

45. See Belkin, *Germanija*; Gromova, *Generation "koscher light"*; Nizguretski, *Jüdische Jugendliche in Deutschland*. The key find of the PhD dissertation of Maja Nizguretski is that "turning" religious is not a reactive, but an active choice that is positively connoted. I am grateful to Maja for sharing this finding with me.

46. Kranz, "Diasporim."

47. Abbas, "Lisa Peretz: Let Us"; Hirschfeld, "No Thank You. I Stay in Berlin"; Shemoelof, "Creating a Radical Hebrew Culture."

48. Avnery, "Young Berlin: Come Back"; Etkes, "No, Moving to Berlin Isn't an Ideological Act"; Peretz, "Israelis in Berlin."

49. The discussion takes place in the Hebrew and English version of *HaAretz* and *+972 Magazine* ([www.972mag.com](http://www.972mag.com)), outlets which command their readership from the middle and upper societal strata in Israel. The widest read – free – Israeli newspaper, *Yisrael HaYom*, does not offer contributions to this discussion. *Yediot Aharonot* does not contain any such missive either, but serves to propagate the Israeli mainstream discourses, while the online platform *YNet* ([www.ynetnews.com](http://www.ynetnews.com) and [www.ynet.co.il](http://www.ynet.co.il)),

which is owed by *Yediot Aharonot* offers a cacophonous diversity of pieces on this topic in general.

50. Weisberg, "One Question before You Speak of Zionism," in Hebrew.
51. Amit, "The Revival of Diasporic Hebrew"; Hirschfeld, "Becoming Post-Israeli"; "No Thank You. I Stay in Berlin"; Shemoelof, "Creating a Radical Hebrew Culture."
52. Kranz, Sünker, and Rebhun, "The Most Comprehensive Survey."
53. Haug and Schimany, *Jüdische Zuwanderer in Deutschland*, 11.
54. In the US, comprehensive data sets on the Jewish population exist that have been analyzed by researchers. The data sets are so comprehensive that output spans topics from the attachment to Israel to intermarriage, the use of dating sites, and the concepts of the Jewishness of "peripheral" Jews, among other even more specific topics.
55. Kranz, Sünker, and Rebhun, "The Most Comprehensive Survey."
56. Ibid.
57. Kranz and Cohen, "Israeli Jews in the New Berlin."
58. See Kranz, "Global Northerners in Israel."
59. See edited volume by Silbereisen et. al., *The Challenges of Diaspora Migration*. It should be noted that Jews of German descent have access to German citizenship via the legal means of "German descent." Descent in this sense means ethnobiological descent by way of citizenship ancestry, as defined in German basic law and as perpetuated in German citizenship law. This sets them apart from German-speaking Jews who resided in East Europe and but who were not German citizens.
60. Kranz, "Expressing Belonging through Citizenship."
61. Ibid.
62. Peck, *Being Jewish in the New Germany*; Webster, "Jüdische Rückkehrer in der BRD nach 1945."
63. Mounk, *Stranger in My Own Country*; Kranz, "Where to Stay and Where to Go?"; Ranan, *Die Schatten der Vergangenheit sind noch lang*.
64. Bodemann, "A Jewish Cultural Renaissance in Germany?"; Grünberg, *Folgen des Holocaust*; Kranz, *Shades of Jewishness*; Kugelmann, "Die Identität."
65. See Roberman, *Sweet Burdens*.
66. Zimmerman, "Rezension zu."
67. Gromova, *Generation "koscher light,"* 282.
68. Kranz, "Where to Stay and Where to Go?"; Mendel, *Jüdische Jugendliche in Deutschland*.
69. Herlich, *Nashim*; Ranan, *Die Schatten der Vergangenheit sind noch lang*.
70. See Kranz and Cohen, "Israeli Jews in the New Berlin."
71. Kranz, *Israelis in Berlin*.
72. Amit, "The Revival of Diasporic Hebrew."
73. Hirschfeld, "No Thank You. I Stay in Berlin."
74. Shemoelof, "Creating a Radical Hebrew Culture."
75. Kranz, Rebhun, and Sünker, "The Most Comprehensive Survey."
76. Kranz, "Where to Stay and Where to Go?"
77. Belkin, *Germanija*.

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