

Chapter 9

“Retrotopia” as a Retrogressive Force in the German PEGIDA-Movement



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9.1 Retrotopia as a Retrogressive Force

One of the key concerns of the political movement coined the “European New Right” (ENR) is to engage in a “metapolitical” struggle related to issues of soft politics such as concepts, history and culture (Salzborn 2016, pp. 38, 45–46). The aim is to relabel political ideas dating back to the rise of interwar fascism in new linguistic framings, to engage in politics of remembrance and memory relativizing the negative impact of fascist politics in Europe and to monopolize a definition of European identity in an exclusionary culture war against internal “traitors” and external enemies. A long-term goal of metapolitical struggle is to achieve an agenda-setting prerogative of interpretation on these topics. Thus, it comes as no surprise that contemporary populist movements on the right fringes across Europe exploit the potentials of new linguistic framings as well as of memory and identity politics in order to mobilize popular support.

One particular element of this strategy is to utilize the potential of “retrotopian longing”. Zygmunt Bauman argues in his last book *Retrotopia* (2017) that larger and larger segments of Western electorates, or more ambiguously “the people”, share a sense of being left behind, abandoned, ignored (not “listened to”) and made redundant. This demise is blamed on internal traditional political elites, the “mainstream media” and foreign foes in narratives frequently saturated with elaborate theories of conspiracy and high treason. Furthermore, people flock to tribal mentalities, encapsulating societal discourse within mutually exclusive and mutually hostile filter bubbles and echo chambers. To this toxic mix are added a dramatic privatization of violence, stimulating copycat behavior, and an almost

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insurmountable and increasing cleavage between rich and poor. “Retrotopia”, Bauman explains, is the outcome of a dramatic U-turn in the public mindset: “from investing public hopes of improvement in the uncertain and ever-too-obviously untrustworthy future, to re-investing them in the vaguely remembered past, valued for its assumed stability and so trustworthiness” (Bauman 2017, p. 6). With other words, progress is equated with the past. What happens in this state, according to Bauman, is that nostalgia and melancholia have turned into a part of a cultural politics of emotions. In the eternal trade-off between freedom and security, people are drawn back to Hobbes and increasingly authoritarian modes of politics, which leads to a “rehabilitation of the tribal model of community” (Bauman 2017, p. 9).

Tribalization is intimately linked to the exclusionary campfires of cultural memory politics. Since the present is perceived as an alienated foreign country and the future appears as an almost certain apocalypse, the only consolation is offered by culture, heritage and tradition. Politics of historical memory have, however, only one principal aim: “the justification of the entitlement of the group (called ‘nation’) to territorially delineated political sovereignty” leading to neo-nationalist constructions of identity (Bauman 2017, p. 62). What contemporary politicians of anger exploit is a crisis of identity and income which has fomented the “anger of the excluded and abandoned”, a recipe for the global success of populism (Bauman 2017, p. 69). Bauman’s *Retrotopia* is a refreshing contribution to studying the intersections between culture, welfare, and migration. As compelling his argument might appear, the retrotopian model remains, however, currently under-theorized and is in need of further theoretical development and empirical studies that confirm its basic hypotheses.

Thus, in this chapter I will propose that the rise of the German PEGIDA (The Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of Europe) since 2014, a “right wing-movement of indignation” (Vorländer et al. 2016, p. 139) can be related to the political exploitation of resentment, nostalgia, and melancholia in large segments of the electorate, sustained by the recent and drastic increase of migration. Moreover, PEGIDA’s alliance with the radical right party Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD), entering the German national parliament *Bundestag* in autumn 2017 (as well as continuing massive electoral support leading up to multiple state elections in 2019), demonstrates the political impact of these developments, propelled by massive mobilization in which online and offline activism reinforce each other (Salzborn 2016). I will argue that cultural manifestations in general and German politics of historical memory in particular are an integrated part of the metapolitical strategy of PEGIDA since 2014. In line with Sara Ahmed and her concept of a “cultural politics of emotion” (2014; see also Edenborg, Chap. 7 in this volume) the affective power of emotions in politics is discussed.

Drawing from my own and other previous qualitative and quantitative studies of PEGIDA in the form of a meta-analysis (up to, but not including the Chemnitz riots in 2018 and described below), I outline initially the performative style of the movement and its activism offline and online. This performative style sets the stage for multitude of cultural expressions out of which I have chosen to focus on the discursive content of two representative examples. The “PEGIDA-hymn” and its lyrics

discussed below communicates a form of programmatic self-styling of the movement, whereas the other example on a more culturally complex and intricate level aims at exclusion. In 2017, PEGIDA engaged with Holocaust-remembrance as a particular German trope of memory politics enabling the movement to rhetorically exclude the “Muslim Other” from a shared German burden of the past.

9.2 Post-welfare (N)ostalgia

For the eastern part of Germany (and the post-communist “East” at large), a particular political sentiment has even received its own label, *ostalgie* (*Ostalgie*), a word-play with and conflation of “nostalgia” and the German word *Ost* for the cardinal point “East”, which recent scholarship describes it as “motivated amnesia”: “post-communist merciful forgetting, selective nostalgia, ‘ostalgie’, ‘retrotopia” (Klicperova-Baker and Kosta 2017, pp. 99–111). PEGIDA originated in Dresden, Saxony and it is likewise in the former GDR the AfD at the occasion of federal elections in 2017 has received its largest support, in some constituencies surpassing 30% of the votes.¹ But it would be misguided to believe that this particular form of nostalgia (as a political sentiment to exploit) is limited to the eastern parts of Germany. Clear pockets of high support for AfD are also located in Western Germany and the party at the time of writing contests the Social Democrats as the second largest political force. These phenomena demonstrate that the idea of that “something” is lost which has to be reclaimed, restored and ‘made great again’ has arrived in core segments of Western electorates. While “ostalgie” mainly serves as an explanation in the political psychology of post-communist countries, it could likewise be argued that “reversed ostalgie” (or another term that awaits to be coined) was/is observable in Western Germany as well, the imagined and still existing so-called “wall in people’s heads” that paradoxically unites Germans across the country. For the “West” in general we might characterize this mood as an irrational longing for an ideal bipolar pre-1989 world order, where the capitalist and liberal “West” (while under the impending existential threat of nuclear Armageddon) not yet had to be confronted with to engage with the complex challenges of south-east and eastern Europe nation-building, the implications of EU eastern enlargement, the contemporary rise of neo-authoritarian and post-democratic rule in Hungary, Poland, and Russia and definitely not the contemporary shared burden of global conflict. In this state of growing unrest, it is the AfD as a traditional party that has developed the largest momentum in Germany as a whole and exploiting sentiments

¹For an overview, see <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundestagswahl-2017-alle-ergebnisse-im-ueberblick-a-1167247.html>. Accessed 8 Dec 2017; more details: <https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/bundestagswahlen/2017/ergebnisse.html>. Accessed 8 Dec 2017. Results for state elections in Brandenburg, (AfD, 23.5%) and Saxony (AfD, 27.5%) in 2019, see <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/die-ergebnisse-aus-brandenburg-und-sachsen-die-grafiken-a-1284812.html>. Accessed 9 September 2019.

of resentment. Originally established in 2013 with the aim to question and to reduce public spending (particularly on EU-level) and to push for libertarian reforms of fiscal policy, the party has since assumed a far more ethno-nationalist program and is now the largest opposition party in the German parliament. During 2018, calls have been made to put the party under scrutiny of the German secret service, known as the Federal Agency for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*, BfV). At the same time, contacts between the former head of BfV, Maaßen and the AfD and his downplaying of evidence of racism during the Chemnitz-riots in August and September 2018 have led to a fundamental crisis in German interior politics. Following the murder of “Daniel H.” by immigrants, the city in Saxony (during the DDR renamed as Karl-Marx-Stadt) turned for several weeks into a battle ground of radical right mobilization during which innocent foreigners were chased through the streets. Chemnitz marks a turning point in the violent radicalization of different German right-wing actors and created significant momentum by uniting outright neo-Nazis, right-wing hooligans, AfD and PEGIDA under one umbrella (Perrigo 2018; *Spiegel* 2018).

From its outset in 2014, PEGIDA never aimed to become a strict political organization, but rather to explore traditional social network and street activism in combination with online-presence as its main field of activity and profile in combination with a fuzzy ideological profile (Önnersfors 2017, pp. 174–175). The stronghold of PEGIDA is still Eastern Germany, although some sister organizations also were established in Western Germany and other countries such as the UK and even as far as Canada. PEGIDA is best understood as a “brand” of political style rather than a pattern of political organization. On the level of political preferences and interpersonal contacts, there is however no doubt that PEGIDA and AfD have developed affinities and synergies, for instance when in 2015 jointly launching the identitarian internet platform *einprozent.de* (Önnersfors forthcoming 2020; see also Nissen Chap. 6, and Kondor and Littler Chap. 8, in this volume). These mutual contacts have been developed since and the magnitude of far-right protest in Chemnitz in autumn 2018 has been explained against the background of significant synergies in the milieu. I have covered the rise and development of PEGIDA extensively elsewhere (Önnersfors 2019; pp. 173–200).

In his book “Whiteness in Swedish motion picture 1989–2010” (*Vithet i svensk spelfilm*), the film scholar, critic, and writer Hynek Pallas (2011) develops the concept of “post-welfare nostalgia”, a term that aptly describes the dynamics also at play in Germany. Pallas determines a point in time when postindustrial society changes profoundly due to an experienced loss of welfare (Pallas 2011, p. 87). This process can also be located in what Hanspeter Kriesi has identified as a new structural conflict in which “globalization ‘losers’ are opposed to globalization ‘winners’”, also in cultural terms (Kriesi 2014, p. 369). Bauman speaks in this context about a “sadness of deprivation” (2017, p. 93). Hübinette and Lundström (2011) argue that there is a “double-binding force” that unites two sides of white mourning. In the first case, racism is evoked as a melancholic reaction towards an experienced loss of a racially homogeneous society. In the other case, it is the collapse of the image of a morally superior country (through parliamentary success of

right-wing populist parties) that causes anxieties, panic and denial among anti-racists and feminists. As opposed as these positions might appear on a political level, they both paradoxically nurture the idea of two varieties of white supremacy that now appear lost, an “unspeakable melancholia filled with limitless pain” (HübINETTE and Lundström 2011, pp. 46, 49–50). Unfortunately, the authors do not explore melancholia and the emotional dimensions of loss (or pain) as analytical categories further (see Ahmed 2014). It is here Pallas’ concept of “post-welfare nostalgia” offers a broader approach, based upon British scholarship on post-imperial, “loss-of-empire” nostalgia and in particular Paul Gilroy’s (2004, pp. 97–104, 107–116, 125–132) writings on the pathology of postcolonial melancholia trapped between un-confronted shame, willful amnesia and manic re-performance of former glory. This is similar to what Taggart has coined the imagined heartland: “a construction of an ideal world but unlike utopian conceptions, it is constructed retrospectively from the past—it is in essence a past-derived vision projected onto the present as that which has been lost” (Taggart 2004, p. 274; see also Wodak 2015, p. 40). The dream of omnipotence collapsed with the dismantling of the British empire which created a sense of deprivation among core segments of the (predominantly white) electorate facing new realities such as multiculturalism, migration, the dissolution of national sovereignty and what are perceived as civilizational conflicts (in Huntington’s terms) or, in Pallas terms what we witness is a “lower European middle-class self-construction as losers in a new social hierarchy” (Pallas 2011, p. 134).

Society after 9/11 and the erosion of social welfare as a consequence of neo-conservative politics and multiple financial crises created mutual alienation and processes of “populist demarcations” (Pallas 2011, p. 89). These developments “provide with answers upon the question why Western societies react upon de-industrialization and growing unemployment with racism and sentiments directed against immigrants and borders closing around the nostalgic perception of what a nation essentially is constituted of” (Pallas 2011, p. 98).

Pallas makes clear that there are problems comparing countries like Sweden to Britain, or other colonial powers in this regard. In the Swedish case, he argues, there is a more homogeneous form of “nostalgic gaze around lost solidarity in the discourse concerning welfare-society and *folkhemmet* [my Italics; the particular Swedish 19th-century concept of a socially equal and culturally uniform ‘People’s Home’]” (Pallas 2011, p. 90; see: Norocel 2016; Hellström and Tawat, Chap. 2 in this volume; Önnertors forthcoming 2020). Still, Pallas concedes that mechanisms of national melancholy can be studied through the (measurable) rise of racism and critique against politics of multiculturalism and diversity even in a broader European framework. It is here PEGIDA as a successful social movement represents a telling case. In a state of post-welfare, European “mourning collectives [are] collectively disoriented in environments they once upon a time took for granted, but where they don’t feel at home any longer [...]. Since the idea of a people is so fundamental in European nation-building, a ‘loss’—or changes—of it create collective emotions; nostalgia, melancholy” (Pallas 2011, p. 148). The German political “loss of empire” on a global scale can be dated back to several instances: to the military defeat of 1918

(together with sustained vivid myths of the injustice of Versailles peace treaty), a general loss of superiority to the defeat of 1945 (paired with the incapacity to mourn atrocities and dictatorial repression) and a persistent feeling of resentment and inferiority in parts of Germany due to the collapse of the GDR in 1989 (and reversed feelings in the former West). Hence, there might be different layers of mourning, memory, amnesia, and selective cultural re-performances of former glory at play, which complicate a straightforward application of Pallas' theories about a consistent post-welfare nostalgia to the German case.

However, by linking these theoretical approaches, I suggest an interpretative framework focusing on resentment, nostalgia, and melancholia as contemporary expressions of cultural politics of emotion. This interpretative framework has the potential to inform culturalist approaches to nationalism studies at the crossroads of (the perceived loss of) redistributive justice as a political good and migration as a perceived political threat. In the "liquid modern" status of an imagined perpetual crisis, decline of welfare and societal cohesion, what is understood as culture is used to express "retrotopian" and exclusionary identity-concepts which paradoxically are perceived as progressive since promoting fundamental political change (Bauman 2017). As Bauman argues in his introduction titled "The Age of Nostalgia", contemporary political visions are not focused on the future but on a "lost/stolen/abandoned yet undead past" (Bauman 2017, p. 10). It is this unspecific longing for the past (that never was) as future that movements like PEGIDA successfully have been able to mobilize and to channel into diverse civil society agency online and offline.

9.3 The Performative Style of PEGIDA

Recent research defines the performative style of contemporary populist politics as "the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power that comprise the political, stretching from the domain of government through to everyday life" (Moffitt 2016, pp. 28–29). Political style has three key features: "appeal to 'the people' versus 'the elite'; 'bad manners'; and crisis, breakdown or threat" (Moffitt 2016, p. 29; Önnersfors 2019). Ruth Wodak has instead highlighted (2015) that contemporary right-wing populism, although displaying a "diffuse political style" and employing "performance strategies", agglomerates around a core of ideological positions such as a revisionist view of history, anti-intellectualism or pseudo-emancipatory positions (claimed approval of human rights or gender equality) aimed at exclusionary denigration of political enemies. Analyzing PEGIDA from a performative perspective reveals how cultural elements are used to create a backdrop and repertoire for the promotion of ideas. First, one can interpret the city of Dresden, where PEGIDA assembles its supporters, as a stage. Completely wiped out as a living city after allied (not so entirely proportional) bombing in the final months of the Second World War, Dresden became a part of the Soviet occupation zone, eventually of the German Democratic Republic and only slowly recovered

from wartime damage to restore its glory as “Florence of the North”. Dresden came into the spotlight again just at the end of the GDR, when thousands marched against ruling communist nomenclature under the motto “We are the people!”, contributing vigorously to the pressure that eventually would lead to the fall of the Berlin wall and the entire militarized border to the West. By reclaiming the motto of the GDR-citizenship movement and one of its iconic places, PEGIDA consciously ties into a symbolic history and a cultural geography of resistance.

As a rule, the events in Dresden consisted of three parts: (1) a stationary opening rally followed by (2) the “evening walk” as such, concluded by (3) a final stationary rally. At the beginning and end of each event, speeches and addresses were presented. A particular dynamic frequently developed between speaker and audience, whereby the latter interjected sentences and passages of the speeches with a variety of chants like “We are the people”, “Media-Liars” (*Lügenpresse*) and surprisingly frequent (and in English) “Ami, go home!” (Vorländer et al. 2016, p. 49). These chants would require a separate study, since they assume the function of ritualized and extremely condensed narrative tropes with the aim to display acclaim for and comment positions expressed by the speaker. These occasions, also documented on numerous videos posted on the PEGIDA-Facebook page and on its YouTube-channel, might be possible to compare with a typical way of ritual interaction between speaker and audience at party conventions and mass rallies of the GDR. Party press such as the *Neues Deutschland* almost prescriptively inserted a standard hyphen into the accounts of different rallies almost like retrospective stage directions (*Starker, lang anhaltender Beifall, Sprechhören* – Forceful, long lasting applause, chants). And of course, the peaceful revolution of 1989 was replete of significant chants. During the rallies and walks, a huge number of banners and signboards with different (and sometimes conflicting) slogans were exhibited. These can be interpreted as an important element of PEGIDA self-design and re-affirmation of positions expressed in writing, speeches or chants. (Vorländer et al. 2016, pp. 50–51) Finally yet importantly, Pegidistas carried various flags that increasingly assumed meaning. Apart from the German, national flags of Israel, France, Ukraine and most notably Russia have been displayed as well as German regional flags either from existing or defunct periods of German history and *lambda*-banners from the Identitarian movement.

Particularly charged is the intensified usage of the so-called “Wirmer”-flag, referring to a new national flag designed during resistance against the Hitler-regime and appropriated by the German “new right” where it has undergone a reinterpretation. This flag arranges the German colors black-red-gold in a fashion similar to the Norwegian. It has become a symbol of PEGIDA, insinuating that the current political system of Germany can be paralleled to a totalitarian state and that supporting the movement is to be seen as an act of resistance – a powerful trope of victim-perpetrator-reversal in the German radical right (Vorländer et al. 2016, pp. 51–52; Wodak 2015, p. 4) As a closing ritual during the final rally, participants raised their mobile phone flashlights or lighteners “to let the politicians see daylight”, followed (and in the light season) substituted by singing the German national anthem

(Vorländer et al. 2016, p. 47). “The truth is out there” and “the politicians are blind” to see this—the topos of “political correctness” is performed in live action.

On the website of PEGIDA, a particular PEGIDA-hymn² (4’18”) with the title Together we are strong (*Gemeinsam sind wir stark*) can be downloaded. It is in use since autumn 2015 (PEGIDA 2020). The hymn has no (official) lyrics, instead the voices are produced by a humming men’s choir set to an orchestra. Starting from a rather gloomy mood in the beginning, the music changes its character to become positive and impressive, finishing off in a heroic upbeat sentiment accompanied by ringing bells. The tune is best described as some sort of soundtrack or a hymn creating sense of community and strength for a football supporter club. It underlines the performative character of PEGIDA’s events, as well as the movement’s roots in and close ties to the hooligan and football supporter (sub-)culture of Dresden.

Apparently, the lack of lyrics prompted one of PEGIDA’s supporters to write a text that is set to some form of *sprechgesang* and published on YouTube on a channel created by the anonymous profile *Tolkewitzer* (named after a part of Dresden). The channel (followed by 233 people) has 33 videos, most of them displaying clear support for PEGIDA, AfD and the Identitarian movement.³ In material like this, through the lens of cultural performance, it is possible to study the overlap between PEGIDA as a political social grassroots movement on the street, AfD as the organized parliamentary branch and Identitarianism as ideological unifying superstructure of the ENR. The PEGIDA-hymn (published in February 2016) is performed by a male voice with the name “Alfred Schnabel” who cannot be identified clearly. A huge number of YouTube-videos under his name are non-professional folk ballads about local places and events composed for the occasion. However, the PEGIDA-hymn with its lyrics (not officially endorsed by PEGIDA) stands clearly out with almost 55,000 views (Table 9.1).

The lyrics represent typical ideas circulating in the PEGIDA word cloud: Islamization drives European patriots to rise, it is a duty for the Germans to protect their country. However, there are also internal enemies, the state, the economic system and religion who steal the prospects of future generations and do not care about their own people. For the sake of Europe and Germany, it is time to throw Islam out of the country, PEGIDA shows the way. “Resistance is a holy duty”, taking to the streets is to make it visible. What unites German patriots is the future, freedom, democracy and language. These are existential values worth fighting for against the enemy. It is a duty to protect the native land, the ‘will of the people’ must be displayed. Whereas we can interpret the milieu around PEGIDA as an expression of the performance of cultural positions born out the idea of resistance against the ruling “system”, PEGIDA capitalizes also on foreign policy events transformed to meaning and decodable only in a specifically German context. This emerged in

²https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-efB_nJnAU. Accessed 17 Dec 2017.

³<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBwEW7OqfILfxP1k7JRf61g/videos>. Accessed 9 Sep 2019.

Table 9.1 The unofficial PEGIDA-hymn

<i>Patrioten Europas stehen auf, Gegen Islamisierung in ihrem Land. Die Heimat zu erhalten, ist Pflicht, Deutsches Volk zeig' dein Gesicht!</i>	Patriots of Europe rise, against Islamization in their country. To preserve the native land is a duty German people, show your face!
<i>Verraten, verkauft und belogen von Staat, Kapital und Religion, den Kindern die Zukunft entzogen, dem eigenen Volke zum Hohn!</i>	Betrayed, sold and belied By state, capital and religion removing future from its children, deriding the own people!
<i>Wacht auf Patrioten, erwachtet! Setzt den Islam vor die Tür! PEGIDA kam, um zu siegen! Für Deutschland und Europa, wir bleiben hier!</i>	Wake up patriots, wake up! Throw Islam out of the door! PEGIDA came to win! For Germany and Europe, we stay here!
<i>Darum Patrioten, nicht zögern, Widerstand ist heilige Pflicht! kommt mit uns auf die Straße, nur so übersieht man uns nicht!</i>	Therefore, patriot, do not hesitate, Resistance is a holy duty! Come with us onto the streets, Only thus we cannot be overlooked!
<i>Wir kämpfen für den Frieden, und für die Zukunft in unser'm Land, für die Freiheit, Demokratie, uns're Sprache, die uns verband.</i>	We fight for peace, and for the future in our country, for freedom, democracy, our language, that united us.
<i>Wir stehen für unsere Werte, den Feinden weichen wir nie! PEGIDA ist gekommen, zu bleiben und zu siegen.</i>	We stand for our values, we never yield to enemies! PEGIDA has come, to stay and to win.
<i>Die Heimat zu erhalten, ist Pflicht Volkes Wille, zeig' Dein Gesicht! Volkes Wille, zeig' Dein Gesicht!</i>	To preserve the homeland, is a duty Will of the people, show your face! Will of the people, show your face!

plain daylight when at the end of 2017 it was announced that the USA was to move its Israeli embassy.

9.4 German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* as a Cultural Argument Against the Absolute Muslim Other

On December 6, 2017 Donald Trump declared that the USA aims to move its embassy to Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in a recognition of a 1980 Israeli decision (condemned by UNSC resolution 478 and others) that Jerusalem represents the united capital of Israel. Trump’s decision sparked an immediate global reaction in which infuriated segments of Muslim minorities in Western countries displayed appalling anti-Semitic sentiments and engaged in unmotivated attacks against Israeli or Jewish establishments (Dreher 2017; FAZ 2017). As much as anti-Semitism and violent attacks rightly were condemned, it is noteworthy that the critique against these acts were appropriated as a cultural argument against the absolute Muslim other.

Six days after Trump's declaration to move the embassy, PEGIDA Dresden posted a text on its website and disseminated it in a newsletter titled "The infinite anti-Semitism [*Judenhass*, literally "hatred of Jews"] of the Muslims"⁴ (PEGIDA 2020, all translations by the author). The newsletter has all typographic attributes of angry social media postings that have inundated divisive political discourse over the last five years: nouns and phrases written in capital letters and quotation marks, some of them neologisms, "bad manners", and a rakish style in expressions (Madisson 2016, pp. 14–15, 38; Moffitt 2016, pp. 28–29) coupled with casual denigrating satire. The readers of the newsletter are called "friends" and thus included in an imaginary "we". First, PEGIDA apologizes for quoting a survey carried out by the popular tabloid *Bild-zeitung* in Neukölln (a part of Berlin, "completely lost to Muslim parallel societies"). This excuse must be understood in the context of PEGIDA's general condemnation of German "system" or "mainstream media" as "liars", an argument that is reiterated later on. In any case the survey "confirm[s] our opinion about Muslims and their dangerous fascistic ideology". The newsletter goes on: "Hatred against the Jews, which we since decades have tried to oust from Germany has returned to our country through uncontrolled mass-immigration and failed – be-cause of IMPOSSIBLE – integration".

The newsletter then states that Germany since decades has been engaged in addressing the country's anti-Semitism, presumably referring to (but not explicitly mentioning) the atrocities carried out between 1933 and 1945. *Judenhass* has now returned to "our country" due to migration, and the impossible task of convincing migrants to embrace the German mindset of weeding out anti-Semitism and fascism. It is the "Muslims" that are suspected of harboring a "dangerous fascistic ideology". The political establishment and "the press" are accused of "noisy silence", relativizing and excusing the events that have unfolded (in the protests against Trump's decision). "Riotous assemblies of Palestinian terrorists" are trivialized— instead a platform is offered to the *Judenhasser* to disseminate their hate speech. Indeed, the Muslim's "complete and *Judenhass*" is allegedly suppressed by their "Taqiyya" (the presumed praxis of intentional lying) "until enough enemies of the Jews are in the country and they can finally attack". It is a difficult task to inform voters that those "illegally immigration skilled personnel [ironic reference to the welcoming attitude towards migrants by the German industry] and other Muslim migrants [...] are responsible for Germany's slide back to a very dark chapter of our history". Apart from the wrongly "vilified" AfD that openly condemned Muslim *Judenhass*, the "green-left-wing-fascist players of politics to the traitors of the people (*Volksverräter*) in CDU and SPD [German conservatives and social democrats]" – are accused of not daring to address the issue. The newsletter warns about the confusing situation, whereby "neo-fascist anti-fascists" denounce "courageous citizens (who are opposed to the new anti-Semitism of the Muslims) as 'Nazis' or 'racists'". As such, the media is accused of lying by omission, not being true on hard facts and ignoring the Muslims' despicable attitudes against Jews. The authors of

⁴ *Islam heisst Frieden – oder doch Gewalt und Judenhass?* www.pegida.de. Accessed 17 Dec 2017.

the newsletter then declare: “Friends, it is time to reveal the name of those who are responsible for the situation in our country! It is neither Trump, Putin nor Netanyahu, nor the ‘evil right’ or imaginary ‘Nazis’—NO, it is Muslims who act out their century-old *Judenhass* in the middle of Germany.”

The newsletter’s message is complex to unpack. Its rhetoric abounds in recurring tropes circulating in PEGIDA-discourse as part of its performative style, expressed both on an explicit and implicit level. First, the narrative of the newsletter is constructed around the image of Muslims as a monolithic collective “Other” holding fixed ideological positions (which they intentionally lie about), isolated socially from the German majority culture (the newsletter’s “we”) in parallel societies. This is exemplified by “their” century-old hatred of Jews, as expressed during the Jerusalem embassy-protests. Whereas Germany and Germans are allegedly engaged in confronting their anti-Semitism since decades (and embrace guilt for the Holocaust), the backwardness of (mass-immigrated) Muslims in this regard is regarded as a proof of the impossibility of cultural integration into the German society, or rather partake in the memory politics constitutive for exclusionary German national identity-formation. Not mentioned explicitly, however, the next step of the argument would be to accuse these “Others” of Holocaust-denial, a punishable offence under German law. It is the political and media establishments who are to blame that Muslim *Judenhass* is not treated in an appropriate manner, but intentionally diminished and excused. Any suspiciously anti-Semitic positions by the “right-wing” (AfD and allies) would in turn have met with a forceful backlash. In fact, it is the Muslims who are responsible for dragging Germany back to darker chapters of its history. At a number of occasions, PEGIDA makes clear who the “real” fascists are: both anti-fascists, the Left and the Green parties, but above all Muslims. This follows a recurring line of thought in the PEGIDA-context. In the introduction to an insider-account of PEGIDA I have treated elsewhere (Önnerfors 2018, p. 105), I distinguish a blame game: who rightly is to be branded as a Nazi or fascist and on which grounds?

This blame game can be interpreted as representative for a selective cultural politics of memory in Germany—no one wants to be associated openly with the political regime of 1933–1945, because such an association simply is a cultural taboo (with the exception of blunt neo-Nazism, see: Wodak 2015, p. 97, 99–100). To attach the attribute of fascism and anti-Semitism to Muslims may be seen as to emotionally project the worst imaginable German shame upon the stranger, namely the shame for the extinction of millions of Jews during Nazi rule. However, not explicitly mentioning 1933–1945 and its atrocities at all might also be explained as a conscious and selective form of willful amnesia (Gilroy 2004), unconfessed shame or a specifically German “incapacity to mourn” (Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich 1984). Yet, there is a term even for this psychological operation in a particular German identity-formation, namely *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – coming to terms with its past through various strategies (Bieberstein 2016, pp. 902–919). This cultural argument of melancholia is at play in the newsletter’s rhetoric. According to PEGIDA, for decades Germans have been working to eradicate their anti-Semitism, but through the mass-arrival of the Muslim “Other” there is a tangible risk for the country being

thrown back to an episode in the past (1933–1945), no one desires to return to nor has the capacity to mourn in an appropriate way. The diffuse strategy of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is such a constitutive feature of cultural Germanness that it leaves no room for any expressions of anti-Semitism, and by extension the inherent *Judenhass* of Muslims is impossible to integrate. The rhetoric of PEGIDA in this case is an example of “calculated ambivalence” reinforcing Manichaeic divisions (Wodak 2015, pp. 54, 67). Arguments conventionally associated with the radical right now are projected upon the Muslim “Other” as a proof of their inability to adopt a German identity, in particular, and the presumed Judeo-Christian cultural heritage of Europe, in general. This makes it possible to construct “scapegoats by shifting blame” (Wodak 2015, p. 67). PEGIDA elaborates a variation of the *Iudeus ex machina*-strategy, whereby pretended support for Jews, and Holocaust remembrance are “functionalized for political ends” (Wodak 2015, p. 101).

9.5 Retrotopian Performance of Culture as a Retrogressive Force

The politics of resentment at play in the German PEGIDA-movement appears to be linked to a perceived loss of redistributive justice, in combination with a likewise perceived state of powerlessness and deprivation, created by allegedly changed priorities of resource allocation and detachment of representative decision-making, receiving existential urgency through the European migration crisis and blamed on ruling elites of the “system” in politics and media. What can be witnessed in these imaginaries of welfare-decline is the simultaneous rise of culture as an answer upon larger insecurities and fears related to identity-formation, and processes of identification. The link between “class politics” in which these concepts of loss are exploited and have contributed to the growth of the radical right have (Bornschiefer and Kriesi 2012, pp. 10–30; Kitschelt 2012, pp. 224–251).

The fuzzy and performative style of politics that characterizes PEGIDA and its allies (Önnerfors 2017, pp. 159–175) allows for the redefinition of conservatism as a seemingly progressive force, particularly in the mobilization of civil society agency online and offline. Since its rise in 2014, PEGIDA has gained considerable momentum as a political movement, contributing to the shift rightwards of the mainstream political discourse in Germany. With the AfD entering the German *Bundestag* in autumn 2017 (as well as several state parliaments with double digit electoral support), and the dramatic developments unfolding thereafter, the German political landscape has experienced a significant and potentially game-changing shakeup that aligns it partially with the solidification of neo-authoritarian and illiberal democracy in central and eastern Europe (see, Cinpoş and Norocel Chap. 4, and Kondor and Littler Chap. 8, in this volume). These developments have been spearheaded by the retrotopian performance of culture as a retrogressive force that has contributed to the mobilization of civil society agency online and offline.

Whereas it is difficult to estimate the overall impact of cultural performances such as the PEGIDA-hymn, it is one example of how political positions of the ENR are mediatized and integrated into the online hyper-media environment. The PEGIDA reaction upon events unfolding following the declared move of the US-embassy demonstrate that the new populist right in Germany is at pains to distance itself from any anti-Semitism, and instead forcefully ascribes it to “immigrant Muslims” with the purpose of continued exclusion. Furthermore, by not being able to share a particular German sentiment towards the past, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, the “Other” cannot be integrated into German culture and its shared identity. PEGIDA provided the organizational framework and sufficient ideological fuzziness to continuously mobilize tens of thousands of people to gather on the streets of Germany, and at the same time to connect on social media, two processes mutually reinforcing one other. While the normative expectations of the role of civil society engagement for democratization and participatory inclusiveness are high and underscored by some researchers (Putnam et al. 1993), others have recently observed that the ENR hijacks typical features of anti-globalization, anti-EU or national justice movements (Bar-On 2014; Salzborn 2016). As previously stated, PEGIDA has been labelled a “populist right-wing movement of indignation” (Vorländer et al. 2016), which highlights the fact that many organizational elements and objects of protest are prevalent across the political spectrum such as in the southern European “indignados”-movements. A recently published book about PEGIDA had the subtitle “the dirty side of civil society?” (Geiges et al. 2015), and elaborated on the apparent paradox that established socio-political institutions embrace the concept of an active civil society, one the one hand, but on the other, do not tolerate activities contrary to the values that are favored (see also Ruzza, Chap. 14 in this volume). Sahoo (2014, 2018) has pointed out a similar situation in India, where the Hindu nationalist organization RSS engages in typical civil society agency but acts for exclusionary Hindu nativist supremacism and against ethnic and religious minorities. Is it possible to understand the contemporary development as the emergence of an “uncivil society” on a global level? Who defines which values are to be protected and by whom? For the supporters of PEGIDA, it is clear that the future lies in the past, retrotopia is a driving force for retrogressive political change of the existing order.

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