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ARTISTIC INTERVENTION AS COUNTER-NARRATIVE—TAGE
DER JÜDISCH-MUSLIMISCHEN LEITKULTUR
AT KAMPNAGEL, HAMBURG

Internship report submitted to Universidade Católica
Portuguesa to obtain a Master's Degree in Culture Studies
(Management of the Arts and Culture)

By

Lilith Salome Theodora Kappelmann

School of Human Sciences

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Under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Peter Hanenberg

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Abstract

As a provocative response to the debate on *Leitkultur* around a proclaimed “core” identity which is being frequently reheated within German socio-political realms, Max Czollek—author of political and poetic works—curated the artistic intervention TdJML, Tage der Jüdisch-Muslimischen Leitkultur (Days of the Jewish-Muslim Leading Culture). Accordingly, this research explores the relation between narrative and counter-narrative based on its case study TdJML reflecting on an internship at the performing arts institution Kampnagel as a host venue thereof. Hence, the main assumption is that TdJML provides an explicit counter-narrative to the idea of *Leitkultur* which results in a twofold objective: firstly, providing a deep understanding of *Leitkultur*, which is defined as narrative, before closely examining TdJML as an oppositional force to *Leitkultur* in a second step.

To investigate the above-stated hypothesis, the study initially discusses concepts and ideas which construct the narrative *Leitkultur*, such as belonging or the exclusionary “We”. By incorporating linguistic, journalistic, political and culture science perspectives the discourse on *Leitkultur* is screened to provide argumentative grounds for the case study and its deconstructive effort. Consequently, both the resistant and the artistic position of TdJML are traced by exploring its constitutive conceptual framework within radical diversity and by highlighting TdJML’s artistic means which hyperbolize, ironize, subvert, and therein counter the ideas of a *Leitkultur* narrative.

Against the backdrop of a substantial increase in exclusionary, xenophobic tendencies currently noticeable throughout Europe, this research does not mirror a German phenomenon only. But it also connects socio-political, cultural concepts with new perspectives negotiating strategic practices of radical diversity, such as allyship and de-integration. On the basis of detecting TdJML’s various dimensions of resistance, it will be particularly interesting to understand how such emancipative practices are reflected within its aesthetic expression. This brings to light the potential in artistic interventions to both contemplate and illustrate pathways towards the concrete utopia of a society based on radical diversity, whereby its members can remain different and thus establish a certain resistant self-conception.

Keywords: TdJML, *Leitkultur*, (counter)narrative, belonging, Max Czollek, difference, other(ing), radical diversity, allyship, de-integration

Resumo

Como resposta provocadora ao debate sobre *Leitkultur* em torno de uma identidade proclamada “núcleo” que está a ser frequentemente reacendida nos domínios sócio-políticos alemães, Max Czollek—autor de obras políticas e poéticas—curou a intervenção artística TdJML, *Tage der Jüdisch-Muslimischen Leitkultur* (Dias da Cultura Líder Judaica-Muçulmana). Deste modo, esta investigação explora a relação entre narrativa e contra-narrativa com base no estudo de caso TdJML, refletindo sobre um estágio na instituição de artes performativas Kampnagel como local de acolhimento. Assim, o principal pressuposto é a conceção de que a TdJML fornece uma contra-narrativa explícita à ideia de *Leitkultur*, o que resulta num duplo objectivo: primeiro, proporcionar uma compreensão profunda de *Leitkultur*, que é definida como narrativa, antes de examinar de perto a TdJML como uma força oposta a *Leitkultur* num segundo passo.

Para investigar a hipótese acima exposta, o estudo discute inicialmente conceitos e ideias que constroem a narrativa *Leitkultur* tais como a pertença ou o “Nós” de exclusão. Ao incorporar perspetivas linguísticas, jornalísticas, políticas e de ciência cultural, o discurso sobre *Leitkultur* é analisado para fornecer fundamentos argumentativos ao estudo de caso e o seu esforço desconstrutivo. Consequentemente, tanto a posição resistente como a artística da TdJML são traçadas explorando a sua estrutura conceptual constitutiva dentro da diversidade radical e destacando os meios artísticos da TdJML que hiperbolizam, ironizam, subvertem e contrariam as ideias de uma narrativa de *Leitkultur*.

Tendo como pano de fundo o aumento substancial de tendências xenófobas e de exclusão atualmente percetíveis em toda a Europa, esta investigação não espelha apenas um fenómeno alemão. Este trabalho liga também conceitos sociopolíticos e culturais a novas perspetivas de negociação de práticas estratégicas de diversidade radical, tais como a aliança e a de-integração. Com base na deteção das várias dimensões de resistência da TdJML, será particularmente interessante compreender como tais práticas emancipatórias se refletem na sua expressão estética. Isto traz à luz o potencial das intervenções artísticas tanto para contemplar como para ilustrar caminhos para a utopia concreta de uma sociedade baseada na diversidade radical, através da qual os seus membros podem permanecer diferentes e assim estabelecer uma certa auto-conceção resistente.

Palavras-chave: TdJML, *Leitkultur*, (contra)narrativa, pertença, Max Czollek, diferença, outro, alterização, diversidade radical, aliança, de-integração

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Preface

Throughout the last ten years of my life, I repeatedly contemplated the question of belonging. Growing up in my mum's big family in Southern Germany, happily nestled by the many idealistic and material privileges this environment could provide for me, I never doubted that I belonged there. And still, there was this other side of me. My father, whom I didn't grow up with, a Jew who immigrated from Israel in the 80s still left an uncertainty inside myself, as I began to wonder about this "other side". The two years after school that I then spent in Tel-Aviv, learning Hebrew, spending time with my no longer distant family there, became the most intense and insightful time I had lived until then. Being exposed to the explicitness of geopolitical and religious surroundings, the continuously palpable tension, as well as the upfront directness of the people shaped my identity to a large extent. From my perspective, I belonged there as well. This sensation was affirmed by every person I encountered, yet the administration questioned it throughout my entire stay demanding several proofs of my "Jewishness". I was just learning to understand what being Jewish might mean for me and already this was not "good enough". Back in Germany, my interest in languages and Near and Middle Eastern studies brought me to an internship at the Jewish community in Munich, where I could learn a lot, but the Jewish attitude there (in contrast to Israel) was almost exclusively characterized by a notion of severity. Additionally, I was always passionate about theatre, no matter if on stage or as a recipient. This excitement led me to an internship as part of my Masters in Culture Studies at Católica University of Portugal, which I had the chance to undertake at the Performing Arts Institution Kampnagel in Hamburg, Germany. The report at hand is motivated precisely by the experience I gained during my work in the press department of Kampnagel as well as participating in its events. For instance, during an event series called "Days of the Jewish-Muslim Leading Culture" (*Tage der Jüdisch-Muslimischen Leitkultur*). I sat in the audience and listened to a talk by Max Czollek, thinker, poet, political essayist of Jewish origin who actively promotes the *postmigrant* discourse. During the talk, I suddenly sensed that everything became clear: Among other things, Czollek spoke about a Jewishness that shouldn't simply be about victimhood. He mentioned how renowned politicians play off one minority against the other to emphasize a certain national self-image and how art and artistic practices can help us develop resistance against extrinsic cultural attributions and their consequences. The beautifully recited words of the author resonated with me in many ways and I knew that my

thesis was going to address these issues. Eventually, I would want to understand how concepts like *Leitkultur* became the answer to matters of belonging in contemporary German discourse. Who is excluded from this state of *belonging* and how? What are strategies that work against this? How does art play a role here? How can art create resistance or vice versa? In what way can art be the expression of a counter-narrative to the predominant culture, *Leitkultur*?

I delve into this topic not only to better shape my personal understanding of belonging but also to trace the main concepts around belonging in the current artistic and political debates in contemporary Germany. I do so by standing in solidarity with the German and international Jewish community, with the German communities that are publicly marginalized and misrepresented, acknowledging the reality of a plurality of world views, cultures and knowledge, and exploring ways of being within one single society.

Throughout this work I intentionally use terms such as *Leitkultur*, *Heimat* and *völkisch* in their German original condition. Firstly, because they hardly translate to a precise equivalent in English, but more importantly because within the socio-political and cultural discourse in Germany these expressions carry various meanings and are utilized differently which is why I would like to remain distinct in the way I implement them. With this unconventional linguistic choice, I would like to emphasize that there is nothing “natural” about (the meaning of) these terms. In contrast, whenever quoting from primary, as well as secondary sources in German language, I have provided an English translation within the body of the text, to avoid a further interruption within the flow of reading. The corresponding original citation can then be found in a footnote. To prevent cluttering, a footnote with the original citation will not be provided in cases of quoting only a few words to one sentence. The titles of works in German are given in the original language, followed by a literal translation to English. The inversion of this occurs, whenever a title of a specific work is included in the syntactic structure of a sentence, then the English title is given previously to its original German version.

All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

*Tage der Jüdisch-Muslimischen Leitkultur*¹—Curator Max Czollek chose this sensational title for the decentral congress. One instantly wonders, “what is it supposed to mean?”. How does the Jewish and the Muslim community come together here? Is this an event uniting Klezmer music, hummus, and baklava? The title of this event series seems provocative. One of the central reasons for that can be found within the strong aspiration that is expressed by the binding element: *Leitkultur*—how does one create a so-called leading culture? Is this a simple, descriptive term or does a claim, an ideology resonate with it? Within this work, I will try to open the discourse on the concept *Leitkultur* from two perspectives: On the one hand, the hegemonically shaped “predominant” culture will be highlighted and on the other we² will explore the discourse that Max Czollek and his postmigrant peers opened. We will try to grasp how these views not only inform and fuel, but also deconstruct each other. In Max Czollek’s words, *Leitkultur*, as a widely held belief cannot cope with the present, which alludes to the title of his book *Gegenwartsbewältigung*, which precisely translates into “Coping with the present”. From this perspective, it can be noted that TdJML can be interpreted as a direct opposition to the concept of *Leitkultur*. I would like to trace this statement by Max Czollek and lay out the reasons and consequences which can be drawn from it. For this purpose, I will rely on the following key questions to navigate through the work at hand: What does *Leitkultur* mean exactly? What are the political implications of this concept? Can it be defined as a narrative? What are the arguments fostering the criticism of *Leitkultur* and how are they valid? Consequently, this raises the question “what is opposed to this narrative?” and points to inquiries surrounding TdJML: How can TdJML be seen as a counter-narrative, a *disarticulating* element (in the sense of Mouffe)? Relating to the case study then, by what means does TdJML show a clear antithesis to *Leitkultur* and its political implications? What role does art and artistic production play here when TdJML is framed as an artistic intervention? And lastly: How do art and resistance intertwine and overlap in the conception of this counter-narrative?

Proceeding from an initial interest in belonging, it will be crucial to understand how this remains a prevalent socio-political issue, which was negotiated once more during the current

¹ This event series marking the argument in this report, will be abbreviated to “TdJML” throughout this work.

² I am choosing this open pronoun referring to both myself, the writer and researcher of this work and to its (prospective) readers. This should be clarified, as the sense of an exclusive “We” will be negotiated later on.

momentum of solidarity in the corona crisis. The pandemic presented practical challenges to the whole world regarding safety matters, and they had an idealistic dimension to them as well. Like many administrations and dignitaries in and beyond Europe, the German government's representatives also urgently appealed to the virtue of solidarity among fellow human beings (Klorman 2020). Many of the solidary actions were either characterized by self-restraint or by urgent assistance. Moreover, they contributed to a sensation of togetherness and unity, which produced the strong sense of a "We", a collective with one common enemy, the virus. It seemed as if everyone was operating with this designation, "We", to constantly re-frame their radius of operation relative to those in need of protection. Additionally, it seemed to be very clear who the people who needed to be safeguarded were and also the rhetorical figure "We" fostered the belief in all-encompassing inclusiveness. The entanglement of solidarity and the appellative "We" yielded the perception of belonging.

However, the pandemic itself and the measures put up against it amplified the tough and distinct lines along which (this) belonging is drawn. Yet, the most precise cut in belonging was drawn at the external frontiers of Europe in respect of migratory movements. The Corona crisis exemplified and amplified the exclusivity of solidarity and the "We". An all-inclusive solidarity created borders when it was meant to erase them. These lines provide a one-sided answer to the question of who belongs to a "We" and who doesn't. One of the prominent lines substantial to the web of German group identity is the notion of leading culture (*Leitkultur*). At least since the "refugee crisis" in 2015/2016 *Leitkultur* repeatedly experienced a "renaissance" within the sociopolitical and cultural discourse. This development can be seen as symptomatic of a momentum in German history and society fueled by a certain need to distinguish between people who acquire German "core values" to be integrated and those who do not. The trouble of absolute binaries—"Us" and "Them"—referring to a predominant culture and a peripheral, minority culture, is that it encompasses issues of othering and, more significantly, it negatively attributes the landmark of *difference*. This is the point where the specific interest on TdJML comes into play:

The performing arts institution Kampnagel hosted TdJML curator Max Czollek, an author of Jewish heritage born in Eastern Germany, for a lecture from his second political essay, the 2020 publication *Gegenwartsbewältigung*. It served as the inspirational moment for this thesis. It deconstructed the *Leitkultur* idea by opposing it with new concepts such as *radical*

diversity or *allyship*, thus provoking a more inclusive discussion about shared space and society in Germany.

By tracing *Leitkultur*, the current debate around it will be highlighted, therefore explaining how it became a center of political instrumentalization. Furthermore, the interpretation of TdJML might allow a new perspective on artistic practices as vital means of resistance to essentializing dynamics. In this way, answers to the previously framed research questions might add to the discourse on societal identity in Germany. Exploring an all-embracing approach to it will show the necessity of difference paving the way for a modern and resistant democracy.

Proceeding from a primary interest in belonging, the focus of this work at hand progressed to matters of difference and resistance by encountering the event series TdJML within the framework of a full-time internship, lasting six months from September 2020 to February 2021. The work will therefore be written in the form of an internship report in order to draw and reflect on the experiences and observations gained from working at Kampnagel – Internationales Zentrum für schönere Künste, the international center for the finer arts in Hamburg and Europe's largest production center for contemporary performing arts. For instance, Kampnagel's self-portrayal as a diversity-affirming institution will be explored and curatorial choices based on migratory experiences will be reflected upon. To exemplify the oppositional character that it presents, the congress TdJML will be integrated into the work as a case study, as well as in the understanding of a counter-narrative to *Leitkultur*.

The methodology I will adopt while approaching the above-mentioned key questions is based on Mieke Bal's *Travelling Concepts*. The cultural theorist defines concepts mainly through their movement from one discipline to another. In this way, the interdisciplinary travelling, the "migration" of ideas through conceptual times and spaces can be defined as a cultural process, as it reflects and constructs history. The object of study, the cultural text to be analyzed, will be TdJML (and this report will be its travel). According to Mieke Bal the object changes while tackling it, "after returning from your travels, [...] [it] has become a living creature, embedded in all the questions and considerations that the mud of your travel spattered onto it, and that surround it like a 'field'" (Bal 2002, 4).

The approach of travelling concepts will apply to the work at hand insofar as it will give an opportunity to trace the origin of the idea *Leitkultur* and the political dimensions therein. This will lead to TdJML's creative potential in forming a resistant counter-narrative. Thus,

the methodology used will include the utilization of relevant literature encompassing academic as well as journalistic texts, the highlighting of political debates, the analysis and interpretation of interviews and video materials and the consequential exploration of TdJML's artistically concentrated approach. Aware of the boundaries of this report, I selected relevant concepts and texts that deepen the understanding of the topic and underline a continuity with regards to the aim of this report.

The report is composed in three main chapters. The first one will provide an overview on the notion of *Leitkultur*, with a twofold structure called "retrospect": firstly, we will touch upon its origin. Secondly, a short linguistic analysis of the term will be undertaken. Additionally, the first chapter will introduce the political dimensions of *Leitkultur* by referencing two German politicians. The first chapter will end with an attempt to broaden the perspective once more and "map" the concept of *Leitkultur* and consequential critical reflections on the insights gained so far. An additional subchapter will draw a connection to the current phenomenon in cultural discourse, Cancel Culture. The first chapter aims to outline *Leitkultur* as a hegemonically charged narrative.

The second chapter will then establish the idea of a counter-narrative regarding TdJML. Thereto, I will answer the question "Which societal developments are urging for a different narrative?". Detecting a specific corporeal aspect in the re-narration of ideology while then seeking to understand, "How can the present be narrated differently?" I will then turn to the heart of the counter-narrative revolving around notions such as radical diversity, as well as strategies such as de-integration and allyship. Besides closely inspecting these concepts, it will further be argued that they are located in diametrical opposition to the ideas encompassed by *Leitkultur*. Consequently, contrastive pairs can be singled out when de-integration counters integration or radical diversity and allyship oppose hegemony. The second chapter will end with a critical reflection mainly focusing on the notion of allyship.

The third chapter will introduce TdJML as a case study and firstly locate it within the performing arts institution Kampnagel. Providing general information about the institution, I will also interweave exemplary but significant parts of its program into an evaluative discussion on (radical) diversity before giving an account on the internship undertaken at Kampnagel Hamburg, which will summarize my experience. Furthermore, I will search for the counter-narrative elements within the congress TdJML and designate specific events,

artistic works, and choices within them in order to establish references to the counter-hegemonic notions mentioned above. The analysis of the “wrestling match of concepts” from Czollek’s publication *Gegenwartsbewältigung* will occupy some space here since it served as an inspirational moment within the lecture at the internship institution. In the last subchapter, I will focus on the aspect of resistance and highlight the German concept *Wehrhaftigkeit* and how it can be applied to art and respective artistic means and practices (within TdJML), before offering conclusive remarks.

1. From *Leitkultur* to Cancel Culture

Predominant cultures articulate a specific social power relation as they interact with “peripheral” cultures. This interaction functions to a large extent via differentiation to mark a specific normative claim to authority. In this way, the demand for control on behalf of predominant cultures results in a sharper demarcation to minority cultures as they are perceived mainly as challenging “others”. As such, the dialogue between dominant and peripheral cultures is characterized by a certain tension in the dynamic of demarcation and inclusion. Especially in Germany, the need for a self-defining moment of national identity prevails at least since post-war times. The discussion around a “core” identity re-emerged when integration became a repeated and prevalent matter of interest. *Leitkultur* represents the epitome of these discourses, which have been conducted time and again over the last decades.

In order to be able to grasp the arena of TdJML, our case study, it is crucial to look at the designating idea of this distinctive title, *Leitkultur*, so the objective of the following chapter is the contextualization of this concept. Firstly, this will entail a retrospective view. Tracing the notion to its origin and founder and subsequently conducting a linguistic analysis of the term which plays a vital role in its understanding and the (often uncritical) way it is being used. Secondly, the concept’s current stage and political implication will mark the center of attention featuring two designate “moments” of *Leitkultur*. For the last part (of the chapter) the key concepts inherent to the main notion such as integration, hegemony, *Heimat*, (belonging and identity) will be reflected upon in the section 1.4. Mapping *Leitkultur*. This section will be essential since these concepts—encompassed in *Leitkultur*—will directly or indirectly be alluded to by TdJML in its sense of establishing a countering position. Making it clear that a one-dimensional view does not do justice to the various realities of life.

1.1. “Retrospect” One: Origin

Bassam Tibi: a conflicting figure founded a conflicting term

In order to dive into the topos of *Leitkultur*³, we will need to understand where the concept originated to better understand the initial purpose and meaning of it. On that point, I would like to refer to its founder, the Syrian-born scholar Bassam Tibi.

³ During the course of this work, I mostly rely on texts in their original language. For one concise analysis of the German *Leitkultur* debate in English, please see Hartwig Pautz’s paper “The Politics of Identity in Germany: The *Leitkultur* debate” (Pautz 2005).

The social scientist coined the term *Leitkultur* 1998 in his work *Europe without identity? The crisis of the multicultural society (Europa ohne Identität? Die Krise der multikulturellen Gesellschaft)* in which he gives preference to a civilian over an ethnic identity.⁴ A second basis for the analysis of the term *Leitkultur* can be found in the late 2016 publication of *Europe without identity* which carries the new subtitle *Europeanization or Islamization?* In the following short analysis, these two sources will be used simultaneously to complement each other.

Tibi assumes that Europe is in a state of deep uncertainty and in a crisis of meaning, which ultimately brings the continent's identity into question. He positions himself against "Europe as a multi-culti collective residential area without its own identity" (Tibi 1998, 28). To counter such a development, Europe needs a binding "guiding culture" (Tibi 1998, 49), at the core of which Tibi positions values of "cultural modernity" (Tibi 1998, 34), which he defines at one point as the "principle of subjectivity" in the sense of Habermas (Tibi 1998, 34). More specifically, the socio-political scientist refers abolishing a religious worldview in favor of a rationalist perspective of cultural modernity. It may be perceived that Bassam Tibi is highly influenced by the Enlightenment and the critical theory of modernity. Regarding the Enlightenment, Tibi specifically refers to the priority of reason as one of the main prerequisites concerning his proposition of *Leitkultur* (Tibi 2016, 136; Tibi 2017). He revisits Habermas in claiming that the central Kantian principle of the Enlightenment reads as follows, "Reason is the supreme court before which whatever claims validity at all must justify itself" (Habermas 1985, 29). Bassam Tibi regards reason as crucial since, according to his argument, it requires a debate to be decided upon instead of expressing one exclusive, monopolistic standpoint (Tibi 2012, 4).

Within a reason-based framework, the Enlightenment as a ground for global discourse paves the way for the necessity of an agreed upon *Leitkultur*. Contrary to that, in Tibi's understanding, multiculturalism leads to various narratives existing next to each other. Since each of these narratives might also be described as a cultural identity, the lived reality of people would be more focused on separation than societal consensus, which is what Tibi

⁴ To be precise, Tibi first introduced the term *Leitkultur* in the 1996 article "Multicultural value relativism and loss of values," ("Multikultureller Werte-Relativismus und Werte-Verlust"). I am referring to the 1998 publication (and its later revised editions) for it had a wider reach and reception in German socio-political discourse.

aims for. He insists that the term *Leitkultur* should not be limited to the German context alone but must be situated in European realms:

“The concept of *Leitkultur* I have developed has absolutely nothing to do with Germanness or any special German ways. Instead, it is about an achievement of occidental Europe, which Jürgen Habermas calls ‘cultural modernity’⁵ (Tibi 2002). Precisely because cultural modernity, which emerged primarily from the European Enlightenment, does not have an ethnic character, following Tibi’s argument, it would be capable of achieving cross-cultural validity. “A European *Leitkultur* must therefore be based on the values of cultural modernity and apply consensually to Germans and migrants as a platform for coexistence. This is the alternative to parallel societies based on arbitrary values”⁶ (Tibi 2017).

Basing this thought on studies by French political philosopher Jean-Jaques Rousseau and scholars interpreting his work, Tibi names the *citoyen* as one of the substantial elements of a European identity and therefore, of a *Leitkultur*. The *citoyen* acting as a part of the societal agreement, the *contrat social* which grounds on non-religious, worldly rules and laws (2016, 103). The intercommunication of the *citoyens* is called *volonté générale*, which Tibi reuses for his interpretation of *Leitkultur*, expressing the European consensus of values. Additionally, Tibi’s attribution of the *citoyen* shows an idealistic view instead of connecting it directly to owning citizenship (Tibi 2016, 104).

Bassam Tibi understands *Leitkultur* as a form of house regulation within a secular, democratic European context based on a value consensus (Tibi 2016, 104). He points this value-consensus towards a broad target group, attempting to include “all, regardless of ethnicity, religion or culture” (Tibi 2016, 104).

Additionally, in 2017 Bassam Tibi published an article within the research forum Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, (Federal Agency for Political Education), where he refers to *Leitkultur* as a premise for conflict resolution of Sharia-influenced worldviews contesting secular European values. Tibi repeatedly justifies his argument and more precisely his authority as a scholar in this specific field with his background and course of

⁵ Original citation: “Das von mir entwickelte Konzept der *Leitkultur* hat absolut nichts mit Deutschtum oder irgendwelchen deutschen Sonderwegen zu tun. Statt dessen geht es um eine Errungenschaft des okzidentalen Europa, die Jürgen Habermas ‚kulturelle Moderne‘ nennt.“

⁶ Eine europäische *Leitkultur* muss daher auf den Werten der kulturellen Moderne basieren und konsensuell für Deutsche und Migranten als Plattform für ein Miteinander gelten. Das ist die Alternative zu wertebeliebigen Parallelgesellschaften.

life. Here his causal clause reads “As I am myself both Muslim and European, I propose an intercultural bridge building as a conflict resolution”⁷ (Tibi 2017). When Tibi assigns *Leitkultur* with a potential to resolve conflicts, I would argue against this claim based on one dimension which might seem obvious, but which, in my opinion, contributes to the problematic nature of the term in a significant way: Linguistics.

1.2. “Retrospect” Two: Linguistic search for traces

***Leitkultur*: A challenge to meaning and translation**

Remaining with the original German expression, the question of its translation in the context of this work persists and should thus not be misappropriated. In my eyes, the associated difficulty might exist due to the required positioning the translation or frankly any translation entails. As by no means I am aiming to escape the duty of taking a stand in discussing the matter of translation, I will briefly address the issue: the first syllable “Leit” shows the expression to be contested here. This abbreviated shape derives from the German verbal form “leiten”. Other common words with the same prefix would be “Leitbild” expressing a principle or model that might be general or guiding. Another one would be “Leitwolf” which can be translated to alpha leader or leading player depending on what context it is referred to. Surely “Leitwolf” is being used to describe an animal that, specifically through its physical superiority, is naturally selected to lead the wolf pack. In this sense, it is a strong biological metaphor portraying the need for the one who takes command or the one who precedes to be “the stronger”. Not only does the wolf persist as one of the animals with, in German context, mythical significance, but more importantly, its iconography also alludes to the possibility of misusing this epitome of hierarchization. The danger of instrumentalization should be pointed out here. Notwithstanding, I do not argue that *Leitkultur* necessarily refers to a person identifying with a leading wolf to whom all others have to submit unconditionally.

In consequence, the essential meaning is perceptible right away which is that the word “Leit” has a connotation of dominance or power. The verb is an active one meaning that the one who enacts it plays the significant role in the interaction which might belong to any sphere,

⁷ One other example which directly connects to this observation becomes apparent in the conflicting relationship Bassam Tibi seems to have with the term *Ausländer*, “foreigner”. In two of his publications, he deliberately chooses to use this self-designation (Tibi 2016, 33; Tibi 2017), both to illustrate the “astonishing” fact that he invented the German term *Leitkultur*.

be it social, political or cultural. Following this argument, the prefix-term could be translated as “guiding”. However, since the term *Leitkultur* should and will be discussed critically, this translation does not seem appropriate here. It refers to a relatively soft expression compared to other possible interpretations. Thinking further, the inherent authoritarian nature of the verb brings forth various meanings: Active implications such as overseeing, directing, managing, controlling, or even governing come to mind. As stated beforehand, all of these verbs require two parties, an active one and a passive one. The passive one might need to be defined even more closely since it expresses the action’s direction; going back to the basic sense we might say that somebody is actively doing something to someone. In that sense, there is a will or an obligation to act felt on the operating side, and—if we think of a human counterpart—the person acted upon might not have chosen to be passive, controlled, or guided. This thought illustrates very well how crucial the translation of this verb remains. The decisive aspect can be traced to a certain mode of “forced” submissiveness which is inherent to the prevalence of the verb.

Thus, the most appropriate way of reading the action *leiten* seems to be “leading”, since this verb resembles a much closer link to the essential power dynamic which needs to be shown when critically reflecting on the term. In English, the verb “to lead” does not function without a preposition, even if it aims at someone. Whereas in German *leiten* can refer to someone, “being lead” by someone else. This grammatical fact is central since it reflects the conflicting nature that the term *Leitkultur* itself entails.

Even though Bassam Tibi would oppose assigning *Leitkultur* a hegemonic attribution⁸, the following observation cannot be denied: *Leitkultur* describes a political concept, that inherently links to forms of participation and opportunity. Clearly, if policymakers operate with the term *Leitkultur* they re-establish and re-assert an active role they already occupy, even without grasping their belonging to a “dominant” group.

Coming back to the hegemonic interpretation of words such as *Leiten*: someone who is leading might also signify a guide, who would show you the way if you are roaming an environment that is new to you. Playing with this picture in mind, a guide is someone you “hire” to be guided, to be shown places you might not be able to find by yourself, the guide might explain certain habits which are common etc. In that case the passive subject expresses the need for someone to take control over the situation. I would though argue that using the

⁸ As in (Tibi 2016, 104).

concept of *Leitkultur*, the passive subject is turned into a submissive part since its framing assumes—from the active perspective, *nota bene*—there is people who need to be guided since they cannot or should not move around freely without knowing where to go or what rules to follow.

Following the linguist de Saussure, who contributed to the discussion and theory on semiotics and semiology, we can trace back the meaning of a concept like *Leitkultur*. It will eventually help pinpointing the difficulties that it lays open, not solely but also through its specific diction. De Saussure introduced the sign as a semiotic entity that presents itself through a specific, two-folded structure: the signifier and the signified (de Saussure 1966).

Aside from that, the main factor constructing de Saussure's notion of the sign at the same time shows one of its effects: The structural model of the sign which de Saussure created does not look for “actual”, “real” representations in the lived world of the subject but remains in its abstract mental construction of ideas. One implication of de Saussure's structuralist approach of meaning would be that language does not reflect reality but constructs it. Meaning language cannot be referred to as a mirror, reflection, or representation of reality, but language is the constitutive element bringing reality to life and into the world. Rather than allowing us to express how we see the world in a relatively objective way, language instead shapes how we come to know the world. Regarding our example, this would mean that an expression such as *Leitkultur* would produce the sense of a necessary leading position, a resulting power imbalance and therefore an image of predominance, legitimized by the unifying mode *culture*.

By contrast, Roland Barthes—who developed the theories of de Saussure further—would not consider the creation of meaning as incidental. Barthes mainly structured his semiologist theory around the notion of a two-layered signification, he would call them *first and second order*. The second order is needed to make sense of a statement. More precisely, Roland Barthes distinguishes between denotation or first order, the literal meaning building a statement and connotation or second order, an added layer of meaning produced as a relation between expression and content. Denotation unfolds at the primary level of signification and consists in the literal, dictionary meaning of a term, ideally one that can be universally applied (Barthes 1977).

The connotative dimension, precisely that of culture, is noted during the opening event of TdJML.⁹ Max Czollek integrated a linguistic analysis to one recitation, performed by director Shermin Langhoff. The text “pseudo linguistic discourse” refers to several German composite words where the part “culture” is exclusively connoted in positive terms, among them *Leitkultur*. The justification is offered as proof that negative words in combination with “culture” barely exist in German. The passage continues as follows:

The formation of words is indeed possible, but culture, the grammatical head of the compound, which determines the syntactic function, virtually resists annihilation, the core that is responsible for meaning. The dialectic between culture and barbarism outlines some of what for me is meant by “What is German? And German *Leitkultur*?”¹⁰ (TdJML 2020b).

This statement astonishes for it expresses the ambiguity in understanding a German identity and a German *Leitkultur* which interweave on many levels. Barbarism—which can be framed as the very opposite of “culture”, a certain “culturelessness”—in my view refers explicitly to the cruel and inhumanely brutal regime of the Nazis.

As we could understand from the linguistic investigation of both my tracing and the text passage above, the term *Leitkultur* semantically situates in delicate grounds as the thought construct surrounding it invokes a claim of dominance with historical jeopardy. This results, in my view, in the political charge of the concept seamlessly transitioning to an ideological one. The ideological disposition of *Leitkultur* is central here. Kellner and Durham widely outline that “ideologies reproduce social domination, they legitimate rule by the prevailing groups over subordinate ones and help replicate the existing inequalities and hierarchies of power and control” (Kellner and Durham 2012, 14). This definition describes the societal influence and power of ideology. Kellner and Durham further allude to the specific nature that lays the ground for the legitimization of an ideology: “Ideologies appear natural, they seem to be common sense, and are often invisible and elude criticism” (Kellner and Durham 2012, 14). This pertains to a great extent to both the viewpoints of de Maizère and Tibi, as

⁹ The official opening event, called “The best supper” (“Das Beste Abendmahl”), gathered allies of Max Czollek at a staged feast whereby all participants engaged in a speech act, so did Shermin Langhoff. The event itself will among others be discussed when TdJML will be the object of attention.

¹⁰ Zwar ist das Bilden der Worte möglich, aber die Kultur, der grammatikalische Kopf des Kompositums, der die syntaktische Funktion bestimmt sträubt sich geradezu gegen die Vernichtung, den Kern, der für die Bedeutung zuständig ist. Die Dialektik zwischen Kultur und Barbarei umreißt einiges von dem, was für mich mit „Was ist deutsch? Und deutsche Leitkultur?“ zu tun hat.

they propagate the ultimate necessity of a *Leitkultur* as an answer to pressing questions of difference without tolerating criticism to their claim. According to Kathleen Knight, coherence can be referred to as one of the central, generally acknowledged traits of ideologies. (Knight 2006) Then, ideologies can be delineated as narratives because an ideology, a set of coherent ideas, can be presented in the scheme of a story (Mumby 1987). In fact, I would claim that *Leitkultur* can be called a (n ideology disguised within a) narrative.

In the following section, we will explore how the narrative *Leitkultur* entered the cultural-political debate and discover how it exactly became politically charged. We will therefore look at “moments” representing two influential political figures at the time who instrumentalized the notion for their agenda and, in this way, considerably shaped the current understanding of the idea.

1.3. Current Political “Moments” of *Leitkultur*

1.3.1. Thomas de Maizère and the patriotic semantics of exclusion

One political figure in Germany was trying to define the term *Leitkultur* in 2017 to contribute to a discussion that started much earlier, then was “reheated” in 2016/17. Thomas de Maizère, at the time German minister of inner affairs, authored an article on the subject matter. The question framing the article alludes to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wo—in literary terms—addressed a critical issue through the canonical figure of Faust: “Dass ich erkenne, was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält” meaning “So that I may perceive whatever holds the world together in its inmost folds”. With regards to the discussion around *Leitkultur*, this famous line was remodeled to the question “What holds Us together at the core?” (de Maizère 2017; Was UNS im Innersten zusammenhält?).

Thomas de Maizère shows approval for the term *Leitkultur* and talks explicitly about a *Leitkultur* for Germany. In order to specify his approach, he offers a list of ten “approved life habits which should be passed on and which are worth preserving,” which then merge into a distinctiveness, a specific *Kultur*. De Maizère’s list can be subdivided into aspects that belong to a practical approach of *Leitkultur*, and others that apply to an ideological category. Summarizing the three practical examples, de Maizère gives reference to daily social conventions, education as a value, and the position of achievement and merit within society

as integral parts of the nation. The additional points develop an outline of a particular ideology.

The frequent use of the personal pronoun “We” can be seen as one ideological element, for de Maizère defines “We” as German citizens drawing a concrete line between citizens and non-citizens.¹¹ What interests me here is the implicit meaning that bases itself on the rejection of a minority group to emphasize and even reinforce the self-definition “We”. This strategy will later be evaluated on a closer note with the help of Max Czollek’s views on dynamics as such. Heribert Prantl, a German journalist well-known for his sharp-tongued op-ed articles, circumscribes de Maizère’s *Leitkultur* catalogue as “semantics of exclusion” (Prantl 2017).

This exclusionary character can also be traced in de Maizère’s indication of *Kulturnation*: The author praises the achievements of German philosophy and culture impacting the whole world.¹² According to Arndt Kremer “a *Staatsnation* is mainly based on a political history and a constitution recognized by its members, a *Kulturnation* is based on accepted and shared cultural and religious traditions and goods” (Kremer 2016, 55). First of all, this notion can be contrasted by a different concept which is mentioned in de Maizère’s article as well: constitutional patriotism. The notion of *constitutional patriotism* was initially used by Dolf Sternberger (1979) and later adopted by Jürgen Habermas: “The only patriotism which will not alienate us from the West is constitutional patriotism” (Habermas 1992). In this view, the constitution becomes the crystallization point of the social and political structure and thus also contains an identity-forming element. Based on this premise, collective identity can no longer be conceived as being tied back to a form of homogeneity but must be developed through political participation. Political unity is then established through the consent of citizens to the constitution. This notion still differs from de Maizère’s approach to *Leitkultur* as he proclaims the latter as an additional binding element (de Maizère 2017).

¹¹ There to, one explanation is formulated in a provocative style applying principal clauses alone: “We are an open society. We show our face. We are not burka” (de Maizère 2017; *Wir sind eine offene Gesellschaft. Wir zeigen unser Gesicht. Wir sind nicht Burka*). Here he singles out a radical element of Muslim religious culture to contradict it with German lifestyle.

¹² Beforehand, de Maizère stated that German citizens are heirs to their history in acknowledgment of its “deepest depths” (de Maizère 2017). This specific preliminary reveals a common rhetoric in Germany claiming that pride in the country can only be made possible when acknowledging the wrongs of the past. With Max Czollek we will see, how problematic such beliefs can be and in what specific ways they provoke a strong ambiguity casting aside the pressing and oppressing issues that form our day-to-day life in the present.

Continuing the discussion on *Kulturnation*, we have to take into consideration the connotations de Maizère alludes to when using the word *Kultur*. His understanding can be referred to as what is called “high culture”: for instance, when saying music, he talks about concert halls undoubtedly evoking classical music, additionally he names Johann Sebastian Bach. This understanding of culture can be integrated into a debate about its “high” and “low” forms which was highly influenced by Raymond Williams. Williams was instrumental in developing a broad concept of culture. In an essay entitled “Culture is ordinary” he wrote: “Yet a culture is not only a body of intellectual and imaginative work, it is also and essentially a whole way of life” (Williams 1958). Williams’ conception of culture is thus an experiential one that does not predefine culture in ideological terms and contradicts notions of inherent elitism. Here the processual, wide-ranging character can be stressed, while de Maizère’s seems to view culture as a narrow, static, elitist corpus of specific works of art.¹³ Along with this hierarchization of cultural goods, the main argument of de Maizère rests on the promise of an internalized leading culture paving the way for integration. In the following section, we will encounter a second political figure who publicly argued with *Leitkultur*. As such, a third way of interpreting and connoting the term will be introduced.

1.3.2. Friedrich Merz and the pretended unimportance of terminology

At the time of interest Friedrich Merz currently held the political position of faction leader of the CDU. As the main basis for the brief analysis, we will use an article by Merz, published in the magazine WELT in October 2000, titled “Immigration and Identity” (“Einwanderung und Identität”), Merz claims that immigration and integration is dependent

¹³ The hierarchization of cultural products is established alongside the exclusionary wording, which can be traced in the following example. The author states the Christian influence on Germany. Here I admit struggling with an accurate translation of the German word *prägen* to English. Depending on the context, it does not only mean “influence” but also “characterize”, “shape,” or even “dominate”, primarily when utilized in its passive form. *Prägen* in itself expresses a form of traditionalistic views, of an origin, of something that “has been there from the beginning”, which is indispensable in life and society. Therefore, we typically refer to conditions of upbringing that “shape” a child irreversibly. Arguing from the defensive side of *Leitkultur*, we would be able to align this understanding with the ideology of a dominant culture, an origin(al culture) which cannot be contested on the very basis of its claims “to have been there all along”. Another interesting aspect about the word *prägen* links to an exclusionist perspective, too. One cannot “influence” oneself, which means one cannot adopt to a distinct way of being “shaped” or “dominated” because the action subsists in dimensions of the unconscious, both from the “giving” as well as the “receiving” end. By joining the semantic levels of both *prägen* and *Leitkultur*, we can state that both can neither be learned, nor achieved. As a consequence, it seems to be almost impossible to become part of this scope if one was not part of it “from the beginning”. The argument here relies on the choice of words. The utilization of *prägen* shows one instrument in establishing a “natural” hierarchization between people living in the same society.

on the approval of the national population and therefore will only be effective when accomplishing a reciprocal ability to integrate: The host country has to be tolerant and open, and the immigrants “must in turn be prepared to respect the rules of coexistence in Germany. I have referred to these rules as the ‘liberal German *Leitkultur*’”¹⁴ (Merz 2000). Two interesting aspects become apparent here. Firstly, the wording “must” demonstrates the strongest verbal expression concerning the rules which form *Leitkultur* of the ones we have seen so far. Apparently, it does not suggest a guideline—as in Thomas de Maizère’s interpretation—but rather shows an obligation. Secondly, it seems as if Friedrich Merz applies the term *Leitkultur* as a concept which he coined and introduced to the discussion when the original feature he added is the attribution “liberal”. The significance of the respective adjectives is what becomes apparent to our discussion here: Merz operates with the term liberal which supports the freedom of the individual and the freedom of speech but which might potentially show its conflicting misconception.¹⁵ Thomas de Maizère emphasizes the German attribution to *Leitkultur*, which shows a close link to the protective conception of the “national”. Bassam Tibi, instead, widens the approach by stressing the European element which points towards universalistic values. One could argue that Tibi utilizes *Leitkultur* in a progressive way, while both de Maizère, as well as Merz apply it on conservative grounds, as they show a more substantial concern with a certain status quo than with a prospective projection of society.

Considering the characterization of the term liberal, the journalists Helmut Schümann and Christoph Amend critically inquire Merz if it was “liberal to advocate a change in asylum law or to propagate the sovereignty of German *Leitkultur*?” (Schümann and Amend 2018). Friedrich Merz replies without mentioning his approach to liberalism that he intendedly used the term to create and foster a debate. He claims to be more interested in the discussion than in the denomination (Merz 2018). But considering his political position one can grasp that a decision to use such a conflicting term—without mentioning the source—can fuel a debate,

¹⁴ “müssen ihrerseits bereit sein, die Regeln des Zusammenlebens in Deutschland zu respektieren. Ich habe diese Regeln als die ‘freiheitliche deutsche *Leitkultur*’ bezeichnet.”

¹⁵ Here I particularly would like to stress Karl Popper and his notion of *the paradox of tolerance* which appears in his publication *The Open Society and Its Enemies*: “We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant” (Popper 1945, chapter 7, note 4). The liberal and open conception of *Leitkultur*, which Merz proposes, can be endangered of becoming instrumentalized by intolerant, undemocratic, or right-wing movements.

and also function as a means to attract attention along with edging Friedrich Merz's profile in the hard-fought political landscape.

Merz extracts two main elements of the liberal German culture: he connects it to the constitutional tradition of Basic Law, which in his terms, articulates the national core value system, and consequently, becomes an inherent part of German cultural identity. Moreover, Merz mentions the European influence on German culture. The second attribution indeed links to the interpretation by Bassam Tibi, who speaks entirely of a European *Leitkultur*. Still, the understanding of culture that Merz proposes here interests: He does not speak of habits, as de Maizère does, but in concrete terms he solely grounds culture on the German constitutional law. This way of arguing overlaps with constitutional patriotism. In the end of his 2000 article, Friedrich Merz prevents an accusation in this direction while at the same time showing clear avoidance of terminology which in the end favors a form of arbitrariness in the discussion. Merz claims it wouldn't matter whether it was German identity, constitutional patriotism or liberal *Leitkultur* which shapes "Us". Similar to de Maizère—we perceive again how Merz' use of the personal pronoun creates a subtle approach to what can be encapsulated into a sense of belonging, even though de Maizère puts much more attention on who "We" are and which implications that entails. Approximately one week before the publication of Merz's article, on October 18th, 2000, the magazine Rheinische Post published an interview with the chairman of CDU/CSU, under the headline "Immigrants should adapt to German culture". Furthermore, Merz demanded the adaption to "basic cultural ideas that have grown in this country" (Merz 2000). Any specifying description of the notions he is referring to remains absent. Here, the choice of words focuses on the verb "adapt". To request and expect such action of immigrant people is widely interpreted as a demand for assimilation, which could entail suppressing the cultural imprints of their "home" country, and therefore negating essential parts of their identity. Consequently, it was mainly this wording by Merz that sparked an outcry among the left political spectrum. In my view, when referring to Merz, the immediate political "marketing" calculation that goes hand in hand with the termination cannot be set aside, as he seems to use provocative terms to attract attention. Interestingly enough, he does not use the same phrasing "adapt" again within the article's publication in WELT. Moreover, even though he would've had the chance to explain his argument more thoroughly there, he merely suggests

the fundamental law of the German institution, as well as the German language as binding cultural ideas which should be recognized.

With de Maizère and Merz using *Leitkultur* as a parallel to the personal pronoun “We”, for a national idea of harmony equaling homogeneity, this narrative fails to regard concepts like diversity or othering. Such notions are located uniquely at a different end of societal awareness and disturb concepts like *Heimat* and hegemony. The latter will be explored in the following part, as both ideas take part in establishing a so-called *Leitkultur*. They are therefore significant on the basis of the subsequent counter-narrative that TdJML will offer. It will further be argued that TdJML operates with concepts located in diametrical opposition to the ideas encompassed by *Leitkultur*. Consequently, contrastive pairs can be singled out as de-integration and resistance counter integration and radical diversity and allyship oppose hegemony. In an attempt to thoroughly screen the narrative of *Leitkultur*, we first need to understand the key ideas which explicitly and implicitly accompany and carry it. Therefore, in the following, I will unfold the different signifying layers and concepts which form the diffuse jigsaw that is *Leitkultur*. This tracing of the conceptual territories and borders will be named Mapping *Leitkultur*.

1.4. Mapping *Leitkultur*

Through the semantic analysis of the German verb *leiten*, we understood that dominance or predominance plays a vital role in the concept of *Leitkultur*. Marxist thinkers extensively examined domination as a social strategy. One of them, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, coined the term *hegemony* as a means of control. Gramsci wrote extensively during his imprisonment under the fascist regime of Mussolini. In particular, he seeks to understand how the bourgeoisie, the wealthy, and the ruling classes, dominate capitalist society. Gramsci’s central claim revolved around the assumption that “societies maintained their stability through a combination of ‘domination’ or force, and ‘hegemony’, defined as consent to ‘intellectual and moral leadership’” (Kellner and Durham 2012,15). With that being said, we may apply this concept to our discussion and ask: Is *Leitkultur* also aiming to incorporate cultures, thinking, and experiences of other, subordinate groups into its domain so that “the others” experience the world in a manner prescribed by the dominant culture? Moreover, Gramsci not only investigated hegemonic forces, but also dynamics supporting a counterhegemony which will be of interest when tackling the counter-narrative TdJML.

One means by which a dominant group establishes a form of hegemonic relation is insisting on a specific mode of separating: Othering. This dynamic is relevant for the main discussion as it precisely reflects on the opposition of “We” and “Them” which will be received and reversed by the counter-narrative of TdJML. The theorization of othering as a discriminating process within a hegemonic society needs to be addressed to explain how TdJML breaks with it.

*Othering*¹⁶ is defined as a psychosocial mechanism in which images and ideas of others are conceived in contrast to images and ideas of oneself—by which the latter is usually positively connotated. Othering describes a process in which people are constructed as *others* and differentiated from a “We”. This form of differentiation is problematic because it goes hand in hand with a brand of distancing that condemns *the other* as “the foreign”. Zygmunt Bauman understands the dichotomous field of othering, referring to deviance as representing the opposite side to a norm (Bauman 1991, 8). Processes of othering can refer to a person’s social position, class or beliefs, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, or nationality. First and foremost, othering involves self-affirmation: through the attribution of inferiority, superiority is claimed for oneself. A dichotomous differentiation and even distancing from other people occurs to confirm one's own “normality”. Christine Riegel describes the binary relationship of “the own” and “the other” as a hegemonic one:

Concerning postcolonial theories and cultural studies, “constructions of others” are understood as social processes, representations, discourses, and practices through which socially significant differences and demarcations are produced against the backdrop of a self-evident, effective normality, and people are turned into others, non-members. They are thereby subjected to a hegemonic order of difference and are assigned an inferior position¹⁷ (Riegel 2016, 8).

Clearly, the decisive factor within this statement clearly points towards a dynamic in which people are subjected to othering, therefore representing an exclusionary practice carried out “on them”. When the construction of an *other* assumes that some people do not fit in a

¹⁶ The concept of other(ing) emerged from philosophical discussions: Simone de Beauvoir (1976) coined the concept of “alterity”, a social position assigned to “woman” in relation to “man.” Since Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) cultural theory can draw on his developments on and the concomitant colonial construction of *otherness*. *Othering* as a process was coined in 1985 by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and found an entrance and an echo to countless postcolonial theories and discussions, now marking a key concept thereof.

¹⁷ Unter „Konstruktionen von Anderen“ werden, mit Bezug auf postkoloniale Theorien und die Cultural Studies, soziale Prozesse, Repräsentationen, Diskurse und Praxen verstanden, durch die vor der Folie einer selbstverständlichen, wirkungsmächtigen Normalität sozial bedeutsame Differenzen und Grenzziehungen hergestellt und Menschen zu Anderen, Nicht-Zugehörigen gemacht werden. Sie werden dabei einer hegemonialen Differenzordnung unterworfen und bekommen eine inferiore Position zugewiesen.

prescribed normality, an insufficiency is recognized. This thought precisely links into the idea of integration which promises to be the solution to this shortfall. The issue of integration asks for a short contextualization, as it prominently shaped the public discourse in central Europe. As far as the recent debate about migration is concerned, Germany had been coping with questions of integration and identity since the first generation of the so-called guest workers from Turkey, Greece, Poland et al. arrived in Germany, helping to rebuild the country in post-war times. Additionally, a repatriation of quota refugees from states of the Former Soviet Union took place in the 1990s. Notwithstanding, these migratory processes were seldomly acknowledged, implying a lack of recognition and representation in socio-political realms.¹⁸ The attention of the public was focused on the notion of guest laborers, who were expected to leave the country after finishing their projects (Husch 2020, 3).

The so-called refugee crisis provoked an additional agitated discussion on the matter of integration, evoking debate on German core identity, whereby the debate around the topic of *Leitkultur* proved to be one of the prevalent ones. In this way, the migratory movement of that time reinvigorated an image of “insecurity” associated with the migrants. This indeed increased the perceived necessity of integration but was framed in the sense of assimilation into the predominant culture. Thus, assimilative integration can be referred to as both the basis for and the objective of *Leitkultur* since it asks for adaption to a core culture while also turning it into a necessity for integration to (generally) succeed. As we have seen in the previous section, the prominent political figures de Maizère and Merz used integration in the sense of adaptation respectively assimilation, meaning to assimilate the *other* into one’s own ideas to such an extent that it disappears in the adaptation. In fact, the convenient understanding of integration sees the minority culture in debt, as it needs to compensate for its “difference” from the prescribed “norm”.

On that perspective, political and social scientist Naika Foroutan provides a comprehensible definition of the concept of *integration* which also implies a paradigm shift:

¹⁸ Author Max Frisch famously stated on the arrival of guest-workers during that time: “We expected workers and humans came.” (“Wir erwarteten Arbeiter und es kamen Menschen.”) This statement summarizes the tragedy in the discrepancy of a nation simply needing to rely on guestworkers without acknowledging their stay and their adverse living situation in Germany. The sad irony of this was once more revealed during the Corona crisis with evident exploitation and non-protection of “foreign” workers, who were in two prominent cases responsible for the disposability of major products of Germany’s consumption: asparagus and meat.

Since the 1970s, integration has been understood primarily as something that concerns “foreigners”, “migrants”, or “people with a migration background” and their integration into German society. Structural barriers and social exclusion mechanisms were hardly addressed. Only gradually is the realization gaining ground that the concept of integration should be broadened to encompass society as a whole and refer to all citizens¹⁹ (Foroutan 2015).

This quote contains a key insight in terms of the conceptual and the very practical approach on confluence processes in society. Meaning that each citizen is challenged in the same way to contribute to the democratic system which can be either perceived as a task or as an opportunity. But since the notion of integration does not entail this insight, it remains complicit to *Leitkultur*. This subchapter focuses on notions which draw on the establishment of a societal order that devalues and upvalues groups based on differences. For the next part, we shall further explore the concepts which describe the relationship between such groups, as we already discovered one of the central dynamics in othering. Jaques Derrida’s notion of hospitality can draw an intimate link to otherness: The Philosopher mentions a pact of hospitality between host and foreigner and claims that the host represents the ruler over that pact who decides what is expected from the recipient. The critique of Derrida mainly focuses on the conditionality of that law as, ethically, it should not demand anything in return. Derrida draws the thin line between someone regarded as a friend and an enemy in referring to the twofold etymology in Latin: *hostis* can be translated both as guest and opponent. Whenever the foreigner is not considered a guest, but one who “is wrong, illegitimate, clandestine, liable to expulsion or arrest” (Derrida 2000, 61), the paradoxical relation between hospitality and hostility becomes apparent.

1.4.1. *Heimat* — the tightly contested ground of belonging

Conditionality also circumscribes another stage of being that depends to a large extent on the social inclusiveness of a predefined group: Belonging. When, earlier, we touched on the pronoun “We” and its ramifications, it became apparent that the notion of belonging represents a key aspect of the discussion on *Leitkultur*. Political forces see *Leitkultur*, including a national self-image of *Heimat*, as the protector and generator of cultural

¹⁹ Seit den 1970er Jahren wurde Integration vornehmlich als etwas verstanden, das „Ausländer“, „Migranten“ oder „Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund“ und deren Einbindung in die deutsche Gesellschaft betrifft. Strukturelle Barrieren und gesellschaftliche Ausschlussmechanismen wurden kaum adressiert. Erst allmählich setzt sich die Erkenntnis durch, dass der Integrationsbegriff auf die gesamte Gesellschaft ausgeweitet werden und sich auf alle Bürger beziehen sollte.

homogeneity and see belonging in the context of growing immigration²⁰. In order to not to make the discourse too abstract, I will now give a small practical example on the topic of belonging: An institutionalized form of belonging is expressed in the “naturalization test” (*Einbürgerungstest*) which can be described as a knowledge inquiry on the nation. The test results are expected to give information about “successful integration” (BMI 2014). The test includes 33 questions from different categories. One category is called “Collective Identity”, wherein a specific question targets the religion that has shaped Germany and Europe. The “correct” answer is Christianity. The fact that the answers of the test are based on the single-choice method underlines a self-description of Germany as a country clad “in strictly homogeneous Christian garb”. According to Alexander Henning Knoth, the test authors seem to be interested in highlighting Germany and Europe as “Christian” and to communicate a narrative of homogeneity, rather than cultural exchange (Knoth 2015, 106-107). Here the problematic interrelation of specific ideas of home, nation, integration, and belonging becomes apparent. Within the debate on *Leitkultur*, belonging would be located at the socio-political sphere encompassed by the nation-state, at least agents such as Merz and de Maizère would argue in the affirmative here. Bassam Tibi would draw the circle on a larger, European scale. However, the circumscribing mark around the ones who belong and others who apparently do not remains, even if, at times, it appears somewhat blurry than cutting-sharp.

If we look at the word-formation by itself, the concept of belonging perceptively includes “longing”. This particular feeling of yearning and its specific entanglement with the realm of “nostalgia” was discussed particularly by Professor in Comparative Literature Svetlana Boym. She speaks of a “global epidemic of nostalgia, an affective yearning for a community with a collective memory, a longing for a continuity in a fragmented world.” (Boym 2001, 13). With regards to territorial specificities, Boym argues that the European Union shows clear nostalgic tendencies framed as a longing for the “good old days” which feeds the accelerates the growth of national political parties. Here, I would like to draw a line towards

²⁰ The development of growing immigration to Germany can be proven since 1957. By 2019, over one-quarter of its population had a personal or familial migratory background, contributing to Germany being considered a country of immigration, according to the Council of Experts for Integration and Migration (Sachverständigenrat für Integration und Migration; Schu 2021). Against this factual background, it seems peculiar that i.e., Friedrich Merz opposed the establishment of a so-called ministry of immigration (Crefeld 2021).

our present debate, since the notion of nostalgia in my eyes closely interweaves with the idea of *Leitkultur*. It tries to conceive an idealistic view of the nation and its society; as we were able to follow de Maizère's claims, such perspectives might grow into ideological spheres. Svetlana Boym calls this an "ideal home [...] tempting us to relinquish critical thinking for emotional bonding" (Boym 2001,14), and she continues by alerting us of the following: "The danger of nostalgia is that it tends to confuse the actual home and the imaginary one" (Boym 2001, 14). I would argue that defending *Leitkultur* too implies an imagined, invented community—that would be the equivalent to "home"—which does not exist in the homogenous, harmonic form being preached. The concepts of *Heimat* and home do not describe the exact equivalent to each other which prompts a clarification on this behalf. Besides home we can single out homeland and native region as an approach to the meaning of *Heimat*. Here we may identify a connotation of nativity that closely intertwines with the concept, since it links both thoughts on belonging and territorial conditions. While there are voices opposing the ideological charge of *Heimat*, claiming that it may have been misunderstood (Scharnowski 2019) when arguing from a critical point of view, the notion can hardly be defined as innocent or free of political dimensions. Ferda Ataman, who is a spokeswoman for the New German Organizations, a network of initiatives founded by people from immigrant families, wrote a commentary on the concept and meaning of *Heimat*, especially concerning its political, social, and cultural revival in Germany:

Politicians who currently talk about homeland are usually looking for an answer to the rampant "xenophobia". But this is dangerous. Because in this context, *Heimat* can only mean that it is about blood and soil: Germany as the homeland of the people who were here first²¹ (Ataman 2018).

Developing further the national and ethnic denotation of *Heimat*, the arrival point might reach as far as the "blood and soil" ideology. This ideological framework grounds on ethnicity and specifically on a blood line that inherently links the people within the group of belonging and thus designates the outsiders.

²¹ Politiker, die derzeit über *Heimat* reden, suchen in der Regel eine Antwort auf die grassierende „Fremdenangst“. Doch das ist brandgefährlich. Denn in diesem Kontext kann *Heimat* nur bedeuten, dass es um Blut und Boden geht: Deutschland als *Heimat* der Menschen, die zuerst hier waren.

The discussion around *Heimat* and its significant meaning has been prevalent in Germany for several years now, not only as the right-wing party AfD newly instrumentalized the concept for ethno-national purposes and the acclaimed prevalence of a cultural “norm”.

Max Czollek argues that the term cannot be used during recent years without alluding to an idealizing viewpoint. Czollek frames the obstruction within the concept as follows:

In this context, the new German love of homeland asserts a normality that simply does not want to occur in the years since the Shoah, and that precisely for this reason affects the understanding of history and the present. In the homeland, after all, no assassin shoots ten people in a small German town, no shelters of refugees burn down, no synagogues are attacked²² (Czollek 2020a, 32).

Essentially, Max Czollek offers criticism of a strategy used when implementing the romantic, ideal picture of *Heimat* which in its positivity neglects all downsides that are, in fact, still part of the actual circumstances shaping the region which *Heimat* wants to refer to. In this sense, *Heimat* promises a false innocence. If the Nazis politicized *Heimat*, the postwar dignitaries coated it in nostalgia, and the term is still bounded by that aura.

Heimat represents one answer to the question “How do we refer to our home?” which in turn is an inherent part of the issue “Who are we?”. In other words, the national self-definition of a people is very much linked to their collective identity. Therefore, the question, “Who are We” renders palpable that the proclamation of *Leitkultur* embedded into the notion of identity, as much as it encloses belonging or othering. Bassam Tibi, with his idea of European identity, does not propose the concept on national terms, but the attribution “national” remains crucial when examining interpretations of *Leitkultur*. Essentially, the position of “We” reflects the significant role of identity within a national context but concedes the problem of past political developments that accompanied “the assertion of that identity in a form that was narrow, ethnically based, intolerant, aggressive and deeply illiberal” (Fukuyama 2018a, 9). From that perspective, *Leitkultur* can be viewed as a “narrow” leading entity legitimized by representing a certain collective identity. The national dimension of this collective identity, which was discernible with the idea of *Heimat*, contributes to a conception similar to Anderson’s *imagined community*, describing a nation which incorporates its members through a sense of belonging (Anderson 2005, 37). This

²² Die neue deutsche Heimatliebe behauptet dabei eine Normalität, die sich in den Jahren seit der Shoah einfach nicht einstellen will und die sich gerade deshalb auf das Verständnis von Geschichte und Gegenwart auswirkt. In der Heimat erschießt nämlich kein Attentäter zehn Menschen in einer deutschen Kleinstadt, brennen keine Unterkünfte von Geflüchteten, werden auch keine Synagogen angegriffen.

imagined community is located “safe in the utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective identity” (Bhabha 1994, 34).

The myth around a core identity which one can adapt to reveals that the essentialist claim within the concept of *Leitkultur* can and should be questioned. Therefore, issues intrinsic to *Leitkultur*, namely those of integration or assimilation, form a debated and contested ground located within matters of identity while moving along the line of culture.

1.5. Critical reflection on *Leitkultur*

Based on a summary of the collected findings in this chapter, *Leitkultur* will be critically reflected upon in the following. According to Bassam Tibi, it should signify the identity of Europe and express a binding catalogue of shared values. Additionally, examining Thomas de Maizère’s claims, the clear focus on the pronoun “We” found its way into the discussion. Even though Tibi repeatedly insists that his initial vision of *Leitkultur* was not meant to be reduced to a German context only, politicians used the brisance of the concept to instrumentalize and reshape it for their specific political agenda. This *Heimat*-influenced, harmonized construct of a collective identity is based on exclusion. A collective “We” only exists and is actively produced only when designating a collective “Them”. This is the representative of the other, the a-normal, the stranger who is othered either by the predominant part based on outward appearance, religion, sex, social status, or all of these criteria combined. Thus, one of the main problems of *Leitkultur* seems to be the establishment of absolute binaries (between “Us” and “Them”). These are inherent to dynamics such as othering and foster a strong identification and unquestioned belonging on the dominant side, while dismantling and repeatedly doubting belonging on any minority spectrum.

The exclusionary nature of the concept has also been proven in the search for semantic traces that I undertook earlier. The word meaning, *leiten* and the historical continuity reflected in the quest for a domination reveals a delicate choice in words. When we believe that language creates consciousness and in this way constructs and shapes reality, the prefix *Leit* reproduces a claim to dominance as an ideologically charged word concept.

Most notably, the hegemonic tendency of the ideologically preformed concept *Leitkultur* doesn’t hide behind a romanticized expression but articulates this demand through its word meaning. The premise, as well as the target of *Leitkultur*, seems to be successful integration

which relies on the paradigm describing a deficit in the minority (culture). It deduces a certain obedience to the ascribed “norm” as a requirement translating into a hidden demand for assimilation. This in turn, can be connected to the abnegation of significant parts within an individual’s identity and pushes the responsibility (of integration) to one side, when approaching one another really necessitates both groups. The reward for such efforts can then be called belonging which links back to a sense (Bhabha’s *myth*) of collective identity, of a solidary “We”. Essentially, the main problematic issue of *Leitkultur* is portrayed through its establishment of a normative cultural identity, one “norm” which does not mirror ideas of pluralism or different ways of being and living. This produced sense of belonging also relies largely on politics of representation. The question of how and specifically who is representing an issue, a group, an interest contributes to a sense of self-identification and support, or it might result in the opposite. Hence, the way in which representation is performed reflects power relation and gives utterance to its distribution.

If we apply this to the current debating culture and its various manifestations, the question of interest can be subsumed as “Who speaks for whom?”. This leads to a heavily debated issue that gave rise to the above-mentioned question in recent years: identity politics. I would like to shortly turn towards the issue, as it bargains similar questions to *Leitkultur* by concentrating its attention on the dialogue between individual identity and collective. Moreover, the mechanism of Cancel Culture, which is variably connected or opposed to identity politics, shows parallels to it on many accounts. I would argue that Cancel Culture reflects an instrument or a practice of *Leitkultur* in the way that it tries to defend the prevalence of a “norm” and in the exclusivity it establishes.

1.6. Politics of identity and Cancel Culture

The first time the expression *identity politics* came to light was within the Black-Feminist collective Combahee River in the late 1970s:

The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression [...] This focusing upon our own oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics. We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else’s oppression (Zillah Eisenstein, ed. 1978).

The Combahee River Collective sought to merge questions such as “Who is ‘We’? As whom do we speak? How are we perceived?” with issues of power and exclusion.²³ One significant reason for the occurring blaze of issues revolving around individual and collective identity and representation, can be spotted in a delimitation of the public (Villa Braslavsky 2021). This development is fueled by the new media and the subsequent weakening of former influential “gatekeepers”—for instance, newspapers—which would exclusively have decisive power about who may voice concern in the public discourse and who may not. On social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, multiple voices can now speak, which disperses the public focus on various positions. Due to open access, interconnectedness, and the potential worldwide reception of shared content and statements the window of debate broadens considerably while at the same time strengthening their intermingling, as well as increasing their sanctioning. A certain group perceives this sanctioning as a threat, a speech ban, or even an antidemocratic tendency of shutting down freedom of speech. All these aspects merge into what is called Cancel Culture. This notion can be pictured as a grenade inflaming open and online debate with animosity. Once the term gets thrown into the arena, it seems to be setting a fire and thus, it becomes harder and harder to control its spread.

On the other hand, and simultaneously, the opponents of identity politics, whose argument often favors the negative connotation of Cancel Culture, operate with terms that tend to exaggerate the scope of the ongoing discussions. First, the word “canceling” seems to be misleading as people who are judged for specific utterances do not “really” get canceled, meaning that they will not be able to pursue their profession or speak out in public.²⁴

Moreover, the wording of the discussion is shaped into expressions like censoring which absurdly became a signaling synonym for speech ban. Additionally, the metaphorical verb “to put somebody in the stocks” is used inflationary in this regard, implying brutal forms of torture and humiliation. Extensive examples of this can be found. For instance, comedian

²³ In general, the decisive question of “Who” within the political sphere emerged and has been under discussion ever since the formation of various social and political movements, such as the civil rights, feminist, anti-racist, student organizations.

²⁴ Such cases are known from the USA, but barely anyone really faced this in Germany. Usually, the opposite seems to be the case. Within the current attention economy sustaining social media platforms, provocation generates attention, meaning that even after “getting canceled” most of those who perceived themselves as victims were featured in several media outlets. Such reappearing occurrences reflect the absurd nature of the Cancel Culture debate. Despite that, accusers of Cancel Culture believe that freedom of speech is in danger. The argumentation justifying such beliefs relies on the enlightenment’s claim for reason and rationality, followed by the assumption that everything can (and should) be discussed rationally.

Dieter Nuhr described a shitstorm “the humane sister of the pogrom”²⁵ (Schwarzer 2020). Such wording is symptomatic of the discussions around identity politics since it distracts from and condemns the emancipating motivation paving the way for discourse around power and its distribution. Put another way, the choice of words in deploring identity politics often reflects alarmism that takes the mind away from the actual discourses around participation and representation which need to be undertaken. Similar to the discussion around *Leitkultur*, the explosivity of linguistic traits fuels the problems connected to the notion itself. The two concepts are therefore similar in the way that they prompt a polarization of discourse. Furthermore, it can be noted that conservative groups identify this claim to enforce a prevalent “norm”.

In general terms, there exists a misunderstanding that identity politics divides society. But in fact, the specific characteristics that divide people into being worthy of protection—and those that are not—are innocently, socially constructed, and translate as inequality of opportunity. Legitimate criticism can be voiced about how the debate is being carried out. The questions of advocacy and authority remain, specifically the question of who is speaking for which group?

This discussion on authorization forms a key part within identity politics. Even Max Czollek, the initiator and curator of TdJML, recently became the target of a heated discussion around Jewish identity. In July 2021, Maxim Biller, a Jewish author, accused Max Czollek of being a fashion Jew, whose main agenda lay in appealing a certain left-wing attitude (Biller 2021). This accusation, which Max Czollek made public on Twitter right afterward, provoked an overarching debate on Jewish identity and the question of belonging.²⁶ It brings to light the discriminatory dynamics within a marginalized community concentrated here on the public figure of Max Czollek. The head of the Jewish Community in Germany, Josef Schuster,

²⁵ The word “pogrom” links to the persecution of the Jewish people in and around Germany during WWII. Therefore, the usage of that phrase in a Cancel Culture context almost alludes to historical revisionism, as the comparison belittles the suffering created by the “real” pogroms.

Such provocative wording reveals the counter strategy of people who feel threatened by possibly legitimate critique, relying on incitement to be considered the victim. As such, it can be identified as a “classic” case of victim-blaming. It occurs when factual power dynamics and their cause of specific forms of discrimination are ignored and denied, while the “perpetrator” presents himself as the victim, being falsely accused. This behavior proves to be specifically delicate when arguing in legal terms and relying on the presumption of innocence.

²⁶ Many offenders of Max Czollek, such as Maxim Biller, Mirna Funk, and other popular figures within the Jewish circle, criticize that Czollek would have lied about his heritage, meaning his patrilinear Jewishness. One accusation against him is, therefore, that would have tricked society, as well as the German intellectual public considering him to be an eligible part of the Jewish community. In fact, Czollek never pretended to be born to a Jewish mother.

emphasized the religious law of Halacha which only explicitly “entitles” one to be called Jewish if their mother is a Jew (Schuster 2021). This law is prevalent within Jewish religion and their representative institutions, and through this case, it (rightfully) comes under review once more. “Father Jews” or patrilineal Jews are not only officially part of Jewish interests but, more importantly, take and will take an enormous part in the continuation and upkeep of Jewish communities. Moreover, they are in the very same way potentially exposed to Antisemitic violence. This problem particularly concerns many young people from Eastern Europe, Russia, Ukraine et cetera, who are grouped as so-called quota refugees (Mendel 2021) and who would want to be formal and respected members of their respective Jewish communities. In the end, they are tolerated, but not fully accepted or affiliated. The US, which holds the biggest Jewish diasporic community, supports Reform Judaism ideally and practically. In 1983, the Central Conference of American Rabbis determined the equality of patrilineal Jews—as long as the child is raised in the Jewish faith (Mendel 2021). This approach shows one possibility of coming to a compromise. Meron Mendel further argues that the adherence to the Halacha doesn’t correspond to the literal meaning of Halacha—which in Hebrew language signifies “movement”—nor does it resemble Jewish rules and religious law as such which evolved with the “human realities” and therefore should reflect and live up to these (Mendel 2021).

Again, identity politics and the question of who belongs to which community is more prevalent than ever. The Jewish community and its leading figures view this dilemma as a fight around principles. The exclusiveness with which communities decide who may belong to the group and who doesn’t, should, in my eyes, not be based on the question of whom one was born as, but how one can be a valuable member of the community. But, as we have seen with the concept of representation, the question of who is being protected, and who speaks for a community seems to be of major importance nowadays. Josef Schuster, in his argumentation, undoubtedly denies Max Czollek the right to speak “in favor of” the Jewish community unless he would fully convert (Schuster 2021). The fear of a truly plural, diverse, including and equaling community seems to weigh heavily into the dreaded scenario of internal fragmentation.

Arguing from this perspective, the need of specific groups to be represented so that they can determine themselves remains. The heteronomy of a predominant group—we also noticed with *Leitkultur*—concerning the identity of a marginalized group seems to be the cause for

this quest towards self-governance and the consequent conflict on the distribution of power and opportunities. In this way, it can be described as a tool favoring resistance and emancipation. Amy Chua names the new core interest of identity politics in comparison to other activistic ideals:

What makes identity politics a significant departure from earlier [movements] is its demand for recognition on the basis of the very grounds on which recognition has previously been denied: it is qua women, qua blacks, qua lesbians that groups demand recognition [...] the demand is not for inclusion within the folds of ‘universal humankind’ [...] nor is it for respect “in spite of” one’s differences. Rather, what is expected is respect for oneself as different (Chua 2018).

With this definition, we can draw a connection towards the characteristic moments of *Leitkultur*: I would argue that the narrative of *Leitkultur* positions itself loosely as a need for universality “despite the differences” of various groups. Whereas with identity politics, the specificity of each group and the resulting political agenda remains the main interest. This aspect can be defined as an essential dissimilarity. The narrative of *Leitkultur* can be described as ideologically tinged as it largely bases on absolute binaries such as “Us” and “Them”. It is therefore glued together by the element of exclusion that in turn is based on difference. The valuation proves to be the key here, as the counter-narrative of TdJML establishes a positive and empowering assignation of difference which results in an open view of societal alliances and the possibility for change concerning inequalities. So, on the one hand, the narrative of *Leitkultur* implies the overcoming of differences. On the other hand, the counter-narrative TdJML encourages an appreciation of these differences.

2. Narrative — Counter-narrative

In contrast to the concept of *Leitkultur* whose objective is to overcome differences, the theoretical framework, and the practical artistic embodiment of TdJML grounds on difference as its foundation.

As *Leitkultur* was defined as a narrative in the previous chapter, the claim of the contrasting counter-narrative can be juxtaposed to it. The counter-narrative only exists due to the narrative in the first place, and it is a response or a confrontation to narrative. One indication of a countering element can be found in the prefixed adjectives, as the attributions “Jewish” and “Muslim” clearly set contextual marks. Let’s look back to the examination of the single word *Leitkultur* in the beginning of the previous chapter. It may become noticeable that the—passively implied or actively ascribed—adjectives made a significant difference in the understanding of *Leitkultur*. Attached to either “European”, “German” or “Liberal”, the term operates in diverging realms of meaning. The focus on two minority groups, or simply on a different *Leitkultur*, turn images of common values of national unity and a supposedly rightful cultural superiority upside down since the idea of *Leitkultur* thereby becomes obsolete. One question will be: are the attributions “Jewish-Muslim” expedients, or do they bear a significance within the discussion beyond this intellectual functionality? The following analytical chapter will provide parts of the answer. Yet, the overarching inquiry of this moment reads: What does counter-narrative mean and in what ways does it fit with TdJML?

Narratives are systems of individual narration in a group that shape its members’ collective identity equally as it is in turn shaped and passed on by them. A narrative is subject to a constant adaptation to changing circumstances. Narratives have an effect in establishing meaning, identity, and solidarity. They provide specific interpretations of experienced reality. They serve the members of the social collective as a guide to ways of thinking and acting. Narratives are a form of communication, both internally and externally, whereby the members of the group in question, on the one hand, adopt this narrative by fusing it with their biography into varying degrees, and on the other hand, simultaneously change, and pass it on.

Michael Bamberg claims that narratives “order characters in space and time and, therefore, as a format narrative lends itself [...] also to revealing character transformation in the

unfolding sequences from past to future” (Bamberg 2004, 354). Here we can spot the identity-building character of narrative as such. We can confer these insights to a broader context, such as the *Leitkultur* debate, which tackles the question, “How does society construct its identity?” In this sense, I argued that *Leitkultur* makes claims about “our nation” and the identities which belong to it, an “Us” encompassing a homogeneous collective identity, determining the sense of belonging and identification (Bamberg 2013).

Therefore, if TdJML is then referred to as a counter-narrative, would it be set on deconstructing terms only or would it proceed in the interest of creating a new, entirely different narrative? This question tackles the issue of whether counter-narratives necessarily and singularly have to be in opposition to a pre-existing narrative or whether they can use this as a departure point to seek out an entirely different vision.

Raül Alberto Mora defines counter-narrative with the following words:

Counter-narrative refers to the narratives that arise from the vantage point of those who have been historically marginalized. The idea of “counter”-itself implies a space of resistance against traditional domination. A counter-narrative goes beyond the notion that those in relative positions of power can just tell the stories of those in the margins. Instead, these must come from the margins, from the perspectives and voices of those individuals. A counter-narrative thus goes beyond the telling of stories that take place in the margins. The effect of a counter-narrative is to empower and give agency to those communities. By choosing their own words and telling their own stories, members of marginalized communities provide alternative points of view, helping to create complex narratives truly presenting their realities (Mora 2014).

Within this quote and argumentation, there are several aspects relevant to our discussion of *Leitkultur* and TdJML: Firstly, if a counter-narrative is created by the marginalized, then narrative conversely corresponds to a generally accepted majority which directly leads to the epitome of *Leitkultur*. In this way, TdJML does not position itself along this line but against it. It embraces the definition given above: “a space of resistance against traditional domination”. A second element to consider is the question of “who tells who’s story?” which is intimately associated with identity politics and the notion of agency. *Leitkultur* also seeks to establish an instructing guideline constituted by a “relative position of power” projected onto society. As we have seen previously, the narrative of *Leitkultur* rests on the shoulders of both exclusionary tendencies such as othering, and harmony-inducing notions such as integration or *Heimat*. Thus, these ideas are specifically what the counter-narrative will aim to critically subvert.

In order for me to tell the full story and us to proceed with the enactment of TdJML as a counter-narrative, we need to acknowledge the twofold nature of this position. There are parts within TdJML that can more accurately be described as re-narrative elements, whereas other, specific reoccurring concepts can be positioned as diametrically opposite towards *Leitkultur*. For the first part of this chapter, we will focus on the re-narrative facets of TdJML.

2.1. Re-narration or what is the corporeal urgency for a different narrative?

Re-narration refers to a narrative that should be told differently, in a new way. However, re-narrating a story can also mean that a specific revelation or insight should be re-established in the way that it should be practically re-visualized. Having understood how *Leitkultur* is prevalent in the German socio-political landscape, we will now move from this theoretical point of view to a more tangible example which will provide the grounds for a practical application of a counter-narrative. In chapter one, we outlined, on conceptual terms, why the narrative *Leitkultur* is problematic and hence, why a counter-narrative is required. In contrast, now we will tackle the following question: What are urgent reasons for the narrative to be different? This will entail a practical potentiation of chapter one, and lay the grounds for a further exploration of counter-narrative itself.

One understanding which should be highlighted once more, as it disappeared from public attention, refers to an ethno-national reasoning called *völkisch* in German. The critical claim that I would like to highlight here is that narratives like *Leitkultur*, encompassing *Heimat* and coupled with specific exclusionary practices such as othering, reproduce an ethno-national ideology which in German is called *völkisch*. Hence, I argue that *Leitkultur* and *Heimat* are used with an ostensibly naïve connotation, while revealing a *völkisch* underpinning. We will briefly discuss the meaning behind this term before proceeding to where its essence can lead to.

2.1.1. A revitalization of the *völkisch* substructure

What does *völkisch*, this ethno-nationalist ideology entail? Max Wundt, a German philosopher who was theorizing, advocating, and promoting the *völkisch* way of thinking, wrote in 1926 that blood and its descendancy of race defines the biological and the mental constitution of a human being (Wundt 1926, 160). In this way, Wundt can be counted among the intellectual leaders of a circle paving the way for the National socialist racial ideology.

Max Wundt also co-founded the German Philosophical Society, which caused an expenditure of national and racial dogma. The society also labeled itself in a dissociating manner, as it wanted to be referred to as “the national alternative” (Hantke 2021). In light of this self-imposed term being used by an intellectual force supporting the racial ideology, the name of today’s right-wing party AfD (Alternative for Germany) deliberately positions itself as upholding of such doctrines and in this way treads on delicate grounds.

Additionally, as Kurt Sontheimer phrases it, the “own and the foreign”, are strictly separated in the *völkisch* ideology. (Sontheimer 1978, 132). As noted earlier, the contested pronoun “We” is the epitome of what “the own” signifies. One crucial idea is implicated in the *völkisch* ideology: *Volk*, describing a national people. Current political debates (within the last years) indicate a discomfiting renaissance of the concept of *Volk*. A prominent example of this circumstance is served by the PEGIDA Monday demonstrations, which frequently occurred in 2018/19 and are now upheld by AfD sympathizers: One of the phrases stems from the repertoire of protest slogans regularly chanted at those demonstrations reads as follows: “We are the people!” (“Wir sind das Volk!”). Even though the emphasis is commonly put on the last word, the operative term seems to be “We”. “We” in capital letters immediately sounds like recital stress, signifying “We” against the “others”. In this sense, it presents an exclusionary rather than an inclusionary groupthink which is still part of the concept. This illustrates the “ambivalence of the people”, the title and main theory of Michael Wildt’s 2019 publication. Accordingly, the concept of “people”, as in *Volk*, implicates a distinction between belonging and non-belonging, which again reinforces a hierarchical social system.

Suppose an ethno-racially centered thought construct such as the *völkisch* ideology operates under the pretext of *Leitkultur* and *Heimat* favoring a homogeneous national self-image. In that case, migratory and marginalized groups are condensed in the image of the other, which is then pejoratively classed into the hegemonic order. This distinction between non-migrants and migrants does not only excavate ideological trenches but conceptions of belonging can also be described as a security issue to a large degree, affecting life and death. In other words, the system of *völkisch* thought and the resulting heteronomy can bring migratory and marginalized groups into jeopardy on various levels.

2.1.2. The corporeality of ideology

Concerning this delicate subject, I would like to cite Max Czollek's *Gegenwartsbewältigung*²⁷ again, as the author clarifies the issue in precise terms: "Those whom society does not count as one of its own are not only denied a job, an apartment or a passport, but their lives are also less protected"²⁸ (Czollek 2020a, 137).

This quote reflects the crucial turning point at which conceptual, ideological ideas dangerously extend into the factual reality of human beings. The fact that the life of people who do not belong, from the perspective of a predominant society, is at risk can be exemplified by the high number of physical assaults that were conducted in the last years: The alliteration of hate (Korneli et al. 2021), an expression encompassing the xenophobic, hostile attacks of Halle in 2019, Hanau and Hamburg in 2020 that present factual evidence of violent compulsion towards a (new) homogenization. It might be a coincidence that the first letters of each city where these crime scenes were committed begin by "H", but it emphasizes the innumerability of hostile attacks executed, if we can name several without changing a front letter. The first "H" describes an antisemitic attack on the holiest Jewish holiday, Jom Kippur, where a right-wing extremist attempted to storm the synagogue in Halle, firing against the main entrance door and killing two people in the vicinity of the synagogue. The second "H" refers to a racist attack in February 2020 where an assassin killed nine people in two different bars and their surroundings in Hanau and left hundreds bereaved. In October 2020, a Jewish person wearing a kippa was severely injured on the head in front of the synagogue in Eimsbüttel, Hamburg, marking the third "H".

These cases visualize which real implications negotiating matters of belonging can bear. A significant component of this violent intensification of exclusionary ideas imagined by a national, homogenous *Volk* is eternal othering and the resulting ascription "foreign" effected by the dominant, and in this specific case by the perpetrator perspective. Accordingly, we will briefly examine two of these extrinsic ascriptions in the following: On the one hand, that of "The Muslim" and, on the other hand, that of "The Jew", since both are constitutive for TdJML.

²⁷ For a condensed synopsis on Czollek's theories and concepts in English, see a translated essay of Czollek, by Jon Cho-Polizzi (Cho-Polizzi 2020). For the sake of clarity, I will list the translator before the author in the bibliography.

²⁸ "Wen die Gesellschaft nicht zu den Ihren zählt, dem*der verweigert sie nicht bloß Job, Wohnung oder Pass, sondern dessen*deren Leben ist weniger geschützt."

2.1.3. Hazardous heteronomy

As we have seen, the marking of people who—in the eyes of the outward, but majoritarian, *Leitkultur* advocate—signify that *the other* can proliferate into heavy stigmatization. The oversimplifying determinations such as “The Muslim” and “The Jew” are also inherent parts of this predefined “normality”. The author Kübra Gümüsay depicts a concrete situation from her daily life as follows:

When I, a visible Muslim woman, jaywalk, 1.9 billion Muslim women jaywalk with me. A whole world religion disregards the traffic rules together with me²⁹ (Gümüsay 2021, 65).

Here, the author illustrates that she and her action are turned into a categorical representation of “all Muslim people” from an outward perspective. In this point of view, individualism in its complexity and ambiguity is refused within a single person, as she is given a collective name turning her into a bearer of determinant stereotypes.

Thus, an appropriative dominant perspective determines and instrumentalizes the opposite so as to make them fit into a hegemonic logic. This “phenomenon” not only tackles a person who is considered Muslim but also the Jewish minority in Germany. Sociologist Michal Bodemann founded the performative metaphor “theatre of memory” (*Gedächtnistheater*, Bodemann 1996) describing a German attitude which ascribes the Jewish position as the “functional” role of the victim with regards to the remembrance of the Holocaust. The purpose is to prove with memorial services *inter alia* how “well” and “successful” Germany remembers the injustices and infamy that the Third Reich caused for the Jewish population. One could call it the “performance of redemption”. In a different sense the Jewish position is also instrumentalized.³⁰

The above-mentioned life-threatening implications of the *völkisch* ideology result in the realization that concepts—such as *Heimat*, *Leitkultur*, *Volk*—that belong, allude to, and describe specific historical circumstances are still used and prevail in the present. This idea

²⁹ “Wenn ich, eine sichtbare Muslimin, bei Rot über die Straße gehe, gehen mit mir 1,9 Milliarden Muslim*innen bei Rot über die Straße. Eine ganze Weltreligion missachtet gemeinsam mit mir die Verkehrsregeln.”

³⁰ On the one side, the Jewish position is frequently ascribed the position of victim. On the other, drawing from Kübra Gümüsay’s example one could argue that “The Muslim” is usually attributed as “perpetrator”, “dangerous” and so forth. This view is elaborately examined in the recent 2021 publication “Muslimania” by political scientist, author and poet Ozan Zakariya Keskinciliç. The author dismantles the ultimate stigmatization, turning “The Muslim” into “The Problem”.

is expressed in a conception of Max Czollek also signifying the 2020 book title: *Gegenwartsbewältigung* which translates to “Coping with the Present”. The title derives from the German expression *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, “Overcoming the past,” which expresses a particular way of dealing with the historical time of the Third Reich within Germany. This behavior is characterized by the will to “overcome” this past which can be problematized as a repression. Max Czollek argues that his idea of *Gegenwartsbewältigung* describes the fact that the past’s history and specificity cannot be ignored as they continue to have an effect in the present. This argument specifically holds true for the *völkisch* ideology, for *Leitkultur*, as well as the idea of *Heimat*. In this way, with *Gegenwartsbewältigung*, Czollek seeks to tell a different story: “how the present has become another, radically diverse” (Czollek 2020c).

Within the entanglement of society constituting the present, this constitutes that a sense of belonging, which has been created and negotiated on national understandings, is diametrically opposed to the lived reality of Germany’s current pluralistic society. In fact, what exists today is “a variety of different life situations, lifestyles, and contexts of origin of people in societies defined by nation-states.”³¹

By now, we have found one way of answering the question “What are the urgent reasons for the necessity of a different narrative?” The response specifically targets the heteronomy and the stereotypes held by members of the predominant society, which can lead to violent attacks. As such, the re-narrative part helped us understand the dangerous substructure of naively used concepts, but it opened our eyes to corporealities of xenophobic hate crimes that are a direct result of the above-described heteronomy. Consequently, turning to the counter-narrative, we will now give rise to the inquiry “How can we tell the story differently?” which will promote a different view, a different narrator if you will. We are located midway through this reflection, and here we will execute a change of perspectives, in the sense that in TdJML the attention will shift to the alleged *other* and attaching “Jewish-Muslim” to *Leitkultur*. After learning about the xenophobically motivated attacks, we can gain the insight that the Jewish as well as the Muslim minority are equally exposed to threats within German society. Moreover, they belong to an encompassing epistemic realm that

³¹ “eine Vielfalt an unterschiedlichen Lebenslagen, Lebensstilen und Herkunftskontexten von Menschen in nationalstaatlich gefassten Gesellschaften.”

urges for the unravelling of the hegemonic order of a predominant society: the *postmigratory* which I derive from the German adjective *post-migrantisch*³². The postmigratory viewpoint epitomizes a shift of perspectives from the heteronomous, othering view towards an empowering self-authorization, not only in terms of creating a different knowledge discourse but also in regards to a self-determined expression within societal togetherness. Therefore, the first element of the new narrative tells the story of how heteronomy leads to self-ascription and self-definition.

2.2. Counter-narration or how is a different narrative constituted?

The postmigratory viewpoint takes societal diversity into account, which brings us to Max Czollek's statement that the present is already radically diverse. Radical diversity not only alludes to a positive connotation of the trait "difference," which epitomizes the counter-narrative of *Leitkultur*, but it also represents a description, an aspiration, and a demand of TdJML. In the following, we will try to understand the meaning of radical diversity as a counter-narrative to *Leitkultur*.

2.2.1. Diversity, plurality, structural discrimination — involving social justice

Contemporary societies are defined by increasing pluralization, individualization, and social mobility due to globalization and migratory movements leading to a growing ethnic heterogeneity determining "an extremely differentiated diversity of individual and group characteristics, orientations, and strategies" (Pries 2013, 21).

Consequently, *diversity* represents one of the most discussed fields in cultural studies. Its meaning and application can stretch from plurality via multiculturalism to anti-essentialism in the socio-cultural realm. The first one merely describes merely a state of differing positions in danger of being interpreted as arbitrariness. In turn, the second one, multiculturalism, implies the demand for the recognition of diversity and is criticized for reflecting differences "only through the affirmative lens". The anti-essentialist tendency, mainly located in feminist studies with the struggle for equality, does not understand

³² The term is still more present in the German-speaking world and was coined in the artistic context of performance by dramaturg Shermin Langhoff, now head of Maxim Gorki Theater Berlin. According to Langhoff, *postmigratory* refers to the complex experiences of migration, encompassing the perspectives of people who did not migrate but whose collective memory is defined by it. "Moreover, 'postmigrant' in our globalized, especially urban, lives signifies the entire shared space of diversity beyond origin" (Langhoff 2011). This second understanding of the postmigratory will be of relevant use here.

identities or their specificities as static but as societal and cultural constructs which might fall short of recognizing differences as identity-forming, self-determining expressions. The reoccurring problem here is that equality and difference should not be negotiated at the expense of the other but need to be thought together (Kymlicka 2010; Stone 2004; Fraser 1997).

All these concepts could compose a new work in themselves, and we will therefore only focus on diversity and its descriptive, radical element. Here is where the concept of *radical diversity* comes into play: The counter-narrative surrounding TdJML targets the concept of *social justice and diversity* by utilizing the utopian societal destination called radical diversity. Max Czollek works with different political and social scientists within the Institut Social Justice und Radical Diversity on its conceptualization. For this purpose, Czollek et al. composed a practical handbook describing their aspirations and specific processes they aim to implement. Within the first page, they lay the grounds for their ideas, situating plurality within the framework of the 1848 UN Human Rights Charta, which acknowledges the freedom and equality of each person with regards to dignity and rights within a non-violent foundation. They further delineate the standpoint by arguing as such:

Plurality does not mean arbitrariness. [...] Standing up for plurality means recognizing people in their diversity as individuals [...] and focusing participatory policies and practices against forms of structural discrimination³³ (Czollek et al. 2019, 9).

Therefore, the theory is located within legal framework and stresses individual diversity as the foundation against the backdrop of equality. Moreover, it introduces the structural element of discrimination, which is based on and simultaneously produces difference, hindering social equality of recognition. In this reading, diversity is framed as being “critical of discrimination” (*diskriminierungskritisch*) which means that it does not allude to common approaches of diversity management, where the concept is presented as “enriching” not mirroring a reality-based scenario, neither within a company, nor a different institution.³⁴

³³ Pluralität bedeutet nicht Beliebigkeit. [...] Für Pluralität einzutreten bedeutet, Menschen in ihrer Verschiedenheit als Individuen anzuerkennen [...] und partizipative Politiken und Praxen gegen Formen Struktureller Diskriminierung zu fokussieren.

³⁴ Eike Marten refers to Sara Ahmed conducting a study on diversity workers in 2012, who therein ascribed diversity as the central characterization of comfort (Marten 2019, 49). Ahmed, as a consequence, formulates the following critique: “the fact that diversity is not a scary word is part of the problem: if it is detached from scary issues such as power and inequality, it is harder for diversity to do anything in its travels” (Ahmed 2012, 66). This insight represents a significant factor within the discussion on diversity management.

The “founders” of radical diversity, the collective force behind The Institute for Social Justice and Radical Diversity insist on the very distinct anchoring of this concept within the dynamics of structural discrimination (Czollek et al., 2019).

This point of departure makes sense when considering the jeopardies we encountered during the last subchapter. Nonetheless, one might wonder: From a culture studies point of view, what exactly is radical about this framing of diversity, how does social justice tie in here, and what implications does it have for its understanding within this work?

First of all, as we may have read from the initial reference to the Human Rights Statement, plurality within this context forms the ground on which all further conceptual framework is built on. Hannah Arendt and her theoretical contributions on this notion are certainly key references here. Based on the philosophical thought of Arendt, plurality can be defined as „the fact that that not one person, but many people live on earth and populate the world” (Arendt 1967, 14). This sentence precludes men’s equality in their humanity, but also the *absolute difference*³⁵ (Arendt 1967) between all humans. At the core of plurality, this difference needs to be respected, acknowledged, recognized and it is here we situate diversity entangling within the thought process. Again, diversity in the understanding of the Institute does not mean an “embellishing” diversity, but one which assumes a counter position to discriminating practices. We can ascertain that the need for a diversity concept critical to discrimination exists because of the learnings of chapter 2.1 that illustrate how societal plurality and (appreciative) difference were and currently are threatened. The structural nature of discrimination fosters the urge for social justice, making the claim part of the Institute’s name. According to its theorists, social justice demands and simultaneously is accomplished through justice of distribution, justice of empowerment, and justice of recognition (Czollek et al. 2019, 24). They derive this conception from works by philosopher Martha C. Nussbaum (2010), and by political scientist Iris Marion Young (1996) who contributed to justice and feminist theory though critically tackling relationships of power and domination.

³⁵ From my understanding, Czollek et al. take Arendt’s expression of absolute difference and transition it to “radical difference,” in German *radikale Verschiedenheit*. The initial meaning remains, but the attribution serves the coherence of conceptualizing radical diversity.

2.2.2. What can be radical about diversity? — A utopian vision

Consequently, Czollek et al. define the accomplishment of social justice as—what they call—radical diversity. For that matter, this concept can be understood both as a driving force and as an actual objective. The following statement exemplifies the idea behind radical diversity and its presupposed utopian potential:

Radical Diversity does not just mean an abstract goal, but a critical practice that is concerned with changing homogenous public-political spaces, institutions, cultural practices and discourses towards a mainstream of radical difference, diversity and heterogeneity in their complexity³⁶ (Czollek et al. 2019, 43).

Here, the manifold aspirations within the concept become palpable, as it points towards a theoretical conception which can also be a possible transition of action(s). Another curious factor focuses on a new “mainstream,” which distinguishes from its common definition of a predominant culture being described as the “mainstream of difference”. In this sense, this could express the diametrical opposite to *Leitkultur*’s claim homogeneity.

Following the quote above, radical diversity envisions a society that in its plurality composed of radically different individuals and allows for their participation and can therefore and ultimately be free of discriminating practices, policies, or behaviors. Also, we can draw from the literal meaning of the adjective “radical” that this refers to a society that needs to change, “from the ground up”, “completely,” and “thoroughly” with regards to recognizing plurality and opposing discrimination.³⁷ Here the utopian nature of the concept becomes apparent. As Peter Hanenberg states, “Utopia emerges from the negation of what is into the claim of what could be” (Hanenberg 2018, 79). In this case, a discriminating society is negated to demand an appreciative way of living together characterized by acknowledging plurality based on equality among humans. The collective theorists in the Institute define radical diversity as a *concrete utopia* with reference to Ernst Bloch (Czollek et al. 2019, 42). In his philosophical masterpiece *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Bloch conceptualizes hope as the driving force of all humans and explicitly underlines its purpose of changing precise circumstances in human life. Bloch understands hope as a concrete utopia, as it contains and nourishes the awareness

³⁶ Radical Diversity meint nicht nur ein abstraktes Ziel, sondern eine kritische Praxis, der es um die Veränderung homogener öffentlich-politischer Räume, Institutionen, kultureller Praxen und Diskurse hin zu einem Mainstream der radikalen Verschiedenheit, Vielfalt und Heterogenität in ihrer Komplexität geht.

³⁷ Within the framework of *Leitkultur* and hegemonic narrative, we could also interpret radical as meaning counterhegemonic in the sense of countering the prevalent “norm”. Generally, the adjective would be used when referring to a force that counters the system, but here it could also mean countering a systematic form of marginalization i.e.

of a potential “to make life better” (Bloch 1985). From Bloch’s work, we can draw the analogy from his conception of humans’ hidden desires which emerge in (day-) dreams to the hope the Institute gives radical diversity; transcribed in the unconscious state of “not yet” being.

Besides, from my understanding of “concrete,” I would derive that this conceptualized visionary hope, be it utopian, still shapes into relatively conclusive ways of achieving the envisioned state. Or at least guide us to acknowledging, knowing, and proceeding on paths that might lead in the desired direction. The aim of social justice, which was annotated earlier, remains crucial to the societal draft of radical diversity since the realization of social justice will promote and display radical diversity. As such, the concept of radical diversity does not remain in its allegedly unreachable utopian state but embarks on practical methods of action. On that point, I would like to stress the beautiful twofold connotation of the word “realization”. On the one hand, it signifies the moment where one becomes conscious of something and, on the other, it refers to the concrete process of “making the vision real”, turning it into action, carrying it out and performing the previously gained insight. It can be assumed that the first and the second way of interpreting the term come after one another and are therefore mutually dependent. The passive realization of, say, an unjust, discriminatory behavior results in the active mode of standing or speaking up against it.

2.2.3. Counter-narrative strategic paths

Suppose radical diversity represents a utopian vision of a convivial, participatory, inclusive, radically pluralistic society and claims to be concrete. In that case, the question remains: what are the ways through which this utopia can be realized? We will focus on both an aesthetic, artistic practice, and a social one in the following. As such, these different practices also intertwine with the counter-narrative of TdJML in the sense that the artistic intervention involves them and enacts them. The way in which TdJML “performs” these concepts will soon mark the center of attention.

2.2.3.1. De-integration or the incantation of self-determination

Let us begin with the first practice. Max Czollek (in 2018) developed a conceptual strategy that he polemically calls *Desintegration*³⁸, de-integration. The practice is defined as such: “By simultaneously formulating an attitude of self-determination and an initiative for action, it is empowerment of the marginalized (Jewish / postmigrant) position”³⁹ (Czollek et al. 2019, 189). From this description, we can draw the connection to the previously introduced *Gedächtnistheater*, which ascribes a significant role to a marginalized position to fit it into a hegemonic logic based on “norm”. Consequently, integration and heteronomy are the parts against which the practice of de-integration is positioned. Again, referring to linguistic traits, the previously discussed concept stands as an answer to the notion of integration which was noted to be an integral part within the order of *Leitkultur*.

As a reminder, integration centers around the formulation of a deficit on the side of the migrant (community), paving the way to the necessity of assimilating to a predefined, national, homogenous image, while then in turn, paradoxically, never granting that promised form of belonging as the norm itself is constituted on the constructed *other*. The motive of de-integration exactly sets out to expose such processes when Max Czollek polemically demands: “That is the end of the integration theatre!” (*Schluss mit dem Integrationstheater!*)⁴⁰ This exposure is achieved first and foremost through means of art and specifically in the form of artistic interventions (Czollek et al. 2019, 189). The potential to stir, unsettle, shake familiar habits of seeing and hearing in artistic ways of expression is stressed and can be called a catalysator for the empowering conceptual practice of de-integration. Consequently, the tangible artistic power successfully enters the epistemic space of envisioning a utopian societal model of plurality. At the same time, knowing the conceptual background of discrimination as well as ways of critically reflecting diversity matters can be of productive use for artistic institutions (Czollek et al. 2019, 189). This capacity of art to incorporate and negotiate outward, peripheral perspectives, and open

³⁸ Originally, *Desintegration* was formulated concerning the Jewish perspective and aimed at a different way of locating this position within the public discourse. Now, the strategic concept is also used referring to a broader, postmigrant context, as its potential gained more recognition since its first implementation at Maxim Gorki Theatre in 2016. For a concise discussion on de-integration in English, see Maria Roca Lizarazu (Roca Lizarazu 2020).

³⁹ Indem sie gleichzeitig eine Haltung der Selbstbestimmung und eine Initiative zur Handlung formuliert, ist sie Empowerment der marginalisierten (jüdischen / postmigrantischen) Position.

⁴⁰ Olga Husch states that „the call for de-integration in Max Czollek’s 2018 publication ‘De-integrate Yourself!’ can be understood as one pivotal practice of autonomous re-narrating of selves” (Husch 2020, 6). I would add that it contributes to the counter-narrative against essentialist tendencies such as *Leitkultur*.

semantic and interpretative spaces thereto will play a vital role in the next chapter when highlighting TdJML as an artistic intervention.

2.2.3.2. Complex intersectionality with a view to allyship

Through the de-integrative practice, the postmigratory changes the direction of thought and self-determined action towards (formerly) marginalized perspectives. A marginalized group that was located “in the border”. In this line of thought, Olga Husch draws a connection from the postmigratory to Walter Dignolo’s decolonial adaption of *border thinking* (Dignolo 2000, 148). Husch argues that

the decolonial approach [...] has more of a central-peripheral dialectic in mind, whereas Czollek’s notion of *radical diversity* [...] tackles not only *border thinking*, but specifically the complexity of the transitional epistemes where one can simultaneously be in a position of privilege and discrimination (Husch 2020, 8).

What Husch refers to is called *complex intersectionality*. This concept of *intersectionality* was developed in the orbit of Black feminism in the 1990ies and can be described as a reciprocally stabilizing dynamic between various forms of oppression based on Race, Class, and Gender, if we follow bell hooks⁴¹ (hooks 2000). By now, additional (repressive) categories are considered when addressing intersectional discrimination. Turning to complex intersectionality, the notion is amplified differently, as it also regards privilege within this intersectional structure. Max Czollek remarks a crucial factor regarding “the discriminated”: “An identity-political fixation on one’s own experiences of discrimination can obscure the view of the agency that everyone has.”⁴² Not only does this give insight into the danger of limiting one’s own solidarity to ones “own” discriminated group, but also it can hinder concrete ways of changing injustices.

Czollek, therefore, seizes the idea of intersectionality but adds the factor of privilege to it, and he specifically refers to the possibility of agency connected to privilege. He insists on the simultaneity of privilege and discrimination while shifting the attention towards the specific situations in which one can use their privilege (to engage in change, of whatever sort). The potential influence one can have in differing situations is manifold. Max Czollek

⁴¹ The term intersectionality was coined by lawyer Kimberle Crenshaw, who examined recruitment practices at the US company General Motors and found out that neither discrimination against women nor discrimination against Black people was effective, but specifically the discrimination of Black women, which provoked the realization that a specific interconnection of both forms was “enforced” (Crenshaw 1989).

⁴² “Eine identitätspolitische Fixierung auf die eigenen Diskriminierungserfahrungen kann den Blick auf die Handlungsmacht verstellen, die jede*r hat.”

gives the example of himself benefiting from his access to a laptop, time, and the possibility to write a book which he turned into the publication of the political essay *Gegenwartsbewältigung* (Czollek 2020a, 163).

In a way, we can spot the criticism of a common dynamic in discussions around identity politics. The assumption is that one cannot know or act out for “the right reasons,” i.e., to fight for equality and social justice, if the one fighting is not in some way affected by discrimination. The consequence of this argument is a different form of exclusivity and, in this way, also exclusion. In opposition to this, the above-mentioned utopian idea of radical diversity helps understand that one can have the same vision and, thus, the same hope for a “better” society characterized by plurality and equality. In other words, we do not have to “be” or experience the same for us to “want” the same. Jo Frank framed this idea as the *fetish for a common ground* that should preferably be turned into common goals (Frank 2020).

“Sameness”, “common ground”, “sharing commonalities” all sounds like vocabulary which describes a society based on the *Leitkultur* narrative. As a reminder, we are in the midst of discovering ways in which this narrative can be countered. Our counter-narrative focuses on radical diversity that resembles both utopia and critical societal practice aiming at breaking homogenous spaces (of all kinds). One specific and active strategy among critical practices which relies on “common goals” to help establish a counter-narrative is the notion of *allyship*.

2.2.3.3. Allyship — a special form of active solidarity or political friendship

One interesting fact about the concept allyship is that it derives from military vocabulary: the allies during World War II, the USA, France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union are the historical example that comes to mind. Departing from this interpretation, the defining characteristic of allies seems to be an agreement on a common aim, despite possible differences among them. A collective that consists of single individuals can formulate a shared concern effecting into joint action directed towards (some sort of societal) change.

This meaning also applies to this work’s context, and moreover, allyship expresses a practical approach to lived solidarity. According to the founders and conceptual theorists of the Institute of Social Justice and Radical Diversity, both people who endure discrimination,

as well as people profiting from privileges should form alliances⁴³, as the common interest in countering structural discrimination serves as the decisive factor (Czollek et al. 2019, 38). In line with this thought, it is important to note that the conceptual practice can not only be understood as being limited to discriminated groups and individuals. To the contrary, it can and should be expanded to everyone who opposes structural inequalities and is willing to actively advocate and work against them. This factor should not be underestimated, as the static focus and adherence to the experienced discrimination can fall short of the emancipative side in terms of identity politics.

In this regard, the necessity of allyship, which unfolds in the current development of the discussion on identity politics, was recently formulated by one of the founders of identity politics, Barbara Smith, as she advises young activists on live television: “You got to work in coalition. [...] You cannot be so immersed in what you are experiencing that you cannot see that wider arch of a need to work for justice” (Smith 2020). In other words, there is the threat of people misusing the emancipatory tool as a form of identity cult, focusing on their own, particular experience-based identity and thereby giving up on political activism. The identity part of the word is bloated at the expense of politics. In the context of social media and click-generating content, political statements are jeopardized to become ephemeral products that may become disposable the day after they were held in high regards. This focus on identity paves the way for an exclusionary tendency as well, which can be observed in current debates around identity politics, frequently utilized as an argument for cancelling. As Amy Chua explains, the gaps created by the argument of exclusivity can be situated within the epistemological realm, which means that “out-group members cannot share the knowledge, possessed by in-group members” (Chua 2018).

Consequently, countering structural discrimination represents the common goal which alliances should target when acting against the backdrop of radical diversity. Leah Carola Czollek et al. envision the dynamic of allyship to possibly apply to various forms of discrimination—such as antisemitism, sexism, ageism, ableism, racism et cetera—therefore encompassing nearly all human beings, from which the theorists derive a very broad potential for political action (Czollek et al. 2019, 38).

⁴³ The theorists of the Institute of Social Justice and Radical diversity in fact, formulate the concept of *Bündnisse*, “alliances” which relates to allyship but emphasizes the “possibility of collective action with the common goal to annihilate structural discrimination” (Czollek et al. 2019, 39). From my understanding, the concept of “alliances” can be defined as a specific form within allyship, while we will operate with the latter (term) for the matter of clarity.

What are the prerequisites of allyship and alliances within it, respectively? Leah Carola Czollek et al. define several “steps” contributing to the practical implementation of alliances: Firstly, they name a self-reflexive mode in terms of the own responsibility within actions or circumstances reproducing discrimination. Secondly, they point to the associated awareness of positions profiting from discrimination. And thirdly, Leah Carola Czollek et al. mention the necessity of “approaching one another” which includes the opening of communities—for which their consolidation surely has a self-determining effect—to make alliances possible (Czollek et al. 2019, 39). The goal would then be to form a new, broader, spanning collective which would follow the same interest(s).

The theorists again point to Hannah Arendt when describing allyship as a political friendship and a specific form of solidarity. They refer to the fact that “classic solidarity” is often based on the sameness of specific, predefined attributions, i.e., women who are in solidarity with women etc. In contrast, allyship spans its possibility of initiative and action onto a much wider arch, as it is (generally) interested in the other⁴⁴ (Czollek et al. 2019, 40). The main factor they derive from Arendt’s writings relies on the thought that one can empathetically be interested in the opinion and perspective of an *other*, an opposite and in this way move away from their own way of thinking (for a moment). As a reminder, Hannah Arendt spoke about the simultaneousness of equality and absolute difference among humans. Therefore, equality can be seen as a framework enabling a universal form of agreement. At the same time, diversity requires communicative ways of speaking and acting in order to foster understanding between differing perspectives.

In this context, the *dialogic principle* is mentioned within the practical handbook of the Institute from which the theorists derive the possibility of generally considering different perspectives and not reducing oneself to merely a subjective viewpoint.

Against the monological principle of unity and certainty, this attitude and approach is central in the concept of Social Justice and Diversity, because it expresses the interest

⁴⁴ Here we should again stress that allyship closely intertwines with the concept of complex intersectionality. If you consider only one characteristic, i.e. femininity, then a female person might be affected by the discriminatory form of sexism. If you consider a different category, say social status, then that very same person may be privileged in terms of their access to capital. As Pierre Bourdieu would insist, capital need not be limited to monetary capital. Allyship would then create the awareness of this privileging capital within the large context of social injustices and discriminatory practices which could provoke the realization of the impact one can have in contributing to creating a more just society.

in the others who are not as I am. Further, it involves the abandonment of purely private interests, the abandonment of egocentrism⁴⁵ (Czollek et al. 2019, 203).

Analogically, the monological principle could also belong to the realm of *Leitkultur* in the way it focuses on a distinct and uniform way of living, whereas the dialogic principle respects and cherishes plurality and fosters a reciprocal transposition between different viewpoints and approaches. Entering a dialogue and engaging with the perspective of the *other* therefore touch upon essential requirements for allyship as a practice aiming for (ex)change.⁴⁶

Raising this idea of exchange to a cultural level, this sets the counterpoint to homogenizing, exclusionary predominant cultures that expect integration from peripheral cultures. The concept of transculturality encapsulates this approach: here, integration refers to an entanglement of interweaving cultures, preserving differences and individuality in favor of a society that recognizes that its members are increasingly “cultural hybrids” (*kulturelle Mischlinge*). This further development of multiculturalism seems to allow for fruitful responses to contemporary challenges in countries of immigration. The keyword in transculturality is thus culture as a network, based on interactive exchange (Welsch 1995).

2.2.4. Critical reflection

As we have ascertained now, re-narrating the *völkisch* substructure shows a practical concern within the counter-narrative. It reveals the ideological underpinning of supposedly innocent concepts such as *Leitkultur* and *Heimat*. The pressing urgency for a counter-narrative was underpinned by the “H-moments”, xenophobic, extremist right-wing attacks that point out a violent radicalization of ideology based on consequent othering. This ideology sustains its ethnically homogenous imaginaries by stigmatizing, generalizing, and exerting extrinsic ascriptions that, on the one hand, turn “The Muslim” into the problem and, on the other, “The Jew” into the eternal victim. The postmigratory encompassed the first emancipative concept within the counter construction to this form of heteronomy. The acclaimed shift of perspective from external ascription to self-definition and self-ascription of (post)migrants

⁴⁵ Gegen das monologische Prinzip der Einheit und Gewissheit ist diese Haltung und Herangehensweise im Konzept Social Justice and Diversity zentral, denn sie drückt das Interesse an den Anderen aus, die nicht so sind wie Ich bin. Ferner geht es um das Aufgeben rein privater Interessen, das Aufgeben des Egozentrismus.

⁴⁶ Dialogue and communication bringing together various voices also intensively appears in the context of TdJML. It characterizes the framework of nearly every event which took place during the Days of the Jewish Muslim Leading Culture, be it open forums or zoom discussions inviting differing parties.

shines a light on a counterhegemonic impulse within the framework of this report. Furthermore, we remember that the pivotal idea for building a counter-narrative expresses radical diversity, fiercely (re)shining the light onto structural discrimination, while at the same time opening it for a utopian way of thinking. The notion thus is anchored in hope for a society characterized by plurality, equality, social justice, and participation.

A central reference within the conception of radical diversity remains Arendt's absolute different, which Leah Carola Czollek et al. consequentially define as radically different or radically diverse, respectively.

Another observation is key to the understanding of radical diversity: it can, on the one side, be referred to as an entirely utopian vision, which is "not yet" accomplished but remains distinct as an idealistic objective for society. On the other side, it can be understood as a critical practice that requires active ways of engaging in it. We could explore one strategy with de-integration and another with allyship, exemplifying a special kind of solidarity or political friendship. In this way, radical diversity signifies a concrete utopia precisely because it implies and upholds concrete strategies which allow for goal-driven actions. However, it must be noted that these concepts can indeed be judged critically. Especially the notion of allyship shows a potential for criticism, which is why we will turn our attention to it once more. It cannot be tackled as an identity, since

it is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups of people. Allyship is not a self-defined—work and efforts must be recognized by those you are seeking to ally with (Atcheson 2018).

A criticism of allyship responds precisely to this misunderstanding of self-defining moments. If allyship is used as a label more than a humble role, then the possibility of self-immunization is clear to see. This applies, for example, if one ascribes to oneself the position of an ally and interprets it as a shield of sufficiency which protects both from discriminating as well as from criticism. The subsequent misunderstanding resulting from this resides in a guilt-free mindset, meaning that one who has denoted oneself as an "ally" ascribes an unblameable, untouchable character to this position. This attitude of "lying back" can become a hazardous proposition if the label "ally" serves self-interests primarily. Moreover, change cannot be achieved without action, and if one uses the self-denotation of an ally and contents oneself with it, then the term remains passive and static. In this sense, the difficulty of identity politics has an unmistakable similarity here. Namely, the positioning becomes

problematic when it is pursued in favor of a self-denotation end that centers around the perspective of the self, rather than acting in interest of the community (TdJML 2020e).

Additionally, a different point of criticism can be raised on the concept of allyship: As we have learned, allyship signifies a specific form of active solidarity which does not center around the “I” but the common goal of fighting discrimination, social injustices etc. Provocatively speaking, does this demand for self-abandonment not possibly show dehumanizing, if not disembodiment tendencies? Such an entirely altruistic motivation seems impossible to achieve in a society where individualism and self-improvement are valued as currencies of social life.

On the other hand, allyship can be read as expedient to the difficulties of identity politics and specifically cancel culture. In fact, if identity politics are defined as making struggles of marginalization transparent, then allyship can be referred to as a continuation of this intention. It seems to be one of the logical consequences of pursuing fights in identity-politics when idealistic and critical conceptualizations regarding discrimination turn into an actual practice or action. In this sense, it can also help against the predicaments of identity politics. The conceptual practice potentially serves as a strategy to disentangle (some) obstacles within identity politics and the denoted Cancel Culture, which excludes and essentializes. Allyship can provide a productive way of refocusing strengths on a struggle for an activist change in the sense of social justice and radical diversity.

Still, more critical positions towards allyship remain. One of which is occupied by sociologist Aladin El-Mafaalani who recently published the book “What is the point of racism?” (*Wozu Rassismus?*) and unsettles the utopian understanding of “alliances” possibly spanning across “all borders”, encompassing all:

Allyship of non-affected people is important but does not lead to structural change. Therefore, I address what must be expected from different institutions and professions such as schools and the police. After all, opportunities for participation in society are primarily organized through institutions⁴⁷ (El-Mafaalani 2021).

El-Mafaalani criticizes here that allyship might (or will) not reach far enough to foster consistent change for social justice and the necessary radicality of working against structural discrimination, which is why institutional strata are to be marked as the main target in the

⁴⁷ Allyship von Nicht-Betroffenen ist wichtig, führt aber nicht zu strukturellen Veränderungen. Deswegen thematisiere ich, was von verschiedenen Institutionen und Professionen wie Schule und Polizei erwartet werden muss. Denn Teilhabechancen in der Gesellschaft werden weitgehend über Institutionen organisiert.

struggle for social justice. Institutions create policies and determine rules and regulations which can either be inclusive or exclusive; as such, they understandably remain in central positions of power. As we may extrapolate from El-Mafaalani's claim, *participation* presents the condensed keyword within this dynamic. Within diversity, postmigratory and de-integration, participation will also be revisited within the following chapter. We now turn to Kampnagel Hamburg being one of the hosting venues of TdJML and framing my internship experience. In this context, we will respond to Aladin El-Mafaalani with a counter-question: What if an institution becomes an ally?

3. Case study: TdJML

We will now enter into the matrix of TdJML as an artistic intervention: As a first step, we focus on Kampnagel as the performing arts institution—among many others—hosted TdJML and the lecture of Max Czollek, which served as an inspirational moment of this report. Moreover, Kampnagel made me familiar with the event series, and determined my internship experience of half a year in total. Therefore, we will, firstly, look at the institution Kampnagel and its particularities and secondly, we will include it into a broader discussion on diversity and explore the possible role of Kampnagel as an ally. In a third step, TdJML will mark the center of attention. Considering the scope of this work, the interpretative analysis of cultural products will be condensed into three main parts, which inform the thesis of TdJML as a counter-narrative in an illustrating way. We will be introduced to several artistic means that make up part of this kaleidoscopic congress composing our counter-narrative. Consequently, the last section of this chapter will then attempt to weave in the discussion on art as a means of resistance and highlight the aspect of *disarticulation* within counterhegemonic struggles brought forward by Chantal Mouffe.

3.1. Practice what you preach! — Kampnagel as an ally?

We have learned from our definition of radical diversity that it can be interpreted both as a goal, and a practice that requires active participation to provide vital grounds for anti-discriminatory work which in turn should and would also lead to more opportunities in terms of societal participation. Institutional regulations largely determine degrees of participation, and also of diversity and this holds true for artistic institutions, as well. In this specific context, diversity often is accompanied by high expectations and various difficulties of implementation. This calls for us to reflect on the institutions role and performance with regards to (radical) diversity and its associated strategies. Additionally, I will briefly give an account of my internship experience at Kampnagel Hamburg. Firstly, I will provide some general information about the institution, its aims and programming, which will directly be evaluated within the conceptual framework outlined in chapter two. This will be embedded in a short evaluation of the internship experience, before coming to terms with the artistic means of TdJML.

Kampnagel is situated in a former factory that produced armaments and later dockside cranes (which form the unique skyline of Hamburg's view at the port for which it is known). In

1982 Kampnagel was transformed into a venue for performing arts and, as of now, it can be referred to as a world-renowned international production house that presents not only contemporary performing arts but also concerts, conferences, and a variety of festivals with different themes. The six Kampnagel stages showcase the work of international artists and that of the local Hamburg scene. The program represents a broad spectrum of aesthetic positions and groundbreaking trends, not only in theater, dance, and performance, but also in music, architecture, and the visual arts. Kampnagel is a productive laboratory for developing ideas, a think tank, and a place for controversy, opening up to society and reverberating reality surrounding it through artistic means. The house cooperates globally and locally with a variety of different partners, from artistic and scientific backgrounds. In total, Kampnagel stages over 900 events per season, attracting 180,000 visitors to the site. In 2020, Kampnagel was appointed to municipal theatre of Hamburg. Additionally, Kampnagel is a member of the Alliance of International Production Houses (Bündnis internationaler Produktionshäuser e.V.), which unites Germany's most important and largest production centers of the independent dance, theater, and performance scene⁴⁸ (Kampnagel n.d. a). Since this Bündnis not only forms an essential part in the funding of Kampnagel, it also asks each production house for "self-commitment", there exists the demand for a collective effort against discrimination. It is worth to take a look at this anti-discrimination pledge, which begins as follows:

The international production houses that have come together in the Bündnis are places of diversity, where people with different biographies, interests, beliefs, and expectations, and from different social situations, come together. It is our social task and obligation to make these places discrimination-sensitive spaces for everyone [...] Moreover, the institutions within the Bündnis are recommitted to active and preventive action against any form of discrimination, which includes creating and maintaining an atmosphere of respect and solidarity among the employees, as well as the audience members⁴⁹ (Bündnis 2020).

⁴⁸ The Budget Committee of the German Bundestag has provided funding to support this collaborative project of seven international production houses for contemporary performing arts in Germany.

⁴⁹ Die im Bündnis zusammengeschlossenen internationalen Produktionshäuser sind Orte der Diversität, an denen Menschen mit unterschiedlichen Biografien, Interessen, Überzeugungen und Erwartungen und aus unterschiedlichen sozialen Lagen zusammenkommen. Diese Orte für alle [...] zu diskriminierungssensiblen Räumen zu machen, ist unsere gesellschaftliche Aufgabe und Verpflichtung. Wir verpflichten uns zu aktivem und präventivem Vorgehen gegen jegliche Form von Diskriminierung. Wir verpflichten uns, unsere Mitarbeiter*innen, unsere Kooperationspartner*innen, künstlerische, technische und administrative Produktionsteams, Gäste und unser Publikum zu bestärken, stets zu einer Kultur und Atmosphäre des gegenseitigen Respekts und der Akzeptanz im Sinne eines solidarischen Miteinanders beizutragen.

The Bündnis' pledge ends with the subsequent statement: "We also work on the topic [of institutional discrimination] discursively and artistically in our program. We regard this work as an ongoing process that must be regularly reviewed in a self-critical manner" (Bündnis 2020).

Interestingly enough, *Bündnis* in German means "alliance" which brings us to the concept of allyship. Affiliating with the Bündnis, Kampnagel could therefore be understood as an allied institution not only with regards to the Bündnis itself but also specifically in forming a coalition to actively work against discrimination.

The last part of the pledge is particularly curious: The fact that anti-discrimination work is considered an ongoing process was proven once more at a recent event at Kampnagel in November 2021, when—arguing in line with their countering of discriminatory practices—the institution disassociated itself from an author and former coroner, who was supposed to give a lecture at the venue in Hamburg.⁵⁰ Kampnagel's artistic director Amelie Deuflhard emphasizes in an interview that the motto of Practice what you preach! applies for Kampnagel (Deuflhard 2021). This case once again refers to identity politics and Cancel Culture. In the end there remain the questions "Who is given a platform? Who is visible? Who represents whom and who actually is able to participate?" The decision of the Kampnagel director shows that such ostensibly artistic choices about whom to invite to a venue bear an important political implications.⁵¹ If a renowned international performing arts institution such as Kampnagel acts in solidarity with the Black and migrant community (in Hamburg) and consequently decides to disassociate themselves from an established figure of Hamburg's medical realm, then this decision shows a clear political and ethical stance. If the mantra guiding this active form of criticism is "Practice what you preach", it signals that it is not enough to label oneself with an emancipating self-definition or to ascribe oneself the role of being-allied with marginalized groups. An active form of positioning is the salient point here. In line with this thought, I argue that Kampnagel's "preaching" of anti-discriminatory

⁵⁰ Kampnagel distanced itself from a lecture of author Klaus Püschel, who for almost 30 years held an executive position in the department of medical jurisprudence at a hospital in Hamburg. During his work, Püschel was responsible for the forced administration of emetics to at least 530 people (mostly Black men). In 2001, one person called Achidi John died after such a forced administration which occurred on the backdrop of investigations on drug trafficking (Twickel 2021).

⁵¹ The case reveals to be a bit more complicated. Kampnagel holds the position of not active programming but hosting a festival of criminal literature, of which the lecture should be part. Still, the platform as stage—in a literal sense—is provided by Kampnagel.

practices does not take place in a mere vacuum. Instead, it is embedded in a wide variety of artistic themes that Kampnagel pursues in its program, many of which deal with discrimination in the narrower sense, and, in the broadest sense, including themes such as visibility.

Here I would like to briefly name some of the diverse events and initiatives Kampnagel is involved in. Last year in October, the institution hosted *Burning Issues: Performing Equality*. *Burning Issues* is a nationwide conference that brings together artists and media professionals to learn, discuss and network on the topic of gender justice in the cultural and specifically the performing arts industries. Within the three-days conference, the open forums, debates, lectures, and artistic interventions dealt with gender issues, and expanded onto discourses about intersectionality, ableism, or queer safe spaces. With hosting this conference, Kampnagel shows active involvement in debates critical of discrimination, allowing it to affect its institutional policies. Moreover, I would like to highlight one initiative which portrays the anti-discriminatory work by Kampnagel in a different way, operating through participation:

As we have seen, representation, visibility, and anti-discrimination form an integral part of the think tank Kampnagel, but diversity and social justice—keyword: participation—can be viewed in this context. In my eyes, one of the most outstanding projects featured by Kampnagel is the initiative *Migrantpolit*⁵², which is located at space on the Kampnagel grounds and was founded in 2015. On the Kampnagel website, *Migrantpolit* presents itself as “a place, a laboratory, and a meeting place where new formats of working, living and celebrating together are tested and developed. A place that leaves behind the social classifications of ‘refugees’ and ‘locals’ and whose actors jointly create cosmopolitan visions” (Kampnagel n.d. b). By now, the performance space *Migrantpolit* regularly stages various events, composed, created and enacted by migrants in Hamburg. *Migrantpolit* can be classified as a platform in which refugees share their

⁵² For this initiative, one Kampnagel dramaturge initiated the show “Hello Germany—the immigrants” (“Hello Deutschland – die Einwanderer”). The show was created to provide a more realistic portrayal of refugee experiences, than in German Tv. Moreover, they are organizing evenings with “Oriental Karaoke”, scripted and produced their own reality show “Ramadram”. This variety is framed by the agents of *Migrantpolit* as *Refugeeism* which they define as such: “REFUGEE|ISM reflects the condition in which involuntary migrants find themselves through cultural contact. The migrants are heavily involved—both in the attribution of their future roles in our society and in their current representation in the theater: sometimes as instrumentalized victims, sometimes as representatives of their biography, and sometimes as self-determined actors of a future community” (Kampnagel n.d. b).

stories. Moreover, it enables the young creative people who are active within its framework to connect to a wider community based in Hamburg and beyond. As such, Migrantpolitan helps young artists from diverse backgrounds set up a network and provides contacts and opportunities for them to enter the art world they are interested in. Migrantpolitan can therefore be counted among postmigratory initiatives as it creates a shared space for creative individuals with or without a migratory background. It also contributes to a low-threshold opportunity for young people who would like to get to know or situate themselves within the (performance) artistic world.

The events from Migrantpolitan were also promoted by the press department of Kampnagel, which reciprocally provided a more diverse audience for their shows and also led me there personally during my internship, where I was able to gain these insights. In my view, the initiative underlines the open-mindedness of Kampnagel's program planning in many ways. As an institution, it recognizes that participation can be the key to a truly—radically?—diverse society. The motto is not (only): How enriching diversity is for our program! Kampnagel makes an effort not to let diversity remain empty within the self-definition of the institution. Instead, Kampnagel agents are thinking about (excluded) people and how they may actively participate in artistic processes within the institution's framework. This ambition towards making participation possible on a broad scale can be understood in the same general way implied here. From this description and the information given above it is possible to perceive the approach what Kampnagel and its surrounding initiatives stand for, it's an opposition to stigmatization and discrimination with a focus on, but not limited to, the migrant experience. This reveals an idealistic mindset, but within the framework of radical diversity it can simultaneously be interpreted as a practice of allyship which recognizes the processual nature of matters of diversity and the consequential need to actively promote and incorporate them, mainly through increasing visibility, as well as participation.

3.1.1. Internship experience

My personal participation in institution amounted led me to being involved in the work process as an intern of which I will give a brief account: My internship took place from September 2020 through February 2021. I was working full time at the Press Department of Kampnagel, Hamburg, which comprised of five employees: the head of the department, one

marketing expert, one musical marketing expert, being one of two social media experts, and one expert for audience development who also paid close attention to matters of accessibility. From the start I was included in all areas of work and was also able to take part in the meetings with the other departments which lead to a quick understanding of the coherence and distribution responsibilities within the institution. Retrospectively, my main task comprised of promoting Kampnagel's program and included the development of marketing campaign and communication strategies such as the creation and uploading of social media content, as well as managing the content management system behind the institution's website. Moreover, my tasks included talking to the local and international artists who staged performances and inquiring about the expectations and emphasis they had of the promotion. Consequently, I reached out towards potentially new audience members for several formats within the program. Additionally, I was solely responsible for keeping up with and archiving the press coverage on Kampnagel's shows, initiatives or the head of the institution. Moreover, I dealt with marketing tasks, for example procuring the material and communication during the production of a high-end upcycling product.

The overall working experience at Kampnagel was respectful and appreciative: in general orders were not simply given but could be discussed, at least in the team most of the things were decided together and dialogue with others was sought. The prevailing hierarchies in the team were allowed to be questioned. A different view, a diverging perspective were also desired which is why some decision-making processes took longer but often increased the team spirit when everyone backed a decision as a team. To me personally, the team-building aspect seems to be one of my most important learnings there: We always ate lunch together and, during the corona pandemic, we held meetings online and talked about our private situations, whether we felt overcharged or underchallenged and attempted to find ways of dealing with issues within the group. This sort of intimate exchange, in my eyes, not only contributed to an understanding and healthy working environment but encouraged collective support and joy. Generally, I would summarize that I enjoyed working there very much, that my understanding of valuable and ambitious communicative work and appreciation of the potential in connecting artistic fields grew. Also, I realized during my work with the employee who was mainly responsible for accessibility matters that, even though Kampnagel already operates with a lot more tools and inclusive initiatives than other performing arts institutions, the problem of audience development often remains. This is the

reason why I value the idealistic ambitions of most of the Kampnagel staff to become and remain an accessible institution, both for artists and audiences. And even though most events during my internship had to be shown online due to restrictions of social distancing, I was able to attend some rehearsals and several events at Kampnagel's halls in person. This leads me to the event series TdJML which sparked the writing of this report. It therefore not only serves as a case study but can be seen as another part of the ambitious approach Kampnagel creates within its program, strongly mirroring a pluralist perspective on and of society.

3.2. Unbagging TdJML as an artistic intervention

In October 2020, Kampnagel hosted Max Czollek, who read from one chapter of his new publication *Gegenwartsbewältigung* (Czollek 2020a). The event began with the reading, and was followed by an open forum which was moderated by one Kampnagel dramaturge. The speakers and participants of this open forum were Perel, an interdisciplinary, queer, disabled artist who is based in New York (and Berlin) and Leyla Jagiella, a transsexual, Muslim Islamic scholar and educator, alongside Max Czollek.

The following subchapter will provide a textual analysis of relevant parts of one chapter within *Gegenwartsbewältigung*. It was chosen out of interest, as Max Czollek read from it during this reading session at Kampnagel in one of the initial days of TdJML. Thus, this chapter is an integral part of the event series that we discuss here. Within the chapter, the author Max Czollek conjures a staged situation between several concepts, as they become actual characters within a socio-political arena. This means that the author appoints roles to specific political concepts and during the course of the chapter unfolds their encounters through several fight scenes. Even though this theatrical enactment transpires only in written form, it offers a significant perspective on the coherency of ideas surrounding and opposing *Leitkultur*. Therefore, its thorough examination may lead to a deeper understanding of the matter. Additionally, the political and structural embedding of the concepts brings to light how they function as defining constants in ideological narratives and beliefs that affect the (German) public. On the one hand, this wrestling match provides an artistic and caricaturing take on political concepts and can therefore be considered as a piece of art. On the other hand, alongside the hyperbolic theatricalization, it is shown by research and reliable data that the rhetorical use of distinct conceptions eventuates in real, societal implications.

3.2.1. Wrestling Concepts — performative lecture

The title of the chapter widens the perspective, gives a foretaste of the artistic-formal framework of the following text⁵³: “Symbolic Jews and Other Trophies”. A trophy is a war achievement. It is not usually gained peacefully but rewarded after a competition or a fight. It is equivalent to a proof of victory or even to a monument. Through this metaphor, the structure of the present text reveals a battle-like connotation or, at least, coincidentally unveils differing parties.

The first sentence, “the leading culture is on the ropes” (Czollek 2020a, 89) reveals: it must be a boxing or wrestling match, the second is confirmed soon afterward. The wrestling match starts with the first fighter, *Leitkultur*, and its initial opponent Theodor W. Adorno, dressed in a black tankini. This exhibitionist, extravagant way of clothing can be read as an ironical distortion of Adorno. It challenges the common picture that shows his constant style in wearing suits or other bourgeois clothing (Spittler 2019). Yet, another detail concerning Adorno should be taken into account: “he had the first bars of Schönberg’s *A Survivor from Warsaw* tattooed on his back”⁵⁴ (Czollek 2020a, 89). The active verbal form applied here is a substantial aspect in this description of his character. In this context, talking about the Jewish theorist who was later forced into exile by the Nazis, his autonomous tattoo poses a counterweight to form the numbers forcibly burnt into the skin of the arrested within the Third Reich concentration camps. The subject of the tattoo, the part of the composition, refers to Adorno’s part-time occupation as a musicologist. But more importantly, the music piece *A Survivor from Warsaw* (*Ein Überlebender aus Warschau*) is known to be among the most frequently broadcasted musical pieces addressing the Shoah. At his day, Adorno discounted that specific piece for its “aestheticization of horror” (Krügler 2018). This detail seems to contradict the deliberate choice of the tattoo itself, but it can also be read as an act described by tolerance of ambiguities.

⁵³ During the following analysis, I will cite specific aspects relying on Czollek’s text. To prevent cluttering, however, I will not provide a bibliographical indication for all details. Therefore, it should be noted here, that the analysis bases on the chapter “Symbolische Juden und andere Trophäen” within *Gegenwartsbewältigung*, ranging from page 89 to page 104.

⁵⁴ “auf den Rücken hat er sich die ersten Takte von Schönbergs *Ein Überlebender aus Warschau* tätowieren lassen.”

Czollek highlights Adorno's radio addresses⁵⁵. The narrative strategy of the match of concepts crystallizes as: it becomes clear that in this chapter, the author uses a fictional setting and the dramatic staging of two wrestling characters, which he then intersperses with political-historical, factual circumstances. This approach, on the one hand, artistically embeds history while, on the other hand, basing the creative embellishments on a plot based in reality.

Subsequently, Czollek refers to Philipp Amthor, one of the younger and more conservative members of the CDU-party in Germany, who in 2020—on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz—replied to an interview question on current antisemitism as follows:

One must not forget that antisemitism is, of course, particularly prevalent in Muslim-influenced cultural circles. And against the background of migration in recent years, there are naturally many concerns for the Jewish population. And I can understand that. It must be clear to us that if migrants are rightly expected to adhere to our culture here, then this also means that antisemitism has no place here⁵⁶ (Czollek 2020a, 90).

Czollek traces the passages to where Amthor refers to the word culture and concludes, that according to the politician, antisemitism can be referred to as a matter of culture. Following this logic, German culture—in contrast to Muslim culture—would be free of antisemitism. According to Czollek, this lays the grounds for the proclamation of a *Leitkultur* which would then protect the Jewish population from Muslim antisemitism. Here the term *Gedächtnistheater* is “thrown into the arena” as it explicitly pinpoints the distinct roles used to perform in a predefined way of remembrance. As seen in the previous chapter, Max Czollek repeatedly reflects on this term by Michal Bodemann.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ According to Czollek, Adorno therein spoke about the role of culture as a dangerous tool possibly favoring the repression of the present (Czollek 2020a, 89). Adorno alluded to the time after WWII and insisted on the dangers that this ongoing preoccupation with culture might involve. By this reference, the author stresses the jeopardy which lies in a flight forward into the alleged exclusive beauty, purity and innocence of art and culture to suppress a politically unpleasant past (and present).

⁵⁶ Man darf nicht vergessen, dass Antisemitismus natürlich vor allem in muslimisch geprägten Kulturkreisen besonders stark vertreten ist. Und auch auf dem Hintergrund der Migration der letzten Jahre existieren natürlich viele Sorgen für die jüdische Bevölkerung. Und das kann ich auch verstehen. Da muss für uns klar sein, wenn man von Migranten zu Recht erwartet, dass man sich hier an unsere Kultur hält, dann gehört dazu auch, dass Antisemitismus bei uns keinen Platz hat.

⁵⁷ In this context, Max Czollek claims when asked about Jewish icons of opposition: “In the German culture of remembrance, Jews do not have the role of active resistance, but of passive victimhood” (Czollek 2021). According to Czollek that is one of the reasons of Germany memorializing November 9 and January 27, the starting point of the extermination and the liberation from Auschwitz, and not—as for example in Israel—the April Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto (Czollek 2021).

Back on the dramatic sphere of the chapter at hand, Czollek describes *Gedächtnistheater* and *Integrationsparadigma* as the “friends” of Philipp Amthor, who now walks out into the wrestling ring himself.

In my interpretation, “theatre of memory” not only includes differing roles which are assigned to the groups “enacting the play” of remembrance. It also encompasses the assumption of a German majority that “successful” remembrance and the accounting of the Holocaust within Germany would lead to an obstruction of any antisemitic tendencies. Additionally, we remember *Integrationsparadigma* declaring a passive position to the dominant culture, expecting the migrant groups to integrate, assimilate, respectively. The character *Gedächtnistheater* is dressed in a partly see-through cellular shirt, and the material of this piece of clothing reflects one important detail here: it is made from candlewick. This object alludes to the way Germany commemorates (the Jewish people): candles are commonly used as symbols of remembrance in religious and secular contexts. One has the option to light candles within Christian churches, and first and foremost, the image which usually illustrates the remembrance of Holocaust victims is a lit candle. In this sense, the focus is set on the role of the Jewish people as victims. Moreover, the candlewick describes a subsequent stage of forgetting rather than remembering. The lighting of a candle or the act of looking at a lit candle—in my eyes—reflects an active remembrance. In contrast, the candlewick as such is a relic of this act of commemoration, simultaneously present and forgotten. Additionally, *Gedächtnistheater* acts as a self-praising figure throughout this match, as the action carried out by it are reduced to perpetual patting his own back, reflecting on the self-perceptive attitude of “good remembrance” in Germany.

The wrestling ring turns into a “show-down” between Amthor and Adorno. As the action develops, *Leitkultur*, *Integrationsparadigma* and *Gedächtnistheater* are presented in an active communal offense as the actual team of Amthor. The latter two, rhetorical strategies characterizing the words of Philipp Amthor, become active participants in the wrestling match. This shows an interesting decision of the author: by focusing on both parties, it is not a stylistic choice but may also serve as a proof that words and their strategic employment in rhetoric play a significant role in contributing to narrative or counter-narrative.

On a scale of idealism, in this regard, one might add that if the successful German remembrance of Jewish victims of the Holocaust proves effective, then—to uphold the story of success—the living Jews need to be protected “at all costs”. This, in turn, makes them a

sublime minority of victims in comparison to the Muslim minority. Following Amthor's words, consequently, the Muslim inhabitants of Germany need to be observed in constant suspicion. We are reminded of the extrinsic ascription and appropriation of "The Muslim" as the problem. And again, the play-off rages between the "one *Other*" and the "other *Other*", favoring one at the expense of the other. In Czollek's argument, this one group can be subsumed as the "symbolic Jews", as he titles the chapter. The Jews are functionalized in order to legitimize a German *Leitkultur* (Czollek 2020a, 93).

The author relies on his description of specific, concrete cases to substantiate that his discussion does not intend to deny Muslim antisemitism. Subsequently, Czollek introduces empirical data at a contrasting angle (Czollek 2020a, 95). On the theatrical stage, this translates into the introduction of a new character, *Statistik*⁵⁸ who has three present actors squint from its brightness as the radiance and clarity of his facts seem to be overly pervasive so that they do not grant a way of escaping. If we assume that statistical evidence equals facts, then we can interpret the light which *Statistik* emanates as the blindingly bright shine of the truth.

Here we are reminded of the "H-moments", xenophobic right-wing extremist attacks of various scopes that we paradigmatically encountered in the previous chapter. Max Czollek sees one solution in an acknowledgement of this "complexity of hate", as follows:

This would include the insight that society consists of overlapping victim and perpetrator positions. And that one must never mean the cancellation of the other. Groups are for the most part simultaneously discriminators and discriminated against, depending on the perspective one chooses: Sexism, Islamophobia, Classism, Antisemitism⁵⁹ (Czollek 2020a, 96).

In the context of radical diversity, this claim has to be considered when discussing any form of marginalization. And it remains crucial for a concept that can be paraphrased as the coping strategy in dealing with identity politics and discriminatory acts based on (exclusive) identity issues that we referred to earlier: allyship.

⁵⁸ Czollek refers to statistical evidence on hate crime during the year of 2018 indicating antisemitic right-wing extremist attacks as a multiple of so-called foreign, religious ideologies (BMI 2020).

⁵⁹ Einschließen würde das die Einsicht, dass die Gesellschaft aus sich überschneidenden Opfer- und Täter*innenpositionen besteht. Und dass das eine nie die Aufhebung des anderen bedeuten darf. Gruppen sind eben meist beides zugleich: Diskriminierende und Diskriminierte, abhängig von der Perspektive, die man wählt: Sexismus, Islamophobie, Klassismus, Antisemitismus.

I will now summarize the middle section of the Wrestling Match, to keep the analysis more concise. The subsequent actors who are introduced are The Jew, and The Muslim, whereby the latter is portrayed expressively: “The Muslim” is dressed entirely in black, wearing a hijab and an explosive belt. Noticeably, the illustration of this figure is stylized as it features strong stereotypical traits—at least for “The Muslim”—and therein reflects an external, *Leitkultur*-inspired view onto the two personae. The crucial factor here is that the perspective of the dominant culture, the “norm” seems to define and therefore determine the figure as “the (dangerous) *other*”. When re-narrating the *völkisch* ideology in the last chapter, we could understand how problematic this form of negating self-determination can be(come). The winners of the wrestling match are Adorno, “The Jew”, “The Muslim” who, with the help of *Statistik* and *Bundestagsarchiv*, managed to find their true ally, fact-based data and historical evidence. The five figures celebrate their victory together with two (other) reality-based characters: Firstly, May Ayim, a black feminist poet. Ayim died in 1996, but her writings are now revived in different contexts, especially in the current post-migrant and black community. Secondly, Marcel Reich-Ranicki, the well-known literary critic of Polish-Jewish origin as well as Holocaust-survivor, attends the celebration of victory in the backwards dressing room. Both characters carry the subtext that the winning team is not only an alliance of the scholar Adorno, two fantastical figures epitomizing ethnic ascriptions and two more representing factual evidence, but also allies with the greats of literary-political circles. The last special guest is Jesus, delivering the following message: „The greatest threat for the German present does not come from Muslims, but from right-wing Germans” (Czollek 2020a, 104).

The role of reconciliation is apparent in the figure of Jesus and his sentence mentioned above that seems like a proclamation summarizing the whole chapter and ends the wrestling match. By holding up a sign presenting the current state of affairs and deliberately not speaking, the epiphanic aura which radiates from the figure of Jesus increases.

The following expressive action performed by Jesus shows him extracting bars from the eyes of the three defeated fighters *Gedächtnistheater*, *Leitkultur* and *Integrationsparadigma*. (Czollek 2020a, 104). This links to a biblical, highly symbolical saying which is attributed to Jesus: “What do you see the splinter in your brother’s eye, but the beam in your own eye

you do not perceive?”⁶⁰ With regards to merciful behavior from a Christian point of view, one should be aware of one’s own weaknesses and not hold others’ faults against them. The symbolical admonition is frequently connected to the sermon on the mount held by Jesus, and this also functions as the ending scene of this dramatically inspired chapter.

3.2.2. A closer look on TdJML’s artistic means — chutzpah, irony, exaltation

Heretofore, we encountered one artistic means of TdJML with the wrestling match of concepts, a literary work of art. In retrospect of the lecture performance of Max Czollek in the large hall on Kampnagel grounds, I recall the tangible excitement of the audience which was kept in suspense by the reader in various ways. The performative reading of the text evoked astonishment and (at times) bewildered-ness by the clear words that seemed to convey real facts; this feeling of near shock, however, could be discharged in the next moment through laughter at the ironic exaggeration of characters and the rejoicing about the cleverness of linguistic expression. What left the most lasting impression was the ingenuity with which Czollek described the dynamics between political rhetoric and socio-cultural relations and thought patterns. I would describe this literary communicative approach as a kind of socio-critical chutzpah⁶¹. In the following we will see if and how this chutzpah is reflected in other artistic means of TdJML.

Let’s begin with the first indication of chutzpah, reflected in the word combination within the title, *Tage der Jüdisch-Muslimischen Leitkultur*. In a literal sense, the meaning of *Leitkultur* is characterized by the adjectives which come with it. Therefore, if *Leitkultur* is then combined with the attributions “Jewish” and “Muslim” the question remains how a specific nature can be determined here? If we consider the religious dimension, one could ask if the main goal is to oppose a Christian *Leitkultur*? One could answer in the affirmative here since we saw with de Maizère, and a sample question taken from the “test for naturalization” (*Integrationstest*) that an interest prevails in the portrayal of *Leitkultur* (and

⁶⁰ The interpretation thereof entails a specifically unforgiving and self-appraising habitus when a person is criticizes someone else but does not want to see one’s own faults. In transference to the characters, this means that the losing parties are consequently described as not interested in the reality-based facts but more in judging certain minority groups for societal imbalances or finding scapegoats to shift responsibilities aside.

⁶¹ Chutzpah is derived from the Yiddish expression *Chuzpe*, and its meaning isn’t easy to transfer: It is often negatively connotated and used to describe someone being audacious or presumptuous. I would like to highlight the affirmative way of its usage: it can also convey an unabashed, bold attitude, as the GRA glossary attests chutzpah the following: “But it also contains an aspect of social intrepidity” The term is still widely used in modern Hebrew and has found its way into the German and English vernacular.

therefore the national value system) as something that is highly influenced and shaped by Christianity. Considering the hegemonic character of *Leitkultur*, Jews and Muslims would be the peripheral, minority groups and gathering from what we learned about the *völkisch* ideology also deeply discriminated and endangered communities. On an additional note, the combination could also allude to an allyship between the two minorities. The understanding of this merger has emancipating potential in two ways. Precisely because defenders of *Leitkultur* claim cultural superiority, we can take achutzpah attitude in attaching “Jewish-Muslim” to this alleged German, Christian, traditional, homogenous narrative. In a different interpretation, the combination of the adjectives “Jewish-Muslim” can be seen as a substitution for any kind of marginalized minority, as the ultimate goal seems to be to achieve a society that doesn’t emphasize one specific group or discapacitate another. In other words, the idea works towards a pluralism that doesn’t discriminate.

Conversely, this translates into a fixation on empowerment and difference. As we have seen in the heteronomous tendencies of the wrestling match protagonists, attributions from the perspective of a homogenous, culturally dominant perspective can be dangerous. In this sense, the team opposing Adorno joins the ranks of the conservative politicians de Maizère and Merz, who stand for an exclusive ideology. The following statement by Max Czollek expresses the influence of such rejecting ascriptions and simultaneously sets the framework for the realm of activity that TdJML will introduce:

Because such social attributions and expectations occur at all levels, they must also be subverted, reworked, processed at all levels. Here, artistic practice can be the starting point of diverse counterstrategies through which the relationship between authenticity and fiction, stage and audience, can be shaken and reordered⁶² (Czollek 2020a, 166).

We can find several aspirations within this statement. In the following we will try to examine, how TdJML utilizes these and how the artistic means relate to the overall discussion on *Leitkultur* as a narrative and TdJML as its counter-narrative. The subsequent questions frame the subject and the correlative activity of TdJML: In what way are artistic works—in particular—expressions of the avant-garde? Is society already depicted differently here? Does it maybe take a step further to not only imagine a divergent society but describe and enact one?

⁶² Weil derartige gesellschaftliche Zuschreibungen und Erwartungen auf allen Ebenen stattfinden, müssen sie auch auf allen Ebenen unterlaufen, umgearbeitet, verarbeitet werden. Hier kann die künstlerische Praxis Ausgangspunkt vielfältiger Gegenstrategien sein, durch die sich das Verhältnis von Authentizität und Fiktion, Bühne und Publikum erschüttern und neu ordnen lässt.

First of all, we will briefly look at their mantra: The slogan of TdJML reflects the aspirations of the interventions the event series entails. “Aus der Bubble in die Charts” translating to “Out of the bubble and into the Charts”. The bubble can be read as a metaphor for an environment surrounding one person, defined by the societal values, ideals, and concerns that a specific community shares. In this sense, a bubble usually refers to an imagined, demarcated space inhabited by an active and receptive audience. This self-contained demarcation represents one of the defining factors of interest here. If the slogan of TdJML aims towards breaking the bubble, then it should reach further. Bursting from the enclosed circle of a specific bubble to a general, omnipresent point can provide a high chance of attracting a broad audience, similarly to the Charts with regards to music.

Consequently, TdJML tries to convey the significance of another mainstream culture, meaning that it aspires to supersede the monotonous, homogeneous tone which outlines the *Leitkultur* narrative.⁶³ The notion of radical diversity, which intimately links to postmigrant discourses, proved to be one of the key aims of the “Jewish-Muslim *Leitkultur*”. Thus, one can also read the slogan as an invitation to stop considering emancipative efforts as concerns of an exterior “bubble” (anymore), which epitomizes the meaning of allyship: seeing identity politics, de-integration, and its implementation of aesthetic practice as tools within a collective fight for social change and justice.

The second decisive moment was as the initial event of TdJML directly released the slogan during the digital opening party streamed on October 2nd, 2020, is called “Out of the bubble and into the Charts. The best supper” („Aus der Bubble in die Charts. Das beste Abendmahl“). Ironically, this title alludes to the holy Last Supper which Jesus held with his disciples before he was betrayed. This momentous occasion is foremost liturgically remembered each time a faithful Christian receives the Communion during mass. Furthermore, it served as a motif of renowned artworks, such as the painting by Leonardo Da Vinci, a highly acclaimed artwork among art historians, of Italian High Renaissance style (Da Vinci, 1495-1498). The metaphorical and interpretative framework of the event series is therefore set on elevating grounds.

The aspiration of exaltation becomes specifically apparent, as the setting of the opening portrays a wine and dine situation with palatial décor and bourgeois atmosphere. The

⁶³ Here we are reminded of the transcultural approach of Wolfgang Welsch (Welsch 1995). Incorporating his view, this mainstream of TdJML could be unified in a constant process of communications, carried out by the “cultural hybrids” that we are.

location reveals itself to be the hall of mirrors within the Palais am Festungsgraben, a palace in the center of Berlin. Piano music accompanies the entrance into the scene, a big golden chandelier hangs from the ceiling, and below it lies a shawarma skewer, which, like the other dishes (falafel, sausages, grapes, lobster), is gilded. A long table, covered by a white tablecloth, stands in the middle of a hall, its parquet floor creaking, and around it Max Czollek gathers his allies. This detail points once more to the iconography of Da Vinci's *Last Supper*. However, and here the performance breaks with its model: It is not only Max Czollek hosting the supper, and he is neither located in the center of the table, but he and his co-host Necati Öziri, theatre author and dramaturge, are positioned on opposite ends of the table, while the guests place themselves at the lengths.⁶⁴ In some sense, we might claim that Czollek and Öziri are symbolically referencing the “Jewish-Muslim” because of their respective heritage, and certainly, they offensively play with this attribution here. In another sense, though, this interpretation falls short of the emancipatory strategies we have acquired so far.

Generally, the introductory event is interspersed with a wide variety of spoken contributions from the participants, whereby a musical act repeatedly breaks up the—sometimes bizarre but thoroughly critical—speeches and thus also serves as a connecting element. This transitory character is reflected in the lyrics of the song *The Jew in You*⁶⁵: it deals with change, as the listener is asked to find the *other* within themselves which also alludes to the non-static constitution of identity. In this respect, the song contributes to TdJML's countering of essentialist and homogeneous tendencies. In the process of the opening event, the protagonists are served alternately gilded falafel and ayran in martini glasses by a stereotypically German-looking waiter. He is alternately called Lukas, Heinz, and Randolph, which underscores the insignificance of his name and presence. The curatorial choice within this staged event could also be read as a criticism of precisely this dominant-cultural behavior toward (post)migrants and their supposedly “different-sounding” names. Thus, it can be interpreted as an element of supersession and reversing of “the norm”. Thereto, it is

⁶⁴ The allies are many: We can summarize that the group consists of “representatives” of the postmigrant, the creative artistic, performing arts, political, literary and activist sphere.

⁶⁵ The song which is performed by Daniel Khan during the event is called *The Jew In You (The Last Universal Diasporic Testament of Adam Spielman)* and one part of the lyrics reads:

...it's a reconstructed You. With permeable borders in between the old and new

...You can leave the many for the few, ...bring out your Jew! A secret Jew is buried inside You.

...I talk about a kind of *other* hiding inside you, but I mean it as a question, not an answer to your blues, the question is an answer and the question is a Jew. ...

crucial to note that the participants of the event name various additional attributive prefixes of *Leitkultur*, such as the queer feministic or the “migrantifascist” *Leitkultur*. They subsequently call these attributions “drawers, that we want to open and close again” (TdJML 2020b). This could underpin one of the previous interpretations of TdJML as a whole, namely that “Jewish-Muslim” serves “only” as a substitution for all marginalized, subcultural groups. As an overreaching artistic conclusion of the introduction, one can note the combination of seriousness and serious exaltation. The setting of this bourgeois space becomes symbolically “occupied” by different people, who bring other perspectives on ideas such as *Leitkultur*, or integration, and are not afraid to articulate them. On the contrary, Czollek, Öziri, and their allies communicate their viewpoints in effervescing ways.⁶⁶

Not only does the opening of TdJML present artistic means of exaltation, but it also heavily draws upon exaggeration and specifically upon irony to convey its ideas. TdJML curator Max Czollek often plays with clichéd images, as we have already seen with the exaggeration of the characters of the wrestling match. Here, he and his allies seem to take this chutzpah a step further: especially the idea of Mely Kiyak wanting to storm the Reichstag can be interpreted as a radical thought, which it certainly is in practical terms. However, the demand for social justice remains the motivation behind it. In that way, her “dream claim” and the opening ceremony as such can be embedded in the utopian framework of radical diversity. In this context, we may also identify the counter-narrative practice of allyship. Each contribution of various people in their artistic, political, activist, or poetic form takes account of each otherness and yet shares the common goal of breaking up homogenous spaces and ethnocentric narratives. At the same time, the performance reflects the idea of de-integration, in that stereotypical social attributions are twisted and thus subverted, which happens in an artistic, performative setting showing another characteristic of de-integration.

Taking into consideration the artistic producers of TdJML as creators, it is essential to state that marginalization or the belonging to a minority does not have to be understood as a

⁶⁶ One of the participants, who seems to be the least afraid, is political columnist Mely Kiyak, who, towards the end of the performative supper ceremony, gives a flaming speech about the idea of storming the German Reichstag. She states that she once dreamed that “we”, that is, she and her allies (everyone at the table is included) would invade the building of this highest political authority and demand the right to vote for “our parents” by distributing ballots there. Kiyak refers to what I consider a central injustice in German electoral law which means that almost 10 million people are currently not allowed to vote because they do not own a German passport (Schuster, Katharina 2021).

“mandate” that thrives in artistic language but uses art as an end to itself, as a way to consider one’s own distinctive expression valuable. Art can be a powerful resource in its function as an interactive platform for society since specific aesthetics have always been instrumentalized for political purposes in all possible and impossible ways. Here, the artistic interventions of TdJML, in turn, instrumentalize the political purposes of *Leitkultur* by undermining the narrative: Ironic exaggeration is noted as one distinctive expression of TdJML, clarified once again in its promotional video⁶⁷ (TdJML 2020a). Consequently, the announcement of TdJML in Max Czollek’s book reads: “I’m bringing fake news back” (Czollek 2020a, 167). The presentation of a trailer for TdJML titled “Jews News Today History Special,” composed entirely of fake news, is a creative strategy for attracting attention and sensitizing the audience for the matter in hand.

The production of the trailer of TdJML, and the stream of the introductory event show a highly, elaborative quality of filming, involving colorfully appalling imagery and descriptive, at times allegorical, settings. Both play with various compelling images. The opening event showed in a real performance how the counter-narrative might “look, speak, sound, smell or taste like”, whereas in the promotion video, the counter-narrators establish a storytelling element. They create the genesis of TdJML, a narrative that relies on fake news and whose creative strategy mainly implements the stylistic device of irony. After a greeting, the news presenter⁶⁸ firstly talks about concrete evidence for the existence and prevalence of a Jewish-Muslim *Leitkultur* and comments, “The history books would have to be rewritten if what many have suspected so far comes true” (TdJML 2020a), leading to another hyperbolic moment. The report continues with indications grounding this assumption: Therein, one defining description is given by the role of the acclaimed architect Ayshegül R. Bauer. She claims that the Museum Island Berlin was raised on kebab skewers, in the same way that Amsterdam was built on wooden poles, which refers to the Jewish-Muslim influence in the German capital.⁶⁹ The architect’s middle name, R. and surname Bauer

⁶⁷ The promotion video was produced by the YouTube channel JewsNewsToday. The name derives from the Russian news channel RT, short for Russia Today, which was (not only recently, but repeatedly) accused of spreading fake news.

⁶⁸ After the address to the recipients with “dear viewers” the news presenter also says, “dear goyim” (TdJML 2020a). This reference to the Yiddish designation of non-Jews assumes that the “regular” customers of the channel are Jewish.

⁶⁹ The spread of beef in the old “Germanistan” is deducted from the donation of 10,000 kebab skewers by the Austrian Emperor to Berlin. Additionally, the link is drawn back to typical dishes made from beef: köfte, kebab, shawarma. All these fake news are presented as evidence for the existence of a Jewish-Muslim *Leitkultur* (TdJML 2020a).

combines to the German word *Erbauer* which translates to “constructor”. The names of other characters within the trailer imply the context of fake news, as well: German philologist Theo von Falafelberg, “Theo of falafel pile” or archeologist Chana Ahnig, whose first name is an old name from the Hebrew Bible, Tanach and the surname translates from the old German “clue”. Interestingly, the details serving as evidence of a Jewish Muslim *Leitkultur* distinctively point to stereotypical Jewish and Muslim habits, culture, conventions (TdJML 2020a). As such, they do not match the interpretation of the opening event, which reminded us of the “exchangeability” of attributions to other marginalized positions. The practice of de-integration, a change of perspectives, of self-ascription and self-determination is also an integral part of the following event staged within the intervention of TdJML.

On a further analytical note, the temporal framework of the event series TdJML should be equally taken into account. It is no coincidence that the initiating date of the congress is set on the 3rd of October 2020, to the day thirty years after the unification of Eastern and Western Germany. Correspondingly, the day TdJML ended is the 9th of November 2020, referencing several historically defining political events. First, the fall of the Berlin wall, second the Remembrance Day for the victims of the Nazi regime in Germany—*Novemberpogrome*—and thirdly, not to be missed: the day of the so-called November revolution, leading to the annihilation of the German empire and facilitating a democratic future. Not only is this date relevant for the temporal framework of the event series, but it represents an integral element to an identity-forming moment in German (national) self-definition. Therefore, the subsequent question may be posed: how is this day remembered? And how does this distinctive remembrance feed into a specific narrative? One of the first topics within the timeframe of TdJML encompasses the time of the (re)unification.

“Day of The Disunification” (“Tag der VerUnEinigung”) is the name of the second event of TdJML curated by Max Czollek on a “different narrative” of reunification. This event took place at Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin. It featured the Black German literary and cultural scholar and transcultural trainer Peggy Piesche, the film scholar and author Angelika Nguyen and the journalist Mely Kiyak. The title once more reveals a technique of reversal, a change of perspective, not obeying claims of unity.

The “traditional” storytelling of the reunification of Germany takes an almost exclusively positive viewpoint. The panel discussion during the event *Tag der VerUnEinigung*

contextualizes this landmark of German history, as it is often referred to, in a contrasting picture. In line with the claim that *Leitkultur* is aimed at but not generated by marginalized communities, the debate revolves around varying perspectives representing a (post)migrant perspective (TdJML 2020c).

Hence, the claim of the debating group—towards reunification and to *Leitkultur*—is creating visibility for these specific experiences, to accommodate them within the narrative. As we learn from the reflective parts of the discussion, a considerable part of society does not associate unification day on the 9th of November 1989 as a day of joy, partly because they were not included in the term unification. Max Czollek refers to the post-Wall time as one of increasing violence, mainly against migrants (Czollek 2020a, 126). The “story” of reunification is not told as such because it deals with perspectives that are not valued, as they do not belong to a predominantly native German group. In this sense, they are filtered through a predefined national, Christian, homogeneous cultural pattern.⁷⁰ The current discussion intertwines with the pertinent question of this thesis insofar as it redirects the view back to the ideological narrative of *Leitkultur*. In both cases, this leads to a specific romanticized picture of the subject matter, as it turns away from uncomfortable realities and discriminatory effects. With this event, TdJML tries to turn heads away from a glorious, comfortable, conforming narrative towards one that questions, that tells a different, non-glamorous, shameful story. The redirection towards discriminatory processes by emphasizing violent actions is painful as, at the same time, it can provoke a liberating, emancipative effect.

3.2.2.1. *Wehrhaftigkeit* or how to become the snake instead of staying the rabbit

One event from the series TdJML tackles the topic of a different emancipatory tool, which ties in with the possible range of influence of the counter-narrative that we are trying to explore here. The event was called “The Reading of The Others” (“Das Lesen der Anderen”)⁷¹ and took place on the second day of TdJML, the 4th of October 2020 (TdJML 2020d). This reading focused on poetry, with a specification on *Wehrhafte Poesie*, that I

⁷⁰ The concept of belonging and its intimate entanglement with the debate around *Leitkultur* was discussed in chapter one.

⁷¹ This wordplay derives from the title of a known German film called “Das Leben der Anderen”, (translated literally “The Lives of Others”). The film is set in the DDR and tells the story about a Stasi official who intercepts the so-called opponents of the state. Target of such interceptions were intellectuals, writers or artists who were seen as part of a resistance for they tried to be able to continue their work within the restricted settings of employment bans by the DDR state and sell some of it to “West Germany”.

translate as “resistant poetry”. The adjective *wehrhaft* in German firstly reminds of a military vocabulary, such as allies, and can also be translated as “militant”. In my interpretation, this adjective does not pinpoint the idea when it comes to artistic expression such as poetry. In the following subchapter, we will trace the significance of that term and ask how it can be applied to TdJML as an artistic intervention? Towards the end of this chapter, I will offer some general reflections on art and resistance, and ways in which they possibly entangle. Even though “militant” would be the literal translation of *wehrhaft*, it can also mean “defensive,” and both also point to the notion for which the term is mainly known: *Wehrhafte Demokratie*, “militant democracy”.

According to Invernizzi Accetti and Zuckerman, “[t]he notion of ‘militant democracy’ [is] understood as the legal restriction of certain democratic freedoms for the purpose of protecting democratic regimes from the threat of being subverted by legal means” (Invernizzi Accetti and Zuckerman 2016, 183).

On that point, in the first re-narrative part of the previous chapter, we were reminded of the cumulative right-wing extremist attacks, which fit into the *völkisch* ideology based on a claim to homogenization. As a response, the German federal cabinet presented an 89-point plan aimed against right-wing extremism and racism in December 2020. Part of this plan is the so-called *Wehrhafte-Demokratie-Gesetz*, intended to expand the federal government’s financial support for civil societal involvement against extremism. A different paradox is presented in one of the main reasons why the proposal was rejected by one of the governing parties CDU/CSU. The basic condition for consent put forward by CDU/CSU included the demand that applicants for the grants would need to confirm their support and commitment to the *Grundsätzen der freiheitlich-demokratischen Grundordnung*, meaning “the principles of the free democratic constitution”. This demand reflects a critical suspicion of the initiatives and providers that would proactively pledge to secure democratic structures from forces aiming to crumble or undermine them, mainly targeting right-wing extremism. Paradoxically, these very institutions, at the first instance, are questioned in their support of foundational democratic rules (Groß 2021).

The concept of militant democracy can only work if the equidistance to both sides of the spectrum of extremism is in effect. Karl Loewenstein, the constitutional theorist, is among the first to claim the relevance and importance of this concept. Nonetheless, the counter

position and symbiosis of the boundaries to both left wing extremism and right-wing extremism assures the contemporary liberal principles agreed upon in a governmental consensus.

The concept of “militant democracy” depends on its everyday proof of the fact that such a political consensus can emerge and develop. To put it pointedly, one must clarify what one stands for to know what one must be against and for what reasons⁷² (Hennecke 2019).

Analogously, the political scientist Hans Jörg Hennecke illustrates the historical circumstances that lead to the construction of and the need for the law protecting democracy. He claims that the young constitution was created in a “negative” way during the aftermaths of World War II. The dangers of right-wing extremism as well as Communism influenced governmental institutions continually. A key summary that Hennecke provides here says that the government, rudimentarily, needs to precisely point out the values essential to a democratic society to assure the citizens of the reasons why other, extremist political forms need to be opposed. The paradox of tolerance is partly comparable to the dilemma that the “militant” democracy is facing. A plurality demands freedom of speech but also makes the regimentation that specific rights are necessary, even if that goes against the support of the constitution. The ambivalence of this circumstance can be subsumed in the German expression *streitbar*, which means both “controversial” and “militant”. Hennecke chose the title “Militant, Argumentative, Self-critical” (“Wehrhaft, streitbar, selbstkritisch”) for the essay, which points towards the adjectives that need to define a democratic system.

Following Czollek’s concept of *Wehrhaftigkeit*, these adjectives can also approach a very personal level of self-authorization, meaning that they signify the resistance of one who chooses to “remain different”. He adopts Loewenstein’s conception by referring to the continued existence of difference within civil society as the premise of “militancy” of democracy (Czollek 2020a, 178). In this context, I found an illustration of the notion *wehrhaft* in his 2020 publication particularly interesting. At the very end of *Gegenwartsbewältigung*, Max Czollek’s looks back on his political essays’ genesis. The author illustrates a scene that he experienced four years ago, in 2017, after the election of the German Bundestag, when the right-wing, *völkisch* party AfD reached more than twelve

⁷² Das Konzept der „wehrhaften Demokratie“ ist in seiner alltäglichen Bewährung darauf angewiesen, dass sich ein solcher politischer Konsens herausbildet und entwickeln kann. Man muss, pointiert formuliert, klären, wofür man steht, um zu wissen, wogegen man aus welchen Gründen sein muss.

percent of the electoral votes.⁷³ He reflects on a day when he and a friend agreed to leave Germany for exile if the party mentioned above would gain more than ten percent. After the outcome of the election, Czollek describes that a feeling of defiance began to take hold of them, and he juxtaposes the choice they made with their initial plan by creating a vibrant metaphorical image:

During this time, the first sketches for *Desintegriert Euch!* are created, which is not only the protocol of our thinking about society, but also a testimony to the feeling that we can't just be the rabbit in front of the snake, but that we have to become a bit of a snake ourselves⁷⁴ (Czollek 2020a, 184).

In my interpretation, this snake-like attitude also intersects with the notion of *Wehrhaftigkeit*, “militance”, “resistance”. It entails a stronger tendency to action, self-recognition and pride distinguished from the image of the frightened rabbit. The imagery of the rabbit standing in front of the snake alludes to the idiom of being scared stiff when encountering a superior enemy. The picture of a superior figure immediately lets the predominance of *Leitkultur* come to mind.

3.2.2.2. *Wehrhafte Kunst* — resistant art

Analogously to defensive democracy, within the framework of TdJML, art should be defined as a means of resistance. The de-integrative, artistic expressions in the events of TdJML such as irony, hyperbole, fictionalization, as well as the very designated, serious open forums deconstruct forms of discrimination and homogenization. They can therefore be understood as a sort of resistance. Metaphorically speaking, they can then be pictured as many hybrid rabbit-snakes collectively deconstructing the dominance and power of ideological narratives inherent to *Leitkultur*.

Therefore, other instruments within the counter-narrative of TdJML contributing to a change of authority are called *Wehrhafte Kunst*, resistant art. Referring to the concept of *Wehrhaftigkeit* in terms of democratic processes, Max Czollek, Jo Frank, and other allies outline the idea with special regards to art and its specific efficacy. According to Max Czollek, this potentiality manifests itself in resistance and self-assertion that constitute art

⁷³ As this report will be submitted after the 2021 election in Germany, it is possible to note the most recent outcome: the right-wing party AfD gained 10,3 percent in this year's election (Bauer et al. 2021).

⁷⁴ In dieser Zeit entstehen die ersten Skizzen für *Desintegriert Euch!*, was nicht nur das Protokoll unseres Nachdenkens über Gesellschaft ist, sondern auch ein Zeugnis des Gefühls, dass wir nicht nur das Kaninchen vor der Schlange sein dürfen, sondern selbst ein wenig Schlange werden müssen.

and enable an artist and the artwork to influence the present (Czollek 2020a, 10). The empowering moment within artistic endeavors is the transition from a (discriminating) objectification of marginalized groups towards becoming the active subject through the ability to share stories through the language of art. Art becomes resistant art once it offers an alternative to the conventional explanation of the status quo. This viewpoint is possibly frequently generated within communities whose perspective of the predominant society does not match its set parameters, the *othered*.

At the backdrop of this chain of thought lies the idea that the artistic means of TdJML—some of which we encountered previously—are located in the realm of *Wehrhafte Kunst*, resistant art characterized by a particular subversive mode. In Czollek’s sense, resistant art is an art that offers active contemplation on society and does not exhaust itself in aesthetic reflections. Here we are reminded of Adorno’s warning of the dangerous flight into art and culture as the “good, pure or innocent” societal sphere within politically tumultuous times. However, as art and culture cannot be uncoupled from the socio-political circumstances from which they emerge, they necessarily respond to these circumstances and, in turn, cannot be understood without contextualization. One could argue that resistant art does not need this warning, as it already incorporates it. “Resistant art uses its aesthetic means in such a way that familiar narratives are irritated [...] it creates unrest [...] Resistant art thus uses aesthetic means to make [political issues] visible” (Joskowitz and Schmelmer 2021, my adding). In other words, resistant art widens the space in which one can be unsettled. It relies on an emotional component in audience accessibility and therefore has a high probability of provoking reactions. TdJML advocates for room and space in which art is created and inhabited seriously, as well as for the vision that a (positive) future can be conceptualized within this space. But in regards to TdJML, not only the reaction to an artistic endeavor lays the grounds for the projection of a different future. Moreover, art unfolds its subversive potential by offering a place of action, self-empowerment, as well as a power of reinterpretation found in playfully ironic expressions which fabricate a perspective on “the different” and “the new”.

Since TdJML has repeatedly been defined as an artistic intervention that expresses a form of resistance, may it be counted as a form of artistic activism? And if so, how does it operate in this realm? According to Stephen Duncombe, the climate of “post-truth” that we inhabit

contributes to a productive groundwork for activism in the arts. Duncombe additionally states:

Even for those committed to telling the truth, it has become clear that the simple presentation of facts falls upon deaf ears, and if facts are to be heard and heeded they need to be made into engaging stories and compelling images that capture attention and resonate with ways people make sense of their world (Duncombe 2018, 2).

Here we are reminded of the appealing moving images and the elaborate production value, along with the capturing stories and contributions of both the trailer and the opening event “The best supper” of TdJML. The fact that the trailer entirely comprises fake news presented in a somewhat witty and compact way serves as an illustrating example for its stimulating artistic production, which already sensitizes the viewer to the main idea of *Leitkultur* and what it might entail. Therefore, it can be seen as a low-threshold, mainstream tv piece that opens eyes and ears for the emancipative fights, the claims, hopes and counter-positions the event series of TdJML plans to offer.

3.3. Reflecting on TdJML within the realms of art and resistance

Reflecting on the assumptions made so far: If the concept of *Leitkultur* became an inherent instrument of (conservative) political agendas and the artistic intervention TdJML sets a counterpart to this narrative, how can the event series and its creative endeavors then be called political? It is essential to look at the politicization of art and cultural discourses within their institutional embedding to recognize how these discourses have been (made) political. The two notions representation and participation can be described as essential concepts in the (performing) arts sector, and in the political realm. Both ideas are almost inextricably linked to the ideas and consequential claims of (more) anti-racist, diverse, and socio-democratic attitudes of institutions. As we have seen during the short evaluation on Kampnagel, these concepts are currently being redefined, as topics like identity and undisclosed evaluation are becoming issues of public interest, and therefore, decisions about employees as well as program planning are examined more closely than before.

Political theorist Chantal Mouffe points out a perspective that is renounced when tackling the question of political approaches in art and artistic approaches in politics. Because of their integration into the capitalist working structure, cultural workers and artists would not be able to articulate criticism through art. Accordingly, the capitalist entertainment system creates and enforces standards and thus holds the cultural producers captive and unresistant

to its control (Mouffe 2013a). This view draws on Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who were the first to criticize the growing commodification of cultural realms. The theory described above alludes to this commodification process, which by now would have arguably advanced to the extent where it would be unreachable for artistic or aesthetic resistance.

As Mouffe states, this pessimistic diagnosis is fortunately not shared by all interest groups. According to Mouffe, there are several strategies for achieving valuable artistic criticism in socio-political terms, some of which pinpoint the necessity of artists to “withdraw” from cultural institutions. This *exodus* draws on the assumption that the *multitude* could autonomously establish new societal models, without collaborating with (state) institutions within the given system of power. Mouffe argues against this that order cannot exist outside of hegemonic relations, being thus outside of the political realm. She takes a different approach, notably referring to the hegemonic structure, which underlies every form of social system:

What is at a given moment accepted as the “natural order” is always the result of sedimented hegemonic practices. Things could always have been otherwise and every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities. This is why it is always susceptible of being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices that will attempt to disarticulate it so as to establish a different hegemony (Mouffe 2013a).

“Sedimented” hegemonic practices are systems whose political nature has been forgotten or ignored.⁷⁵ Mouffe puts forward an additional perspective here as she develops further on a thought by Max Czollek. The acknowledgment of “other possibilities” draws back to the one statement Czollek made during the opening event of TdJML: “The present always claims that it can’t be different and half a year later the [Berlin] wall falls. The present always claims that it is not possible, and then it *is* possible”⁷⁶ (TdJML 2020b, my adding, my emphasis).

This assertion alludes once more to the idea of a concrete utopia, we encountered it with Bloch, and it interlinks with Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, who insist on the

⁷⁵ The idea of “sedimented forms” (Laclau and Mouffe 2001 [1985], preface, viii) appears in the theoretical contributions which Chantal Mouffe brought forward together with Ernesto Laclau, namely in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.

⁷⁶ “Immer behauptet die Gegenwart, es kann nicht anders werden und ein halbes Jahr später fällt die Mauer. Immer behauptet die Gegenwart, es ist nicht möglich, und dann ist es doch möglich.”

contingency and thus the alterability of socio-political processes.⁷⁷ Within this imagery of “a different way” alternate to the prevalent one, fruitful ground for emancipative practices can be provided, as it helps to grasp the possibility for change. Furthermore, as Mouffe insists, this chain of thought specifically motivates counterhegemonic practices. Different possibilities can be acknowledged in terms of the past, and more importantly, in the present through creative imagination and touching upon future thoughts. Again, the notion of *chutzpah* can be grasped within this implemented vision of Czollek, which leads to the hopeful assumption that change is possible and that TdJML might be part of the process leading to it.

In line with the thought on status quo and its respective disruption, Chantal Mouffe argues that artistic works necessarily connect to politics, “as they either contribute to the reproduction of the common sense that secures a given hegemony or to its challenging” (Mouffe 2013a). TdJML operates within the latter scenario: the project shows the aspiration to set up a new and different hegemony. As I argued earlier, TdJML can be seen as a counter-narrative. That is because narrative reflects a hegemonic structure as well, just as storytelling encompasses the speaker, the protagonists, the ones spoken about and the way in which the story is constructed around the characters. All of these factors form a specific web of power relations. Even the format of TdJML reflects the different distribution of power. If we argue that *Leitkultur* is a story told by the dominant part of society or politicians exercising their power of essentializing aspirations, contrarily, the “Jewish-Muslim *Leitkultur*” is articulated by a diverse group of people from various backgrounds and professional environments.

Moreover, the setting is decentralized (without a binding authority). But, and here we relink to the first point of criticism by Mouffe: TdJML does not consider itself as a new societal form outside of powerful institutions. It specifically enters these cultural, performing arts

⁷⁷ The theories of Laclau and Mouffe are relevant for this discussion insofar, as they argue that identities or power relations have to be considered in their historical conditionality, meaning that they are subject to change which locates them in the realm of politics. Societal discourse provides the ground on which issues such as identity or identity-establishing collectives are negotiated. According to Laclau and Mouffe, identities are not established through a preconceived set of common elements or traits, as a *Leitkultur* approach would suggest. They align with the central poststructuralist claim that meaning, identity, and cultures are in flux and not fixated. In that case, this means that TdJML can also reinterpret *Leitkultur*—which we attributed with a claim to dominance—to express an emancipative notion, still carrying a linguistic contingency but loaded with a different societal vision. The political approach of Laclau and Mouffe can here describe the path from theory to practice: by critically observing consolidating structures, they show the possibility of liberating practices (Laclau and Mouffe 2001 [1985]).

institutions and theatres like Kampnagel, who are financially supported by the state. The objective therein includes presenting ideas within a framework and therefore carrying the message forward through networks into the public, as well as “fostering dissent and creating a multiplicity of agonistic spaces where the dominant consensus is challenged and where new modes of identification are made available” (Mouffe 2013a)⁷⁸. Such new modes of identification can, for instance, be established through the strategic practices of de-integration. They can be implemented in institutional structures by creating rooms, safe and creative spaces for groups who are marginalized, voices which continue to be unheard of and bodies that are kept invisible — Kampnagel as an institution, together with the initiative Migrantpolitan, can provide a productive ground for such developments.

In light of Mouffe’s argument, the collaboration of artistic activism and established institutions may provide the only successful way for counter-hegemonic artistic practices. Such collaborations therefore cannot be underestimated, also for the fact that they will additionally transform the institutions as such. With regards to a so-called consensus reflecting a dominant position within society, Max Czollek formulates the specific relation between art and politics as such:

No, the task of art is not to reinforce a certain position that the audience shares anyway. But rather to question it. And that is precisely what distinguishes art from politics, which always presupposes a thinking of us and them. So perhaps the social task of art lies in questioning precisely this supposedly clear confrontation between us and them, which also means destabilizing hegemonic narratives and established self-understandings⁷⁹ (Czollek 2020b, 8-9).

Here we find ourselves in the heart of the current argument: Czollek sees in the purpose of art a questioning of the excluding binaries “We” and “Them” and links it to a “destabilization of hegemonic narratives”. Mouffe would phrase this as the “(counter) hegemonic struggle,” which signifies *disarticulation*.

Correspondingly, Mouffe undertakes the following assessment: “A properly political intervention for me is always that engages with a certain aspect of the existing hegemony in order to disarticulate [...] its constitutive element” (Mouffe 2013b). In line with this thought,

⁷⁸ By agonistic spaces Mouffe means that therein the legitimacy of the respective opponent’s claim is not destroyed but recognized.

⁷⁹ Nein, die Aufgabe von Kunst ist nicht die Stärkung einer bestimmten Position, die das Publikum ohnehin teilt. Sondern ihre Infragestellung. Und genau das unterscheidet Kunst von der Politik, die ja immer ein Denken von wir und ihr voraussetzt. Vielleicht liegt also die gesellschaftliche Aufgabe von Kunst in der Infragestellung eben jener vermeintlich klaren Gegenüberstellung von wir und ihr, was ja auch eine Destabilisierung hegemonialer Narrative und etablierter Selbstverständnisse bedeutet.

I would argue that TdJML chooses the *Leitkultur* element from the contemporary cultural, political argument to disrupt this order and give voice to a new narrative.

Against the backdrop of Mouffe's argument, if TdJML aims to set up a new hegemony, we can point to the concepts we explored in the previous chapter to answer the question through which means this aspiration is being reflected? The new hegemony of TdJML bases itself on the positive connotation of difference. It reaches out towards radical diversity as a utopian idea of society and places its measurements of it within a discriminatory system and additionally employs ways that aim to counter such systems, one exemplifying strategy being de-integration.

It is, therefore, within the plurality of public space(s), as Chantal Mouffe transforms this notion of Habermas, that the creation of a "rational consensus" by "leaving behind all our particularities" is being contested.⁸⁰ According to Mouffe, the public space can neither be singular nor redeem the promise of a "consensus without exclusion"⁸¹, which is why "the [public spaces] constitute the battleground for hegemonic struggles to be fought, without any possibility of final reconciliation" (Mouffe 2013b).

These "hegemonic battles", are, in TdJML's case, being fought with artistic weapons are driven by the urge to change, and can, in that sense, be classified as a theory of change. Social change happens because people make it happen, and when driven by emotions more than rational insights. "As such, when it comes to stimulating social change, effect and affect are intertwined" (Duncombe 2018, 7).

Arguably, socio-political change driven by art can be brought about by targeting the "emotional pathway" (Shank 2004, 534) of the observer or the respective recipient. Here we can point to Max Czollek's framing of the potential that lies in art and artistic interventions, namely the capacity to *erschüttern*, to shake, stir, unsettle, and agitate. All these signify emotional expressions, which are valued for their powerful dimension of alteration. It is argued that for these potential changes to be effective, the emotional blow should then shift into catching the mind, the cognitive area as well (Duncombe 2018). The awareness of a body or an art piece and the emotion they can trigger should still not be underestimated, as

⁸⁰ This assumption links to Bassam Tibi, who refers to rationality as a principle and repeatedly references Habermas' theories for the emphasis on reason.

⁸¹ Mouffe argues that Hannah Arendt, as well as Jürgen Habermas conceptualize the public space as a consensual one (Mouffe 2013b).

actress Marina Frenk argues concerning a live performance in the theatre. Here, she adds another dimension to the concept of resistant art, which is central to the efforts of TdJML: “Nevertheless, the living body in action on a theater stage is more resistant than any printed word because it exposes itself to the world, makes itself available, is more immediate, can be perceived even before it is thought”⁸² (Frenk 2020, 23).

Frenk refers to the corporeality of the performing body and describes its philosophical dimension which alludes to the tangibility of the performer, which precedes the idea and the meaning behind it. This thought points towards the crucial aspect of visibility. In the context of TdJML, the resistant aspect of the intervention reflects the increasing visibility of marginalized perspectives and bodies. The fact that the TdJML agents were seen and heard on various stages of well-known cultural institutions across all German-speaking countries while their performance was usually streamed live makes them more visible. Their stories and perspectives create and foster the compelling images supposedly necessary for “artivism” to thrive.

Moreover, within the influence of (artistic) activism, Duncombe argues that collective identity can be referred to as a theory of social change, as “(people) come to believe in their agency and see themselves and their interests collectively” (Duncombe 2018, 8).

This thought process reconnects to the concept of allyship, a crucial element within the desire for social change that radical diversity defends and demands in the present and future. Allyship can, in this sense, serve as a form of collective identity, with the common goal of countering discrimination. Here the next step within artistic activism can be taken as well: Not only should it point at the emotional spot of recipients, before settling within their minds as concrete matters of potential social injustices, the cognitive realm. On the decisive level it should be effective in the way that it forms an imaginary of action and opens the recipients’ eyes as to which means they can contribute to a change. Activist Andrea Polli, whom Duncombe interviewed stresses: “Changing people from taking a passive point of view to an active point of view” (Duncombe 2018, 15).

⁸² “Trotzdem ist der lebendige Körper in Aktion auf einer Theaterbühne wehrhafter als jedes abgedruckte Wort, weil er sich der Welt aussetzt, sich zur Verfügung stellt, unmittelbarer ist, wahrgenommen werden kann, noch bevor er gedacht wird.”

The new collective identity in the artistic intervention of TdJML may be just a different *Leitkultur*, namely a *Leitkultur* of radical diversity, meaning that no distinctive attribution is given on social order but on the difference of people and society determining the outcome of the future-oriented model. The agents within this utopian idea can be seen and should see themselves as *agents of history* forming a collective identity, and I borrow this term from Stephen Duncombe (Duncombe 2018, 15).

The acknowledgment of agency within a common struggle is reflected one last time through Max Czollek's last words in his book *Gegenwartsbewältigung*: "We don't clear the field, even if nothing becomes good again. Not with the homeland, not with the *Leitkultur* [...] But if we lose, we lose together"⁸³ (Czollek 2020a, 185).

These words may sound polemic, but they provoke the reader to feel like an eligible part of this "We" that Czollek operates with. Again he twists his own argument, stating initially that his objective was to destabilize the binary logic of "We", but it once more emphasizes the power within this strategy of appropriative reversal, not only through semantics but with the use of conceptual spaces, as well. Czollek's closing lines suggest that we are all fighting a mutual battle, against homogeneity, heteronomy, hate, *Heimat*. He therein suggests this collective be a possibility and acknowledges the possibility of failure as an outcome. However, this does not seem to be the crux here. Rather, it is the emphasis on non-passive resistance carried out by shared thoughts of agents that provides the ground to conjure the utopia presented by radical diversity fruitfully. Even though these lines thematize defeat, they do not effectuate thoughts on devastation. One could argue pessimistically that the numerous xenophobic attacks, the uprising of ideologically influenced concepts such as *Heimat* and *Leitkultur* specifically contribute to what can be called *Leidkultur*, "culture of suffering". Even though this line of thought proves to be comprehensible, "it's the nonetheless that keeps us fighting" (Czollek in TdJML 2020b). The words "nonetheless", "despite", "nevertheless", "even so" not only reflect the fearless attitude of *chutzpah*, but effectively epitomize the location and aspiration of TdJML within a space of resistance. Within the spirit of *Gegenwartsbewältigung*, if the present is to be(come) a counter-narrative to the past, then it belongs to the many, who in their diversity approach each other and still find a resistant self-conception by staying different.

⁸³ "Wir räumen nicht das Feld, auch wenn nichts wieder gut wird. Nicht mit der Heimat, nicht mit der Leitkultur [...] Aber wenn wir verlieren, dann verlieren wir zusammen."

Conclusion

This report departed from its initial interest in belonging and was motivated by the encounter with the curator of TdJML, Max Czollek. The distinctive title of this event series literally “lead to” a reshaping of the concept *Leitkultur* and the consequential thesis that TdJML formulates an opposing, countering element to it. Guided by the aspiration to understand what this notion signifies, I conducted a first retrospective of its founder Bassam Tibi, who determines *Leitkultur* as a European value-consensus with cross cultural validity. In second retrospective view, I traced the linguistic traits and hegemonic character of the term itself. Moreover, the political inscriptions by Thomas de Maizère and Friedrich Merz revealed that the narrative *Leitkultur* operates inherently within a specifically German context: designating “We” and “Them” proved to epitomize the political binary of exclusion. Moving along from this insight, we—as in the researcher and reader(s) of this work—discovered how concepts such as the paradigm of integration, othering, and a harmonized national self-image of *Heimat* formulate a core identity on the essentialist grounds of exclusion and therefore ideologically charge *Leitkultur*. On a side note, we reflected that such dynamics of exclusion do not only apply to the directives of a dominant culture towards a minority group but also within (marginalized) subcultures. Taking this research into account, we concluded that *Leitkultur* can be viewed as a clean-cut hegemonic concept with political brisance.

In highlighting this idea, TdJML certainly tries to provoke at first, but it offers a relevant and functioning counter-hegemonic claim to *Leitkultur*. In the first place, the disarticulating process of the counter-narrative relies on a re-narration, the reasoning for its necessity resonating with the revitalization of the ethno-national *völkisch* ideology. Allegedly innocent concepts such as *Heimat* and *Leitkultur* were—in tracing them to their extremist ends—revealed that they carried a *völkisch* substructure. This proved to be a critical point within the construction of a counter-narrative, as we were confronted with the corporeality of the exemplary “H-moments” displaying how stigmatization and extrinsic ascriptions can determine the practical matter of living in unsafe, life-threatening conditions. A dangerous, ideological conception of belonging reinforces and simultaneously is fueled by such developments. Hence, heteronomy is viewed as the spot of friction within this work. From this point, *Leitkultur* stood in the back, which gave rise to the essential ideas composing its counter-narrative. After introducing the postmigratory’s epistemic realm, which epitomizes

a shift of perspective towards self-determination decisive emphasis was put on the notion of diversity. On that point, its interweaving with practical conceptions such as structural discrimination and social justice were highlighted. Mainly relying upon Hannah Arendt's theories, the Institute for Social Justice and Radical Diversity determines both plurality and equality among human beings as the foundational framework, on which the conceptual umbrella of radical diversity is spanned. Against the backdrop of this jeopardy—in opposing and violently attacking societal plurality—the need was tangible for diversity to be developed as a notion critical of discrimination.

At the same time, difference signifying the core of plurality has a vital position as recognizing and respecting difference marks another central pillar of the conceptual scheme of radical diversity resulting in the definition of “radically different”. Consequently, we became familiar with the twofold nature of radical diversity, not only pointing towards a utopian vision of social justice, but also acting on this utopia as a critical practice. The main objective thereby is the breaking homogeneous spaces—located in discursive realms or being of socio-political or cultural disposition. Therefore, the concrete utopia of radical diversity embarks on distinctive practical strategies two of which were highlighted due to their significance and their way of complementing each other—de-integration and allyship. De-integration marked the diametrical opposing part to integration insofar, as it means an empowering invocation to self-determination by exposing essentializing processes such as the construction of the *other*. Complex intersectionality then formed the binding element between de-integration and allyship: the realization that each individual—and each group for that matter—always combines experiences of discrimination and privilege at the same time. Both operating on varying levels gives rise to allyship's strategy, which relies on joining, rather than excluding forces. Allyship, arising from the primary interest in “what and whom is different from myself,” can grow into a deep understanding thereof, singling out potential social injustices or discriminatory mechanisms meanwhile becoming aware of one's own privileges and the consequential ability to use them. It also reminds of Welsch's transcultural approach of curious, communicative, and therein converging cultural groups within one society. In this sense, the potential power of allyship is expressed through collective effort while viewing the common goal of social justice and standing up against discrimination. This perspective reflects how allyship can provide vital means for an emancipative movement such as identity politics.

In line with this thought, we subsequently explored the case study of TdJML. Firstly, this entailed the inspection and evaluation of Kampnagel as a performing arts institution, an ally to anti-discriminatory work and within the sphere of diversity while also incorporating my internship experience. Secondly, the performance of emancipating ideas within the counter-narrative realm came to the center of attention. We traced the wrestling match of concepts, the scripted performance of the opening event of TdJML, the promotion trailer and the day of disunification. To varying degrees, each of these artistically constitutive means of TdJML implemented stylistic devices of wit, irony, and hyperbole—all contributing to the socio-critical attitude of *chutzpah*—to facilitate their ideas. The reconciling moment of catharsis after the wrestling match was replaced by actual political demands on the one hand and distorting realities in sarcastic costumes on the other.

Recapitulating, we can state that against the image of unity and harmony, which is fostered by defenders of *Leitkultur*, TdJML relies on radical diversity, which is reflected in German society. Here, Czollek's conception of *Gegenwartsbewältigung* allows for a different view onto the present. Furthermore, TdJML's agents bring forth the assumption that art and culture act as a seismographic device for societal upbringing. In this way, the two domains mirror society's more progressive and pluralistic realm. Therefore, TdJML tries to create a different paradigm, twisting and inverting the narrative of *Leitkultur*, by which the relationship between aesthetic practice and societal reality is put into the center of attention.

Towards the end of this report, this specific relation was given a distinct name, *Wehrhafte Kunst*, resistant art—deriving from the socio-political concept of militant democracy—which expresses political issues with artistic, aesthetic means and thus keeps societal circumstances in mind, as well as anchoring in them. In reflecting on claims and theories by Chantal Mouffe we concluded that TdJML can be framed as an artistic but therein also political intervention. The project acts in favor of disarticulating a hegemonic order, in turn revealing its specific counterhegemonic character. This quality is highlighted in its constitutive way to make unaccepted, ignored, marginalized, and discriminated bodies visible and foster attention for their perspectives, stories, and narratives. Analogous to the aim of radical diversity working towards a mainstream of plurality and heterogeneity, one could summarize that TdJML works towards establishing a new mainstream a *Leitkultur* of heterogeneity grounded on plurality and the simultaneousness of equality and difference.

This, in turn, will once and for all reinforce the unnecessaryness of a *Leitkultur* in the first place.

A further discourse of the present topic could primarily deal with the role and meaning of culture, with a very close look on the German concept of *Kultur* which could only be touched upon briefly in this work as delving into it would have led too far. On a different note, this work in its specificity on Germany certainly could not shed light on a more global discourse of dominant cultures versus peripheral cultures, which could point out another direction to further inquire in. Hereto, I additionally see the conceptual practice of allyship as a fruitful ground for exploring ways of establishing common goals, rather than common grounds on a wider contextual basis. Correspondingly, further inquiries on institutional accounts within the cultural sector could be explored moving along from this research. Here, I can imagine investigations on anti-discriminatory curatorial practices and dramaturgy.

Retrospectively, the structure of this work moved away from abstract notions, met distinctive as well as general discussions throughout the travel of narrative towards counter-narrative, but crystallized in specific ways of acting. Elevating this development to a meta-level, we can derive from this content structure that on a societal, as well as a very personal level, it is necessary to question an alleged consensus, to scrutinize one's own privileges uncovering power structures, and trying to break through them. Possibly becoming an ally of another person who is different to you, you step into action instead of accepting the present as it is. In that, you are acting "despite" the seeming fact that the present can't be changed. All such small components can contribute to a counter-hegemonic struggle. TdJML, for its part, has shown how this fight can be carried out artistically. However, there are so many more social levels and perspectives that can be taken on the pathway to the future utopia of a radically diverse and socially just society. Even if this concrete utopia is set within the realm of "not yet", a shared hope can contribute to collective *Gegenwartsbewältigung*, "Coping with the Present". In other words, there are still some paths that have not yet been taken and that need to be discovered. All these paths become more transparent as soon as we understand that we can formulate a common goal. And here, in my understanding, also lies a possible, new form of belonging.

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