Off and on stage interactions: Muslim-Jewish encounter in urban Europe

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Keywords: Jewish-Muslim encounters; entrepreneurs of encounter; interfaith; religious diversity

Introduction

In this article we present some of the findings of a research project that has carried out empirical research on Muslim-Jewish encounters in six cities in three countries in Western Europe.[1] Stuart Hall (1993) suggested that how we live with difference is the defining question of the current century; we respond to this challenge by asking specifically *how Jews and Muslims live together in urban western Europe in the 21st century*. As described below in the remainder of this introduction, our research has sought to explore the range of encounters between Muslims and Jews in our six cities.

Historically, the Jew and the Muslim have been the primary symbolic figures of alterity in Europe, the constitutive outsiders who have shaped what Europe is (Renton and Gidley 2017). Media and public discourse are key vectors in perpetuating tropes of alterity which revolve in particular around questions of integration, migration and national identity, often pitching "new" and "established"

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(sometimes figured as "model") minorities against each other. While in wider society unfavourable attitudes and behaviours *towards* Jews and Muslims correlate with one another (Mayer et al 2019), contemporary public discourse instead narrates growing hostility *between* them, shaped by war in the Middle East and the rise of violent Jihadism and the consequent war on terror. Commentators point to Muslims as perpetrators of antisemitism across Northwest Europe (with some areas seen as "Muslim" neighbourhoods represented as "no-go zones" for Jews) or to the growing purchase of anti-Muslim activism in Jewish communities (cf Feldman 2018). This lachrymose vision of Muslim-Jewish relations (Gidley and Everett 2022) is part of a broader discourse in Europe, intensifying since 2000, that sees diversity and mobility in terms of segregation and conflict, a form of policy panic linked to demographic anxiety and anti-diversity politics (Neal et al 2013, Krastev and Holmes 2019, Vertovec 2022).

However, our research suggests that, in urban spaces, mundane commercial exchange, cultural traffic in music and arts, spontaneous and institutionalised interfaith initiatives, joint lobbying of state actors on common issues, nostalgic attempts to retrieve earlier (real or imagined) periods of conviviality, and banal contact in the street are among the many – and not necessarily conflictual – forms relations can take. In the next sections of this article, we briefly describe the field contexts of our empirical research project and then describe its findings in two key *spaces of encounter*, before making four arguments grounded in these. The first zone of encounter we examine here is "staged" or formal multi- or interfaith activity, typically hosted by municipal actors. The second is a zone of "unstaged" encounters: everyday commercial spaces. In describing these, we show that our original heuristic distinction between "staged" and "unstaged" breaks down in practice, as formal institutional activity creates opportunities for serendipitous, unscripted fleeting encounters and deeper intimacies, while the informality of commercial spaces does not prevent participants from falling back on to received scripts and is also subject to instrumentalization by various actors with a range of agendas and overdetermination by politics (including interpersonal, municipal or transnational politics). We observe the particularly important role of key "entrepreneurs of encounter", who tend to occupy liminal or marginal spaces in relation to their ascribed identities.

We argue that the texture and the possibilities (and sometimes impossibility) of encounters are structured intersectionally (crucially by class, gender and generation), and are shaped by patterns of insecurity and securitisation and by different available discursive repertoires and cognitive frames (produced at supra-national, national, local and micro-local levels – e.g. Israel/Palestine politics, laïcité or communitarianism, city narratives and neighbourhood identities respectively). We conclude that, although insecurity, securitisation, policy panic and geopolitical pressures can block meaningful encounter, emerging trans-diasporic cultural formations point towards some fragile resources for hope.

Field sites and research methodology

The research for this project was carried out in three countries, chosen for their sharply contrasting approaches to the governance of diversity and for their sharply contrasting colonial, postcolonial and migration histories. In all six sites, our team conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the zones of encounter described in the next section. This began with online participant involvement in local interfaith activities during the depths of the COVID pandemic in 2021, followed by gradual immersion

into street life in areas used by Jewish and Muslim residents and then participant observation in offline interfaith activities and the local cultural sector, supplemented by qualitative interviews with key communal gatekeepers and municipal actors (Peretz forthcoming b).

Our research questions focus on Muslim-Jewish encounters, and therefore – in contrast to the literature of the neighbourhood-focused "diversity turn" (Berg, Gidley and Sigona 2013), inaugurated by scholars such as Gerd Baumann (1996) – we do not focus on "everybody" sharing space in specific diverse urban areas. But at the same time, informed by that literature, we are alive to the way in which the categories "Muslim" and "Jew" are shifting, unstable, contingent and contested, that encounters between them are always structured by power and unfold on a landscape dominated by a secular-Christian third, and that our interpellation of actors as "Muslim" or "Jewish" is not innocent of these processes and indeed can risk reducing people into reified, essentialist identities (see Gidley and Everett 2022, building on Egorova 2022, Sheldon 2022, Topolski 2018).

We therefore try to foreground this contingency and its ethical demands in our analysis, in the following three ways.

a. At a *local* level in European cities, Jews and Muslims each share space with physically proximate religious and cultural others. Jewish and Muslim narratives get layered on each other, or used to narrate each other's stories. At the heart of our research strategy are detailed local case studies which attempt to build a thick description of staged and unstaged encounters in each site. By researching two cities in each country, holding the national level "constant", we can start to identify the specificity of each city, before drawing out comparisons and contrasts with cities in other countries.
b. At a *national* level, each state has a different migration and colonial history as well as different (and evolving) national policy discourses and cognitive frames. A vast literature exists providing us with contextual data on the different national "models" of integration and state-faith relations. Across the three countries, in the wake of demographic diversity and the war on terror, a form of *policy panic* or what Hanock et al (2012) call "crisis social policy" has emerged, which emphasises segregation and conflict – the dangers of communitarianism, parallel lives and extremism supposedly carried by migrants and minorities, and especially Muslims – which has inflected all three national models with an assimilationist and securitising note (Neal et al 2013, Rashid 2016).
c. Jewish and Muslim Europeans, as diasporic minorities, are also entangled in *transnational* social fields. The Israel/Palestine conflict, the Arab Spring, the Syrian tragedy, and the space of hope and death that is the Mediterranean all reverberate through urban daily life. Financial as well as cultural and political remittances back to migrants' "sending" countries, the active engagement of sending states with their expatriate populations, dispersed and transnational confessional networks (such as Gülen, Chabad or Jamaat-e-Islami), the influence of cultural diplomacy and soft power institutions, and political solidarity networks (e.g. Zionist or pro-Palestinian) all mean that a methodological nationalism or methodological localism is unsustainable as a mode of analysis.

Crucially, these different levels cannot be neatly separated. Jewish and Muslim populations maintain close contact with multiple elsewhere such as the Near and Middle East and North Africa, whilst *simultaneously* being enmeshed in national, regional and local structures which operate with horizontal and vertical connections to other structures. The *glocality* of diasporic life means that a multiplicity of transnational local, diplomatic and geopolitical discourses, actors and contexts are

salient. In digital space, residents follow (and co-produce) both hyper-local and globally dispersed conversations. Thus new contexts emerge for thinking Jewish and Muslim life relationally.

Our first case study country is France. Historically Catholic and putatively secular, France is the European country where the largest number of Muslim people reside (see Tiberj 2020, Drouhot, Tiberj and Simon 2023) – many of migrant descent from the former North African colonies and more recently sub-Saharan Africa – *and* also Europe's largest Jewish population (DellaPergola 2023) – an old population bolstered by the arrival of the North African Jews in the post-colonial moment. In France, our case study cities are Paris and Strasbourg. Paris, the French capital, with a dense population and geography marked by the social and spatial exclusion of many racialised working class residents in its peripheral suburbs (*banlieues*), is home to half of France's Jews and over half of France's Muslims (Drouhot, Tiberj and Simon 2023, DellaPergola 2023).

Strasbourg is a distinctive city for many reasons. Its borderland location means that it has been part of Germany rather than France for much of its history, and the Alsace region of which it is the capital has a strong, distinct identity, including its own Alsatian dialect (a Germanic dialect recognised as a minority language in France, which includes some words originating in Yiddish). Its many cultural, EU and educational institutions give it a cosmopolitan feel. In the last three decades, it has generally had a left or centre-left municipal leadership, with a Green mayor of Armenian background elected in 2020. It has an old Jewish community, although this is now smaller than before the Holocaust, and a growing and diverse Muslim population (DellaPergola 2013, Cody 2013). The place of Islam has been a topic of policy panic in Strasbourg in recent years. It was the site of a major ISIS terror attack in December 2018 and the proposed site of a Turkish-funded mosque that would have been one of the largest in Europe.

Our second case study country, Germany, has conceptualised itself as an immigration nation for a much shorter period than post-imperial Britain and France – only in the present century, if at all, despite decades of labour migration from Turkey and Southeastern Europe that saw the emergence of a significant Muslim population, alongside the immigration of "ethnic Germans" from other lands. This has been augmented in the current century by refugee flows from the Middle East, including Kurds, Palestinians and Syrians. Since 2015 especially, refugees from the Syrian civil war found a haven in Germany. Its Jewish history is overshadowed by the Holocaust, which reduced its Jewish population drastically, but Jewish presence has been reshaped by migration from the post-Soviet world and by young Israelis, both Ashkenazim (the majority, see Kranz et al, 2015) and Mizrahim as well as LGBTQ+ seeking cultural vibrancy and opportunity (Amit 2018, Cohen and Kranz 2017, Rau 2019).

In Germany, a federal nation, considerable powers and responsibilities relating to the governance of diversity are devolved to the level of the regional state. Our German case study cities are Berlin and Frankfurt-am-Main. Berlin saw Turkish migration in the period of the building of the Wall dividing the Eastern and the Western part of the city, subsequent Jewish migration from the Former Soviet Union, Israel and many other countries, Bosnian refugee inflows in the 1990s and a more recent period of Syrian refugee arrival. The city is also often described as the Palestinian capital of Europe (Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg 2020, Atshan and Galor 2020, PERETZ 2023, forthcoming). Frankfurt is a diverse city, with over 50 mosques and a long-established Jewish community. In 2017, it was widely reported that fewer than half of Frankfurt's residents were "native" Germans, although the 51.2%

who were considered non-German included German citizens born abroad or Germans who are the children of immigrants, and the majority (61% of those born abroad) were from other EU countries. (EMMERICH 2022).

As in France, postcolonial trajectories shape Britain's primarily subcontinental Muslim population (two thirds of Muslims in England and Wales are of Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Indian ethnicity), but its Jewish population has a largely European migration history. However, the long-standing heterogeneity of Britain's Muslim populations has multiplied in recent decades, largely through the diversification of migration flows. (For example, there is a growing number of people of Arab ethnicity in England and Wales.) Meanwhile, Ashkenazi Jewish migrants in London were threaded into the circuitry of empire through the docks and garment industry as well as trans-migration to colonies such as South Africa; Spanish and Portuguese Jews arriving in London from the Low Countries and Baghdadi Jews with colonial ties to Britain has meant that Anglo-Jewry has never been homogenously Ashkenazi. More recently, strong ties with Israel have reshaped British Jewish culture, making it less Yiddish and more Mediterranean (Gidley forthcoming).

Our UK case studies are the capital, London, and the major northern metropolis Manchester. London is highly diverse along every axis, including in terms of ethnicity, religion and migration trajectories. Within London, an inner circle of historically ethnically diverse arrival quarters have been zones of encounter between groups. For example, inner East London (including the boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets) has been an arrival destination Protestant refugees from France, Irish labour migrants, Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe and postcolonial migrants and refugees from the Indian subcontinent. In contrast to some of the banlieues of Paris, London's outer boroughs (including Barnet in the northwest) have historically been whiter as well as economically more stable than inner London. In the imperial period, Greater Manchester was a major manufacturing centre, but now has successfully rebranded itself as a centre of the cultural industries, a regional capital and university city, with some of the country's most deprived as well as most affluent neighbourhoods. Manchester has had a Jewish and Muslim presence for over 200 years, many of the early Jewish and Muslim migrants being traders from Aleppo and other regions of the Ottoman Empire (Kasstan 2019). It now has the second largest Jewish population in the UK (after London) and the third largest Muslim population in the UK (Ebbiary and Egorova 2023).

Across all six sites, we conducted extensive interviews (twenty or more per site) and intensive ethnographic research for twenty four months per site including participant observation in Neu Köln (Berlin), Bahnhofsviertel (Frankfurt), la Meinau (Strasbourg), the 19th arrondissement (Paris), Barnet (London) and Cheetham Hill (Manchester), on which the next two sections will draw, as well as analysis of Jewish and Muslim community media and, in Paris, quantitative research on residents' attitudes. Having introduced our research and its sites, in the next two sections we present our findings in two of the three key zones of encounter explored in our fieldwork: formal interfaith activity and everyday street life.

Staged encounter? Formal interfaith activities

The possibility of formal intercultural encounter is shaped by the discursive repertoires available in each context both at municipal level and at national level. There are sharp differences in the

management of religious and cultural diversity in our three countries, reflecting radically different national models or philosophies of integration. Because our research is at local level, we do not provide a comprehensive account of the national picture but rather identify how it is refracted at the local level. In this section, we describe the three national models, showing that they constrain and pattern the possibility of Jewish-Muslim encounter, but also showing that a local level of analysis reveals considerable variation within (and even contradiction of) the national models, as well as commonalities across the models. In particular, on the one hand, all three countries have been marked by the policy panic noted earlier about migrant, minority and Muslim presence, as well as be the shadows of geopolitical conflict, and this has shaped how interfaith encounters are staged. On the other hand, despite this, we can observe that grassroots actors and entrepreneurs of encounter are able to knit together trusting, intimate relationships within such encounters.

France's political discourse has been marked by an intense focus on Muslim minorities, frequently positioned as a communitarian threat to republican values or as the source of terrorist violence. In recent years, the far right have further mobilized against minorities, increasingly targeting Islam, driving the electoral rise of Marine Le Pen's Front National/Rassemblement National. Meanwhile, French Jews, while maintaining diasporic connections to communities in North Africa, Israel and elsewhere (Everett 2020), have been conditionally and uneasily included in the French mainstream, while experiencing intense insecurity in light of high-profile antisemitic and terrorist incidents. Officially secular France places a taboo on the political representation of faith. The dynamic and growing visibility of Islam in the public space in the latter half of the twentieth century opened anew the opposition between two conceptions of "secularism": a tolerant one, as a way for religions to coexist peacefully, and a combative one, against the presence of any religious sign in the public space, which sees religion as a purely private affair. At times, the latter conception acts as a barrier to the integration of the growing number of residents with a Muslim background (Lamine 2020).

Nevertheless, at a local level in Paris, the establishment of several city-wide initiatives followed the terrorist attacks of 2015, with liberal figures within faith communities given prominent platforms in civic life (Everett 2018). Thus, although religion and politics are not supposed to mix in the Republic, our Parisian fieldworker, DROUEZ, notes that the municipality practises a form of soft power around liberal Muslim and Jewish initiatives. Formal institutional encounter between Jews and Muslims as faith groups takes place in non-municipal contexts, instead focusing on civil society actors – "associations" as they are called in France. For instance, in Paris, there are organised anti-racist initiatives, such as Salam Shalom Salut, led by SOS racism (perhaps France's most well-known antiracism organization), and some grassroots Muslim-Jewish dialogue associations in civil society, and micro-local interfaith associations (Drouez 2023), all of which are less well-integrated into municipal structures than their UK or German counterparts. While the formalisation of laïcité (secularism) prevents individual faith leaders being official municipal interlocuters, the informalisation of interreligious governance means that cultural activists and religious leaders can nonetheless become prominent voices at a local level.

However, the secular republican repertoire, which shapes how religious minorities define themselves in relation to the state and to each other, permeates associational activity. In Paris, most of the associations researched adopt a secular and republican repertoire (Cohen and Everett 2021). This manifests in the way they present their organisations, in the speeches they hold during events and in

their various activities. For example, at the request of political stakeholders, one Jewish/Muslim dialogue organisation ran an education program about "civility" to teach young people how to behave in public space. Another association created a "civic trip" where Muslim and Jewish mothers and children went to visit important republican public buildings thereby fostering a fleeting organised encounter (Drouez 2023).

If most of these associations insist in interviews and in their public self-presentation on their good relationships with public authorities (especially town council actors) and try to interact with them, those which instead adopt a more multiculturalist discourse reported having tensions with these authorities. In addition to this, most associations complained about having difficulties in getting public funding: one compared French interreligious organisations with European organisations perceived as wealthier; a second one explained that she had to beg politicians for money; a third reported that a secular association cannot access public funding if it works with religious actors (Drouez 2023).

If the dominant legal framework in France (including in Paris) is laïcité, there are local variations in how it plays out. In the East of France (Haut Rhin, Bas-Rhin and Moselle), a special regime has survived called the Concordat, a more corporativist model at odds with the pure republican model – for instance, unlike in the rest of France, faith schools and places of worship can be funded directly by the state – although Muslims are not formally included. Strasbourg's religious history and local institutions under the Concordat status means that religious diversity – and in turn balance and dialogue between religious populations – is seen as normal part of city and regional life, rather than a problem. Alsace is home to some 20 mosques (including its decade-old Grand Mosque, one of France's largest and most visible mosques), and there is considerable interfaith activity in the city and its region. Alsace's Concordat status allows certain religions to be directly funded by the state. This explains the dynamic religious civil society in Alsace and explains the salience of interfaith dialogue locally and the promotion of such dialogue at municipal and regional (Alsace/Grand Est) levels. We have mapped considerable interfaith activity in the city of Strasbourg and its region, including events and initiatives focused on culture and on anti-racism. Here, specific individuals who are well integrated into municipal and civic life can become prominent gatekeepers and facilitators of such initiatives (Emmerich 2022).

This contrasts with the German and UK context, where the civic participation of faith communities *as faith communities* is legitimated in national discursive repertoires. In contrast to France's rigorous proclaimed secularism, Germany is characterised by what has been called a "limping separation" (*hinkende Trennung*) of church and state (Fetzer and Soper 2003, Heinig 2003), in which the Protestant and Catholic churches, and subsequently (although unevenly) other confessional communities, have specific corporative privileges within the state, especially at the regional level. In the current century, the dominant framework for managing diversity has been "integration", and in particular there has been a strong focus on "*Leitkultur*" (orientation to a national "guiding" culture) and on incorporating Muslims (previously seen as essentially outside the German polity and left to the governance of foreign actors) into corporative structures (Laurence 2012, Nagel and Peretz 2022), as had been done with Jews decades ago (Becker and Topkara 2022). Although there is regional variation in the discourse, the German state occupies a putatively neutral stance in relation to religion, but in practice the inclusion of religious minorities continues to be partial; Jewish and Muslim practices have been the subject of public and legal controversy (Langer 2018, Lavi 2018, Yurdakul 2016).

A number of German Federal ministries finance programmes focusing on interfaith dialogue; where the emphasis is specifically on Jewish-Muslim dialogue "antisemitism prevention" is often a central justification. In both Berlin and Frankfurt, many organisations which have a licenced role engaging with the local state on behalf of confessionally identified communities. In Frankfurt, the mayoral authority exerts influence on this domain, and the city has a multi-religious municipal authority team that promotes its diversity and sometimes represents communities through it (Emmerich 2023b). In Berlin, as the capital, the Federal government has a larger role. Both governance levels are active in supporting projects in the city aimed at interreligious dialogue and integration, with Muslim community projects in cooperation with Jewish organizations explicitly encouraged (Peretz 2023).

In Berlin, our fieldworker Peretz visited a variety of Jewish-Muslim dialogue and interfaith trialogue events in person and online. He found Jewish-Muslim dialogue was frequently an elite project for the clergy, little reverberating within the communities. Participation is often lopsided towards one community, either Muslim or Jewish (Peretz 2023). Online sessions drew a large group of interested Christians, despite the format being supposedly exclusive. In general, Jewish-Muslim dialogue in virtual spaces expresses a common search for belonging as minorities in a religiously and culturally Christian Europe. The increasing mediatization of dialogue attracts new audiences who identify with the political agenda focused on increased visibility of minorities and tolerance of difference. Digital dialogue frameworks are not radically independent spaces but are for the most part bound to the objectives of the institutions funding them. They tend to result in staged performances of harmonic encounters and produce an image of conviviality. Yet they also facilitate co-creation by young members of both communities that extend beyond the virtual sphere, providing alternative sources for formal and informal education about Germany's multicultural or postmigration society with a nationwide outreach. The formats and the influencers who create them – entrepreneurs of encounter – form focal points for building virtual interfaith networks over social media outlets that enable interventions in internal communal as well as national discourses (Nagel and Peretz 2022).

Frankfurt meanwhile has perhaps the most significant Muslim representation of any German city parliament (Magistrat) and other municipal representational bodies. This is partly due to the Department of Multicultural Affairs (Amt für multikulturelle Angelegenheiten, AMKA) founded in 1989 by the French-German secular Jewish Green Party politician Daniel Cohn-Bendit. AMKA was the first of its kind to adopt the concept of super-diversity in its integration strategy, interreligious and intercultural governance. Before WWII, Frankfurt was one a centre for Jewish culture and theology, and remains influenced by Jewish institutions, politicians and political expressions, and by their solidarity with other minorities. Frankfurt's former Jewish mayor himself was until recently married to a Muslim woman, while the deputy mayor, who fled from Iran in the late 1970s, is married to a Jewish psychoanalyst. Hence one prominent urban narrative encountered in the field is that if one wishes to truly understand Jewish-Muslim relations one has to first understand Frankfurt's Jewish identity assertions and the feeling of Jewish responsibility toward other vulnerable minorities.

Frankfurt has produced several important interfaith initiatives, many of which have won several integration prizes, enabling the city to portray itself as a happy place where religions can meet, visit and learn from each other – emphasising notions of seeing eye to eye, and standing on equal footing within a level playing field. Perceived by policy-makers as a prime institutions to ensure social

cohesion, the Frankfurt research team has explored how such initiatives can also become involved in internal and external disputes and political crisis (e.g. occurrences in the Middle East); such crisis moments lead to new management strategies and processes of institutionalization, changing internal affairs within Muslim, Jewish and other faith communities and altering partner choices within dialogue constellations (Emmerich 2023). In short, the German national model allows for considerable variation between cities, with the local style of interfaith activity being shaped by and shaping local place narratives, and individual entrepreneurs of encounter creating a range of local possibilities.

The UK has a history of what Feldman (2011, 2012) has named "conservative pluralism", in which the established Anglican church paternally protects the minority denominations as a way of maintaining its own privileged position within the state. Religion plays an active role in public life: in particular the established Anglican church has a privileged place in the state while other "faith communities" are also key actors in civic life. In the comparative literature, the UK is often described as having a "multiculturalist" framework for managing diversity, which actively accommodates and indeed often celebrates cultural and religious difference, group identities, and group rights. However, multiculturalism has been a contested approach in Britain; its death has been periodically announced since the late 1990s as part of the policy panic noted above, and in the last two decades national governments have instead promoted "cohesion", which prioritises a shared commitment to vaguely defined "British values", the promotion of opportunities for mixing, and the proscription of group-specific public funding. For instance, Manchester became a major focus of social cohesion policies after the 2001 urban disturbances, including in Oldham (Greater Manchester) and Burnley (close to Manchester).

British Muslims have been the focus of policy panic since September 2001, with a whole raft of government initiatives focused on their perceived (lack of) "integration" and vulnerability to "extremism". In 2017, following the Manchester Arena bombing, the Mayor of Greater Manchester set up a commission to consider how to combat extremism, social exclusion and radicalisation. The Community Impact Assessment report which the Commission produced identified that the attack had resulted in minority groups of Greater Manchester feeling threatened by the possibility of the reprisals, which was felt not only by Muslim and Asian heritage residents, but also persons from Libyan, Jewish, Sikh and LGBTQ+ communities (Ebbiary and Egorova 2023). At the same time, anti-migration and anti-diversity rhetoric (sometimes targeted at Muslims, although less so than in other European countries) has been mainstreamed in the last decade, playing a major role in 2016 referendum on European Union membership.

In the UK there is a long history of formal institutional interfaith exchanges, with several national organisations focusing on it. Government policies around community cohesion, integration and preventing violent extremism have led to local municipalities investing in faith-based community infrastructure and in multi- and interfaith activities, and in seeing faith leaders as key policy stakeholders. Local authorities typically fund and cultivate official fora representing the range of faith communities locally – such as Barnet Multifaith Forum (BMFF) in the London Borough of Barnet, Faith Network 4 Manchester, Manchester City Council's key formal interlocuter in relation to faith communities, and the Faith and Belief Advisory Panel, Greater Manchester's equivalent. For instance, in Barnet, the BMFF leadership tends to be long-term members representing older generations, although younger members are starting to show an interest in the forum, especially with more online

events, mirroring the Berlin findings described above. There are close links between the forum and the local authority (Shaw 2023).

If the history of interfaith relations in the UK has often been a story of elite encounters, predominantly (though not exclusively) centring male religious, political and community leaders, there has been a significant shift since the mid-2000s towards grassroots, cultural, youth, and other work, including the initiatives of women's Muslim-Jewish groups and LGBTQ+ interfaith encounters (Törning 2021, AUTHOR 7 2023). Grassroots women's groups have proliferated, often led by the group Nisa-Nashim. There has also been a growth in offerings for LGBTQ+ people of faith, particularly led by the Faith and Belief Forum. In short, while the UK model means that interfaith activity is far more intimately intertwined with formal local governance structures than in France or Germany, there is nonetheless an active associational space outside the local state where staged and unstaged encounters occur (Shaw 7 2023, forthcoming b).

For municipalities in the UK, as in Barnet, visible investment in multifaith initiatives is a necessary way of performing a commitment to faith communities, and they disseminate representations of municipal leaders with visibly diverse groups of faith leaders as a way of narrating a local story about cohesion and diversity that is not always grounded in grassroots contacts among congregants. Optics matter for such a group and vice versa, and thus photos and other opportunities are often taken by the council and local press through local interfaith fora. This focus on visibility can serve to essentialise and even exoticise faith groups, who are represented through their most visible representatives, and perhaps promote reified or ossified ways of being Muslim or being Jewish, for example (AUTHOR 7 2023, forthcoming b). This kind of staging of interfaith work confirms Feldman's description of the UK's "conservative pluralism": it is a pluralism that conserves the dominant neutral role of the (implicitly Anglican) state and the leadership role of often the most conservative forces within communities, while obscuring differences within communities. Nonetheless, the long-term contacts created by such initiatives have enabled enduring friendships based on mutual trust, despite the pressures of policy panic (Egorova 2024).

In all of the cases, possibilities of encounter in formal interfaith contexts are patterned along intersecting lines of identity and advantage, with class and generation playing a particularly key role. All three countries' national models generate interfaith infrastructures in which elite actors – clerics, elders and specific entrepreneurs of encounter who are tightly integrated into structures of civic power and cultural authority – play a dominant role. However, local variations on the national models mean that in all the sites there was a more emergent sphere of interfaith activity, including online, in which younger activists and activists from more marginal parts of communities were able to find a voice. Entrepreneurs of encounter become adept at navigating national and local policy discourses and opportunity structures to negotiate outcomes that can at times confound prevailing policy norms.

Everyday life and commerce

In each of our city case studies, we have focused the research in specific neighbourhoods with higher probabilities of Jewish/Muslim encounter, but also developed case studies of specific spheres of encounter that occur both within and outside these neighbourhoods. In this section, we turn from the formal interfaith sector, where we saw that "staged" encounters between Jews and Muslims

sometimes provide openings for meaningful interaction but in ways that are constrained and patterned by national and local policy repertoires, to "unstaged" encounters in the street and commercial life (Everett and Gidley 2018). We argue that, in contrast to the "panicked" tendency to assimilationism and securitisation that constrains staged interfaith, commercial life allows more "unpanicked" encounters to emerge beneath the radar (Neal et al 2013), with entrepreneurs of encounter again emerging as significant brokers of contact.

Frankfurt and London both provide good examples of this. In Frankfurt, Emmerich focused on the Bahnhofsviertel (Central Station Area), a congested, diverse and dynamic quarter. In the 1950s-60s, Jewish displaced persons from Poland and other Eastern European countries – stranded on their way to Israel or the US – started businesses in the informal economy of the Bahnhofsviertel. Contemporary witnesses said that "every second shop was Jewish" and "you still heard Yiddish in shops and on the street". However, the Bahnhofsviertel was soon shaped by the arrival of Muslim labour migrants from the 1970s, who, through steady investment, contributed to the neighbourhood's uplift.

Emmerich's research in this context of overlapping histories of migration and cultural and economic co-existence brings out various examples of cooperation, partnerships and convivial sentiments between the 1970s and the 1990s. These include mutual learning of Yiddish and Turkish, eating together, being invited to weddings, mutual employment and business mediation. This period was frequently described as "a better time," without political polarisation and mutual suspicion – prior to 9/11. Today, Münchener Straße (one of Emmerich's main fieldwork sites in the Bahnhofsviertel) has a largely Muslim "ethnic" economy with shops, restaurants and mosques – previously run but still owned by Jews in some instances. On the same street there was until recently a bakery which sells kosher German-style bread, the new Jewish Museum in the Rothschild Palais is two minutes walking distance, and, due to gentrification over the past 15 years, a few Jewish restaurants, bars and small music scenes have been emerging; the role of entrepreneurial activity that foregrounds intercultural encounter is vital to the reshaping of the area (Emmerich 2022, 2023).

In London, the historical centre of Jewish life was in East London, in the boroughs of Tower Hamlets and then Hackney. In Tower Hamlets, the area around Brick Lane was an early settling point for Jewish immigrants to London from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century and was the centre of predominantly Jewish micro- industry, particularly in garments. In the post-war years, it became the centre of Britain's Bangladeshi community, and the Jewish population rapidly decline. The area has been rebranded "Banglatown" and marketed as a tourist destination leisure and food destination, and houses important Islamic institutions. However, traces of Jewish settlement remain, including bagel bakeries, heritage sites and less visible continued involvement in the garment industry, leading to interesting possibilities of Muslim-Jewish encounter despite the low Jewish population. The neighbouring borough of Hackney, the iconic site of much of the social science research on "super-diversity" (e.g. Wessendorf 2013),[2] has become a centre of Haredi (sometimes called "ultra-Orthodox") Jewish life (including a smaller, less visible Yemeni community). The heterogeneous Haredi population is often seen (by local residents and policy-makers and in some of the academic literature) as segregated from its diverse neighbours, but municipal politics, commercial life and side-by-side interfaith initiatives create interesting opportunities for encounter with Muslim residents (as well as

[2] See Sheldon (2022) and Kasstan (2022) for a critical take on this literature.

complex intra-Jewish encounters, for instance between Haredi congregations and secular Israeli or Russian Jewish contractors working for them in construction or security).

Far less researched (for an exception to this see Van Esdonk 2020) and rarely mentioned in the public debates on diversity, the London Borough of Barnet, in the northwestern part of the metropolis, has significant Muslim and Jewish populations, and is the main focus of our London fieldwork. Within Barnet, Golders Green is known for its large Jewish population and kosher shops, while Hendon resembles more closely the neighbourhoods studied in the "super-diversity" literature, but with a large Jewish presence as one of the mundane ingredients in the mix; Jewish- and Muslim-owned Middle Eastern food outlets can be found side by side. In contrast to East London, Barnet's Jewish population has closer links to the Levant, opening the possibility of new trans-ethnic "Mediterranean" cultural formations. In both areas, food culture provides opportunities for encounter. Everyday patterns of commercial co-operation exist beneath the radar of formal interfaith and intercultural initiatives. This includes Arabic-speaking kitchen staff in the kitchens of Jewish-owned Mediterranean food outlets; Arab customers buying familiar Middle Eastern food from outlets branded as Israeli, and Israeli customers buying familiar Middle Eastern food from outlets branded as Palestinian; and complex trans-religious relationships across the supply chain between retailers, wholesalers and the religious authorities who grant halal and kosher certification in the food business, and between leaseholders, freeholders, business partners and suppliers in the garment business (Gidley forthcoming).

Some entrepreneurs become particularly adept at navigating these relationships, and we have seen examples of food outlets with both Hebrew and Arabic signage in all of our cities. This can both contribute from below to local narratives about diversity *and* be encouraged from above by municipal actors keen to disseminate such narratives. And this dynamic cannot be separated from the ways in which exoticized "ethnic colour" and the consumption of the other plays a major part in gentrification (as in East London or Berlin, for example). Local narratives about diversity can be drawn on as an asset in municipal place-branding strategies and private sector marketing, sometimes tapping into or provoking nostalgia for imagined more convivial past moments and/or into reified representations of imagined homogeneous ethnic communities. Finally, although this can generate new possibilities of productive encounter, processes of gentrification often endanger migrant and minority settlement and community infrastructure, pricing them out of the neighbourhoods where they have found a home (Emmerich forthcoming, Gidley forthcoming)

Security, insecurity and geopolitics

Across our case studies, we observed that Jewish-Muslim encounters are overdetermined by conflict in the Middle East. This is one of the central features of the entangled othering of the two populations. Spikes in violence in the Middle East (as in May 2021 and after October 2023) often lead to a weakening (or even cessation) of formal interfaith work, as well as hostility in shared spaces. Similarly, Europe's post 9/11 politics of security impact on Jewish-Muslim encounters. On one hand, European Jews have become an increasingly insecure minority in the last quarter century. The perceived existential threat to Israel (particularly since the Second Intifada commenced in 2000 and after October 2023) is discursively linked to measurable rises in antisemitic incidents across Europe in the same period. Terror attacks targeting Jews have occurred with frightening frequency, and low-level

harassment, as well as the wide circulation of antisemitic discourse on social media and elsewhere (including in spaces previously seen as liberal havens, such as universities and left-wing parties) have led to a climate of insecurity. Security cameras and bodyguards are a common sight at Jewish educational and religious buildings across Europe; school choice and residential settlement patterns have been profoundly affected by this; some of the Jewish-owned sites of culinary conviviality noted in the previous section have been vandalised in aftermath of 7 October 2023.

European Muslims have been increasingly racialised, made into central objects of panicked policy discourse, placed under obligation to demonstrate "moderate" beliefs and resistance to "radicalisation" and extremism. European Muslims have become a "suspect community", subject to constant surveillance. Islamist terror attacks have been followed by intense spikes in hate incidents against visible Muslims (disproportionately women, who are often more visible) across Europe. Anti-Muslim rhetoric has become more prominent than antisemitism and other forms of racism on the far right, circulating in pan-European networks, and this rhetoric has increasingly been articulated by mainstream parties.

Antisemitism and Islamophobia suggest the need and possibility of Muslim-Jewish solidarity. This is so not least because anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish attitudes are typically held by the same people or articulated together – for instance, in conspiracy theories blaming Jews for Muslim migration. The right-wing terror attack in Halle, Germany, in 2019 is exemplary of this: a gunman unable to access a synagogue turned to a Turkish kebab shop. And there have been some instances of such solidarity: a Somali mosque burned by anti-Muslim racist in one of our London fieldwork sites received significant support from Jewish congregations in the neighbourhood, for example (Shaw2023).

However, more frequently, Jewish insecurity and Muslim securitisation has pushed in the other direction. Not only do European Jews and Muslims buy into the reservoir of anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish tropes which circulate in wider European society and particularly in online media, but the dynamics of (in)security create their own tensions. Instead of solidarity and alliance, competitive victimhood is more common.

Conclusions

The impact of (in)security politics on Jewish-Muslim encounters and the impact of Israel/Palestine conflict are important examples of how intercultural and interethnic encounter is patterned under pressure from exogamous forces at a macro level. We have also seen above that national level policy discourses – such as laïcité in France, Leitkultur in Germany, or cohesion in the UK – shape the terms on which encounters can occur, especially in the staged interactions. But we have also seen that neighbourhood-specific narratives can emerge which promote mixing and that intimate and mutually productive engagement occurs on the street and in commercial contexts for example in Frankfurt, and that alternative modes of interfaith activism are emerging which give more space and voice to marginalised voices within communities for example in London and Berlin. Key individuals who are able to navigate tensions across lines of difference play a vital role in this, whether entrepreneurs of encounter working in the interfaith scene like in Strasbourg, or actual entrepreneurs using their ability to navigate between groups to find economic niches in the diverse metropolis like in Manchester. Emerging trans-ethnic "Mediterranean" culinary and cultural milieux across the sites provide new

formations in which Jewish-Muslim co-presence is seen as positive or even banal. Along with the fleeting instances of Jewish-Muslim solidarity described, these emerging formations – despite their ambivalences and tensions – provide fragile resources for hope in an age of division.

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