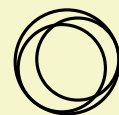


TOWARDS YOUNG POSTMIGRANT ALLIANCES

**Political Education for
a New Generation
of Postmigrant Alliances**

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 Schwarzkopf 
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YOUNG EUROPE 



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PREFACE

The question of alliances is one of the central challenges of our time. As society becomes increasingly divided and polarised, the search for shared perspectives, coalitions grounded in solidarity, and common goals becomes all the more urgent. The question of alliances is one of the central challenges of our time. As society becomes increasingly divided and polarised, the search for shared perspectives, coalitions grounded in solidarity, and common goals becomes all the more urgent. The postmigrant society we live in today is shaped by processes of negotiation—between identities, affiliations, and the possibilities of an equitable future. It is above all young people who are actively involved in shaping these processes, testing out new forms of collaboration, and forging alliances that transcend supposed lines of division.

“Towards Young Postmigrant Alliances” explores the significance and potential of postmigrant alliances, reflecting on why they are necessary and what skills are required to build them in ways that are both functional and sustainable. As such, this publication not only examines the theoretical foundations of these concepts, but also considers how relevant skills and strategies can be taught in practice in a way that will empower young people to build solidarity-based structures themselves.

Postmigrant alliances are not only a response to social inequality—they also present an opportunity to test out new ways of living together. They require a deep understanding of the structural challenges faced by marginalised groups, as well as the dynamics that make successful collaboration possible. This includes the ability to bridge differences, to formulate shared goals, and develop sustainable strategies for change. Supporting the development of these skills is a key component of political education, and makes it possible for young people to grow as individuals while actively participating in processes of social transformation.

In this context, it is vital that political education work not only impart knowledge; it must also create spaces in which communal learning and solidarity-based action can be explored. At a time when right-wing movements are working to deepen social divisions and call democratic values into question, postmigrant alliances offer a vital counterpoint. They help show that social diversity can be seen as a strength rather than a threat—and that change is only possible through collective action.

But such alliances do not arise on their own. They require courage, perseverance, and the willingness to continually engage with new perspectives. They emerge through encounters between different groups, shared experiences, and collective struggle for a more just society. They require long-term structures that make it possible to turn individual initiatives into lasting movements. They also require support—from civil society, from educational institutions, and from political actors.

A key aspect of postmigrant alliances is a readiness to critically question existing power structures. It is not enough to invoke the mere existence of diversity when structural disadvantages continue to exist. Instead, what is needed are active strategies that strengthen marginalised perspectives and dismantle existing hierarchies. This also means being aware of one's own privileges and taking responsibility for the creation of a more just society.

We see time and again that political education work is a decisive factor in the success of alliances. Only through continual reflection, exchange, and collective learning can long-term alliances emerge that extend beyond temporary expressions of solidarity. It is important that such discussions do not remain confined to academic or activist circles, but also to reach people who have previously had little

interaction with postmigrant perspectives. The ability to bring different social groups into conversation with one another and facilitate the formulation of shared goals is a core skill that must be further strengthened.

This publication seeks to function simultaneously as a catalyst and an invitation: to think together, to discuss together, and above all to collectively shape a postmigrant future built on equality, justice, and solidarity. For it is only through collective action that sustainable social change can be achieved.

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POSTMIGRANT

Postmigrant is a term that describes the recognition of migration as a reality and the process of how a society is shaped after migration. Diversity is understood as normal and the question of whether it can be reversed has been abandoned. Instead, there is an ongoing negotiation of how recognition, participation, and opportunities are distributed, and existing conditions are critically examined.¹

The term was coined by Shermin Langhoff, artistic director of the Gorki Theater, and first became established in the mid-2000s in the art and theatre scene. The idea was to give expression to pluralistic and ambivalent social realities and more accurately portray a diverse society. The depiction of the perspectives, narratives, and lived experiences of people with a migrant background—but without a direct experience of migration themselves—was crucial in this context.² In the latter sense, the term can also serve as a form of self-identification by people with migrant backgrounds.

Since then, the term has become well-established in the humanities and social sciences as a way of analysing a society-wide transformation that is taking place and being negotiated within the context of migration.

¹ Naika Foroutan, *Die postmigrantisches Gesellschaft* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2019), 48; Erol Yildiz, "Ideen zum Postmigrantischen", in *Postmigrantisches Perspektiven*, ed. Riem Spielhaus, Naika Foroutan and Juliane Karakayali (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2018), 19.

² Foroutan, *Die postmigrantisches Gesellschaft*, 46; Shermin Langhoff "Die Herkunft spielt keine Rolle – postmigrantisches Theater im Ballhaus Naunynstraße", *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, 2011, <https://www.bpb.de/lernen/kulturelle-bildung/60135/die-herkunft-spielt-keine-rolle-postmigrantisches-theater-im-ballhaus-naunynstrasse/> (accessed 27 March 2025).

INTRODUCTION

YOUNG POSTMIGRANT ALLIANCES – DEFINED

Why do we need postmigrant alliances right now in particular?

Germany has been profoundly shaped by migration. Both immigration and emigration movements have a long history in the country. As of 2023, a quarter of Germany's population—around 21.2 million people—has a so-called “migrant background.” Among children, the proportion is even higher: around 40 percent of children under five have a migrant background.³ Long after the question of whether Germany was a country of immigrants had become a regular subject of political debate, this empirical fact was officially acknowledged in 2001⁴—roughly half a century after the recruitment of migrant workers began in the 1950s.⁵ German society's understanding of itself as a migrant society

has become more deeply entrenched over time. At the same time, civil society has formed new and more closely-knit networks in order to formulate (and subsequently insist upon) demands for justice and participation.⁶

The rapidly growing influence of transnational right-wing and extreme-right movements poses a significant challenge. Particularly alarming in this regard is the spread of anti-migrant “fantasies of return” that idealize the myth of a society before and without migration. Against this backdrop, we reiterate our demand for a pluralistic democratic society that guarantees recognition, equitable participation,

³ DESTATIS, *Migration in Zeiten des demografischen Wandels*, (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 2023), <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Querschnitt/Demografischer-Wandel/Aspekte/demografiemigration.html#:~:text=In%20Deutschland%20hatten%201%2C3,Staatsangeh%C3%B6rige%2C%2042%20%25%20waren%20Deutsche> (accessed 27 March 2025).

⁴ Unabhängige Kommission Zuwanderung, *Zuwanderung gestalten, Integration fördern: Bericht der Unabhängigen Kommission „Zuwanderung“*, (Berlin: Bundesministerium des Innern, 2001).

⁵ Redaktion, “Erstes Anwerbeabkommen vor 65 Jahren”, *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, 2020, <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/hintergrund-aktuell/324552/erstes-anwerbeabkommen-vor-65-jahren/> (accessed 6 May 2025).

⁶ Foroutan, *Die postmigrantische Gesellschaft*, 31.

and equal opportunities for all. In our work as a political education programme, we see here not only a responsibility, but also an opportunity to empower young people to navigate such difficult times and to take an active role in shaping them for the better. To us, engagement is above all about facilitating broad, sustainable, and strong alliances through cooperation.

We have long observed how exclusion and the erosion of rights are directed against particular racialised or migratised groups that are presented as being “other,” “dangerous,” or “exotic.” In the discourse around migration and Islam, as in political debates around measures against Islamist terrorism, we see entire communities held collectively responsible.

This dehumanization and criminalization must be understood as an attack on pluralistic democracy, one that has consequences for society as a whole.

The current political discourse, in which migration is increasingly portrayed as a threat, is fuelled above all by the ethnicization of violence.⁷ With a strong focus on migrants perceived as Muslim, this narrative draws on a deeply entrenched conflation of Islam and migration. This includes equating migrants with Muslims, Muslims with migrants, and Islam with something intrinsically foreign—as well as racist and anti-Muslim narratives that associate Islam with terrorism. The construction of violence as ethnically or culturally determined is further reinforced by media coverage and a distorted use of the police’s

RACIALISATION AND MIGRATISATION

Racialisation describes a process that divides people into supposedly biological groups based on external characteristics or forms of behaviour, resulting in the creation of stereotypes and hierarchies—a racist process that not only constructs alleged differences but also places a value on them. In contrast, **migratisation** refers to the social attribution of a migration background to a person regardless of whether this is actually applicable to them. It often affects non-white people, marking them as foreign and socially devalued.

7 Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

official criminal statistics (PKS).⁸ These statistics reflect police activity and, as a variety of studies have shown, they also illustrate the higher rate at which people perceived as “foreign” are subject to police surveillance and profiling.⁹ Experts have shown, however, that origin and migration history are not decisive factors when it comes to criminality.¹⁰

Anti-migrant discourses are typically accompanied by racist, anti-feminist, antisemitic, anti-Muslim, and queer- and transphobic attitudes.¹¹ The increase in hostility, discrimination, threats, and violence makes life more difficult and dangerous for many people. In 2024, almost 42,800 crimes motivated by right-wing extremism were recorded, a new record and an increase of 48 percent.¹² This included almost 1,500 violent offences. In 2023, CLAIM reported a 114 percent increase in anti-Muslim incidents in

comparison to the previous year.¹³ It is marginalised groups in particular who fear for their future in this country.

These racist and anti-migrant dynamics became especially apparent in Germany’s 2025 federal election campaign, and were also reflected in its results. Migration continues to be portrayed as one of society’s central problems, without those who do so also devising constructive strategies for organising a society shaped by migration. What’s more, challenges such as the climate crisis, growing inequality, a lack of housing, and the development of sustainable social policy in an ageing society took a back seat in the campaign discourse as a result—despite these issues being closely connected to how we equitably configure a society so shaped by migration. Demands for “deportation offensives”—including to regions still experiencing

⁸ Donata Hasselmann, “Die wichtigsten Fragen zur Ausländerkriminalität”, *Mediendienst Integration*, 2. April 2025, <https://mediendienst-integration.de/artikel/die-wichtigsten-fragen-zur-auslaenderkriminalitaet.html> (accessed 27 March 2025); Thomas Hestermann, *Wie Medien über Messerangriffe berichten: Expertise zur Berichterstattung*, (Berlin: Mediendienst Integration, 2025), https://mediendienst-integration.de/fileadmin/Dateien/Expertise_Berichterstattung_ueber_Messerangriffe_Thomas_Hestermann.pdf (accessed 27 March 2025).

⁹ For representative studies on racial profiling, see: Maximilian Müller and Alex Wittliff, *Racial Profiling bei Polizeikontrollen*, Sachverständigenrat für Integration und Migration, 2023, https://www.svr-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/SVR-Policy-Brief_Racial-Profiling-bei-Polizeikontrollen.pdf (accessed 3 May 2025); European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Being Black in the EU – Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2023), https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2023-being-black_in_the_eu_en.pdf (accessed 30 April 2025); European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Being Muslim in the EU – Experiences of Muslims in the EU* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024), https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2024-being-muslim-in-the-eu_en.pdf (accessed 29 April 2025).

¹⁰ Tobias Singelstein and Christian Walburg, *Sollten Medien die Herkunft von Tatverdächtigen nennen? Hintergrundwissen aus der kriminologischen Forschung* (Berlin: Mediendienst Integration, 2021), https://mediendienst-integration.de/fileadmin/Dateien/MEDIENDIENST_Herkunftsnennung_Expertise_Walburg_Singelstein_final.pdf (accessed 7 May 2025).

¹¹ Foroutan, *Die Postmigrantische Gesellschaft*, 160.

¹² ARD-aktuell, “Rekordwert bei politisch motivierter Kriminalität”, *tagesschau.de*, 20. Mai 2025, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/bilanz-politisch-motivierte-straftaten-dobrindt-innenministerium-100.html> (accessed 3 June 2025).

¹³ CLAIM – Allianz gegen Islamfeindlichkeit und Muslimfeindlichkeit, *Zivilgesellschaftliches Lagebild antimuslimischer Rassismus: Antimuslimische Vorfälle in Deutschland 2023 – Kurzzusammenfassung*, (Berlin: CLAIM, 2024), <https://www.claim-allianz.de/content/uploads/2024/07/zusammenfassung-lagebild-amr-antimuslimische-vorfalle-in-deutschland-2023.pdf?x91564> (accessed 7 May 2025).

conflict—as well as for a selective immigration policy oriented towards the interests of the labour market, and the criminalization of migrants are all growing louder.¹⁴ The increasing marginalisation of migrantised and racialised German citizens as second-class citizens is also evident in proposals to revoke the German citizenship of dual nationals convicted of crimes.¹⁵

These reactionary, short-sighted demands do nothing to help develop long-term perspectives for an inclusive society. But there are in fact a number of positive, tested examples and sustainable approaches that demonstrate the possibility of a constructive immigration policy—such as multilingual public agencies, culturally sensitive healthcare services, and successfully facilitated political participation, as well as the expansion of municipal voting rights and the recognition of qualifications and participation programmes that go beyond mere employability. However, these developments stand in stark contrast to current political rhetoric.

In light of these new challenges, the time has come to forge stronger postmigrant alliances. We understand postmigrant alliances as civil society coalitions that fight for the recognition of diversity, equal participation, and equality of opportunity. They are based on shared attitudes and bring together migrants and non-migrants, people affected by racism and those positioned as *white*¹⁶, to work collectively in pursuit of shared goals.¹⁷ Broad-based coalitions reflect the fact that combating racism, anti-migrant hostility, and other inhumane ideologies must be a task for society as a whole. Alliances that foreground shared values are concerned with taking collective responsibility for this society and steering a shift in attitudes that makes diverse futures possible.

There has so far been little empirical research into what is required to form postmigrant alliances. One exception is the study undertaken by Katarina Stjepandić and Serhat Karakayalı into the

¹⁴ See, for example, Donata Hasselmann, "Kann Deutschland das individuelle Asylrecht aussetzen? – Interview with Nora Markard", Mediendienst Integration, 7 April 2025, <https://mediendienst-integration.de/artikel/kann-deutschland-das-individuelle-asylrecht-aussetzen.html> (accessed 6 May 2025); ARD-aktuell, "BAMF-Chef stellt individuelles Asylrecht infrage," tagesschau.de, 1 April 2025, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/bamf-sommer-asylpolitik-aufnahme-gefluechtete-100.html> (accessed 6 May 2025).

¹⁵ See, for example, Correctiv, "Secret plan against Germany," Correctiv, 15 January 2024, <https://correctiv.org/en/top-stories/2024/01/15/secret-plan-against-germany/> (accessed 6 May 2025); Ali Ighreiz, "Deutsch ist, wer deutsch ist: Warum der Entzug des deutschen Passes verfassungswidrig ist", der Freitag, 5 February 2025, <https://www.freitag.de/autoren/der-freitag/doppelte-staatsbuergerschaft-entzug-des-deutschen-passes-ist-verfassungswidrig> (accessed 6 May 2025); Christian Rath, "Forderung von Friedrich Merz: Können kriminelle Doppelstaatler ausgebürgert werden?", Legal Tribune Online, 6 January 2025, <https://www.lto.de/recht/hintergruende/h/ausbuergerung-merz-straftaeter-migration-verfassungskonform> (accessed 6 May 2025).

¹⁶ We mark *white* with small italics to indicate that it does not refer to the colour of a person's skin, but the social attribution and political position of whiteness in a systemically racist society. Informations- und Dokumentationszentrum für Antirassismusbearbeitung e. V. (IDA), "Glossar: Weiß/Weiß sein", IDA e. V., <https://www.idaev.de/glossar/> (accessed on 6 May 2025).

¹⁷ Naika Foroutan, *Die postmigrantische Gesellschaft*, 198.

motivations of people who see themselves as part of postmigrant alliances.¹⁸ They emphasize that their motivations go beyond their own personal concern. Many participants share an anti-racist stance or understand migration as a collective experience, since in a country shaped by immigration, everyone comes into contact with the phenomenon in some way. This awareness is often the result of their own migrant contexts or having engaged with the subject in an academic context. We would like to build on these insights and focus on how these alliances can be facilitated.

PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

denotes the equal and self-determined participation of people perceived as migrants in all areas of society. In contrast to the concept of integration, participation emphasizes the recognition of diversity and the rejection of the exclusionary logic of difference.

¹⁸ Katarina Stjepandić and Serhat Karakayali, "Solidarität in postmigrantischen Allianzen: Die Suche nach dem Common Ground jenseits individueller Erfahrungskontexte", in *Postmigrantische Perspektiven*, ed. Naika Foroutan, Juliane Karakayali, and Riem Spielhaus (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2018), 237–252.

The Evolution of the Young Islam Conference (JIK) into Young Postmigrant Alliances

The Schwarzkopf Foundation Young Europe's Young Postmigrant Alliances programme, which was created in 2024, is an expansion of the approach established by the Young Islam Conference. Since 2011, under the motto "Values not Origins," we have been working with a network of over 1,000 young people with a wide variety of life experiences and backgrounds on issues such as participation, equal opportunity, and the discourse on Islam in Germany. One of the core aspects of our work is supporting these young people to find allies and become involved in civil society together. We also believe that it is of great importance to foster closer cooperation between those affected by racism and those who are not, Muslims and non-Muslims, people from East and West Germany, and to cultivate alliances that extend beyond Germany's borders, as well as those between different minorities, particularly between Muslims and Jews. We see expanding our work to incorporate postmigrant alliances as a way to support and cultivate these diverse coalitions.¹⁹

In today's migration society, alliances are increasingly based not on origin but on a shared commitment to pluralist democracy. Such allies are required in all spheres of life: in the workplace, in volunteer work, at school, in community engagement—everywhere. These alliances can challenge constructed differences and narrow understandings of "us." This raises the crucial question: How can we combine our strengths and act collectively?

For us, cooperation across lines of difference does not mean ignoring what makes people distinct, but rather negotiating these differences in a conscious and reflective way as part of the process of collaboration. In the context of political education, this means strengthening people's capacity to act in a context where access to resources is unequally distributed. Approaches that foreground discussions around assuming responsibility and power relations, such as "empowersharing," are highly relevant in this regard.²⁰ Strengthening skills such as self-reflection and the capacity to tolerate ambiguity is also of key importance here. We consider it a central task to provide opportunities to help people gain experience in conflict negotiation and to develop methods suitable for a variety of target groups and an ever-changing world.

¹⁹ Asmaa Soliman, "Proaktives Handeln und Allianzen im Kampf gegen Rassismus", Junge Islam Konferenz (2024), <https://www.junge-islam-konferenz.de/proaktives-handeln-und-allianzen-im-kampf-gegen-rassismus> (accessed 6 May 2025).

²⁰ Halil Can, "Doing Empowersharing – Empowerment und Powersharing als machtkritische und inklusive Handlungsstrategien gegen Rassismus und intersektionale Diskriminierungen", in *Handeln in Organisationen der Migrationsgesellschaft*, ed. Paul Mecheril and Matthias Rangger (Wiesbaden: Springer VS.), 397–418.



OUR VISION

A postmigrant society in which each person, both individually and collectively, can proactively participate, has equal rights and opportunities to shape their own future, and is free to pursue their dreams. In such a society, young people are able to actively define who they are and are listened to, taken seriously, and recognised.²¹

According to Naika Foroutan's analysis, postmigrant alliances emerge from a defensive position, with the aim of strategically pursuing shared goals.²² It is particularly important for us to be able to create spaces for people who are often primarily occupied with survival and responding to the obstacles they face in their everyday lives—spaces in which they can dream, and in which they can imagine the world they want to live in. Marginalisation often deprives communities of the ability to imagine their futures. As Ouassima Laabich's project "Muslim Futures" asks: What if Muslims had the space "to imagine a tomorrow, one that is more just, inclusive, and empowering?"²³ **In this spirit, we see postmigrant alliances as sites of imagination as well as exchange, reflection, and strategic development.**

The *Connecting Minds—Festival for Power and Solidarity*, which took place in September 2024, took up this very issue, putting postmigrant alliances more firmly at the centre for the first time. Fifty-four participants travelled from all across Germany to take part.²⁴ The festival's panel discussions, workshops, training sessions, and "power spaces" helped deepen their knowledge and strengthen the skills that are essential for working in alliances. In the context of this festival, we also involved participants in a qualitative and quantitative research project in order to better understand and incorporate their perceptions, needs, and experiences with alliances.²⁵

²¹ For more information on our mission, see: Young Islam Conference, "What We Do", Young Islam Conference, <https://www.junge-islam-konferenz.de/en/about-us/what-we-do/> (accessed 6 May 2025).

²² Naika Foroutan, *Die Postmigrantisches Gesellschaft*, 198.

²³ Ouassima Laabich and Sayda Elaarbi, "About us", Muslim Futures, <https://muslimfutures.de/about-us/> (accessed on 6 May 2025).

²⁴ At the time of the event, the participants were between 17 and 31 years old and came from twelve federal states. Most were in higher education or taking part in professional training, while some were working, going to school or pursuing other paths. The group was made up of people with different life experiences and backgrounds, including participants with and without experiences of discrimination.

²⁵ As part of the research, we asked speakers and participants of the 2024 *Connecting Minds* Festival about their views on postmigrant alliances. The data were collected using an online questionnaire that had 46 participants and seven qualitative interviews.

The aim of this publication is to provide impetus to the fostering of postmigrant alliances through political education practices. It centres the perspectives of our festival participants and is supplemented by the viewpoints of experts from the fields of political education, academia, and politics.

The first chapter takes a look at the potential for new postmigrant alliances and the role of programmes such as ours. Dawud Yildirim, our programme's 2024 Outreach Fellow, reflects on the questions that guide his search for alliances, as well as the experiences and hopes that drive him. Following this, we outline and analyse characteristics such as shared attitudes, courage, empathy, and perseverance, all of which are so important for cooperation.

In the second chapter, the challenges that alliances face—including conflict, internal power dynamics, and a lack of awareness around discrimination—are more closely examined from the perspective of our participants.

The third chapter is devoted to Muslim-Jewish alliances and why these are now more necessary than ever, and concludes with an interview with political educators Derviş Hızarcı and Daniel Eliasson from the Kreuzberg Initiative Against Antisemitism (Kreuzberger Initiative gegen Antisemitismus, KlgA e. V.), which provides insight into the connection between friendship and alliances as well as lessons learned from Muslim-Jewish cooperation. Together, these contributions demonstrate the range of opportunities for supporting and strengthening postmigrant alliances—whether as an individual, in civil society, as a political educator,²⁶ or in politics.

²⁶ Describes people working in extracurricular political education on a full-time, part-time or voluntary basis, thereby creating opportunities for political education for children, young people and adults.

A Politics Both For and With Postmigrant Alliances?

As part of our conversation series JIK Meets Politics, we spoke in summer 2024 with policymakers at the national and EU levels about postmigrant alliances in times of growing influence from far-right movements. We discussed how politicians can live up to their responsibility in this moment. Among other things, the importance of supporting and working with civil society was emphasised in our discussions. The following quotes from three of our conversation partners provide a snapshot of different perspectives on these issues.

FILIZ POLAT member of the German Bundestag for Alliance 90/The Greens

"You have to forge alliances in order to take on responsibility in the first place. This is not always an easy task, and you have to be assertive. I have noticed, for example—as someone who has been politically active for a long time—that my party, which has an explicitly antiracist stance—harbours its own racisms among its membership and elsewhere. Things only really started to change in a material way when we adopted our diversity statute, which mandates that we become more diverse and share power more evenly. I believe that our society, as diverse as it is, can't just make demands on the street or act from outside parliament—it must actively push for greater involvement in decision-making organisations."

ÖZLEM DEMIREL member of the European Parliament for Die Linke

"As important as it is to stand in solidarity with all broad-based movements that oppose racism and fascism, it's just as important to shape the discourse and carry out the necessary debates—and maybe even conflicts—within that broad spectrum, in order to define what a different and just politics might look like. Because that's the only way to stop the right from gaining more ground. For me, these two things are intrinsically linked."

HELGE LINDH member of the German Bundestag for the SPD

"On the one hand, civil society organisations have the impression that we do not trust them, and we politicians feel that we are treated as being inherently suspect. How then are politicians and civil society organisations supposed to successfully work together to combat anti-democratic sentiment when there is such a mutual lack of trust? We need to move beyond this culture of suspicion, and it is here that alliances are absolutely essential."

CHAPTER 1

FRESH IMPETUS FOR POSTMIGRANT ALLIANCES

Connected despite Differences: In Pursuit of a Just Society

DAWUD YILDIRIM 2024 OUTREACH FELLOW

"Sometimes we have to do the work even though we don't yet see a glimmer on the horizon that it's actually going to be possible."²⁷

With these words, Angela Davis reminds us that it is still worth advocating for change, even when the potential fruits of our labours remain unrealised. The same holds true for alliances. Alliances require patience, perseverance, and the belief that progress will occur with time. Stamina of this sort is crucial in sustained collaborations aimed at transforming power structures and building a more just society. When doing so, it is important that the particularities of the future we are working towards remain at the forefront of our minds.

What I was most moved by at the *Connecting Minds* festival²⁸ was how many participants were willing to speak about their own personal histories and concerns—about their dreams, but also the challenges that they face on a daily basis. In listening to these stories, it became clear to me that these sorts of spaces, in which people can truly open up and engage in honest dialogue, are sadly all too rare. How often do people have to hold these thoughts on their own, without anyone there to listen to them?

²⁷ Angela Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 29.

²⁸ The *Connecting Minds* Festival for Power and Solidarity took place in Berlin in 2024. More information can be found here: <https://www.junge-islam-konferenz.de/aktuell/veranstaltungen/connecting-minds-festival-fuer-power-und-zusammenhalt/> (accessed on 7 May 2025).

Collectively, we were able to create a safe (or rather “safer”) space. In every conversation, every sharing circle, and every workshop, the following questions resonated throughout:

- Where is our society headed with respect to extremism?
- What will become of us, the children and grandchildren of migrants, in a society increasingly shaped by division, mistrust, and hatred?
- Will Germany still be a place where we can feel safe in the future?
- Or will it be a place where life becomes even more difficult for people like us?

I was deeply moved by the workshop on Muslim-Jewish alliances held by Derviş Hızarcı and Daniel Eliasson (see Chapter 3). The discussions on the difficulties of forging alliances were also particularly lively. Amidst all the societal ruptures that we witness on a daily basis, the festival provided a moment of hope, of optimism. It was a place where we did not see each other as adversaries or competitors, instead encountering each other as allies, all of whom—despite all our differences—pursue a common goal. We all want a society in which belonging is not determined by heritage or religion, but by the willingness to stand up for each other.

The experience was both emotional as well as healing. Many of us carry wounds and scars left by discrimination, exclusion, and prejudice. Despite this—or perhaps precisely because of it—this space was so important. It was if we were all able to take a deep breath, hold each other, and share the fears that often accompany us like shadows.

Postmigrant alliances—it may sound like an abstract term. But in reality, it isn’t all that complicated. Postmigrant alliances are formed on the basis of shared values, not shared origins. They don’t emerge through theoretical debate, but rather through genuine encounters and exchanges with others. They can emerge from friendship groups, societies or clubs, or our communities, as well as with people that we do not (yet) know, but who share similar objectives.

They emerge in moments wherein we open up to each other, are willing to be vulnerable, and recognise that despite our differences, we wish for things to move in the same direction. They also emerge when we advocate for others in their absence, because we see them as allies, friends, or as part of ourselves. This leads to the insight that we are not alone, and that we don’t have to be. At the festival, in spaces filled with young people, it became clear to me how much strength we have when we connect with each other and join forces. People with a range of different backgrounds step out of their comfort zones, approach one another, and say: let’s tackle these challenges together.

You can do it too



**ALLOW YOURSELF TO FEEL THINGS,
AND USE YOUR EMOTIONS AS A SOURCE
OF MOTIVATION**

Political work requires stamina, strength, and a high tolerance for frustration—such work will inevitably take its toll on you, and it is important not to suppress the emotions that arise as a result. Shared grief, rage, powerlessness, and hope are all valuable sources of political strength. Whether you have been directly impacted or you are acting in solidarity, give your feelings room to breathe, allow yourself to be vulnerable, connect with others, and hang tough—even if that includes taking breaks. Collective change requires connection, patience, and time for healing.

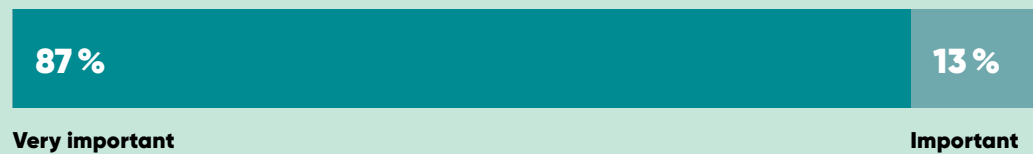
It is worth mentioning that none of this means we will all always be on the same page. Quite the opposite, in fact: alliances must be able to withstand dissent and differences of opinion. But alliances cannot grow at the expense of our individual lives and identities. They must do justice to this diversity, not practice exclusion. Even when coalitions are formed to promote solidarity and justice, they still face the challenge of overcoming internal power dynamics and discrimination in order to create an inclusive space for all those affected. They remain a dynamic, ongoing process of negotiation which must be constantly refined. As a result, they present a compelling alternative model for the coexistence they espouse—and only in this way can they possibly realise their visions.

One question remains: What do we do with these insights? How can we also experience such spaces, in which we feel safe and heard, in our daily lives as well? It's simply not enough to merely speak about change.

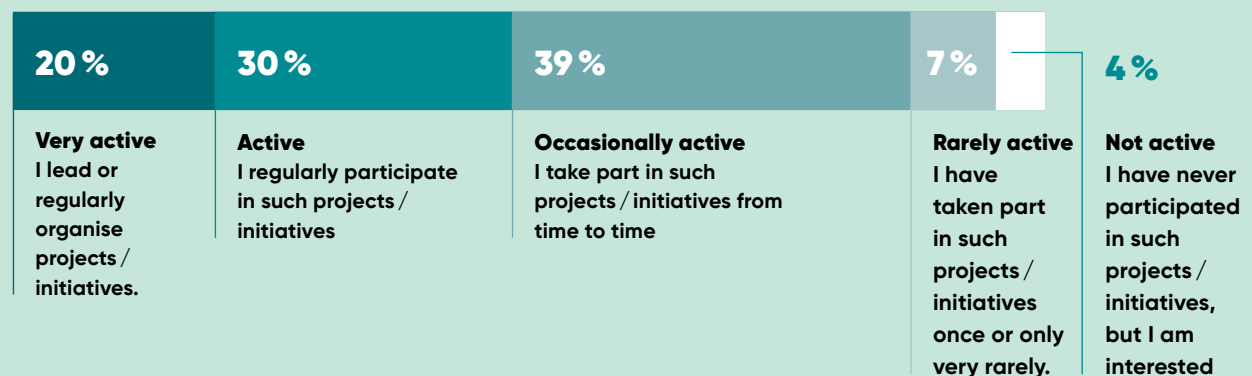
I want to carry over the understanding I have gained from postmigrant alliances into my everyday life by drawing attention to social injustices and advocating for causes that may not directly affect me. I want to utilise my privilege to support others, particularly those who experience multiple forms of hate and marginalisation, including from within migrant communities themselves. By constantly engaging in dialogue with others and maintaining networks, I seek to draw strength from those affected and work together on a collective process of healing. Only if we have the courage to recognise our differences and walk the path towards change together can we build a future in which diversity is our strength and justice our foundation.

The Relevance of Postmigrant Alliances for our Network

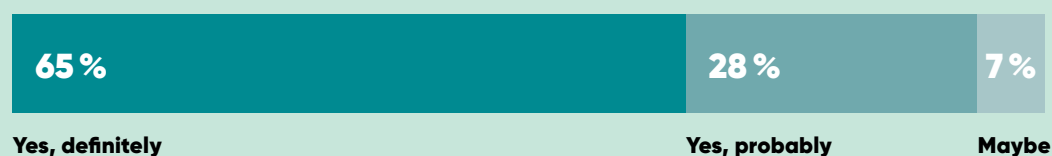
1 In your opinion, how important is it to form alliances between people with different positions of power and experiences of discrimination in order to address social challenges?



2 How active are you in initiatives or projects that bring people with different positionalities together?



3 Would you like to become more involved in postmigrant alliances in the future?



In our work, we observed a strong desire for postmigrant alliances among the young participants, as well as a willingness to become more involved in this area. The importance of stronger alliances across varied positions of power and experiences of discrimination was unanimously expressed in the survey and in discussions (see Diagram 1).

The willingness to become even more actively involved in strengthening these alliances is particularly important to us. Half of the respondents described their current involvement with initiatives or projects that bring people with different positionalities together as active or very active and extending to taking on a leadership role.

When asked “Would you like to become more involved in postmigrant alliances in the future?”, a large majority (65%) responded that they would definitely like to become more involved. None of the respondents ruled out stronger involvement. Even participants who perceive themselves as inactive or rarely active signalled a need here that we would like to pursue. With these findings on the sentiment around participating in alliances, we would also like to encourage other political educators to respond to this need with new formats and programmes.

VOICES FROM THE NETWORK: MEVIZE ²⁹

Mevize Meryem Candan is 21 years old and a passionate activist. She is involved in various initiatives: From founding the meet&need association, which offers support to homeless women and children with refugee backgrounds, to working on the board of a Muslim university group.

What experiences have shaped your understanding of alliances?

There is a story that has been passed down through generations and that my parents repeatedly passed on to me. To summarise: “A single arrow can easily be broken, but many arrows together are strong.” I realised this for myself very quickly – alone, I can be broken or be erased if I am too conspicuous and become a target. But if I share my idea in a network, then it will continue to exist. That’s why alliances are much more important than working as an individual.

²⁹ Interview from 15 September 2024, edited and shortened.

What Does it Take? Aspects of Successful Cooperation

We see the promotion of alliances as a way to build meaningful connections and creative power that counteract the prevailing pessimism. Specifically, this involves enabling young people to get involved and organise with others, forming the foundation for sustained engagement and participation in activism.

We, as well as many of our participants, see a shared attitude as the key to successful alliances. Among other things, it requires a strong will, empathy, a willingness to learn, and perseverance.

*"Together, resources can be pooled, which makes us stronger. Prejudices and stereotypes can be broken down and history can be reappraised."*³⁰

The reasons for involvement are varied and complex. Participants often describe both the potential for social change and the impact on the people who come together in the alliance. The current and potential social impact of alliances is evaluated differently. Many of the participants express their motivation to join forces and build power - in the hope that what was previously impossible will become achievable through solidarity-based action.

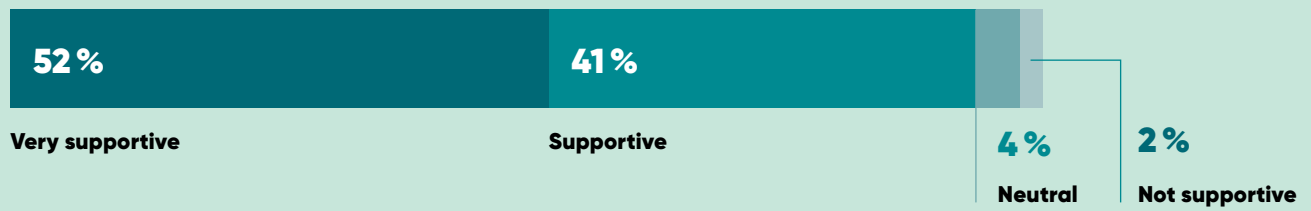
"From my perspective, the current influence could be expanded. A lot of potential is not being utilised because social division sets up boundaries that can be erased."

"We must all realise that it is a 'positive-sum game' and not a 'zero-sum game'."

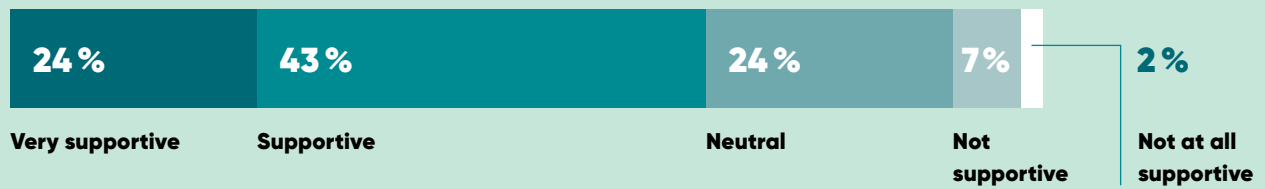
For some of those involved, the impact "internally" is at least as important as the effectiveness "externally". Empowering and strengthening each other, learning from one another, breaking down prejudices, and participating collectively are emphasised by many as positive experiences. Postmigrant alliances can offer strengthening and hopeful experiences: A sense of shared responsibility for social issues and for change towards a more just society that overcomes the supposed boundaries between "us" and "them".

"Solidarity also manifests itself in standing up for each other, especially in difficult times. It is not a one-way street, but a mutual promise not to leave each other alone."

4 How do you perceive the cooperation between people with similar experiences of discrimination?



5 How do you perceive cooperation between people with and without experiences of discrimination?



Cooperation between people with similar experiences of discrimination was almost exclusively described as “supportive” and “very supportive” – over 93% in total. When it comes to cooperation between people with and without experience of discrimination, the result is milder, but still predominantly positive. The vast majority of respondents (67%) experienced the cooperation as positive. A quarter responded neutrally, and almost 10% described it as unsupportive or not supportive at all. In the more detailed comments accompanying these answers, an ambivalence becomes clear, as the collaboration is perceived as enriching in many ways, including because it can enable interesting exchange, new approaches, and resources. At the same time, it brings its own challenges.

"We must network and communicate well with allies so that we can join forces. To do this, it is sometimes necessary for us to put aside minor differences of opinion. This is not to say that we should completely abandon our own stance and accept everything, but we should realise that we are all going through different learning processes. As long as the common goal of a more just world for all people and without any form of discrimination exists and our fundamental values are the same, we need to take one step at a time together and should not put the cart before the horse."

Postmigrant cooperation always involves encounters with different lived realities and perspectives, which brings with it potential points of friction. Collaborative work requires a tolerance of ambiguity, perseverance and patience for learning processes and possible mistakes. The shared will to change and the negotiation of viable differences are crucial.

Empathy was named as an important quality by many participants. Even if the ability to empathise is part of the innate human repertoire, it must be trained and nurtured. In a postmigrant context, the ability to empathise with varied realities and switch perspectives is essential. This means that empathy always entails greater awareness and the broadening of one's own perspective.³¹ Empathy also includes responding appropriately to the needs of others, offering support to counterparts or standing up for them in difficult situations.

"It feels good to see that good people still exist who stand up for 'others'."

³¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung and Fondazione Cariplo, *Interkulturelle Kompetenz – Die Schlüsselkompetenz im 21. Jahrhundert?* (Gütersloh/Milan: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008), https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Presse/imported/downloads/xcms_bst_dms_30236_30237_2.pdf (accessed on 6 May 2025).

We also believe that learning and practising solidarity is particularly important for empowering alliances. Participants describe a multi-layered understanding of acting in solidarity. Among other things, it means civil courage and standing up for others, even if a discriminatory act or problematic behaviour does not affect you personally. One participant replied that acting in solidarity means "... standing up, even if nobody is looking or notices it." This emphasises the unconditionality and sometimes invisibility of these everyday actions and suggests a

decoupling from recognition or reward. Using and sharing privileges as well as access to resources is another aspect. Many participants describe alliances that go beyond an individual level and include the ability to intervene in racist and otherwise inhumane systems of oppression. They want to actively shape a just society.

"It is super important that people without these experiences also stand side by side and that they also use their resources to make a difference."

VOICES FROM THE NETWORK: KIM³²



Kim Machbar, 23 years old, won the 2024 "(Post)migrant youth prize for (post) migrant engagement in East Germany", which is awarded by the umbrella organisation of migrant organisations in East Germany (DaMOst). Kim is involved with Youth without Borders (Jugendliche ohne Grenzen, JoG) and advocates for the rights of young refugees.

In your experience, what is needed for effective and sustainable cooperation in alliances?

On the one hand, they need to create access and opportunities to realistically achieve goals and demands. They need to be structurally effective. On the other hand, several people have to work together on one thing. A quote from Kool Savas comes to mind, which I find very appropriate here: "The best friend is someone who not only takes, who also accepts a no, who also defends you." Within the alliances, there needs to be an honest understanding of each other and a certain reliability. It's similar to friendships.

I also recognise that capitalist and self-serving interest can sometimes get in the way. Dependencies, for example through party political affiliations or funding, often restrict people's voices. For me, one thing is certain: human rights and equality should take centre stage so that alliances can actually constructively work against power structures.

CHAPTER 2

"EMPOWERSHARING": A WAY OF THINKING THROUGH POSSESSING AND LACKING POWER SIMULTANEOUSLY

Many participants stressed that working in alliances requires—and sometimes challenges— a conscious engagement with various power imbalances. This necessitates reflective processes and educational practices that meet people where they are. For those directly affected, participating in these contexts can be accompanied by feelings of wariness and tension. There is also often a fear of reproducing prejudices, of not being understood, or the sense that they need to justify or assert themselves in order to be heard.

One of the respondents in our study said that it was difficult to evaluate cooperative efforts between people who have and have not experienced discrimination, explaining:

*"Cooperation between people who have and have not experienced discrimination is certainly important, as it can be enlightening and helps foster dialogue. But it can also be very painful and even harmful. The level of sensitivity and understanding on the part of people who have not experienced discrimination personally can be limited."*³³

This description of such cooperative efforts as being "important but demanding" was echoed repeatedly. A reflective approach to power dynamics and solidarity across communities is essential for sustainable postmigrant alliances. A lack of awareness of one's own positionality and the political or everyday consequences of existing power relations, particularly among those who have not experienced discrimination personally, as well as differing perceptions of the urgency of certain issues, can lead to conflict..

³³ The anonymous quotes in this text are taken from our survey of 46 participants of the *Connecting Minds* Festival in September 2024.

You can do it too



REFLECT, LEARN, AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE

Change begins from within: understand your privilege, question your assumptions, and commit to continuous learning—about racism, queerphobia, ableism, classism, and other prevalent power structures. Speak about these issues in your social settings, attend events, and share spaces, knowledge, and access. While doing so, remember that it is the voices of those directly affected by structural discrimination that belong in the foreground—they know best how these systems function and where they fail.

Some participants emphasised the importance of safer spaces in the context of alliances, especially when working with groups in which not everyone has experienced the same form of discrimination. These spaces can provide a meaningful place of refuge, as well as an environment in which people feel that they can express themselves more freely and work through their experiences without feeling pressured to constantly explain themselves or educate others.

"We need spaces in which we don't need to explain ourselves, where we can finally relax mentally and be ourselves."

"Our experiences resonate with each other and we can be there for one another. We're not alone with our worries and our collective pain."

Participants described safer spaces as being spaces in which they feel seen and understood. They are also crucial for developing strategies and opportunities for action, allowing people to better navigate racist dynamics, discrimination, and other social challenges.

"In my experience, [safer spaces] often make hardships more bearable, and you benefit from others' knowledge of how to respond."

One participant described empowerment as "a key first step" and building alliances with allies as a necessary next one.

"I haven't experienced racism myself, which is why it is important to talk with those who have. I'm not sure, however, how they feel about working with someone like me—someone who cannot understand their pain."

Even people who want to act as allies face questions and insecurities in their learning and reflection processes. Creating spaces where those not directly affected can engage with one another in course of their development can be valuable—without placing the burden of that labour on those who are affected by discrimination and exclusion.

It is essential to foster collaborative spaces in which people learn to work with their own lack of knowledge and tolerate ambiguity. Openness and respectful dialogue should be understood as prerequisites to engaging in educational programmes and exchange processes, as they can help facilitate relationship-building and collaboration. Too often, people from marginalised groups are expected to

share their painful or even traumatic experiences. In order to counteract this boundary-crossing dynamic, it is necessary to circumvent common pressures and proactively create a context wherein people are free to share their stories and experiences—or not—and wherein emotional vulnerability is something offered in a reciprocal manner. This helps build trust and a sense of equality while preventing harm through exoticisation or sensationalism.

The fact that these stereotypes are deeply ingrained and widely reproduced in society means that reshaping group dynamics requires awareness, practice, and patience. A key step is shifting expectations and addressing the behaviour of people who might ask inappropriate questions.

"As with everything, it is important to be aware of the power dynamics that exist within a given group and to be open to others' perspectives, in order to learn and, just as importantly, to unlearn."

ALLYSHIP

Allyship is an ongoing and reflective process of solidarity offered by privileged people to those who experience marginalisation. At its core, it involves confronting one's own privileges, making discrimination more visible, and engaging in supportive action that strengthens the perspectives of those affected.

Halil Can's Concept of "Empowersharing"³⁴

With his concept of "empowersharing," political scientist Halil Can encourages a form of political education work that engages critically with the role of separate and shared spaces for people with different positionalities and experiences of marginalization. He combines the established notion of empowerment with power-sharing, conceiving of three distinct political spaces:

1. **empowerment**
2. **power-sharing**
3. **empowersharing**

All three involve dealing with power. In this context, power is initially understood as being neutral, and is defined "as the potentiality latent in both the individual and social-interactive ability to act and exert influence on oneself and one's (social) environment or existence, and which is dependent on the possibility of it being enacted."³⁵

Can stresses the importance of breaking away from rigid notions of power and powerlessness. Power is often understood as something absolute—some are considered powerless, while others are viewed as powerful. In reality, however, power relations are dynamic and intersectional: all people have power, albeit in differing quantities. In comparison to others,

most people are both privileged and disadvantaged in different ways based on certain aspects of their positionality, such as nationality, residency status, gender, class, or disability. The privileges people are able to access and the forms of discrimination they are subject to can change over the course of their lives. This complexity requires strategies that address both power and powerlessness in a conjoined manner.

While empowerment refers to strengthening the position of those who lack power and face discrimination, in particular through mindful dialogue and critical reflection in safer spaces for marginalised groups, power-sharing addresses those in privileged positions. Can argues that interventions into power imbalances must account for the positions of both sides in order to be both effective and sustainable.

The power-sharing approach entails practical action. This includes both individual and collective efforts, such as the equitable redistribution of resources, increasing institutional access, and reflecting on structurally rooted privilege. The practices of critical whiteness³⁶ and critical masculinity³⁷ are two examples of this approach. Building upon the concept of using separate spaces to address both

³⁴ Based on an interview with Halil Can on 13 September 2024.

³⁵ Halil Can, "Transformative Empowersharing. Empowerment und Powersharing als machtkritisches Handeln in sozial und ökologisch-planetarischer Verantwortung", in *Empowerment und Powersharing. Ankerpunkte – Positionierungen – Arenen*, ed. Yasmine Chehata and Birgit Jagusch, 2nd Edition (Weinheim: Beltz Juventa, 2023), 361.

³⁶ Critical whiteness refers to a critical perspective on whiteness as a social category. See, for example, "KURZ ERKLÄRT: CRITICAL WHITENESS", Vielfalt-Mediathek, <https://www.vielfalt-mediathek.de/critical-whiteness> (accessed on 6 May 2025).

³⁷ Critical masculinity describes a critical examination of sexist oppression in the context of systemic male privilege, gender roles and sexist behaviour.

the phenomena of power and powerlessness, Can conceives of a third space: the empowersharing space, in which people with a range of positionalities come together in order to collectively develop practices that are critical of power and centred around solidarity.

You can do it too

ALLIANCES ARE JUST A STEP AWAY

Potential allies can be found in many different situations, and usually right on your doorstep: build bridges that extend beyond your bubble and tap into existing sources of knowledge—in your neighbourhood, for instance, or at advisory centres or (post)migrant organisations. Many of these local stakeholders are well connected, know what is needed on the ground, and able to respond quickly and effectively. Make use of these established structures, seek out dialogue, and work in tandem with them.

EVEIN OBULOR

"We need to understand how the systems we live under function. Only with such knowledge will we be able to change them (...). bell hooks said that "What we cannot imagine cannot come into being." Tap into this imaginative power, but be sure to also apply it practically, always thinking: How can this be implemented? Who do I need to make it a reality? And never lose sight of the cities you live in." ³⁸

³⁸ Evein Obulor, "Und jetzt? Gemeinsam durch bedrohliche Zeiten", JIK Talks, Berlin, September 2024, 1 h, 23 min, 55 s, <https://www.youtube.com/live/ZF0WztQi1SY?si=KhFagNcQEgqAfIZj> (accessed on 7 May 2025).

In conversation, Can explained that empowerment and power-sharing spaces should be designed in a way that is intersectional and self-determined; those seeking to address sexism, for instance, might have separate spaces for Black³⁹ women and women of colour.

With his concept of empowersharing, Can calls for encounters that take place after these separate processes have occurred. This shared space enables discussion about what experiences the separate processes induced, how those experiences shape us, and how significant they are for a given person. Such encounters would also involve shared reflection upon how collective practices of solidarity can be implemented in order to actually produce change on both the individual and societal level.

What distinguishes this empowersharing space from other mixed spaces? In our conversation with Can, he emphasised that "this empowersharing space has its own distinct quality." The individuals present suddenly find themselves in different circumstances, due to having critically engaged with their own

experiences and positionalities. For Can, this model also requires adopting a critical stance towards paternalism—meaning that efforts to counteract power imbalances, such as redistribution, should not be made conditional.

According to Can, there are two prerequisites for cultivating reflective encounters in which participants engage as equals: the recognition of discrimination, and access to adequate resources to make spaces of reflection possible. The lack of recognition of various forms of discrimination in public discourse inhibits the development and implementation of concrete measures for dismantling them. One example in this regard is the denial of institutional racism in the police force by both state institutions and large swathes of mainstream society. These spaces also require both means and motivation, which means that society and its institutions must be genuinely willing to engage in anti-racist transformation. Only when these conditions are fulfilled will it be possible for a genuine transformation towards a more equitable and inclusive society to take place.

PATERNALISM

Paternalism refers to patronising forms of assistance offered from a more dominant position of power that deprive affected individuals of their agency, and which primarily serve to reinforce the perspectives and self-worth of the person offering help. Instead, approaches critical of paternalism rely on solidarity-based support extended on equal footing, foregrounding the needs and viewpoints of those affected.

³⁹ The term Black is capitalised to make it clear that this refers to a political identity and not to skin colour.

VOICES FROM THE NETWORK: NURGÜL ⁴⁰

Nurgül is 27 years old and a passionate advocate for equity in education and political engagement. As manager for Jusos Hamburg (the SPD's youth wing in Hamburg), she is responsible for administrative tasks and organises political events. She also actively promotes empowerment by leading workshops in schools.

What does it mean to you to have allies at your side?

For me, allies are essential, since alliances are important counterweights to established power structures, as they aim to establish balance or provide alternative pathways. Joining forces with like-minded comrades offers a way to escape individual powerlessness and fear. A formative experience for me was the feeling that others would stand up for me, even when I was not present. This sense of assurance motivates me to take action myself.

In your opinion, what do alliances need?

I worry that alliances often lack resources and rely heavily on voluntary work. My hope is that we will be able to hold on to everything that has already been established, and that collaborative efforts are professionalised and institutionalised—without any unnecessary bureaucracy, however. In particular, I aim to encourage young people to recognise the political dimensions of their lives.

CHAPTER 3

MUSLIM-JEWISH ALLIANCES

One sort of alliance that we would particularly like to support through our Young Postmigrant Alliances programme is that of Muslim-Jewish alliances. It goes without saying that we in Germany have been strongly impacted by the Middle East conflict, the escalation that has occurred since October 7 2023 and the ongoing suffering, and as an organisation we would like to focus our efforts on those affected here. We have observed an increase in both antisemitic and anti-Muslim crime. We also sense that there is a danger of society becoming even more polarised. No condemnation of anti-semitism should be used to fan the flames of anti-Muslim racism; equally, condemning anti-Muslim racism must not be instrumentalised in order to stoke antisemitic sentiment.

In this context, we see our role as being that of facilitator, encouraging dialogue between people with differing positions on this issue; not only do we seek to bring down the temperature of the debate, we also aim to create space for encounters that strengthen all involved. We are excited to be able to support the formation of more alliances between

Jews and Muslims through a new project beginning in 2025. The specific focus of the project is on the untold stories of coexistence between Muslims and Jews within the context of the Holocaust. As part of Muslim-Jewish duos, young people from all across Germany will have the opportunity to delve into the issue through their own artistic projects and the curation of an exhibition. There are then two layers of Muslim-Jewish alliances in this project: the thematic focus on the issue of solidarity-based action, and the pairing of the participants themselves.

The Role of Muslim–Jewish Alliances: A Conversation with Derviş Hızarcı and Daniel Eliasson⁴¹

At our *Connecting Minds* festival, Derviş Hızarcı and Daniel Eliasson presented their experiences with and thoughts on alliances to our network. Since 2015, **Derviş Hızarcı** has been leading the Kreuzberg Initiative Against Antisemitism (Kreuzberger Initiative gegen Antisemitismus, KIgA e. V.) in his role as chairman. **Daniel Eliasson** is the constituency office manager for Tonka Wojahn, a Green MP in the Berlin state parliament, as well as being deputy leader of the Greens-affiliated BVV (district assembly group) in Steglitz-Zehlendorf. He has been working with the KIgA for almost a decade.

VINYA You’ve just come from a lively discussion in a workshop with the participants of our festival. The discussion was about alliances: the motivations behind forming them, potential obstacles, and first steps. Why do you think that we need Muslim–Jewish alliances?

DANIEL Given the state of things in this country at the moment, all minorities need to take a look around and assess the situation—and not only take note, but in fact grasp hold of anyone who could be an ally. It is becoming increasingly difficult to exist as a minority in Germany, and in some federal states this is particularly evident. I am increasingly unable to comprehend how minorities can waste their precious time attacking one another. We need alliances, partly because such examples naturally have a huge impact on the communities themselves, but also because their effects reverberate outwards, too. They are a key component of the new kind of German identity that we want to create. For everyone working towards progressive goals, the aim is to create a shift away from the *völkisch* [an ethno-nationalist understanding of German identity] towards

an understanding of Germany as a postmigrant society. Postmigrant alliances serve as examples in this regard: they show that such alliances can actually work, and that, despite what some particularly strident voices might proclaim, multiculturalism hasn’t actually failed.

DERVIŞ I also think that protecting minorities is becoming ever more important, and that at the same time it is becoming increasingly difficult for people to come together and to build up and pool their resources and capacities. As groups impacted by racism, antisemitism, and hatred, there is no other option but for us to come together. This is important, because it is an effective tool to combat the constant attempts to play us off against each other—a dynamic which not only weakens those of us impacted by racism and antisemitism, but also bolsters those who purvey hatred and intolerance.

VINYA We have also observed how intensely Muslims and Jews are being turned against one another at present—a phenomenon that is only becoming more prevalent.

DERVIŞ When it comes to Jewish–Muslim alliances, it is important to point out that both of these groups are perceived as being monolithic in nature, with the idea that they have never and will never be able to coexist. In line with this belief, most people declare their solidarity much more readily with one side, at the expense of the other. We don’t want to engage in such games. We need to expose this double standard and work to counteract it. Alliances can combat antisemitism and racism in wider society—which is broadly non-Jewish and non-Muslim—while also reducing the resentment, prejudice, and even

⁴¹ Interview from 15 September 2024, edited and shortened.

hatred that exists within our own communities. In all honesty, it's hard to see a downside to Jewish-Muslim alliances, and when something has a lot going for it, you simply have to set about making it a reality.

VINYA In the sense of “making it a reality,” in the workshop you also used your friendship as an example, framing the relationship between two individuals as the smallest possible instance of an alliance. Could you expand on that a little?

DERVIŞ “Alliance” is such a weighty term. In our case, it was simply a friendship that grew over time—with and through humour, empathy, meeting each other halfway, being open to allowing the other person into your own world while also taking up the other person's invitation to enter theirs. Put simply, it's about this willingness.

DANIEL But an understanding of shared goals is key. On a smaller scale, this could be with respect to KlgA projects, for instance—but also on a larger scale, it might mean in terms of society as a whole and how we would like it to look. As well as the shared desire to somehow make it happen. This mixture is what counts.

DERVIŞ We do not only differ in terms of this aspect—he with his “Jewishness” and me with my “Muslimness,” whatever that may mean for us individually—but also in the sense that we conceive of things differently. We have different opinions on certain political and social issues, but we acknowledge and respect this, and are always tolerant of each other. This is something that we have to continually maintain and be open to. It's incredibly easy to accept someone else's opinion if it's the same as yours. Acceptance is more about tolerance, considering and allowing for other viewpoints, and

finding a way to negotiate them—as equals, and in a way that is positive and fair. That's what matters!

VINYA In your experience, what is lacking in political education work when it comes to navigating differences and fostering mutual acceptance and respect? What advice would you give to others seeking to follow a similar path?

DANIEL To start with, it is important to say that you don't need to broach the most difficult issues straight away if the aim is to foster dialogue, connection, or alliances. I don't think that it makes sense, for example, to bring Palestinians and Muslims together with Jews who share an interest in these issues, and to then ask, “Okay, so who is in the right when it comes to the Middle East conflict?” I think that this sort of approach is nonsense. Something else that I have also repeatedly witnessed, however, is a situation like Derviş talking for two hours about the KlgA's work—about dialogues, projects, and alliances—only for someone to put up their hand and say, “Yeah, okay, but what is your position on Israel's right to exist?” In these moments, I think to myself, “Have you actually been listening to him? Have you listened at all over the past two hours?” It has to go both ways. You shouldn't immediately try to identify what is problematic in something and then seek out points of contention. You need to look for commonalities, as it these that will form the basis for any future action. Of course, it is also important to discuss our differences. But in order for that to work, you have to have first established common ground, in order that the aspects which separate you don't become the defining aspects of the relationship that you are trying to build.

DERVIŞ I think that we also have to be mindful of the fact that when it comes to engaging in dialogue, the point is not to go into it with the aim of convincing the other person, but in fact to be convinced of

the validity of the other person's position. In terms of the so-called "conflict in the Middle East," you shouldn't go into such discussions demanding certain acknowledgements or concessions, as Daniel has already said. Your first instinct should be to listen and to figure out why somebody thinks the way they do, regardless of whether their position is different to yours, or indeed incorrect or problematic. I need to know what the starting point of the discussion is. In our work, we have frequently seen people who initially had misgivings, or were misinformed, or who sometimes even had particularly nasty attitudes, eventually get to a point where they questioned these positions. Engaging with people in an empathetic way and providing spaces that allowed for reflection, along with deliberately planned exercises and processes made it possible for them to break free of problematic perspectives. It is possible to dismantle one-sided perspectives and black-and-white thinking.

VINYA Given the prevailing discourse, which depicts Jews and Muslims as being homogeneous in nature and irreconcilable with one another, Muslim-Jewish alliances can be difficult to imagine. What experiences do you draw on in order to maintain your belief that greater cooperation is possible?

DERVIŞ We don't believe in anything that we have not already experienced, but rather believe in and practice that which we know to actually work. There are many examples which demonstrate that things can be done differently: Jews and Muslims riding tandem bikes together; sharing flats; and those who have travelled widely and thereby helped Jewish-Muslim alliances develop and prosper. Many Jews and Muslims have also gone to a synagogue or mosque together or have opened up their homes to the other community to celebrate a religious festival.

For me, the things happening on this really personal, fundamental level are what is most important. There are so many encounters that lead to friendship, and there have also been some where people who were previously quite clearly antisemitic ultimately became engaged volunteers dedicated to fighting antisemitism, following a long period of exchange and education. Empathy, sharing knowledge, empowering people to be able to put up with differences of opinion, expressing individual interests, and making the effort to understand—these can all have a major impact and help combat hate.



You can do it too

DEMOCRACY ON THE DEFENSIVE—PROTECTING COMMUNAL SPACES

Democratic spaces are currently facing financial and political pressure and require support in order to ensure that they remain true to their principles and can continue to fight for their goals. It's important to support organisations and initiatives that have a history of standing up for justice and togetherness—through your presence, participation, and solidarity.

ARNE SEMSROTT

"Those who advocate for democracy and cooperation already find themselves on the defensive. At this point in time, the most important thing is to defend democratic values! Spaces in which democratic processes take place, where democratic processes are organised, where common ground is identified—these are the spaces that we need to maintain and protect!"⁴²

⁴² Arne Semsrott, "Und jetzt? Gemeinsam durch bedrohliche Zeiten", JIK Talks, Berlin, September 2024, 1 h, 13 min, 58 s, <https://www.youtube.com/live/ZFOWztQiSY?si=KhFagNcQEgqAfIZj> (accessed 7 May 2025).

CONCLUSION

What this publication makes clear is that post-migrant alliances must not remain abstract concepts—they must be both political practice and part of our lived reality. In light of increasing social polarisation, anti-Muslim racism, antisemitism, and extreme right-wing ideologies, such alliances are more necessary than ever.

Young people are showing us that they are willing to assume responsibility for change—not despite, but rather because of their diverse perspectives, experiences, and positionalities. Postmigrant alliances establish spaces for listening, solidarity, and mutual empowerment. They enable us to tolerate differences and critically reflect upon power relations while still coming together to advocate for a more just and inclusive society.

Testimonials from participants and experts show that **successful alliances are built on empathy, trust, a willingness to reflect, and strategic cooperative efforts.** At the same time, it is clear that there is no blueprint that guarantees their success: alliances are dynamic, confrontational, and vulnerable, while also being powerful and transformative. They do not merely demand social change—they actively seek to bring it about.

In this vein, we see this publication not only as an analysis, but also an invitation to take action. In order to strengthen postmigrant alliances in a

sustainable manner, deliberate structures to support them are required at all levels—in education, culture, politics, and civil society, both locally and internationally. We need spaces that facilitate encounter between a plurality of different people and resources for marginalised groups, as well as institutional recognition, and political support. Young people's perspectives and engagement must be translated into longer-lasting participation that extends beyond short-term projects.

If we wish to imagine democracy as something pluralist and just, postmigrant knowledge and engagement must not only be acknowledged, but also actively encouraged. Political education, research, and practice must take up the challenge of creating spaces in which young postmigrant people can assume responsibility, critically reflect upon power, and actively contribute to change.

It is important to communicate that alliances are “positive-sum games”—to show that they benefit all who participate in them, rather than being a threat to existing privileges. **The next generation of postmigrant alliances is ready**—it is up to politicians, institutions, and civil society organisations to be brave enough to support this transformation and actively protect democratic spaces.

YOUNG POSTMIGRANT ALLIANCES

Young Postmigrant Alliances is an independent political education programme within the Schwarzkopf Foundation Young Europe. The programme encompasses varied formats and subject areas that share a common approach centred on postmigrant alliances and focus on social negotiation processes. It provides space for young people with a variety of different backgrounds to address issues such as just participation and equal opportunity, to engage with questions of identity and belonging, and work together to promote diversity.

The Young Islam Conference (JIK) is one of the programme's projects, and has been housed by the Schwarzkopf Foundation since October 2019. Other projects launched by Young Postmigrant Alliances include Zukunft D, which focuses on digital democracy, as well as Moving Europe—Negotiating Legacies of Migration at the Museum. These projects involve a range of different participatory formats, such as workshops, platforms for exchange, empowerment spaces, and academies. There are also other offerings that engage with subjects such as debate culture and the culture of remembrance, media competency, and Muslim-Jewish alliances.

The non-partisan **Schwarzkopf Foundation Young Europe** was founded in Hamburg in 1971 by Pauline Schwarzkopf. The Schwarzkopf Foundation's vision is a Europe of openness, solidarity, and democracy, and an inclusive, open, and pluralist European civil society shaped by young people. To pursue this vision, the foundation advises, trains, and supports young Europeans through events, workshops, prizes, professional development opportunities, trips, and platforms for dialogue and education.

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