

1. Arab Berlin – Ambivalent Tales of a City

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Why Arab Berlin?

Is there a productive way to go beyond the omnipresent binary images of Arab Berlin? At present, many public debates engage with the binary images that come to mind: either the romanticized notions of Arab food fostered by the abundance of Arab restaurants and fast-food places dominating central neighborhoods of Berlin, or the securitized image of Arab Clans, especially in the German-language public discourses, reinforcing questionable and discriminatory policing practices and investigation methods (Özvatan, Neuhauser, Yurdakul 2023). Political party elites often push exclusionary media discourses and public debates, and the media flare up repeatedly to show that the multicultural façade has its limits. While there are vibrant dynamic communities on one side, there are also discriminatory structures on the other. This book asks whether a city with a multicultural façade offers equality for all its citizens and non-citizens. The reality says otherwise.¹ One recent prominent example is the debate about the violence on New Year's Eve of 2023. Dubbed the “Berliner Silversternnacht-Krawalle”, attacks targeted security forces, police, and firefighters in Neukölln, a neighborhood visibly populated by Arabs, despite ongoing gentrification. Immediately, conservative politicians and media coverage spoke of “little unintegrated pashas” living in their parallel societies and

1 For example, people with Arab and Turkish names are severely discriminated against on the German housing market. They are significantly less likely to be contacted by landlords than a German applicant. See Bayerischer Rundfunk/Der Spiegel, “No Place for Foreigners. Why Hanna is invited to view the apartment and Ismail is not” (2017), <https://interaktiv.br.de/hanna-und-ismail/english/index.html>. With no specific mention of Arab students, the study refers to recently immigrated school children and shows that young people with a migrant background are at a disadvantage in many respects compared to their non-migrant peers, with Berlin being particularly dire for these students. See Caritas Study (2019) Bildungssituation von jungen Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund (<https://www.caritas.de>) <https://www.caritas.de/fuerprofis/fachthemen/kinderundjugendliche/bildungs-chancen/bildungssituation-von-jungen-menschen-mi>. Similarly, see Bertelsmann Stiftung/Klemm, Klaus (ed.) (2023), Jugendliche ohne Hauptschulabschluss Demographische Verknappung und qualifikatorische Vergeudung.

violating law and order. This interpretation of the events in racist discriminatory language correlates origin and crime (Hauenstein 2023) and echoes right-wing sentiments that blame migrants for rising crime. This has been a trope since New Year's Eve 2015/16 in Cologne, when certain North African men sexually harassed women, leading to a nationwide discussion primarily directed against the migration of Arab Muslim men to Germany, stirring sentiments of "the Arab man" being sexually violent, not willing to integrate, and thus a danger to neoliberal freedoms (Dietze 2018). "Arab Berlin" picks up on these debates as they shape the lives and futures of Arabs and Germans, and Arab-Germans in Berlin. It engages with and resists a narrowing of debates that spread stereotypes and myths.

Five reasons make publishing this book of importance. First and foremost is that its core argument has not yet been made. The book covers a dire literature gap: much still needs to be said about Arab Berlin, whether in academic or public knowledge production, that goes beyond the binary Orientalist discourse trap. "Arabs in Berlin" was last comprehensively covered in 1998, when the Berlin Senate for Foreigners commissioned a study (Gesemann, Höpp and Sweis 1998). Transdisciplinary scholarship on Arab Berlin is still rare, if on the rise. The last twenty years (post 9/11) have seen literature appear on Muslims in Berlin (Spielhaus, Färber 2006; Mühe 2010), and since 2015 there has been research on Syrian refugees to Germany. "The Arab" has not been studied much as a category in the last twenty years, as "the Muslim" and "the refugee" have taken over. While these categories remain relevant, it strikes us that "the Arab" shares overlapping information with "the Muslim" and "the refugee" yet is not the same (Spielhaus 2013). Obviously, not all Arabs are Muslim, and neither are all Arabs refugees. It is essential to recognize the religious, cultural, and political diversity within the Arab communities and to take note of their different residential status.² The aim of this book is to capture this Arab diversity and simultaneously take note of the "figure of the Arab" that serves as foil for many political and legal dis-

2 On the diversity within the Arab community in the USA, see Moll, Yasemin (2023), Arab Americans are a much more diverse group than many of their neighbors mistakenly assume, https://theconversation.com/arab-americans-are-a-much-more-diverse-group-than-many-of-their-neighbors-mistakenly-assume-201930?fbclid=IwAR1KZgmo9kmmU3v53y_IQok8iKdeMlzdVHOtcdT3NM9hamFX36eTBLlmsEg.

cussions at the intersection of religion, race, and gender³ as well as class and sexual orientation.^{4,5}

The second argument for writing this book is to seek open engagement with the public debates around Arab Berlin through the book's kaleidoscopic and interdisciplinary approach. This means that the editors deliberately enter the conversation on "Arab Berlin" using an innovative approach by mixing different formats of publishing: articles, essays, interviews, and photos. Mixing long and short formats of knowledge production and mixing the academic with the journalistic tone is on purpose to engage with public discourse. We believe that the book produces knowledge and uses formats that are accessible and valuable to expert knowledge. This book articulates innovative forms of knowledge to challenge mainstream social theories and create newer forms of knowledge production. While using multiple formats might seem eclectic for academia, we believe it is a more inclusionary practice that offers a dynamic document full of living testimonies that often uses the journalistic account to give people a voice. The book is therefore not targeting an exclusively academic audience: it is a deliberate attempt to expand the elite language to connect with an audience beyond academia, from Berlin, Europe, and the world.

One of the reasons for developing this book is its connections to "Global Berlin in the 21st Century"⁶, a multi-disciplinary project that pushed questions on where Berlin is heading in its global aspirations. The book engages with Berlin as a site of critical transformations globally situated within increasingly polarized democracies and rising tendencies towards the right. Berlin is a chiffre of the post-World War II liberal order, a place where seismic shifts can be observed at the same time in defense of provincialism and internationalism. Berlin is a location where transformation processes begin and new activities, possibilities, and lifestyles as well as experimental spaces open up.

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- 3 On the intersection of religion, race and gender as captured in the concept of the "Gefährder", the potentially dangerous person in German security law, see Samour, *Politisches Freund-Feind-Denken im Zeitalter des Terrorismus* (2020), in: Andreas Kulick & Michael Goldhammer (eds.) *Der Terrorist als Feind? Personalisierung im Polizei- und Völkerrecht*, Mohr Siebeck, 49–66. See also the contribution in this book, Smour, *The Arab in the law of Berlin* or: "How does it feel to be a problem?"
 - 4 See Abdallah Iskandar "On framing and de-framing the queer Arab" in this book.
 - 5 In 2022, Joe Biden was the first US president to recognize the Arab American Heritage Month, with some US states as well as the US State Department proclaiming April as Arab American Heritage Month. Biden celebrates April as Arab American Heritage Month | CNN.
 - 6 'Global Berlin in the 21st Century' was carried out with renowned Berlin institutions and together with members of Arab German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) members and alumni from Germany and the Arab world. The project was funded by the Senate Chancellery – Higher Education and Research of the State of Berlin.

It is one of Europe's megacities, a transforming society, and one of the "centers of Arab intellectual life in the West" (Ali, 2019). In the Arab world, Berlin is often described as an intellectual hub, a place to discuss academic and political freedoms, but also its crucial limitations (Tzuberi and Amir-Moazami 2022; Tzuberi and Samour 2022). Berlin can be perceived as a place influenced by general transformation processes, both liberal and illiberal, caused by phenomena like de/colonization, globalization, transculturality, debates on gender, religion, race and sexual orientation, media discourses, and changes through migration. The dynamics, dimensions, and effects of the transformation in Berlin are diverse and sometimes ambivalent. As a result, they are also subject to controversial debates. Berlin, in particular, seems to have developed into a center of Arab intellectual life that radiates this image and is appreciated beyond Germany's borders in the Arab world. In fact, the media also refer to Berlin as "Europe's capital of Arab culture" (Unicomb 2022). Some popular culture formats, like the Netflix movie *The Swimmers*, document the story of the Syrian Mardini sisters. Yet, crucial debates about Germany's memory politics, Germany's (lack of) decolonial efforts, and the Arab World as part of the Global South are not even taking place (Anonymous 2020). The intellectual life of this city is situated in its streets and civil society organizations, less so in its still largely homogenous universities and elite intellectual institutions.

Berlin seeks to strengthen its position as a city of increasing global visibility, motion, and relevance for the world and Arab migrants. The book therefore offers a resonance space to reflect its own identity and its desire to put itself on the map after the reunification in 1990s. Part of the ongoing debates about the Humboldt Forum in Berlin have shaped the debates about Berlin's commitment to restitution (Reimann and Samour 2022).

Returning the gaze is the fourth reason for writing this book. In the wake of Arab Uprisings since 2010/11, numerous academic publications focused on transformations in Arab countries from a Eurocentric, securitized epistemic perspective. Instead, the book editors shift the perspective to investigate transformations in Berlin, centering the gaze on the European context of Berlin as part of the Global North. This book employs bell hook's "oppositional gaze" by interrogating, questioning, and disrupting the power dynamics that usually rest the gaze on the Arab other, this time with a critical focus on "the Arab" as subject, object, and agent of transformations in Berlin. How did "the Arab" witness the various opportunities and challenges in a transforming Berlin? How did "the Arab" contribute to changes within Berlin's arts, media, culture, activism, in Berlin's social and cultural life, or in its educational and international encounters?

The fifth and most obvious reason for writing this book is the demographic transformation of Berlin's Arab population and its pronounced importance for Arab migrants and refugees. While the book does not claim representation of Arab voices in this book, it acknowledges the multi-layered formations of Arab presence in

Berlin and its complex evolution over the last decades, which witnessed a change in the constitution and formation of Arabs. Traditionally, starting in the 1970s, the Arab population in Berlin developed and changed in its characteristics. While until the 1980s, clear migration patterns marked the global migration flows in specific country pairs (for example Turkey-Germany, Algeria-France, etc.), since the 1980s, global migration patterns became more diverse and entangled in terms of background (Vertovec 2011). While Arabs in Berlin were largely Palestinian refugees from Lebanon in the 1970s (Ghadban 2000), in the last decade, the Syrian presence has gained strong visibility. Despite the increasing numbers of Arabs as German citizens, migrants, and refugees, they continue to be underrepresented in the official and formal administrative and legal-political structures (Bertelsmann, 2018).

Two contradictory transformation processes

This book has one central argument: two contradictory processes are happening at the same time in Arab Berlin. The chapters capture the contrasting dynamics of transformation between the hard legal-political structure and soft dynamic culture in Arab Berlin. Outdated and illiberal structures lead to stagnation and exclusion on the one hand; innovative and fluid activities use the vibrant cultural scene through journalism, media, the arts (music, film, and others), and food to push toward a more inclusive future on the other. The imbalanced discourses on Arab Berlin show the persistent power of hegemonic frameworks, which reproduce cycles of exclusionary discourses of othering and discrimination. The contributions in this book, whether long academic articles, shorter essays and interviews, or photographic contributions, show those tensions.

Countless Arab initiatives claim cultural citizenship (Klaus and Lünenborg 2004) and enrich Berlin's cultural life through what have become prominent Arab spaces of cultural co-creation, including ALFILM, Oyouun, Khan Al-Janub, Bulbul, and many other initiatives establishing themselves in the city of Berlin. Some conservatives might label those valuable cultural spaces of self-determination as ghettoed fragmented public spheres, while other progressive voices might romanticize them as “multicultural initiatives”. Instead, this book views those initiatives from a perspective that highlights Arab agency. Eman Helal, photographer and author in this book, speaks of the “Arab comfort zone” in Berlin.

While the book shows the arts and inclusion in Berlin's cultural and social life, it also shows an exclusionary side of Berlin. Academic scholarship and empirical evidence show that systematic discrimination of fundamental rights and freedoms occurs, even in Berlin, a city that has connected its identity with freedom since the Cold War. For Arab Berliners, the question of equality and anti-discrimination is central. It is at the intersection of religion and race in particular that the state views many

Arabs in this city. While recent studies center on anti-Muslim racism, of which anti-Arab racism must be seen as one dimension, racial *and* religious profiling (Samour 2020) constitute parts of their lives in their neighborhoods, schools, universities and workplaces.

In capturing those ambivalences of Berlin, we, the editors, together with the authors in this volume, argue that Berlin has both: it offers open spaces for a diverse intellectual life, yet it also restricts life through laws and practices that show that Berlin has not yet accommodated Arabs as equals in their midst.

How this book was written

Throughout this book, the interpretations of contemporary transformations in Berlin vary depending on the areas in which they take place. This book's epistemic and critical intersectional position is on the margins (hooks, 1989). Located within the critical literature on migration in Germany, this book neither romanticizes Berlin nor serves as a tourism brochure. Therefore, the contributions do not seek to endorse the myth of "Multi-Kulti", the multiculturalism diversity discourse that neglects real power inequalities and exclusion (Eskandar 2022). By adopting a critical lens and engaging with post- and decolonial theory, we ask how the "colonial present" (Gregory 2004) can shed light on the realities of the various societal, cultural, and political transformations in Berlin and how they affect Arab Berlin individuals and communities. Paying attention to the epistemological paths of knowledge production, we examine where and how we can overcome coloniality as a concept of domination that persists in processes and in outcomes of research. By uncovering some areas of weakness or ignorance, the book counters the racialized epistemic violence in constructing the Arab, which permeates the public social constructions of Arabs in European cities (see Badr 2017). Epistemic violence rests on dynamics rooted in the modernity/coloniality project that began with Europe's colonial expansion and that reproduce persistent forms of biological and cultural racism (Brunner 2020: 39).

Arab Berlin follows a non-essentialist reductionist approach. No single intellectual work can capture the rich and multi-layered Arab presence in Berlin. On the contrary! Inspired by the critique of the Western knowledge formation that creates dichotomies in knowledge production and categorizes it into "West and the Rest" (Hall, 2012), in this book, we provocatively create the term Arab Berlin, which merges what could seem as two separate worlds. The central statement of this book would be, as Omaren and Gerlach express in their chapter, that Arabs have become a part of Berlin, too.

However, we do not want to reproduce essentialist perspectives that flatten and conflate "Arab existence" into one homogenous category. "The Arab" is applied here

from a non-identitarian, non-deterministic perspective. This means the book did not narrow the contributions according to “birtherism” only giving voice to Arabs but allowed many voices working *with* and *on* Arab Berlin. We are also careful not to conflate Arabs with Muslims or negate other ethnicities, whether Kurds or Amazigh, or else. At the same time, the book cannot claim to capture entirely or offer a definition of what Arab Berlin is or should be, as there is no one ‘single’ Arab Berlin. Different epistemic perspectives on the city come both from insiders living in Berlin for decades and from newcomers. There are outsider perspectives, established and struggling, young and aged, and different life phases. In scouting the field, we have found many of Berlin’s intellectual institutions to be sadly reluctant to engage with Arab thought going on at the community level: A case in point, while this book cannot reflect the many complex facets, it opens the discussion on selected central aspects.

Intensive emotional labor has been invested in this book: co-edited by two female POC scholars and mothers, the journey of writing this book was a roller-coaster during a globally difficult time of a pandemic, uncertainty, and global conflicts. We notice different subjective realities and a range of feelings and sentiments in this book, just as Berlin is full of emotions, sometimes extreme, at other times subtle. The feelings conveyed in the contributions range from excitement, confusion, disappointment, gratitude, love, rage, and hope. Even if the book editors critically reflect on the trope of the grateful migrant, readers will find gratitude in some chapters, and in others, they will find rejection and disillusionment. The book does not – and cannot – provide one coherent narrative for one Arab Berlin because the reality is complex. Our role as editors is not to *approve* of the contributors’ articles in this book; instead, we see our role as curators who *enable* voices, positions, and portraits to speak.

Structure of the book

This book examines the different structural, political, and cultural transformations in different fields in six parts. The wide range of contributions from different disciplines vary in tone and emotions. After this introduction that positions the book and explains its rationale, Part 1 entitled *Exile, Migration, and Belonging*, starts with an inspiring chapter by Amro Ali, “On the Need to Shape the Arab Exile Body in Berlin”, echoing the multiple sentiments of Arabs in Berlin as an in/voluntary place of exile, a political laboratory, where Arab individuals and collectives dream and plan for freedom and equality, while also realizing that the “intellectual exile body” will always have to struggle for freedom and equality, including in Berlin, as subjects and objects of the Berlin “Zeitgeist”.

In the third chapter, Abdolrahman Omaren and Julia Gerlach describe Amal, Berlin!, an online platform providing local news in Arabic, Dari/Farsi, and

Ukrainian. The initiative allows exiled professional journalists to produce relevant news as active participants in offering fact-checked information to the migrant communities. In the fourth chapter, Nazeeha Saeed, the award-winning journalist from Bahrain and a newcomer to Berlin, connects Berlin's past and present from a journalistic eye. Her chapter captures the contrast between the freedom the city promotes on the one side and the discrimination that Arab newcomers sometimes feel on the other, connecting the latter to what she terms the city's "collective trauma". Sonja Hegasy's chapter on "Hermeneutic Chicanery" is a contribution to the debate on migration and memory in Germany that points to ongoing debates between scholars of antisemitism, scholars of colonialism, postcolonial theorists, and scholars of comparative genocide studies. Refusing to play "Oppression Olympics", the chapter tries to enlarge our understandings and solidarities in comprehending past and present injustices. In the sixth chapter, Nahed Samour in "The Arab in the law of Berlin, or: 'How does it feel to be a problem?'" investigates how Arabs are addressed in the law of Berlin. Berlin's state law engages with Arabs as "minor citizens" or stateless subjects, as members of clans engaged in crime and therefore needing to be policed, their businesses raided. Pigeonholed as "not yet civilized", they are seen to need to be governed and taught what forms of speech and comportment are unacceptable behavior in a liberal democracy.

In Part 2 *Inclusion, Arts, and Activism* Iskandar Abdalla contributes the chapter "On framing and de-framing the queer Arab". Here he analyses the racialized existence of Arab queers in Berlin as an attempt to break with the figurative Orientalist formations of Arabness and Muslimness as identities. By doing so, he highlights ways of political subjectivity, despite Arabness as a marker on skin, body, family, trauma, and loss. In chapter eight, acclaimed photographer Mahmoud Dabdoub remembers life in East Berlin and shares fresh impressions of the early hours of the German reunification. "When I got off at Friedrichstraße, I was so happy to be back in East Berlin" is an account of an Arab Palestinian, who raises his hopes to overcome the wall and achieve reunification.

In his auto-biographic essay, "Berlin: A city of infinite dreams", Hashem El-Ghaili, a science communicator from Yemen with millions of followers worldwide, describes his first years in Berlin: "a city of infinite dreams", but also of "infinite problems". Berlin witnessed the production of his debut science fiction film, an important milestone in his career, offering valuable opportunities while showing the limits of accommodating highly skilled Arab ex-pats. The following chapter features an interview with Younes Al-Amayra, the co-founder of the German award-winning satire show *Datteltäter*. He describes how he uses satire to deconstruct radical social constructions and anti-Muslim discrimination. He perceives himself as closer to the Muslim community, which transcends the Arab category. At the same time, he shares his aspirations for more acceptance for People of Color (POC) in Berlin.

Part Three, entitled *Social Life*, focuses on dimensions of togetherness in Berlin. In an interview, Mahmoud Salem, a blogger and cybersecurity activist, compares Berlin to Cairo, as both megacities have an inescapable magnetic energy. He shares his disillusionment about living in Germany's capital, critiques the myth of the "poor and sexy" city, and reflects on enduring the Covid-19 lockdown in Berlin.

In chapter twelve, "The Tastes of Arab Berlin: Manifestations of Arab snack culture in the changing urban migration regime of Berlin," Miriam Stock explores the changing urban settings through an Arab infrastructure of restaurants, supermarkets, Shisha-bars, and cafés that navigate between the need to adapt to gentrification and respond to Orientalism.

In her essay, Abir Kopty, a Palestinian journalist and mother, writes about the challenges of parenting Arab children. Asking if her son will grow up to be sexist, she shares everyday situations that find her delicately balancing freedom and responsibility.

In their chapter, documentary photographer Eman Helal and media scholar Hanan Badr document "Biographies in Motion" in an academic-photographic cooperation that gives Arab newcomers who live in Berlin a voice and a face and lets them reflect on their own stories. The exhibition chronicles the protagonists' perspectives and experiences before coming to Germany to make their biographies count. It de-essentializes not only the images of the Arab migrants but also that of a romanticized Berlin.

Part 4 – *Cultural Life* – opens with a short critical essay by Fadi Abdunour, "That's how you people do things round here, right?!". He questions the Orientalist stereotypes regarding what authenticity means for Arab people and critiques the assumptions about "authentic" Arab culture. Not only do such assumptions reproduce mainstream Eurocentric assumptions about the "other", but they also reduce the "Arab" to one homogenous category. In the interview with Christoph Dinkelaker, co-founder of Alsharq Travels, then explains how his specialized agency organizes political study trips for Germans to visit Arab countries to recognize the diversity within the Arab. He aims to promote awareness about colonialism, unite people and contribute to changing perceptions. In the interview, he recounts how a right-wing German participant on a trip to Lebanon gradually could see the diversity within the Arab societies. Arab Berlin is increasingly creating fragmentation but also chances for cooperation.

Seeing Berlin from the outside, philosophy scholar Mohammad Alwahaib in "Arendt's Shadow: Salam-Schalom from Berlin to the Holy Land" asks us to look beyond the separating rationale of the two-state paradigm for Palestine-Israel by using Hannah Arendt's work and by investigating the chances, and limits, of initiatives coming from the streets of Berlin, such as the Salam-Schalom initiative which counter such ideas of separation between Palestine and Israel and between racism and anti-Semitism.

In “Memories in the Nights of Despair”: Jussuf Abbo in Berlin’s Yiddish Literature of the 1920s, Tal Hever-Chybowski explores the artistic and intellectual contribution of sculptor and painter Yussuf Abbo (c. 1889–1953) in Berlin-Charlottenburg’s avant-garde artistic and literary scene of the Weimar Republic. As a Palestinian-Arab Jew, Abbo engaged with the overlapping categories of identity regarding race, faith, language, and artistic stylization that were less restrictive in Berlin during the 1920s than today. Hever shares his astute observation that Yiddish-speaking Jews in Berlin “orientalized their Palestinian Jewish colleague Jussuf Abbo to westernize their own identity”. This was a reaction to European Christian Orientalism that considered Jews and Arabs “to be “oriental” in character and essence”.

Part 5 of this book is dedicated to the *Education & International Encounters* of Arab Berlin. In “Arabic Sciences in the Humboldtian Cosmos: Potentials for the Humboldt Forum”, Detlev Quintern engages with Humboldt’s appreciation of Arabic science, specifically geography and cartography, and the potentials of the Humboldtian non-Eurocentric universal history of science for the Humboldt Forum – one that opens up the cosmos for the Arab community in Berlin. In Chapter 20, scholar of Islam and Arabist, Islam Dayeh explores the academic career and influence of Ḥasan Tawfiq al-‘Adl, the first native teacher of Arabic at the newly founded *Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen* at the Berlin Friedrich-Wilhelm University (Humboldt University today). While ‘Adl’s achievements especially in Arabic literary history, have been recognized in Egypt’s renowned academic institutions, they were erased from recognition in Berlin. Dayeh analyses encounters with German colonialism and scholarship and explores the erasure of the Arab academic.

Returning to the present day, Nadine Abdalla, a political scientist based at the American University in Cairo who frequently visits Berlin for academic cooperation, compares in her interview how academia works in Arab and German societies. She contrasts Berlin before and after COVID-19, describing how the pandemic changed the spirit of the otherwise accommodating city. Calling Berlin the new Arab cultural capital is an exaggeration, she says, even if the Arab presence is growing and increasingly diverse. In an interview with Florian Kohstall, head of the Global Responsibility Unit at the Center for International Cooperation of Freie Universität Berlin, he reflects on his journey from Cairo to Berlin, his motives for starting the Welcome@FU-Berlin program to support Arab refugee students, and what the intersections between the professional and personal mean for his work with the Arab region in educational encounters. Chapter 23 explores how Berlin can benefit from knowledge developed in the Arab World, Ehab El-Refae, a neurosurgeon between Germany and Egypt, traces back the relations in the medical field of higher education, reflecting on differences and similarities in medical training between Egypt and Germany at a time when medical staff is a global scarcity. He highlights the benefits of building a strong Cairo-Berlin connection in medical cooperation.

In the book's last part, entitled *Outlook*, Jan Claudius Völkel looks "Beyond Berlin: Why the rest of Germany also matters" and argues that other locations outside Berlin offer great transformative insights into Germany. Taking the reader on a journey to the Lusatia region, Görlitz, Hamburg, Munich, and the Rhine-Ruhr area, the author gives reasons to look for transformative potential beyond metropolises like Berlin to recognize contrasting dynamics taking place.

Finally, the book ends on a duality of hope and melancholy in the interview with Salah Yousif, a poet from Sudan who settled in Berlin in the 1970s. His is the voice of an Arab who has been here for many years, observing the joys, struggles, and meanings of being an Arab in Berlin. Looking from the past onto the future and maintaining a dialogue with the newcomers, Yousif's reflections on the migrants arriving in the city over the decades include the sad realization: "Always after a war, many people would come here."

Conclusion

As the tour through the contributions in "*Arab Berlin: Dynamics of a Transformation*" shows: This is Berlin, with all its ambivalences and complexities! The book gives us an idea of the struggles for equality in this city, where equality as a liberal promise seems both tangible and elusive, often simultaneously. The idea of equality might not materialize for everyone in the same way, or even at all. This is why in addition to hope and the willingness to invest in the future of this city, we also read about reasons to worry over persistent structures of discrimination, hitting the old, in the fields of health, housing and workplace, as much as the young in the fields of school and education. The contributions in this book highlight the frictions, ambivalences, and spaces of light and shadow in a city that is longing for what it aspires to become. It also highlights the potential missing to achieve what it could still become. The book is an invitation to diversify studies on the status of Arabs, Muslims, and refugees. Studying "the Arab in Berlin" is a way to dive into the rich history of Arabness as reflected and not reflected in Berlin. One book is not enough. *Arab Berlin* just starts a much-needed conversation.

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