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Jan Wilkens

QUEER JEWISH GROUPS IN EUROPE (1972-1990S)

ARCHIVING THEIR HISTORIES AND NETWORK

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Jan Wilkens

Queer Jewish Groups in Europe (1972–1990s)

Europäisch-jüdische Studien – Beiträge

On Behalf of the Moses Mendelssohn Center for European-Jewish Studies, Potsdam

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Contents

Acknowledgements —— VII

List of Abbreviations —— IX

1 Introduction —— 1
1.1 Research Questions —— **2**
1.2 State of Research —— **6**
1.3 Consulted Primary Material —— **13**
1.4 Outline —— **15**
1.5 Notes on Terminologies —— **17**

2 Writing Queer Jewish History —— 21
2.1 Queer History as a Frame of Reference —— **21**
2.2 Developing a Methodology for Queer Jewish History —— **36**

3 Jewish and Queer – Contradictory Terms? Jewish Tradition and Modern Responses —— 49
3.1 Jewish Traditional Literature and Its Position —— **49**
3.2 Jewish Denominational Reactions from the 1970s on —— **55**
3.3 American Developments: Queer Synagogues —— **64**
3.4 The World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Organizations —— **70**

4 The Triangle London – Paris – Amsterdam —— 75
4.1 The Three Queer Metropolises —— **76**
4.2 Jewish Life in Post-WWII Western Europe —— **97**
4.3 Synopsis: An Environment of Change —— **113**

5 Jewish Gay (and Lesbian) Group (London) —— 115
5.1 Coming Out and the Way to the Jewish Gay Group (1971 – 1974) —— **116**
5.2 Coffee Evenings and Parties: JGG's Early Years (1974 – 1979) —— **127**
5.3 More Social, More Religious, More Recognition. And Yet Another Name (1979 – 1987) —— **139**
5.4 Diversification in UK's Queer Jewish Landscape and Settling Down (1988 and Beyond) —— **155**

6 Beit Haverim (Paris) — 169
6.1 The "Creation of a Jewish Homosexual Movement" – Beit Haverim's First Years (1976/7 – 1980) — **170**
6.2 Independence and First Heyday (1980 – 1985) — **190**
6.3 Between Stagnation and Revival (1985 – 1994) — **206**
6.4 Stabilization and Continuation (from 1994 Onwards) — **214**

7 Sjalhomo (Amsterdam) — 221
7.1 Founding Years (1979/80–1985) — **222**
7.2 Sjalhomo's Heyday (1986 – 1995) — **243**
7.3 Sjalhomo Comes to an End (1995 – 2002) — **260**

8 Sharing Experiences, Sharing Ideas: A European Network of Queer Jewish Groups — 273
8.1 Distinctively European: Social Groups Emphasizing Sociability — **273**
8.2 Building Up a Network — **278**
8.3 Diversification of the Network and End of Its Peak Period — **306**

9 Conclusion — 310

10 German Summary – Deutsche Zusammenfassung — 321

11 Bibliography — 333
11.1 Archival Collections — **333**
11.2 Primary Sources — **335**
11.3 Secondary Sources — **347**

Index — 362

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List of Abbreviations

Names of Organizations, Institutions, Movements

BCC	Beth Chayim Chadashim
BHC	Beit Ha'Chidush
BKY	Beit Klal Yisrael
CBST	Congregation Beit Simchat Torah
CCAR	Central Conference of American Rabbis
CCL	Centre de Christ Libérateur (Center of Christ the Liberator)
CGL	Centre Gai et Lesbien (Gay and Lesbian Center)
CHE	Campaign for Homosexual Equality
CJLS	Committee on Jewish Law and Standards
COC	Cultuur en Ontspannings Centrum (Center for Culture and Recreation)
CRIF	Conseil représentatif des juifs de France (Representative Council of French Jews)
CUARH	Comité d'Urgence Anti-Répression Homosexuel (Emergency Committee Against Homosexual Repression)
FHAR	Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire (Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action)
FSJU	Fonds social juif unifié (United Jewish Welfare Fund)
GLF	Gay Liberation Front (London)
GLH	Groupe de Libération Homosexuelle (Group of Homosexual Liberation)
HLRS	Homosexual Law Reform Society
HUC-JIR	Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion
IATF	Israeli AIDS Task Force
JAT	Jewish Aids Trust
JC	Jewish Chronicle
JCC	Joods Coördinatie Commissie vor het Bevrijde Nederlandse Gebied (Coordination Committee for the Liberated Area of the Netherlands)
JFG	Jewish Feminist Group
JGG	Jewish Gay Group
JGLG	Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group
JGLH	Jewish Gay and Lesbian Helpline
JHsLG	Jewish Homosexual Liaison Group
JHpLG	Jewish Homophile Liaison Group
JMW	Joods Maatschappelijk Werk (Jewish Welfare Organization)
JRG	Jewish Research Group
LJG	Liberaal Joodse Gemeente (Liberal Jewish Community)
MCC	Metropolitan Community Church
MJLF	Mouvement juif libéral de France (Liberal Movement of France)
NIK	Nederlands-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap (Dutch Israelite Religious Community)

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NIW	Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad
NWHK	Nederlandsch Wetenschappelijk Humanitair Komitee (Dutch Scientific Humanitarian Committee)
NZB	Nederlandse Zionistenbond (Dutch Zionist League)
PIK	Portugees-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap (Portuguese Israelite Religious Community)
PJA	Platform Jews and AIDS (Platform Joden en Aids)
RRC	Reconstructionist Rabbinical College
RSGB	Reform Synagogues of Great Britain
SPPR	Society for the Protection of Personal Rights (האגודה לשמירת זכויות הפרט)
UAHC	Union of American Hebrew Congregations
ULIF	Union libérale israélite de France (Liberal Jewish Union of France)
WCGLJO	World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations
WhK	Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee)
WLM	Women's Liberation Movement

Libraries, Archives

AGL	Académie Gay et Lesbienne, Conservatoire des Archives et des Mémoires LGBTQI, Fonds Thierry Meyssan
ANF	Archives Nationales de France
BHA	Beit Haverim Archives
BIA	Bishopsgate Institute Archives
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Site Tolbiac/François Mitterrand
HCA	Hall-Carpenter-Archives
HUC	Hebrew Union College (Klau Library Cincinnati)
IHLIA	Internationaal Homo/Lesbisch Informatiecentrum en Archief LGBTI Heritage
IPT	Centre doucmentaire de l'Institut Protestant de Théologie Paris
LGBT CCNHA	LGBT Community Center National History Archive New York
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
LSE	London School of Economics
StA Ams.	Stadsarchief Amsterdam
UoA	University of Amsterdam Library

Nota bene: Abbreviations are not always used consistently within cited sources. They can, therefore, slightly differ from the ones used in this study. For example, the Gay Liberation Front is sometimes abbreviated as G.L.F in contemporary sources.

1 Introduction

With homosexuals, I cannot be Jewish,
and with Jews, I cannot be homosexual.[1]

This was a common experience for queer, i. e., non-heterosexual, non-cisgendered, Jews in Europe at the beginning of the 1970s. This was a time of social change: the Stonewall Riots in New York in 1969 catalyzed the so-called Gay Liberation Movement in the United States and Europe. Queer people became publicly present, they were challenging society and its exclusionist position towards them. The Jewish world could not remain unaffected by these social changes. Jewish queers also raised their voices. However, their demands for recognition and acceptance by the Jewish mainstream were not immediately met. Furthermore, they found that the queer community was unaware about Judaism and Jewish life. The queer community blamed Jewish and Christian traditions for the exclusion it experienced, often not thinking about queers who did not want to neglect their religious or spiritual traditions. Thus, queer Jews started organizing themselves and creating safe spaces in which they could be both: Jewish and queer.

In the United States, queer Jews founded their own synagogues and tried changing mainstream Jewish communities, at first from the outside, and later from within. In Europe, however, queer Jews founded social groups that never affiliated with any Jewish denomination. These groups brought Jews from all religious backgrounds together and mobilized their members because they offered spaces for sociability. Members either remained in their original congregations and tried changing them from within or opted out from mainstream Judaism.

Three of these groups were founded in Europe between 1971/2 and 1980. They remained the only ones up until the late 1980s and started changing the perception of queer Jews on the continent. As the first queer Jewish group ever recorded, the *Jewish Research Group* was founded within the Gay Liberation Front London. This group was reorganized and renamed a couple of times in the following years after but stabilized as the *Jewish Gay Group (JGG).* In 1987, it aimed at including more female members and was further renamed to the *Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group (JGLG).* This group became the only space for Jewish queers in the United Kingdom for one and a half decades until the queer Jewish scene in the country diversified

1 Jaap Sanders and Tineke Sjenitzer, "Sjalhomo brengt homoseksuelen en lesbiènnes tezamen. 'Bij homo's kan ik geen jood en bij joden geen homo zijn.' [Sjalhomo brings homosexuals and lesbians together. 'With homosexuals, I cannot be Jewish, and with Jews, I cannot be homosexual.']," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 116, no. 33 (April 24, 1981): 7.

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in the late 1980s. Due to yet another name change, the group is today known as the *Jewish LGBT+ Group.*

In 1977, similar events occurred in Paris. Within the Centre du Christ Libérateur (Center of Christ the Liberator, CCL), a center for sexual outcasts founded by Christian pastor Joseph Doucé, Jews came together and created *Beit Haverim (House of Friends).* After constituting an 'AG informelle' (informal working group) within the CCL for a couple of years, Beit Haverim started off as an independent group and became an official association under French law. It established itself as the only space for Jewish queers in France. The group went through the 1980s despite many troubles. It still exists today and is the only one in Europe to own a community center for meetings, events, and celebrations.

Finally, *Sjalhomo* (pronounced as Shalhomo, a neologism of the Hebrew *shalom* and *homo* for homosexual) was the third group on the European continent starting in 1980. This was also founded within a larger organization, the Cultuur en Ontspannings Centrum (Center for Culture and Recreation). From the very beginning, the group acted in the public eye and became very well known in Amsterdam. Sjalhomo even received funding from the Dutch government for its activities. Both sociability and a distinct political outreach were important parts of Sjalhomo's agenda. However, in the mid-1990s, the group had internal troubles since members increasingly stopped being involved with the group. Eventually, Sjalhomo was dissolved due to internal conflicts within the board in 2002.

This study is dedicated to the history of these three groups that were the first on the continent establishing a debate with, and about, queer Jews. Moreover, the three groups got to know each other quickly and established a network of Jewish queers in Europe that enabled an exchange of knowledge, ideas, and people. The existence of the Jewish Gay (and Lesbian) Group, Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo changed the fate of European Jewish queers and offered a welcoming alternative to the exclusionist position of the overwhelming majority of Jewish communities at that time.

1.1 Research Questions

This study primarily addresses the institutional history of the three queer Jewish groups in Europe. Their history has not been examined and reappraised before. In recognizing the potential of writing a *queer* Jewish History, the study asks which kind of organizational status did they agree upon and why. What were the groups' agendas, and how did these change throughout the years? How did they bring their members together and address their members' needs?

Connected with these questions is the environment in which the groups were founded. The study argues that the groups could only be founded in the triangle consisting of London – Paris – Amsterdam. These cities were not only the most powerful political centers in Western Europe after World War II, but they were also the most prominent queer metropolises on the continent. Moreover, the cities harbored the largest Jewish communities of their country; those of London and Paris were amongst the largest in post-World War II Europe. Jews saw a future in the UK, France, and the Netherlands, and Jewish life stabilized there.

Another focus of this study is the three groups' constitution of a merged queer Jewish identity. How were the groups imbedded into the Jewish and the queer communities? How did the groups understand Jewishness? Which position did religious practice have for them? Did they confront their opponents in the Jewish mainstream, and how did they deal with their opponents' critiques? What was their relationship with the non-Jewish queer community? What were the groups' reactions regarding the HIV/AIDS epidemic that hit the queer community so badly in the 1980s? Were they successful in gaining allies beyond their own membership? Moreover, which topics were important for the groups beyond the merger of a queer and Jewish identity?

Another important aspect of this study is the gender relations within the groups. The relations between men and women were often filled with tension, especially in the first years of the groups' existence. However, the different experiences of men and women have previously often been neglected in the study of queer religion and its institutions as Melissa M. Wilcox already stated in 2005[2] and Marla Brettschneider reconfirmed in 2018.[3] Previous research focused on the mere fact that women were absent in the early years of religious congregations and the debate about how to attract more women. The lack of women, however, resulted in institutions led mostly by men and, therefore, male-centered agendas. As a consequence, scholars have been studying gay male religiosities.[4] However, as Wilcox correctly stated: "To understand a religion fully, then, we need to take gen-

2 Cf. Melissa M. Wilcox, "A Religion of One's Own: Gender and LGBT Religiosities," in *Gay Religion*, ed. Scott Thumma and Edward R. Gray (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2005), 203–220. Wilcox underlined their critique in a follow up to the article and, thereby, contributed a book on the religious individualism of queer women in 2009 (cf. Melissa M. Wilcox, *Queer Women and Religious Individualism* [Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2009]).

3 Cf. Marla Brettschneider, "Jewish Lesbians: New Work in the Field," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 23, no. 1 (2018): 2–20.

4 Cf. Wilcox, "A Religion of One's Own," 204–205.

der into account. [...] The complexity of women's lives is an integral part of the complexity of religion."[5]

Queer women had their own experiences, their own reasons for joining, not joining, or leaving a congregation, or, in this case, a group.[6] More than ten years after Wilcox, Brettschneider criticized that: "Lesbian work was often occluded in general feminist scholarship and Jewish work was largely absent from feminist and lesbian feminist work, rendering Jewish lesbian feminism virtually invisible in all three fields."[7]

To take these voices into account, this study portrays the experiences of queer women separately. This does not follow any tendency that tries excluding their histories from those of the groups. It tries recognizing that queer women had different experiences in gay male dominated group structures. Having said this, it has to be acknowledged that this study had its struggles to find evidence of trans* and nonbinary Jews in the consulted sources. This problem will be addressed at several points. However, a lack of evidence does not mean that trans*/nonbinary Jews were not present in the groups' early history. This fact has to be kept in mind while reading this book.

Beyond the groups' history, this study further analyzes the entanglements of the three groups. They were the first of their kind in Europe and got to know each other soon after each group was founded. Before collecting comprehensive material on the groups, I had presumed that the US-American queer synagogues had a significant influence on the European groups, their self-conception, their structure, and, finally, their members. The US-American movement of queer synagogues developed quite quickly in the 1970s and, in that same decade, already achieved that the Jewish mainstream, especially Reform Judaism, questioned its attitude towards queer people. The queer synagogues dealt with both religious and social questions, adapted rituals and liturgy, and demanded visibility in the religious landscape. They also became the formative force behind the *World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations (WCGLJO)* through which an international exchange of Jewish queers became possible. Ultimately, the hypothesis of a signifi-

5 Wilcox, "A Religion of One's Own," 203.

6 Wilcox identified in their study six patterns that queer women chose from when dealing with their specific situation: 1. Leaving one's religious tradition even before coming out; 2. Staying in the religious tradition while and after coming out; 3. Switching a denomination or congregation; 4. Struggling with the queer-exclusive tradition and anti-queer biases of other members; 5. Seeking new forms of religiosity/spirituality, e. g., in new religious movements; 6. Relying on divine assistance beyond traditions in their coming out process (cf. Wilcox, "A Religion of One's Own," 204, 206 – 217).

7 Brettschneider, "Jewish Lesbians: New Work in the Field," 2 – 3.

cant US-American influence on the European groups also emerged from the existing research on queer Judaism that predominately focused on developments in the United States.

However, after analyzing the material for this study, it became apparent that while the European groups had connections with their US-American counterparts, they developed their own ideas about queer Jewish organizing. They understood themselves as distinctively European. This study explains how this understanding came about and describes the network the European groups created. The history of these entanglements has almost been forgotten, including the striking example of the queer Jewish conferences the groups organized on the continent. The network allowed an exchange of knowledge, ideas, and people that became a crucial element of the groups' efforts.

Regarding the period of time these groups operated, this study looks at the years from 1972, which is considered the founding year of queer Jewish organizing in London, to roughly the mid-1990s. In the 1990s, a new chapter began for the groups: the number of deaths caused by AIDS decreased, and a new, "noisy"[8] generation arrived and joined the groups. Turning points within the 1990s are detectable for both JGG/JGLG and Beit Haverim. In addition, the European network of Jewish queers lost its significance in the mid-1990s until its ultimate cessation in the beginning of the 2000s. One exception is Sjalhomo. Even though the group's heyday started to end from 1995 onwards, this study additionally portrays the last years of the group until it was finally dissolved in 2002. The decline, and ultimate end of, Sjalhomo also had an impact on the European network since the group was the main protagonist for the network's success.

This European network expanded to Israel and its LGBTQ+ groups in the first half of the 1990s. The Society for the Protection of Personal Rights (האגודה לשמירת זכויות הפרט, SPPR) was founded in Tel Aviv in 1975 as the country's first group for queers. It was later renamed to Agudah – The Association for LGBTQ Equality in Israel. As the Agudah does today, SPPR understood itself as the umbrella organization for the LGBTQ+ community in Israel and not as an exclusively Jewish group. SPPR was not an organization that primarily dealt with questions of Jewishness and Queerness, it rather summarized the efforts of people who identify as LGBTQ+ in the Jewish state. That is why I did not include SPPR in this study since it would skew the comparability of the groups and would neglect their different environments: on the one hand continental Europe, on the other the Jewish state with an Orthodox rabbinate whose jurisdiction includes issues on personal

8 Alain Beit and Madeleine Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité. 40 ans d'histoire avec le Beit Haverim* (Paris: Trèfle Communication, 2017), 17.

status (e. g., marriage or conversion). However, since the developments in the Jewish state were a constant point of reference for the European groups, the study includes SPPR, its involvement in the WCGLJO, and the State of Israel on several occasions and shows how the European groups engaged with them.

This study also does not include the lesbian-feminist Schabbeskreis ('Shabbat Circle') in West Berlin that existed from 1984 to 1989. This group consisted of women with different family backgrounds and identities like heterosexual feminists, with or without an immigrant background, and many non-Jews. Only a few of its members were both lesbian and Jewish.[9] Whereas the group's very early objectives were similar to those of the three queer Jewish groups portrayed in this study (e. g., creating a space for merging a queer and Jewish identity or for celebrating Jewish culture and traditions), its main struggle quickly became to "systematically reveal both antisemitism in the women's and lesbian movement and the invisibility of Jews [in West Germany]."[10] The Schabbeskreis arranged its activities around this aim with lectures, exhibitions, and press releases.[11] The first queer Jewish group in Europe outside the London – Paris – Amsterdam triangle was L'Chaim founded in Berlin in 1990.

Summarized, this study aims at delving into the more recent efforts in academia to reconstruct the history of Jewish queers. Thereby, these efforts contribute to a destabilization of norms, irrevocable assumptions, and heteronormative research.

1.2 State of Research

There exists only a small amount of research regarding the LGBTQ+ community within Judaism. Starting in the 1980s, scholars and community activists started telling and documenting the stories of queer Jews and, thereby, fought both against their invisibility and initiated a discourse about Jewish same-sex desires and differing gender identities.[12] Though it has to be noted that the first anthology solely by and for trans* Jews was published by Noach Dzmura only in 2010.[13]

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9 Cf. Debora Antmann, "Der lesbisch feministische Schabbeskreis," *Jalta. Positionen zur jüdischen Gegenwart*, no. 1 (2017): 30.

10 "[…] systematisch den Antisemitismus innerhalb der Frauen- und Lesbenbewegung und die Unsichtbarkeit von Jüd_innen aufzuzeigen." (Antmann, "Der lesbisch feministische Schabbeskreis," 33)

11 Cf. Antmann, "Der lesbisch feministische Schabbeskreis," 34.

12 Cf. Angela Brown, ed., *Mentsh. On Being Jewish and Queer* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2004); Caryn Aviv and David Shneer, eds., *Queer Jews* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Rebecca T. Alpert,

Others tried combining their Queerness with their Jewishness and developed new textual interpretations that made it possible for Jewish queers to find themselves within the Jewish tradition.[14] Additionally, several scholars wrote pieces about textual interpretations regarding homosexuality and gender in the past, and about how Jewish denominations started dealing with the queer-excluding texts in the Jewish tradition after the impact of the social movements of the 1960s/70s: in the German-speaking world, Walter Homolka[15] published many articles of this kind.[16] Similar, yet older, attempts are also recorded in English-language sources.[17] Rona Matlow contributed a comprehensive analysis of the textual basis for the exclusion of trans* Jews in the past,[18] whereas Max Strassfeld[19] searched

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Sue Levi Elwell, and Shirley Idelson, eds., *Lesbian Rabbis. The First Generation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001); Tracy Moore, ed., *Lesbiot: Israeli Lesbians Talk about Sexuality, Feminism, Judaism and Their Lives* (London: Cassell, 1995); Christie Balka and Andy Rose, eds., *Twice Blessed. On Being Lesbian, Gay, and Jewish* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989); Evelyn Torton Beck, ed., *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology* (Watertown, MA: Beacon Press, 1982).

13 Noach Dzmura, ed., *Balancing on the Mechitza: Transgender in Jewish Community* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2010). Another, similarly orientated publication was published by Naomi Zeveloff in 2014 (cf. Naomi Zeveloff, ed., *Transgender & Jewish* [New York: Forward Association, 2014]).

14 Cf. Gregg Drinkwater, Joshua Lesser, and David Shneer, eds., *Torah Queeries. Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Steven Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004); Rebecca Alpert, *Like Bread on the Seder Plate: Jewish Lesbians and the Transformation of Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

15 Hereby, I strongly distance myself from the person Walter Homolka after several accusations against his role at the University of Potsdam, the Abraham Geiger Kolleg, and other Jewish institutions in Germany became public. However, I recognize his work in presenting approaches towards homosexuality in the Jewish tradition and different Jewish denominations.

16 Cf. Walter Homolka, "'Der Mensch soll nicht allein sein.' Jüdische Perspektiven zur Homosexualität," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Zeitgeschichte* 74, Issue 1 (2022): 3–23; Walter Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," *Teologia i Moralność* 15, no. 1(27) (2020): 89–108, 92; Walter Homolka, "Jüdische Perspektiven zur Homosexualität," in *Religion und Homosexualität: Aktuelle Positionen*, ed. Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2013), 36–59.

17 Cf. Lewis John Eron, "Homosexuality and Judaism," in *Homosexuality and World Religions*, ed. Arlene Swidler (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), 103–134, and Yoel H. Kahn, "Judaism and Homosexuality: The Traditionalist/Progressive Debate," in *Homosexuality and Religion*, ed. Richard Hasbany (New York: Haworth Press, 1989), 47–82.

18 Cf. Rona Matlow, "Traditional Sources Against Prohibiting Trans Jews from Transitioning Gender," *G'vanim: The Journal of the Academy for Jewish Religion* 10 (2019): 50–67. Matlow published a similar article (cf. Rona Matlow, "Gender and Tanakh: Exploring Rabbinic Interpretations of Gender and Sex in the Hebrew Bible," in *Liberating Gender for Jews and Allies: The Wisdom of Transkeit*, ed. Jane Rachel Litman and Jakob Hero-Shaw [Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambrige Scholars Pub-

the Talmud for queer gender expressions, underlined their potential for understanding Judaism, and contributed to empowering interpretations of the Talmud.[20]

At the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, the focus of academic research concentrated on the intersection between Queer Theory and Jewish Studies. Daniel Boyarin already pointed out in *Unheroic Conduct*[21] that the image of the effeminate Jew is permeated by antisemitic stereotypes, and that Jewish men and women have always been and continue to be strongly influenced by gender norms. Together with Daniel Itzkovitz and Ann Pellegrini, Boyarin further reflected on the correlation between Jewishness and Queerness in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question.*[22] Their anthology is often considered the academic starting point for *queering* Jewish Studies. A strength of the articles collected in this volume is that they appropriately analyze the effects of misogyny, heterosexism, and antisemitism on individuals. However, they do not consider experiences of being queer *and* Jewish. Other scholars also concentrated on the deconstruction of norms, binaries, and the influence of gender expectations for Jewish men and women, but again, only in a few, exceptional cases on the experience of being queer *and* Jewish.[23]

Other academic contributions attempted to document a lineage of queer Judaism and portrayed same-sex sexuality and/or nonbinary gender expressions in the past which were not necessarily called *homosexual* or *queer* or implied any iden-

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lishing, 2022], 26–33) in an anthology of essays dealing with *transkeit* and strategies for allies of trans* Jews published in 2022.

19 Cf. Max K. Strassfeld, *Trans Talmud: Androgynes and Eunuchs in Rabbinic Literature* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2022).

20 In 2019, another book was published to approach the question of trans* individuals from an Orthodox perspective. It aimed to engage in a dialogue about both the emotional (for those effected) and religious challenges, cf. Alan Slomowitz and Alison Feit, eds., *Homosexuality, Transsexuality, Psychoanalysis and Traditional Judaism* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2019).

21 Cf. Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

22 Cf. Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz und Ann Pellegrini, eds., *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

23 Cf. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, *Geschlecht und Differenz* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2014); Benjamin Maria Baader, Sharon Gillerman, and Paul Lerner, eds., *Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender, and History* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2012); Marion A. Kaplan and Deborah D. Moore, eds., *Gender and Jewish History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011); Matti Bunzl, *Symptoms of Modernity: Jews and Queers in Late-Twentieth-Century Vienna* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Jonathan Freedman, "Coming out of the Jewish Closet with Marcel Proust," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 7, no. 4 (2001): 521–551; Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt, eds., *Judaism since Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Jonathan Magonet, ed., *Jewish Explorations of Sexuality* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995).

tity category.[24] A milestone for the reconstruction of queer Jewishness was Noam Sienna's anthology *A Rainbow Thread*,[25] the "boldest and most comprehensive attempt yet"[26] to create a queer Jewish genealogy. Sienna collected texts from the first century CE until 1969, very shortly after the Stonewall Riots. They placed these texts in historical order and explained why they have to be regarded as queer and Jewish: either they include or were written by queer Jewish protagonists, or they contain nuances that break with the heteronormative Jewish norm. Many of these texts have not been read from a queer perspective before, while others have not been considered by Jewish historiography at all. The methodological deliberations about how to write Queer Jewish History are another strength of the anthology which this study also takes recourse to.[27]

The history of queer Jewish institutions, however, is far less often considered and almost entirely focused on the United States. The latter focus on US-American

24 Cf. Janin Afken and Liesa Hellmann, eds., *Queere jüdische Gedichte und Geschichten in homosexuellen Zeitschriften zwischen 1900 und 1932* (Berlin: Hentrich und Hentrich, 2024); Andreas Kraß, Moshe Sluhovsky, and Yuval Yonay, eds., *Queer Jewish Lives Between Central Europe and Mandatory Palestine. Biographies and Geographies* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2022); Shaun Jacob Halper, "Coming Out of the Hasidic Closet: Jiří Mordechai Langer (1894–1943) and the Fashioning of Homosexual-Jewish Identity," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 101, no. 2 (2011): 189–231; Miryam Kabakov, ed., *Keep Your Wives Away from Them: Orthodox Women, Unorthodox Desires* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2010); Warren Hoffman, *The Passing Game: Queering Jewish American Culture* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009); Jonathan C. Friedman, *Rainbow Jews. Jewish and Gay Identity in the Performing Arts* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007); Jonathan Krasner, "Without Standing Down: The First Queer Jewish Street Protest," in *Queer Jews*, ed. Caryn Aviv and David Shneer (New York: Routledge, 2002), 119–134. Since the late 1980s, Magnus Hirschfeld has become the focus of scholarly interest. Hirschfeld, Jewish and homosexual, founded the modern sexual sciences and created a safe space for queer people with his Institut für Sexualwissenschaften (Institute for Sexual Sciences) in Berlin's Tiergarten at the beginning of the 20th century, cf. James Steakley, *Magnus Hirschfeld: Ein Schriftenverzeichnis* (Berlin: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2021); Ralf Dose, *Magnus Hirschfeld. The Origins of the Gay Liberation Movement*, trans. Edward H. Willis (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014); Elke-Vera Kotowski and Julius H. Schoeps, eds., *Der Sexualreformer Magnus Hirschfeld. Ein Leben im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft, Politik und Gesellschaft* (Berlin: be.bra Wissenschaft Verlag, 2004).

25 Cf. Noam Sienna, *A Rainbow Thread: An Anthology of Queer Jewish Texts from the First Century to 1969* (Philadelphia: Print-O-Craft, 2019).

26 Gregg Drinkwater, "Review of A Rainbow Thread: An Anthology of Queer Jewish Texts from the First Century to 1969," In geveb, October 28, 2019, https://ingeveb.org/articles/review-of-a-rainbow-thread-an-anthology-of-queer-jewish-texts-from-the-first-century-to-1969, accessed January 9, 2023.

27 Sienna further described their idea of Queer Jewish History in an additional article that can be read as complement to their anthology, cf. Noam Sienna, "Spinning a Rainbow Thread: Reflections on Writing Queer Jewish History," *G'vanim. The Journal of the Academy for Jewish Religion* 10 (2019): 1–13.

experiences is not unknown to Queer Jewish Studies in general,[28] but is especially evident in the research on how Jewish queers created alternative and communal safe spaces. Moshe Shokeid, an Israeli social anthropologist, devoted several years to fieldwork in the queer synagogue Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (CBST) in New York and published his first results in *A Gay Synagogue in New York*[29] in 1995. Shokeid additionally contributed more articles about the synagogue to the academic discourse.[30] However, Shokeid's interest was neither historical nor did he situate CBST, its founding and existence, into US-American Judaism. He was interested in the reasons why Jews decided to become members of the synagogue, how their identities were constructed, and which political decisions they made within the congregation based on their personal experiences. In 2014, Rabbi Ayelet Cohen became the author of an extensive history for CBST's 40th anniversary. She took recourse to archival material and the testimonies of (former) members.[31]

The rabbinical thesis by Amy Hertz embedded the founding of the first official queer synagogue Beth Chayim Chadashim (BCC) in Los Angeles in 1972 into the changing attitude of US-American Reform Judaism towards homosexuality.[32] I previously reconstructed BCC's early history and decisions in detail up until the congregation's admission into Reform Judaism as the first queer synagogue to have been admitted.[33] Besides these two instances, Gregg Drinkwater worked extensively on the history of US-American queer synagogues. Drinkwater spent many years interviewing (former) congregants and searching in archives for the dealings of the US-American denominations with queer synagogues. This resulted in a comprehensive, as yet unpublished dissertation[34] about how these synagogues (BCC, CBST,

28 For more research in the field of Queer Jewish Studies, e. g., queer Jewish perspectives in Literature, Media, or Holocaust Studies, cf. Jan Wilkens, "Queer Jewish Studies – Ein Fach neu denken," *Medaon – Mazagin für jüdisches Leben in Forschung und Bildung* 16, no. 31 (2022): 1–13.

29 Cf. Moshe Shokeid, *A Gay Synagogue in New York.* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

30 Cf. Moshe Shokeid, "When the Curtain Falls on a Fieldwork Project: The Last Chapter of a Gay Synagogue Study," *Ethnos* 72, no. 2 (2007): 219–238, and Moshe Shokeid, "'The Women Are Coming': The Transformation of Gender Relationships in a Gay Synagogue," *Ethnos* 66, no. 1 (2000): 5–26.

31 Cf. Ayelet S. Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History. Congregation Beit Simchat Torah. The First Forty Years* (New York: Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, 2014).

32 Cf. Amy Beth Hertz, "One in Every Minyan: Homosexuality and the Reform Movement" (Rabbinical/Ordination Thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Cincinnati, 2008).

33 Jan Wilkens, *"Jewish, Gay and Proud": The Founding of Beth Chayim Chadashim as a Milestone of Jewish Homosexual Integration* (Potsdam: Universitätsverlag Potsdam, 2020).

34 Cf. Gregg Drinkwater, "Building Queer Judaism: Gay Synagogues and the Transformation of an American Religious Community, 1948–1990" (PhD diss., University of Colorado, 2020).

and Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco[35] in particular) were able to transform the American religious landscape. Additionally, Drinkwater analyzed both in the dissertation and in a separate article[36] the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and how the disease changed rituals, liturgy, and the sense of community in queer Jewish spaces.

Concerning the three European queer Jewish groups portrayed in this study, their history and impact have only been marginally considered in both academia (Jewish Studies and Queer Studies/History alike) or community history projects so far. The first years of JGG (the early 1970s) were elaborated on in several students' dissertations. They either focused on the biographies of very early members[37] or, as part of a larger study, on the establishment of the group and on its first impact on queer Jews in the UK.[38] Not all of their evaluations can be validated since this study took considerably more material into account and broadened the perspective on the early JGG. The master's dissertation of James Lesh[39] used historical and sociological methodology as well as approaches from Urban Studies to map London through the lenses of queer Jews. In this case, JGG/JGLG came up several times as part of queer Jews' experiences, but not necessarily as an institution with its own history.

Regarding Beit Haverim, Alain Beit and Madeleine Racimor published a book for the group's 40th anniversary.[40] It has a narrative character with limited historical information, including interviews by (former) members and supporters, but particularly focuses on contemporary issues and challenges, like the fight against anti-queer biases and antisemitism. Beit Haverim's first president, Martine Gross, published several articles reflecting on her experience with the group. One article dealt with the group's history, but especially with what the group achieved in the

35 Also cf. Gregg Drinkwater, "Creating an Embodied Queer Judaism: Liturgy, Ritual and Sexuality at San Francisco's Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, 1977–1987," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 18, Issue 2 (2019): 177–193.

36 Cf. Gregg Drinkwater, "AIDS Was Our Earthquake: American Jewish Responses to the AIDS Crisis, 1985–92," *Jewish Social Studies* 26, no. 1 (2020): 122–142.

37 Cf. Christian Klesse, "Identity Formation and Society. Identification Processes in the Context of the Lesbian and Gay Movement in the Life History of a Jewish Gay Men in Twentieth Century Britain" (MA diss., University of Greenwich, 1997).

38 Cf. Daniel Lichman, "'Hot Potatoes': Lesbians, Gays and Jewish Communities in Late Twentieth Century Britain." (BA diss., University of Nottingham, 2008), and Alexander Eisenberg, "Exclusive Recognition. Gay and Lesbian Jews in Britain, 1967–1983" (BA diss., University of Nottingham, 2006).

39 Cf. James Philip Lesh, "Queer Jewish London: An Historical Geography of Twentieth-Century Cultural, Sexual and Spiritual Intersections" (MA diss., University of London, 2014).

40 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité.*

21st century.[41] For another article, Gross conducted qualitative interviews with group members questioning their identities and their expectations towards communal institutions.[42]

Sjalhomo has almost never appeared in published academic resources before. One exception is an article by Gemma Kwantes which dealt with the "Queer Shabbaton," a weekend of queer events which the congregation Beit Ha'Chidush in Amsterdam organized in the early 2000s, shortly after Sjalhomo dissolved.[43] An unpublished study paper by US-American student Anita Brakman interviewed Jewish lesbians in Amsterdam in the late 1990s.[44] Many of them were members of Sjalhomo at that time. Besides that, Rob Snijders is one of the editors of the website *joodsamsterdam.nl* that had indeed recorded the existence of the group, but only had limited resources to refer to.[45] In 2021, the Stadsarchief Amsterdam opened the exhibition "Amsterdam Regenboogstad – 25 jaar Pride" (Rainbow City Amsterdam – 25 Years of Pride). In the physical exhibition, Sjalhomo was

41 Cf. Martine Gross, "The History of Beit Haverim," in *Gender, Families and Transmission in the Contemporary Jewish Context*, ed. id., Sophie Nizard, and Yann Scioldo-Zurcher (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 102–112.

42 Cf. Martine Gross, "Juif et homosexuel, affiliations identitaires et communalisation," *social compass* 54, Issue 2 (2007): 225–238. Other sociological studies that used interviews with Jewish queers concentrate on North American experiences: Faulkner and Hecht conducted interviews on the US East Coast (cf. Sandra L. Faulkner and Michael L. Hecht, "The Negotiation of Closetable Identities: A Narrative Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered Queer Jewish Identity," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 28, Issue 6 [2011]: 829–847) and Randel Schnoor interviewed gay Jewish men in Toronto (cf. Randel Schoor, "Being Gay and Jewish: Negotiating Intersecting Identities," *Sociology of Religion* 67, no. 1 [2006]: 43–60). In recent years, the experience of Orthodox Jewish men who need to hide their sexual orientation came into focus for qualitative research (cf. Samuel H. Allen and Laura A. Golojuch, "'She Still Doesn't Want Me to Tell My Next-Door Neighbor:' The Familial Experiences of Modern Orthodox Jewish Gay Men," *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* 15, no. 4 [2019], 373–394; Eyal Zack and Adital Ben-Ari, "'Men Are for Sex and Women Are for Marriage': On the Duality in the Lives of Jewish Religious Gay Men Married to Women," *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* 15, no. 4 [2019]: 395–413; Haya Itzhaky and Karni Kissil, "'It's a Horrible Sin. If They Find Out, I Will Not be Able to Stay': Orthodox Jewish Gay Men's Experiences Living in Secrecy'," *Journal of Homosexuality* 62, Issue 5 [2015]: 621–643).

43 Cf. Gemma Kwantes, "'Natuurlijk, ik ben joods!' De Queer Shabbaton Amsterdam 2006: queerjoodse identiteit bevestigd ['Of course I am Jewish!' The Queer Shabbaton Amsterdam 2006: queer Jewish identity confirmed]," in *Nieuw in Nederland. Feesten en rituelen in verandering*, ed. Irene Stengs (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 143–163.

44 Cf. Anita Brakman, "Jewish Lesbians in Amsterdam: New Narratives on Dual Identities" (Paper, School for International Teaching Amsterdam, 1999).

45 Cf. Rob Snijders, "Sjalhomo," Joods Amsterdam, September 13, 2019, https://www.joodsamsterdam.nl/sjalhomo/, accessed January 12, 2021.

not represented. However, the archive published a short article about the group in the online version.[46]

The European network of Jewish queers occurred in the framework of the WCGLJO. The congress and its very early history are mentioned in the research on US-American queer synagogues.[47] In 1989, Aaron Cooper wrote about how the congress came into existence and its significance for the US-American synagogues at that time.[48] In 2018, the World Congress published a book documenting the contributions by queer Jewish organizations. It contains a timeline and historical pieces, but especially focuses on the situation for queer Jews in different countries in the late 2010s and the challenges for the future.[49] However, these works did not cover the European network of Jewish queers in the 1980s and 1990s.

1.3 Consulted Primary Material

In order to approach the research questions and to add European queer Jewish voices to the academic discourse, this study consulted and analyzed first and foremost primary sources including the groups' newsletters, meeting minutes, correspondence, (smaller) group publications, further administrative documents, and clippings. Since neither the history of the groups nor their network have been considered in academia before, there was more than one archive to refer to because the material on the groups is scattered throughout many different archives. Thus, a comprehensive search for material in archives of Jewish and queer communities in Europe and the United States was conducted for this study.

For the foundation of the Jewish Research Group and the first years of JGG, the Hall-Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics were especially useful. A comprehensive collection of the group's early newsletters is stored in the archival collection of the queer synagogue CBST at the LGBT Community Center National History Archive (LGBT CCNHA) in New York. This study was also enriched through the work of the Rainbow Jews Project conducted by British Liberal Judaism. It collected Jewish LGBTQ+ history in the country in form of materialized documents

46 Cf. Stadsarchief Amsterdam, "'Sjalhomo, Shalom!'," 2021, https://www.amsterdam.nl/stadsarchief/stukken/liefde/sjalhomo/, accessed January 30, 2023.
47 Cf. Drinkwater, "Building Queer Judaism," 244–246; Wilkens, *"Jewish, Gay and Proud,"* 89, 107; Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History*, 256–257; Hertz, "One in Every Minyan," 29–30.
48 Cf. Aaron Cooper, "No Longer Invisible: Gay and Lesbian Jews Build a Movement," *Journal of Homosexuality* 18, Issues 3–4 (1989): 83–94.
49 Cf. The World Congress – Keshet Ga'avah, ed., *Kol Koleinu. All Our Voices. From the Closet to the Bimah. A Legacy for Future Generations and All Communities* (Washington: 2018).

and interviews (audio and/or video). The results of the (meanwhile) ceased project are stored at the London Metropolitan Archives. Unfortunately, attempts to find more material at (former) members' homes have not proved to be successful.

In France, the search for material was more challenging. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) and the Centre documentaire de l'Institut Protestant de Théologie Paris (IPT) both collected I.L.I.A, the newsletter of the CCL, Beit Haverim's birthplace. I.L.I.A contained the newsletter of early Beit Haverim as a supplement. Newsletters after the split from the CCL are not retraceable in the BNF. More valuable were several boxes stored in the basement of Beit Haverim's community center in the 10th arrondissement of Paris. These boxes and their documents were neither organized nor codified. Some newsletters of the post-CCL area were acquired from the Archives Nationales de France. This meant there was a relatively sparse availability of data for the second half of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. These gaps could be filled with articles from different newspapers, journals, and the book for the group's 40th anniversary by Alain Beit and Madeleine Racimor.[50]

Sjalhomo's history can be retraced very easily through the collection of almost all of its newsletters in University of Amsterdam's Library. Further documents were found in the Stadsarchief Amsterdam and the Internationaal Homo/Lesbisch Informatiecentrum en Archief LGBTI Heritage (IHLIA). Due to the fact that Sjalhomo was well-connected with other groups in Europe, Beit Haverim's newsletters are stored in the IHLIA through the archive's collection of material on Sjalhomo. Thanks to the online database Delpher, several newspapers published in the Netherlands and their coverage of Sjalhomo can be accessed easily.

For the chapter on the European network, this study mainly uses material from the analysis of the group's history. However, the LGBT CCNHA also stores in its CBST collection many newsletters and individual documents of the WCGLJO that enriched my perspective.

It should be noted that the kind of materials consulted differ from group to group. Depending on availability, a chapter is either based more on a group's newsletter or on newspaper articles about the group. It also turned out to be very difficult to acquire material consistently throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Whereas Sjalhomo's material covers all three decades in almost the same quantity and quality, there is a much better material base for Beit Haverim from 1977 to 1983. After 1983, the group's newsletter was only published irregularly, and the group slowly went into a period of silence. Most newsletters from JGLG in

50 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité.*

the 1990s have not been stored, which leads to a more detailed picture of the 1970s and 1980s.

This results from the fact that there was almost no sense of self-historization among the groups in the past. No group dedicated their time establishing a physical archive which would be eventually passed on to a national or academic archive. Material found its way to these archives more or less by accident. Beit Haverim's boxes in the community center's basement contain documents that were more randomly collected without any directive. One exception, however, are Sjalhomo's newsletters that were sent monthly to the University of Amsterdam with a certain sense of preserving them for future consultations.

This study is built on written primary sources. It was not possible in the scope of this study to conduct structured, qualitative, or quantitative interviews. In a few cases, however, I have used information obtained from private conversations with (former) members of the three groups or other protagonists. These conversations did not have any directive, but served to understand the groups better, find archival material beyond the already mentioned archives, and understand the impact the groups had on those people involved.

1.4 Outline

The study starts with methodological reflections on how to write Queer Jewish History since it intends to contribute to the efforts of this newly emerging academic field. Queer Jewish History tries to reconstruct the forgotten history of Jewish queers and, simultaneously, deconstruct Jewish understandings of gender and sexualities in the past. Drawing from experiences collected from the field of Queer History, the second chapter establishes a framework for conducting research in Queer Jewish History and how it can challenge Jewish Studies as an academic discipline and perceptions of Judaism as a whole.

Chapter Three deals with the general (eventually rhetorical) question of whether being Jewish and queer is possible. It describes which parts of traditional Jewish literature were used to neglect the existence of Jewish queers and how modern interpretations try to reconcile the problematic past of these texts. Furthermore, the chapter addresses the adaptions denominational Judaism made from the 1970s to today regarding queer people, from a mere acceptance of queers in their congregations to same-sex marriages. This context facilitates our understanding of the climates in which the queer Jewish groups operated. Additionally, the chapter summarizes the efforts of queer US-American Jews who founded queer synagogues, some of whom chose to join denominational Judaism. In order to complete the historical background for the three European queer Jewish groups, the

chapter shows how the queer synagogues in the United States initiated the WCGLJO, which became fundamental to the international changes for Jewish queers.

Chapter Four discusses the environment in which JGG/JGLG, Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo were founded. It argues that London, Paris, and Amsterdam formed a triangle of queer and Jewish life in post-World War II Europe, at least until the end of the Cold War. All three cities were regarded as queer metropolises. They were home to the movements fighting for the rights of queer people. Their legacies persisted and/or continued after World War II. Thus, the chapter explains how the reputations of the three cities as queer metropolises came into effect over the centuries. Moreover, the respective countries were those in which Jewish life in Europe after World War II and the *Zivilisationsbruch* revived: the UK's Jewry was less affected by the Shoah, while Jewish life in France and the Netherlands stabilized relatively quickly. Jewish communities saw a future in these countries (re-) building old and new structures and institutions. The chapter argues that only within this triangle could the establishment of queer Jewish groups in Europe become possible starting in the 1970s.

Chapters Five to Seven deal with the three queer Jewish groups in particular. They take the primary material into account and reconstruct their history. The chapters are arranged by the founding date of the groups, thus starting with JGG/JGLG, followed by Beit Haverim and, finally, Sjalhomo. Thereby, the chapters use a similar structure by approaching the groups' histories. They address the organizational decisions the groups made (like agreeing on a name, defining membership standards, or renting meeting spaces) and the agenda the group agreed upon.

This also includes the very diverse nature of their activities. Another important area of interest is the outreach the groups performed – to the queer and the Jewish community alike – and the allies whose support they could rely on. As already mentioned, the experiences of queer women in religious spaces have not previously been considered sufficiently enough. That is why the chapters address these experiences in their own subchapters, not by isolating the female experience, but by recognizing its specificity. Moreover, the chapters take the effect of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the queer Jewish groups into account. For Beit Haverim and Sjalhomo, the State of Israel, its politics, and wellbeing became another formative factor in the group's history.

Chapter Eight is dedicated to the network European queer Jewish groups established and maintained in the 1980s and 1990s. I will draw upon the network

theory implemented by Lukasz Szulc.[51] It suggests that a globalized network consists of nodes (geographical locations or geopolitical entities), their connections, and the flows between them. The European groups constituted the nodes of this network. They understood themselves as distinctively European with a social and not religious purpose, in contrast to the US-American queer synagogues. Additionally, they had a different experience of being Jewish and queer than that of Jews in the United States. In recognizing these differences, the groups (as the network's nodes) were connected with each other on several occasions, most importantly during the European (and Israeli) Regional Conferences of the WCGLJO. The conference's legacy seems to be almost forgotten in the groups' collective memory and beyond. Moreover, the chapter looks at the flows between the nodes – the flows of knowledge, experiences, and people. This resulted in an important, since supportive, network for the three groups that diversified in the second half of the 1990s, and finally lost its significance in the late 1990s/early 2000s.

Finally, Chapter Nine brings all results, trains of thoughts, and further considerations together and concludes this study. It also addresses absences, e. g., of trans* and Sephardic/Mizrahi perspectives. By acknowledging that even after several years of research gaps still exist, the chapter points to further academic inquiries this study may initiate.

1.5 Notes on Terminologies

Writing about non-heterosexual desires, non-cisgendered people, and the corresponding history always poses the question which terms are used. Using contemporary terms like gay/lesbian, homosexual, or queer for historic research may imply that people in the past had a clearly marked identity, or that an understanding of a group of people with similar desires and gender identities had always existed. This was not the case: in different cultures there existed different understandings of what we call "sexuality" today. The terms we now use have a history themselves. We cannot, for instance, properly speak about homosexuality before the end of the 19th century. The term *homosexuality* in distinction to *heterosexuality* was coined by Austrian-Hungarian activist Karl Maria Kertbeny at the end of the 1860s. Around the same time, sexologists began dealing with same-

51 Lukasz Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland. Cross-Border Flows in Gay and Lesbian Magazines* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 220 – 224.

sex attraction and researching its causes and implications.[52] Before that, society did not distinguish people by their homosexuality, but by their sexual acts. Terminologies like "sodomites," "pederasts," or "buggers" were used to describe the phenomenon of people having sexual contact with the same sex.

However, after its introduction, the term homosexuality became contested. For some, homosexuality concentrated too much on sex and not on loving same-sex partnerships. Originating in Germany at the time of the Weimar Republic, the burgeoning postwar homosexual movements in Central Europe picked up the term *homophile* – Greek for "loving the same" – at the end of the 1940s. The term reached the Unites States around the same time.[53] The moderate homophile movement with its mostly white, middle class, and educated gay men and lesbian women[54] was superseded by the more radical and political Gay Liberation Movement evolving after the Stonewall Riots in New York. However, the term homophile was used roughly up until the late 1970s. Subsequently, the term homosexuality, along with gay or lesbian, became the prevalent terms used by and for those affected and in their fight for equality.

In the 1990s, these terms were challenged again. Those who did not identify as homosexual/gay/lesbian such as bisexuals or trans*[55] people demanded recognition within the movement. These demands concluded in the acronym LGBT. However, the word *queer* was increasingly chosen by activists to describe themselves

52 Cf. Kevin White, "Homosexuality and Heterosexuality," in *Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History in America. 2, H.D. to Queer Theory*, ed. Marc Stern (New York: Scribner's, 2004), 60 – 61.

53 Cf. Martin Meeker, "Homophile Movement," in *Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History in America. 2, H.D. to Queer Theory*, ed. Marc Stern (New York: Scribner's, 2004), 53.

54 Cf. Meeker, "Homophile Movement," 52.

55 This word also has its own history. At the beginning of the 20th century, sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld called all those who cross-dressed and those who identified with another gender other than their birth sex *transvestites.* Already shortly before World War II, *transsexuality* was used to describe the later phenomenon. In 1949, *transsexualism* was introduced as a medical diagnosis for people who "sought to change their sex" (Kara Thompson, "Transsexuals, Transvestites, Transgender People, and Cross-Dressers," in *Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History in America. 2, H.D. to Queer Theory*, ed. Marc Stern [New York: Scribner's, 2004], 203). In the 1980s, the word *transgender* came into play. It originated as distinction to *transsexual* and emphasized that those affected did not intend to change their gender by surgery or hormonal treatment. Instead, they lived in constant conflict with their biological sex and their gender identity. In the end, trans* is not a description of a sexuality, but concerns gender identity. The term *transgender* or *trans(*)* today is a general, all-compassing term to the full range of gender-crossing and describes those "who disturb(s) normative gender or sex identifications or dichotomies" (cf. Thompson, "Transsexuals, Transvestites, Transgender People, and Cross-Dressers," 206).

and their community. Originally meaning strange or peculiar, queer was previously used as a pejorative against all those who did not fulfill heteronormative expectations. Nevertheless, activists around the world[56] were reclaiming the term for their own agenda. Queer became an umbrella term for the LGBT community that included the whole spectrum of non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgendered people. It can also serve as an own identifier for people who do not identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans* or asexual.[57] With the emergence of Queer Theory, the word also received a methodological meaning: *queering* is a methodology to disrupt categories and questions fixed, unchanged assumptions about sexuality and gender. Laura Doan once spoke about "Queerness as being" (i. e., being a queer person) and "Queerness as method."[58] Chapter Two focuses in length on queer(ing) as a methodology.

While looking at the analyzed material and the three queer Jewish groups in particular, terms around identity are not used consistently: as Chapter Five shows, JGG experienced several name changes in the first years of its existence, at one time emphasizing the homophile tradition, at another the homosexual. Later, the finally chosen word gay was challenged by women who did not feel represented. Also, Sjalhomo predominately used the term homophile in its early days, but quickly changed completely to addressing homo- and bisexuals. Beit Haverim consistently used the word homosexual up until the early 2000s.

Besides the political implications of the terms, research of same-sex desires and non-cisgendered people face two other problems: firstly, protagonists might have used certain terms to describe themselves because they did not have the terminology we have now, or they further/newly discovered their sexuality/gender and identify differently today. Secondly, there might have been people who were subsumed by a term even though they did not identify with it at that time, e. g., women or trans* individuals who were active in a *gay* group. In my opinion, queer as an umbrella term can solve this problem. That is why I use the word queer in this study describing all non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgendered people.[59] I use the word in making general statements and speaking about a group

56 It should be noted that regional differences existed. For example, as explained in Chapter Four, the word *queer* has not yet received the same recognition in France as in other European countries.
57 Cf. Mollie Clarke, "'Queer' History: A History of Queer", The National Archives, February 9, 2021, https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/queer-history-a-history-of-queer/, accessed February 6, 2023.
58 Cf. Brian Lewis, "Introduction: British Queer History," in *British Queer History*, ed. id. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 7.
59 When an acronym is being used, I choose LGBTQ+. The "+" opens up the acronym for all letters that want to be included.

of people in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. This might be an ahistorical usage of the word queer and it might exclude those who distinctively did and do not wish to be subsumed under the word queer. However, the word's usage from the 1990s to this day justifies the inclusion of everyone outside the heteronormative matrix under this term. In the case of the three Jewish groups portrayed in this study, queer also points to their "unapologetic, anti-assimilationist stance"[60] and its usage takes into account that "queer champions those who refuse to be defined in the terms of, and by the (moral) codes [...] set down by, the dominant society."[61]

Nevertheless, there are many instances in which I use the words homosexual, gay, lesbian, or even homophile. That is when I cite or directly refer to the study's material, or while referring to a group's endonym, a specifically addressed group, or a self-imposed term. This may result in a sudden change between the word *queer* and the word *homosexual* within one page. This might be challenging for the reader but takes account of contemporarily used terminologies and (unintended) ignorance for certain groups of people. We have to acknowledge that there is not a conclusive solution for the problem (yet) in which there is one word which enables us to speak appropriately about same-sex desires and gender identities, neither in the past nor in the present. We continuously need to reflect on the terms we use and substantiate why we do so. The reflection of what we do is also an essential part of the queering of academic research. Henceforth, the next chapter addresses the potential of how "Queerness as a method" can enrich our understanding of Jewish Studies and Jewish historiography in particular.

60 Noreen Giffney, "Introduction: The 'Q' Word," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory*, ed. id. and Michael O'Rourke (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 3.
61 Giffney, "Introduction: The 'Q' Word," 3.

2 Writing Queer Jewish History

This study contributes to the emerging field of Queer Jewish History that attempts to "disrupt" the mainstream trends of Jewish historiography and to represent queer Jewish voices as well as a reevaluation of categories and identities. Thereby, Queer Jewish History can take recourse to experiences in general historiography and the establishment of Queer History. This chapter describes the potential of Queer History on Jewish historiography and calls theoretical and methodological cornerstones to mind. The way of "doing the history of sexualities and gender" has changed from its beginnings in the late 1960s. Today, Queer History's theoretical frame of reference is Queer Theory and its notion of constructed identities, instead of an essentialist comprehension of sexuality and gender.[1] Hence, in the first step, I show how Queer History gradually emerged under the influence of Queer Theory and its multilayered perspectives, and how it became "a field in motion, one in conversation with the lively interdisciplinary fields of queer studies and open to reflection and self-critique."[2] In the second step, I take these experiences and their potential into account to develop a methodology of writing Queer Jewish History.

2.1 Queer History as a Frame of Reference

Before the academic world started including queer perspectives to historiography in any way, Queer History (Gay and Lesbian History as it was called at its beginning) was mainly pursued by historians (or students), archivists, and activists from the queer community itself. They believed that Gay and Lesbian History (and later, the history of trans* and nonbinary people) was necessary for understanding current politics and for a liberatory future.[3] John D'Emilio, one of the pioneers in writing Queer History, recalled: "History was our confirmation that the worlds we were constructing in the present were not our momentary hallucina-

1 Cf. Martin Lücke, "'Queer History' – 'Geschichte queer unterrichten' – was soll das sein?," undated, http://queerhistory.de/queer-history-geschichte-queer-unterrichten-was-soll-das-sein/, accessed December 4, 2019.

2 Regina Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," *The American Historical Review* 123, Issue 5 (2018): 1577.

3 Cf. Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1560.

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tions but had roots and connections; our lives had strong ties to something that stretched way back in time."[4]

The first phase of Queer History, from the late 1960s until the 1980s, was dedicated to rediscovering histories. Previously, history was predominately written by and dealt with the privileged and powerful; this was, for the most part, by and for cisgendered, heterosexual men. The attempts of community historians served to restore forgotten people to history and thereby change the view of them in the present and the future.[5] This work not only made forgotten history present, it also functioned as an experience of community building. Groups of people came together to do research on individuals and/or developments that had a queer potential: "We were driven in part by the conviction that knowing our history would contribute to making us a people and a community."[6]

Additionally, there were attempts to move homosexuality from a medical diagnosis "into social, cultural, and political life – in the past as well as the present."[7] These early attempts were "inherently political," transformative for both "doers and receivers,"[8] and aligned with the changing political climate of that time. Several intellectuals tried to "incorporate history into their community and political work" and "addressed their work to the community about whom they wrote."[9] Community-based work was strengthened by the activist press which was "hungry" for histories to use. The press functioned as a carrier for and promotor of the new stories that historians were able to discover.[10]

At the beginning, the research limited its focus to two issues: first, the rediscovering of biographies, the emphasis on "gay heroes" to establish role models for the community;[11] second, the history of homosexual oppression and resistance. Whereas some researchers highlighted the various historical cases in which queer people were repressed, others did not acknowledge this negative view on the common history and concentrated on the cases of resistance even before the

4 John d'Emilio, *In a New Century. Essays on Queer History, Politics, and Community Life* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 5.

5 D'Emilio, *In a New Century*, 122–123.

6 D'Emilio, *In a New Century*, 125.

7 Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1560.

8 John d'Emilio, "Not a Simple Matter: Gay History and Gay Historians," *Journal of American History* 76, Issue 2 (1989): 439.

9 D'Emilio, *In a New Century*, 133.

10 Cf. Lisa Duggan, "History's Gay Ghetto: The Contradictions of Growth in Lesbian and Gay History," in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, ed. Susan Porter, Steven Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986): 281–282.

11 Cf. Martin B. Duberman, "Reclaiming the Gay Past," *Reviews in American History* 16, no. 4 (1988): 516.

Stonewall Riots of 1969.[12] Stephen Garton observed that this early stage of writing history was "largely untheorized," apart from its representatives' (debatable) notion that homosexuality was created as a distinct behavior from heterosexuality and was, therefore, produced by repression and control.[13] This may have been derived, as John D'Emilio pointed out, from the fact that academic and community history had different goals and different audiences to address.[14] Therefore, the development of a theoretical approach was only possible later when academia took an increased interest in the history of sexuality. Another reason for the untheorized start of the field might have been the lack of resources and the personal struggles of early researchers. Writing Queer History was not profitable and could only be done part-time.[15] Researchers had to take the risk of being affiliated with this area, possibly losing financial resources. Lisa Duggan spoke about a "ghettoization of gay and lesbian history," completely excluded from funding and support.[16] She indicated two primary locations for research: independent archives that had sprung up since the mid-1970s, which were based on volunteers and community fundraising, and history projects. Many of the latter were short-lived and covered only a small part of Queer History within a given city or community.[17]

However, the 1980s became the "breakthrough decade"[18] for Queer History, queer historians, and queer archivists. This contributed to the field's academization. It introduced sociological and anthropological theory into Queer History, which opened two frontlines in the debate about how the newly acquired sources should be interpreted, and about what constituted the subject of inquiry.[19] On the one hand, essentialist historians suggested that a gay identity, and gay people, could be found throughout history.[20] They drew especially on Greek and Roman history that featured a large number of same-sex activity.[21] Their efforts "tried to trace the continuity of sexuality across time and culture."[22] In doing so, homo-

12 Cf. Martin B. Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Jr. Chauncey, "Introduction," in *Hidden from History. Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. id. (New York: New American Library, 1989), 2.
13 Cf. Stephen Garton, *Histories of Sexuality. Antiquity to Sexual Revolution* (London: Equinox, 2006), 9–10.
14 Cf. D'Emilio, *In a New Century*, 134–135.
15 Cf. D'Emilio, *In a New Century*, 133–134.
16 Cf. Duggan, "History's Gay Ghetto," 282, 285.
17 Cf. Duggan, "History's Gay Ghetto, 283–284.
18 Cf. D'Emilio, "Not a Simple Matter," 440.
19 Cf. Duberman, Vicinus, Chauncey, "Introduction," 4–5.
20 Cf. Duberman, Vicinus, Chauncey, "Introduction," 5.
21 Cf. Garton, *Histories of Sexuality*, 20.
22 Garton, *Histories of Sexuality*, 19.

sexuality should be recognized as a natural part of human sexuality, which, in turn, had always been part of history.

Essentialism's counterpart in this debate was social constructionism. Proponents of the latter regarded sexual categories and identities as socially constructed and historically specific. Instead of a "history of the gay people," they demanded a history "of the changes in sexual categories themselves."[23] They noted that "the homosexual," i. e., what we understand as a homosexual today, is a specific invention of the late 19th century Western world.[24] Social constructionists, however, were first and foremost united in their opposition to essentialism – theoretically and methodologically, they were a very diverse group. One group might highlight the aspect of social action and the attempts at making his or her own history, another might view sexuality as embedded in wider social structures.[25]

Social constructionists drew their inspiration from Michel Foucault's revolutionary work *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge*,[26] first published in 1976. Foucault established the argument that sexuality should be regarded as historical: He opposed the "repressive hypothesis" which had been an essential part of the sexual liberation of the 1960s and 1970s. According to this, any expression of sexuality in Western culture had been repressed, muted, and restrained by the Victorian bourgeoisie.[27] The rich and powerful classes of society repressed the lower classes in regard to sexual expression.[28] Foucault challenged this view and shifted the discourse from the question "Why are we[29] repressed" to "Why do we say [...] that we are repressed?"[30]

Foucault argued that the Victorian bourgeoisie hid neither sex nor sexuality. On the contrary: sex was a very important topic in the 18th and 19th century:

> [...] since the end of the sixteenth century, the 'putting into discourse of sex,' far from undergoing a process of restriction, on the contrary has been subjected to a mechanism of increas-

23 Duberman, Vicinus, Chancey, "Introduction," 5.
24 Cf. Duberman, "Reclaiming the Gay Past," 519.
25 Cf. Garton, *Histories of Sexuality*, 19, 22–23.
26 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1, The Will to Knowledge*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1998).
27 Cf. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 3–8.
28 Rachele Dini und Chiara Briganti, *An Analysis of Michel Foucault's The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2017), 24.
29 Foucault, homosexual himself, was active in many leftist movements of the 1960s. Therefore, he uses the plural "we." A sexual liberation in the eyes of leftist thinkers, i. e., a liberation from state powers and capitalist forces that oppress sexual drives, was a too simplistic concept for him (cf. Dini and Briganti, *An Analysis*, 17–18). Hence, his *History of Sexuality* can be read as a reply to his experiences with the (French) left.
30 Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 8–9.

> ing excitement; that the techniques of power exercised over sex have not obeyed a principle of rigorous selection, but rather one of dissemination and implantation of polymorphous sexualities; and that the will to knowledge has not come to a halt in the face of a taboo that must not be lifted, but has persisted in constituting – despite many mistakes, of course – a science of sexuality.[31]

This "science of sexuality" – Foucault called it *scientia sexualis* – led to the identification of different sexual pathologies. First, these were only described as a part of one's personality.[32] In a next step, they were regarded as abnormal or perversions.[33] This enabled a scientific discourse; studies about the categories of (sexual) individuals began to be conducted.[34] So, "[w]hat is peculiar to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum* [sic!], while exploiting it as *the* [sic!] secret."[35]

Only the discourse about sexual behavior, enabled through the production of knowledge, labeled homosexuality as "abnormal" in contrast to "normal" heterosexuality. This, in turn, enabled the introduction of moral and legal punishment.[36]

Foucault concluded that power did not work primarily through direct repression within the modern period. Instead, power was used through the production of knowledge. The information about sexualities was used to decide what was normal or not.[37] Thereby, the dominant class did not spread its knowledge to the lower class in order to reassure its superiority.[38] Foucault stated: "[N]ever have there existed more centers of power; never more attention manifested and verbalized; never more circular contacts and linkages; never more sites where the intensity of pleasures and the persistency of power catch hold [...]"[39] than in the Victorian era. Thus, power does not only work from the top down. Foucault argued that power operates from different sides, that it is dispersed, it is "everywhere."[40] Power is "polymorphous."[41] However, power can be productive, too. It can be

31 Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 12–13.
32 Cf. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 42–44.
33 Cf. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 40.
34 Cf. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 44–45.
35 Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 35.
36 Cf. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 45–46.
37 Cf. Dini and Briganti, *An Analysis*, 36.
38 Cf. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 11.
39 Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 49.
40 Cf. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 93.
41 Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 11.

used to acquire knowledge and construct identities and desires.[42] Power is "not [...] a total force, but rather, [...] a set of relations."[43] Sexuality is an effect of power in modern societies and not necessarily in opposition to the power.[44]

Foucault's work was groundbreaking since it challenged the then prevalent academic discourse about sex and sexuality. It offered "a new approach to understanding the relationship between sexuality, knowledge, and power"[45] and suggested historical analysis for the study of sexuality rather than explanations through psychoanalysis.[46] The history of sexuality and its relationship to power is, according to Foucault, far more complicated than the then-current scholarship, or the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s tried to imply.[47]

Despite broad criticism of his work,[48] Foucault offered a new way to challenge sexual categories, the historical "instability" of perceptions on human beings, and power relations. As Tamsin Spargo stated: "Foucault can be seen as a catalyst, as a

42 Cf. Dini and Briganti, *An Analysis*, 30, 37, 40.

43 Dini and Briganti, *An Analysis*, 45.

44 Cf. Dini and Briganti, *An Analysis*, 45.

45 Dini and Briganti, *An Analysis*, 9.

46 Cf. Dini and Briganti, *An Analysis*, 12 and Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 5.

47 Cf. Dini and Briganti, *An Analysis*, 12.

48 Criticism on Foucault's ideas were expressed immediately after the publication of *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1.* Social historians criticized that sexuality and sexual identities are constructed "within specific social and political structures of power and inequality" (Garton, *Histories of Sexuality*, 23) and not, as Foucault insisted, through scientific discourse. It is not the language that constructs identities and social life, but rather the reflection of social structures (cf. Garton, *Histories of Sexuality*, 23). Additionally, Foucault received criticism that his ideas were Eurocentric. This was caused by Foucault's juxtaposition of the European *scientia sexualis* and the *ars erotica* of the East, namely of China, Japan, India, the Arabic-Muslim world, but also Rome (cf. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 57 et seqq.). Foucault characterized the former with the (academic) production of knowledge about sexuality, whereas within the latter, truth is drawn from pleasure and the sexual experience. Another point of debate was the androcentrism of his study. Feminist scholarship raised the question that when there is no center of power, where can the feminist critique against the patriarchy be addressed to? With Foucault's thinking, resistance would become impossible when there is no body of power than the society as a whole to resist against (cf. Tamsin Spargo, *Foucault and Queer Theory*. 2nd ed. [Cambridge: Icon Books/Totem Books, 2000], 56–57). They objected that Foucault did not offer any kind of theoretical approach for women's struggles (cf. Dini and Briganti, *An Analysis*, 68–69). More controversies were raised through Foucault's unclear standpoint against rape and sexual violence that he poorly addressed in *The History of Sexuality* (cf. Monique Plaza, "Our Costs and Their Benefits," in *Sex in Question: French Materialist Feminism*, ed. Diana Leonard and Lisa Adkins [London: Taylor & Francis, 1996], 183–193, and Kelly H. Ball, "'More or Less Raped': Foucault, Causality, and Feminist Critiques of Sexual Violence," *philoSOPHIA* 3, no. 1 [2013], 52–68).

point of departure, an example and antecedent but also as a continuing irritant, a bit of grit that is still provoking the production of new ideas."[49]

Following Foucault, essentialist views in Queer History became more challenged like those of other academic fields (e. g., sociology). Nevertheless, Regina Kunzel pointed out that the work of rediscovering forgotten history in the 1970s and 1980s helped to "elucidate larger workings of power."[50]

The involvement with Queer History made historians more aware of the intersections between sexuality and economy, gender-based oppression, or other forms of marginalization.[51] This indicated the shift from the first to the second phase of Queer History, starting in the 1990s. The tragedy of the HIV/AIDS epidemic underlined that lives mattered differently for political institutions and decision makers, based on long existing anti-queer biases. Hence, the second phase tried to see Queer History in a larger context of power, politics, and the state. Queer History was now regarded within broader narratives; the effect of sexuality and gender on (making) history was carefully evaluated.[52] As Michael Bronski stated, the history of queers was always entangled and intertwined with the broader historical narrative and its purpose is not solely to trace who had sexual relations with members of the same sex.[53]

An evolving field of Queer Theory substantiated the methodological framework and the acceptance of Queer History. Queer Theory can have various meanings depending on who uses it: "Queer [Theory] loosely describes a diverse, often conflicting set of interdisciplinary approaches to desire, subjectivity, identity, relationality, ethics and norms."[54]

Influenced by Foucault's work, Queer Theory acknowledges that sexualities and gender identities are socially constructed and spawned by "complex and multilayered processes" – "of acting and suffering people in past and present."[55] Queer Theory's main point of critique is directed towards heteronormativity, "the normative order of thought, society, and signs that constructs gender and desire as oppositions and, thus, fails to recognize the complexity of gendered and sexual manifestations."[56]

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49 Spargo, *Foucault and Queer Theory*, 10.

50 Cf. Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1561.

51 Cf. Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1561.

52 Cf. Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1562.

53 Cf. Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), XII–XIV.

54 Giffney, "Introdcution," 2.

55 Cf. Lücke, "Queer History."

56 Andreas Kraß, "Queer Studies in Deutschland," in *Queer Studies in Deutschland. Interdiziplinäre Beiträge zur kritischen Heteronormativitätsforschung*, ed. id. (Berlin: trafo Verlag, 2009), 8.

Two main protagonists subsidized the development of the field and changed the perception of sexuality and gender: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler.

In her book *Epistemology of the Closet*,[57] US-American scholar Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick especially built upon Foucault's understanding of homosexuality as an intervention of modern producers of knowledge and, therefore, power. She used deconstructionist and poststructuralist approaches. Her main argument was that since the end of the 19th century, the understanding of Western culture has not incorporated the analysis of the "homo/heterosexual definition,"[58] i. e., the "definitional distinction of gay/straight."[59] The apparent dichotomy between homo- and heterosexuality operated, so Sedgwick, in the same way that "all relations [like between men and women, majority or minority, private or public] [...] are constructed and negotiated in modern culture."[60] She claimed that this homo/heterosexual definition is "organized around a radical and irreducible incoherence:"[61] homosexuality can be both everywhere and isolated; there is no clear demarcation between gay and straight, there is nothing strictly one or the other.[62] However, contemporary culture emerges out of this incoherence and the "anxiety" of "where heterosexuality ends and homosexuality begins."[63]

Another aspect of Sedgwick's argument is the closet, referring to the act of hiding one's homosexuality. She wrote: "[...] the relations of the closet – the relations of the known and the unknown, the explicit and the inexplicit around homo/heterosexual definition – have the potential for being peculiarly revealing as a critical framework."[64] Although many gay people suffered from the closet, and from hiding their sexuality for a greater good (e. g., financial stability or family), she stated that the closet has been fairly productive for Western culture and history at large.[65] The "reign of the telling secret,"[66] the secret knowing of the unknown, was a powerful mechanism that enabled homosexuals to be visible despite

57 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of The Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

58 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of The Closet*, 1.

59 Christien Garcia, *An Analysis of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's Epistemology of the Closet* (London: Routledge, 2017), 10.

60 Garcia, *An Analysis*, 11.

61 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of The Closet*, 85.

62 Cf. Garcia, *An Analysis*, 23 – 24.

63 Garcia, *An Analysis*, 33.

64 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of The Closet*, 3.

65 Cf. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of The Closet*, 68 – 69.

66 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of The Closet*, 67.

being in the closet. Knowing and not knowing overlap.[67] The closet, therefore, is nothing that is strictly "in" or "out."[68]

Another contribution of Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* is its notion on a difference between the study of gender and sexuality and, therefore, an "antihomophobic inquiry is not coextensive with feminist inquiry."[69] However, Sedgwick explained that a study of sexuality is impossible without the study of gender.[70] She concluded that "[i]t is unrealistic to expect a close, textured analysis of same-sex relations through an optic calibrated in the first place to the coarser stigmata of gender difference."[71]

Thus, the analytic axis of gender is limited in explaining the homo/heterosexual definition. Sedgwick, henceforth, proposed a new axis – the axis of sexuality – alongside the axis of gender. A study of homosexuality would show more nuances and comprise a much larger complexity than just the attraction for the same sex.[72] Sexual orientation, so Sedgwick, has "far greater potential for rearrangement, ambiguity, and representational doubleness"[73] than gender. Sexuality is "far more visibly incoherent, more visibly stressed and challenged at every point in the culture."[74] With this idea, Sedgwick unknowingly calls Queer Theory into being – a different analysis of oppression, identity, and power that feminist theory did not have in mind at that time.[75] Her approach of "not definitely knowing" or uncertainty and the commitment to complicity paved the way for queer theorists to further evolve the debate. Sedgwick did not offer an empirical diagnostic of culture, she invented a new critical lens for rethinking it.[76] Barber and Clark summarized: "[...] her writings constitute a series of decisive though often controversial interventions, changing for a generation of scholars and activists [...] how we think about the nexus of identities, desires, bodies, prohibitions, discourses, and the play of power."[77]

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67 Cf. Garcia, *An Analysis*, 33–34.
68 Cf. Garcia, *An Analysis*, 25.
69 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of The Closet*, 27.
70 Cf. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of The Closet*, 27–32.
71 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of The Closet*, 32.
72 Cf. Garcia, *An Analysis*, 39.
73 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of The Closet*, 34.
74 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of The Closet*, 34.
75 Cf. Garcia, *An Analysis*, 39–40.
76 Cf. Garcia, *An Analysis*, 44.
77 Stephen M. Barber and David L. Clark, "Queer Moments: The Performative Temporalities of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick," in *Regarding Sedgwick. Essays on Queer Culture and Critical Theory*, ed. id. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.

Judith Butler and her book *Gender Trouble* is the other important influence on the establishing of Queer Theory.[78] She fundamentally changed the way how feminists and protagonists in the evolving Queer Studies spoke about gender and sexuality.[79] She took into consideration how gendered subjects are formed and how our culture limits their representation.[80] Butler introduced the categorical difference of *gender* and *biological sex* (she later also defined *desire* [hetero-, homo-, bisexuality or other forms of desirable relationships] as a third category). She claimed that there is no natural basis for gender: "[…] whatever biological intractability sex appears, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. […] If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way."[81]

Another key concept of *Gender Trouble* is gender as a performative creation. Being a gendered body involves a process of acting as the gender. However, the biological sex may not be linked to the gender a person "performs." The performance

78 Cf. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

79 As influences for her work, Butler identifies her upbringing in the Jewish community, her family's experience during the Shoah which made her sensitive for dynamics of oppression, and the values she received through the study of Jewish ethics. Despite that, the reactions she received as a critical, keen-to-debate young woman ("you are not well behaved") and the Jewish separatism, the "policing" of who is Jewish enough for the community, led to her growing skepticism and discomfort. She felt the same "identity policing" and separatism within the lesbian community she came in contact with during her time at Yale University (cf. Judith Butler, "As a Jew, I Was Taught It Was Ethically Imperative to Speak Up. Interview with Udi Aloni," Haaretz, February 24, 2010. https://www.haaretz.com/1.5052023, accessed December 2, 2020). As a third influential part for *Gender Trouble*, she mentioned the destiny of their uncle who was incarcerated for his "anatomically anomalous body" and lived in an isolated institution in Kansas (cf. Tim Smith-Laing, *An Analysis of Judith Butler's Gender Trouble* [London: Routledge, 2017], 18. Butler wrote about their uncle in the preface of *Gender Trouble's* second edition, published 1999). Moreover, Butler became involved in Israeli-Palestinian politics and a defender of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. A comprehensive synopsis of Butler's involvement in politics and in regard to the State of Israel is not possible within the scope of this study, especially in light of the more recent developments following the terrorist attacks of Hamas on October 7, 2023. For further reading, a detailed (yet older) examination can be found in Shaul Magid, "Butler Trouble: Zionism, Excommunication, and the Reception of Judith Butler's Work on Israel/Palestine," *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 33, no. 2 (2014): 237–259. More on academic boycotts of Israel in Cary Nelson, "The Problem with Judith Butler: The Political Philosophy of BDS and the Movement to Delegitimate Israel," in *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*, ed. id. and Gabriel Noah Brahm (Chicago: MLA Members for Scholars Rights, 2015), 164–201.

80 Cf. Smith-Laing, *An Analysis*, 26.

81 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 6.

of a gender in a certain way makes that way "real."[82] Therefore, "[t]hat the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality."[83]

In acting in a certain way, e. g., "masculine" as a man or "feminine" as a woman, gender itself is produced, and is "getting real" by this performance. We learn, like a language, to "'do gender right'," according to society's power structures.[84] The conclusion is that: "If gender attributes and acts, [...], are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction."[85]

Butler went even further and said that the biological sex is a product of cultural assumptions.[86] Sex, gender, and desire are not essential,[87] they are "effects of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin."[88] Butler showed that these categories were never fixed throughout history and cultures. However, today's discriminatory constitution of these categories did not happen deliberately. Almost invisible patterns of thought, embedded in our society, were the cause.[89] Two defining institutions are responsible for creating identity categories: firstly, phallogocentrism – the privileging of masculinity in spoken and written language or thought – and secondly, compulsory heterosexuality, meaning that it is assumed that heterosexuality is normal, and people should be, therefore, made heterosexual.[90] *Gender Trouble* caused a complete shift in the discussion about sex and gender, "troubling" the understanding and assumptions of identities. In the words of Smith-Laing: "[I]t is one of a small number of texts that can claim to change the way readers see the world."[91]

Especially for the LGBTQ+ community, the text had, and still has, significant relevance. It is still considered to be one of the founding texts of Queer Theory. *Gender Trouble*, its understanding of socially constructed sex and gender, as well as the concept of performativity had direct implications for how feminist and

82 Cf. Smith-Laing, *An Analysis*, 15.
83 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 136.
84 Cf. Smith-Laing, *An Analysis*, 38.
85 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 141.
86 Cf. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 7, 106 et seqq.
87 Cf. Smith-Laing, *An Analysis*, 31.
88 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, IX.
89 Cf. Smith-Laing, *An Analysis*, 32.
90 Cf. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, IX.
91 Smith-Laing, *An Analysis*, 13.

queer activists formed their policy and thought. It also influenced the way in which any kind of Queer History would be written.

In an article about linking Queer Theory and historiography together, Marie-Christine Schlotter acknowledged that the "traditional historiography" was already methodologically equipped for what Queer Theory demanded, namely that the hermeneutic and analytic apprehension of history facilitated the challenge of hierarchies and normalizations. Human beings had always been regarded in correlation with their environment.[92] However, the question of what the subject of an inquiry is, remains important for Queer History: is it possible to say that there were "queer subjects" in the past when the term did not exist at that time? Moreover, describing "queer," besides its political implications, as a feature of identity or as a group might simply contradict Queer Theory's notion of deconstructed, non-closed genders and identities. Is the mere distinction between queer and heterosexuality/heteronormativity productive? It might seem impossible for historiography to conduct research while tossing all categories overboard. However, Schlotter pointed out that combining historiography and Queer Theory requires an ongoing reflection of terms, concepts, categories, definitions, and methods – in all possible directions.[93] Or, with Jennifer Evans, "a queer methodology emphasizes overlap, contingency, competing forces and complexity" – it takes "nothing for granted."[94]

As well as "queer" meant to shake up society in the 1980s and 1990s, Queer History takes "queer" as an analytic and descriptive tool in order to shake up and destabilize taken-for-granted assumptions, institutions, and arrangements in history, besides being a term for identification.[95] As Susan Stryker, a pioneer of trans* history, said: trans* is "a modality rather than an identity"[96] that "disrupt[s] the smooth functioning of normative space."[97] Trans* can simply "unsettle the categories on which the normative sexualities depend."[98] This can likewise be applied to the term "queer."

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92 Cf. Marie-Christine Schlotter, "Unordnung der Geschichte. Reflexion über die Verbindung von queer theory und Geschichtswissenschaft," 2013, https://docplayer.org/67938961-Unordnung-der-geschichte-reflexion-ueber-die-verbindung-von-queer-theory-und-geschichtswissenschaft.html, accessed January 10, 2023, 4.

93 Cf. Schlotter, "Unordnung der Geschichte," 9–10.

94 Jennifer Evans, "Introduction: Why Queer Germany History?," *German History* 34, no. 33 (2016): 371.

95 Cf. Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1565.

96 Susan Stryker, "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity," *Radical History Review*, Issue 100 (2008): 148.

97 Stryker, "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity," 155.

98 Stryker, "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity," 155.

Hence, Queer Theory complexes historiography, it has an open structure for all possible layers of historical inquiry. It is a "doing" rather than a "being."[99] Its biggest accomplishment might be to show us the margins of well-established methodologies: "[Queer History] asks us to linger over our own assumptions – individual as well as societal – to interrogate the role they play in the past that we seek out, discover and recreate in our writing."[100]

Queer History raises more questions than it answers, something that "we historians may have to get used to."[101] Regina Kunzel summarized these complex and complicated reflections perfectly: "'Queer' describes a critical lens rather than a set of linked sexual and gender identities, offering historians new insight into broader structures of power."[102]

This lens was, and still is, being enriched by a concept that massively influenced all areas of social studies in the 21st century: intersectionality.

The concept of intersectionality was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, Professor for Law at University of California Law School.[103] It describes the intersection and simultaneity of different discriminatory categories. As Hill Collins and Bilge importantly pointed out, the core ideas of intersectionality had already been present in the social movement activism in the United States from the 1960s on.[104] Crenshaw's work was the starting point for an embattled introduction of the concept to academia.

Crenshaw's argument was based on the "single axis" framework that was used in anti-discrimination law, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. She claimed that this framework erased Black women in their singular experience of discrimination. When a Black woman raised a race discrimination case, this case tended "to be viewed in terms of sex- or class-privileged Blacks."[105] When she raised a sex discrimination case, the focus was "on race- and class-privileged women."[106] She argued that the focus on the most privileged group (e. g., white women in sex cases, middle-class male Blacks in race cases) marginalized the multi-burdened. An analysis of only one form of discrimination (sex or race) is not sufficient

99 Cf. Giffney, "Introduction," 8.
100 Evans, "Introduction," 371.
101 Schlotter, "Unordnung der Geschichte," 14.
102 Cf. Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1566.
103 Cf. Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, Issue 1, Article 8 (1989): 139 – 167.
104 Patricia Hill Collin and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 2020), 73 – 86.
105 Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.
106 Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.

enough to understand the experience of Black women. She concluded: the intersection of race and gender and its experience is simply greater than just the sum of racism and sexism.[107] This knowledge demanded a specific set of feminist or antiracist policies, admitting that the ultimate goal of ending racism and patriarchy is much harder to achieve than expected.[108] In her article *Mapping the Margins*,[109] Crenshaw concluded: "Recognizing that identity politics takes place at the site where categories intersect thus seems more fruitful than challenging the possibility of talking about categories at all."[110]

With this text, Crenshaw introduced intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry, e. g., of power relations, social justice, and praxis. She translated intersectionality from a concept rooted in social movements to academia, showing how to use it as an analytic tool.[111] Her articles showed "what persisted, what became muted, and what disappeared."[112]

With the reception of intersectionality in academia, the bottom-up knowledge project, introduced and advocated by Crenshaw, shifted to a top-down knowledge project shaped by academic theory and normative practices of academia.[113] Intersectionality is not a single use term anymore, it is used by diverse intellectual and political projects. Its "concepts and matrices of domination have not remained static" and it incorporates various "dimensions of subordination, across many different social settings"[114] today (e. g., race, gender, sexuality, class, abilities, religion, age, or citizenship). Hence, the understanding and the usage of the term varies; there is no consensus of how to implement an intersectional analysis.[115]

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107 Cf. Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.

108 Cf. Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 152.

109 Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–1299.

110 Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 1299.

111 Cf. Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 93. It has to be noted that Crenshaw's work did not end with the theoretical framework. She was (and still is) involved in using intersectionality to enhance the lives of marginalized people, e. g., in the African American Policy Forum. She advocates for intersectionality "as a social justice construct, not as a theory of truth disconnected from social justice concerns" (cf. Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 93–94).

112 Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 93.

113 Cf. Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 94.

114 Christine E. Bose, "Intersectionality and Global Gender Inequality," *Gender and Society* 26, no. 1 (2012): 67.

115 Cf. Bose, "Intersectionality and Global Gender Inequality," 68. A few scholars rather prefer to speak rather about interdependencies (*Interdependenzen* in German) than intersectionality since, in their view, the idea of an intersection implies single categories of discriminations that have added together. Interdependencies focus on the entanglements and interactions between and within the categories (cf. Katharina Walgenbach, "Gender als interdependente Kategorie," in *Gender als*

However, the idea of intersecting discriminations is unified by the assumption that power relations are not discrete and exclusive entities, but rather – often invisibly – build on each other and work together.[116] By being heterogeneous, intersectionality is intellectually and politically dynamic. It challenges our perceptions of society and complicates them intensely. Collins and Bilge see in its heterogeneity not a weakness, but "a source of tremendous potential for emancipatory social change."[117] This has direct consequences for Queer History. It can draw from intersectionality, from its dynamics and entanglements, to reveal a history that can only be explained by multilayered, intersecting experiences.[118]

To summarize, Jeffrey Weeks described one of the main goals of writing Queer History as follows: "In demonstrating the sexual and moral diversity of the past it may lead us to be a little more accepting of the diversity of the present."[119]

However, besides the honorable goals of Queer History, we have to acknowledge that the field has been mostly focused on the experience of people in the Western world, i. e., the United States and Europe. In addition, this study focuses on the experiences of European Jewish queers. The growing scholarship of non-Western queer experiences challenges the assumptions about sexualities and identities, and questions the portability of the Western concepts of homosexualities, trans* and Queerness, and even heterosexuality.[120] In writing Queer History, we have to keep in mind that we are not only writing in a specific historic, but also in a specific ethnic and geographic, context. Furthermore, from its beginnings in the 1960s, Queer History has been accused of an imbalance of male and female stories.[121] That is why this study concentrates on the female/lesbian experience in designated subchapters. With the rising awareness of trans* issues, another group demanded their history's recognition.[122] Thus, it should always be the goal of an inclusive Queer History to recognize the different experiences within

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interdependente Kategorie: Neue Perspektiven auf Intersektionalität, Diversität und Heterogenität, ed. id., Gabriele Dietze, Lann Hornscheidt, and Kerstin Palm, 2nd ed. [Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich], 23 – 64). The term interdependencies did not prevail within larger academia since the term "intersectionality" has evolved and does certainly imply the entanglements between social categories.

116 Cf. Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 1 – 2.

117 Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 241.

118 Cf. Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1571 – 1572.

119 Jeffrey Weeks, "Sexuality and History Revisited," in *Sexualities in History. A Reader*, ed. Kim M. Philipps and Barry Reay (New York: Routledge, 2002), 39.

120 Cf. Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1581.

121 Cf. Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1577 – 1578.

122 The efforts of Susan Stryker have to be mentioned in this context, e. g., in Susan Stryker, *Transgender History. The Roots of Today's Revolution.* 2nd ed. (New York: Seal Press, 2017), 40 – 41.

the acronym "LGBTQ+" and to include their voices whenever possible, or point to omissions.

In its first years, Gay and Lesbian History "filled a hunger, an aching need"[123] for a new community. The field evolved and drew from Queer Theory and its demands to see gender and sexuality as fluid, not static, and as a tool to question the way how we understand our society. The study of power relations became essential. Queer Theory's aim to deconstruct and analyze heteronormativity open up the potential to rewrite the history of heterosexuality itself. Acknowledging that heterosexuality is a modern production – like homosexuality – and "demystifying" it as normality or universal,[124] Queer History can show us that heterosexuality was "neither monolithic nor always privileged."[125]

Until this day, Queer History is a "field in motion,"[126] inherently interdisciplinary. It uses "queer" as lens to question, deconstruct, and reevaluate (already written) history in order to rewrite it from the perspective of the queer community. Queer History today is theoretically and methodologically well-equipped and able to "transform other historical fields"[127] – in our case Jewish historiography. Especially powerful are new endeavors that take the concept of intersectionality into consideration. These intersectional approaches "will likely bring new subjects into view, some with the potential to disrupt [...] founding narratives and assumptions."[128]

2.2 Developing a Methodology for Queer Jewish History

Intersectional perspectives are fundamental for writing Queer Jewish History. The venture of a queer Jewish historiography is a relatively new endeavor. Indeed, with the rising visibility of queer Jews in the 1970s,[129] first attempts were made in order to find "great gays,"[130] be it in the Bible (e.g., romantic tensions between David and Jonathan) or in more recent history (e.g., German-Jewish sexologist Magnus

123 D'Emilio, *In a New Century*, 87.

124 Cf. Kim M. Philipps and Barry Reay, "Introduction," in *Sexualities in History. A Reader*, ed. id. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 18–19.

125 Cf. Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1577.

126 Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1577.

127 Cf. Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1562.

128 Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1579.

129 Cf. Section 3.

130 Faith Rogow, "Speaking the Unspeakable: Gays, Jews, and Historical Inquiry," in *Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian, Gay, and Jewish*, ed. Christie Balka and Andy Rose (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 76–77.

Hirschfeld with his Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin-Tiergarten). Only with postmodern thought entering academia has it slowly become obvious that in the past, predominately cis-male and heterosexual Jewish thinkers wrote Jewish history and, unknowingly, transformed their experience to "the Jewish experience." They implied a uniformity in Jewish history and ignored Jewish diversity in regard to sexuality and gender.[131]

As soon as the first documentation of queer Jewish experiences was recorded, their invisibility was highly criticized. Evelyn Torton Beck addressed the invisibility of especially lesbian Jews in the introduction of the book *Nice Jewish Girls* (1982), the first anthology of queer Jewish authors. Invisibility, so Beck, "has a trivializing, disempowering and ultimately debilitating effect"[132] for those affected, even though invisibility enabled queers to survive as such within the Jewish community.[133] In Beck's view, exploring queer Jewish lives is a promising way to overcome this invisibility.[134] As Kerry Wallach showed, invisibility and passing had been a common Jewish experience in the past.[135] The fact that visibility was denied to queer Jews contributed to the already prevailing experience in a non-Jewish mainstream society.

Other contributions by Jewish queers acknowledged their place in Jewish history. Christie Balka and Andy Rose, for example, claimed in *Twice Blessed* (1989) that Jewish history was always reshaped according to the prevailing discourses of a specific period in time.[136] Therefore, there must be a place for queer Jews in Jewish historiography. Henceforth, the book *Queer Jews*[137] (2002) affirmed that queer Jews are "borne out of [Jewish] history."[138] The editors, however, rejected the notion that queer Jews are only defined by heteronormativity and by the discrimination against them.[139] They pointed to the transformative character of queer Jews for all domains of Jewish life and culture – including Jewish history.[140] A more recent endeavor, for the Jewish and non-Jewish world alike, is the history

131 Cf. Sienna, "Reflections on Writing Queer Jewish History," 3.
132 Cf. Evelyn Torton Beck, "Why Is This Book Different from All Other Books?," in *Nice Jewish Girls*, ed. id. (Watertown, MA: Beacon Press, 1982), XV.
133 Cf. Christie Balka and Andy Rose, "Introduction," in *Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian, Gay, and Jewish*, ed. id. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 1.
134 Cf. Beck, "Why Is This Book Different," XXXI.
135 Kerry Wallach, *Passing Illusions. Jewish Visibility in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 5–7.
136 Cf. Balka, Rose, *Introduction*, 1989, 4–5.
137 Cf. Aviv and Shneer, *Queer Jews.*
138 Aviv und Shneer, "Introduction," 5.
139 Cf. Aviv und Shneer, "Introduction," 8–9.
140 Cf. Aviv und Shneer, "Introduction," 10.

of trans* or gender non-conforming individuals. Noach Dzmura pointed out that questions of faith (and historical inquiries) often fell short in the past because trans* people had (and still have) to fight for civil rights and have long struggled with their own identity.[141] It is only within the last one and a half decades that they have organized as trans* Jews and started to transform Jewish life and practice. They need "time to develop and share a body of collective wisdom with the Jewish world."[142]

The importance of history for the building of a queer Jewish conscience was outlined by David Shneer in a reinterpretation of *parashat devarim* (Deuteronomy 1:1–3:22).[143] In Deuteronomy, Moses stands before Israel and tells the story of the Israelites, reports their struggles and God's commandments. By doing so, Moses gives the past a meaning and shapes the way in which Israel can live in the future. Shneer summarized: "The ability to recount a history illustrates that a community has reached maturity. Group stories and histories are, in fact, the very foundation of a community. [...] Delineating the hardships of a nascent community is one of the key ways of *defining* [sic!] a community."[144]

Shneer assumed that community is more defined through words than biological lineage. Words are tangible and a community is connected and committed through them. In creating history, not only written words are important, but also the words of the elders, oral history, so to speak. Like Moses, they shape community by retelling events that were important to them.[145] By acknowledging the tension between "history" and "memory," Shneer emphasized his view that Jewish consciousness has always been shaped and constructed by "the facts" and the memory of the forebears, both of the texts and the voices.[146] By adding the queer element, a central problem emerges: Collective memory and historical consciousness are usually passed on by families on an individual level, or through schools and other educational institutions on a community level. Queers usually have neither a family lineage nor affirming communal institutions, so they are "lacking in the basic tools for creating collective consciousness."[147] In consequence,

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141 Noach Dzmura, "Introduction," in *Balancing on the Mechitza: Transgender in Jewish Community*, ed. id. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2010), XVIII–XIX.

142 Dzmura, "Introduction," XX.

143 David Shneer, "From Whom Do We Learn History? Why Queer Community Needs Texts More Than Other Communities. Parashat Devarim (Deuteronomy 1:1–3:22)," in *Torah Queeries: Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Gregg Drinkwater, Joshua Lesser, and id. (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 231–234.

144 Shneer, "From Whom Do We Learn History?," 232.

145 Cf. Shneer, "From Whom Do We Learn History?," 232.

146 Cf. Shneer, "From Whom Do We Learn History?," 233.

147 Shneer, "From Whom Do We Learn History?," 234.

a Queer Jewish History, both in written form (e. g., in books) or orally (transmitted by the elder Jewish queers[148]) is fundamentally necessary in order to create a queer Jewish community.

Shneer's argument invokes the idea of the Queer Archive. Queer Archives are spaces where "queer lives, past and present, are constituted by voices that swell with the complex measures of our joys and our struggles against annihilating silence."[149] On the one hand, a Queer Archive can be a building in a specific place, while, on the other, it can constitute any document, any interview, any video recording, in fact any source telling about the queer community.[150] This is especially true for the *Queer Jewish Archive* which not only lacks an actual building, but exists only as dispersed collections in various (queer) spaces as the procedure of acquiring material for this study exemplifies.

J. Halberstam indicated correctly that the Queer Archive is "not simply a repository." It is complex, has cultural relevance, and creates a collective memory. Using it means putting small puzzle pieces together and acknowledges that Queer History is still in the making and not unalterable.[151] One important difference of Queer Archives in comparison with other archives is that they are archives of emotion, trauma, and feelings due to the restrictions and discrimination against expressing sexual or gender differences: "They address particular versions of the determination to 'never forget' that gives archives of traumatic history their urgency."[152]

The archive as a place of trauma is not unknown to Jewish history: most prominently, archives that preserve recordings of the Shoah also serve the purpose to "never forget." Charles E. Morris developed two important threads about how

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148 Jhos Singer pointed to Moses' idea of *dor l'dor* ("from generation to generation"), expressed in Deuteronomy 32:7, the idea of giving the teachings of the Torah from generation to generation. Singer sets this in proportion with current developments between the "early generation" of queer life and the group of young queers. This relationship is not always without tension (especially in regard to a diversification of sexual expressions and gender identities), even though Singer sees great potential for the queer Jewish community in an intergenerational exchange (cf. Jhos Singer, "Dor l'Dor. Parashat Ha'azinu (Deuteronomy 32:1–52)," in *Torah Queeries: Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Gregg Drinkwater, Joshua Lesser, and David Shneer [New York: New York University Press, 2009], 271–275).

149 Charles E. Morris, "Archival Queer," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2006): 146.

150 On the importance of "ephemera" for Queer History cf. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. 3rd ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 243–244.

151 Cf. Jack/Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 169–170.

152 Cf. Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 242.

Queer Archives must work so they can fulfill their mission. Firstly, LGBTQ+ discourses have to be acknowledged, engaged, taught, and written about with the same commitment as with any other prevalent discourse. Secondly, Queer Histories need to circulate beyond the disciplines: "In order that they vibrantly sound, we must all become archival [Q]ueers."[153] These requirements can easily be applied to the Queer Jewish Archive. This study will not only use materials from the (still small) Queer Jewish Archive, but it will contribute to it through material that was not included in a historical analysis in the past. Additionally, the study will add a European perspective which was previously not (or only to a small extent) part of consideration for queer Jewish historiography.

The Queer Jewish Archive can serve to show a historical lineage of queer Jews. "We're not alone!" is not merely a flat slogan, it is an important component of compiling a shared and owned identity. Connecting the past and the present evokes a feeling of connection to Jewish history, and to Jewish tradition in the sense that being queer is part of Jewish life, now and in the past. Moshe Rosman explained that postmodern thought changed the view on Judaism and its often assumed unity.[154] Postmodern historical writing requires nuanced responses to history and a "self-consciously critical stance."[155] Rosman underlined that "[g]ender, class, race, ethnicity, [...] offer a unique perspective from which to produce a different, and valid, portrayal-cum-interpretation of past events."[156] More importantly, he pointed out that there is no unitary history, no unitary Jewish history, but there are Jewish histor*ies*.[157] Even though Rosman thought more about introducing the category "Jewish" to the broader historical narrative, his notion of a destabilization of conventional academic inquiries in postmodernity[158] can be translated to include queer perspectives into Jewish history.

History, as Noam Sienna put it, has to be regarded as a "messy, contingent, and complex network of processes, connections, interruptions, and innovations," just a "field of possibility."[159] Sienna proposed to see Queer Jewish History as "an infinite rainbow, with no beginning or end, and with no clear boundaries between its different facets."[160] Sienna had recourse to José Esteban Muñoz' model of queer fu-

153 Cf. Morris, "Archival Queer," 149.
154 Cf. Moshe Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History?* 7th ed. (Oxford: Litman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), 4.
155 Cf. Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History*, 10.
156 Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History*, 10.
157 Cf. Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History*, 10.
158 Cf. Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History*, 14.
159 Sienna, *Rainbow Thread*, 4–5.
160 Cf. Noam Sienna, *Reflections on Writing Queer Jewish History*, 2019, 4.

turity. Muñoz claimed that "[q]ueerness is not yet here [...], we are not yet queer."[161] Queerness is rather performative – a "doing for and toward the future" – than a being.[162] According to Sienna, Muñoz' model focuses on multiplicity, discontinuity, and simultaneity. History is filled with paradoxes and – simply put – surprises.[163]

This understanding of history, according to Sienna, opens Jewish history for queer narratives. Additionally, they took Caroline Dinshaw's concept of "shared contemporaneity" into account, with which marginalized communities today can link themselves with the past. This circular relationship to history that always returns to the past to shape the future seems not only queer, but especially Jewish.[164] Sienna adds Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's framework of "eternal contemporaneity" to the possibility of queer Jewish historiography. According to Yerushalmi, traditional Jews do not seek the "historical facts" of the past, but more "the emotional connections that link people and communities across time."[165] Taking these three approaches (Muñoz, Dinshaw, Yerushalmi) into consideration, Sienna significantly summarized: "[...] queer Jewish history must be constructed through an intertwining of past, present, and future."[166]

Rediscovering the queer Jewish past is not purely self-serving, it is fundamentally necessary for future liberation.[167] Not only is it a matter of inclusion and an embrace of queer identities, but also of a non-queer Jewish community that speaks *about and with* its queer siblings.[168]

It seems that Queer Jewish History is still mostly shaped by what the first phase of Queer History in the 1970s and 1980s was all about: rediscovering forgotten histories and finding a place within the narrative of a broader, in this case, Jewish history. Gregg Drinkwater stated that previous scholarship that brought Queer Theory and Jewish Studies together challenged constructed norms and destabilized binaries. However:

> Rarely, though, have these authors engaged deeply or directly with LGBTQ lives or histories, either in their modern manifestations as identity categories that emerged in the late-nine-

161 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia. The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1.
162 Cf. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.
163 Cf. Sienna, *Rainbow Thread*, 5.
164 Cf. Sienna, *Rainbow Thread*, 5–6.
165 Sienna, *Rainbow Thread*, 6.
166 Sienna, *Rainbow Thread*, 6.
167 Cf. Sienna, *Rainbow Thread*, 6.
168 Naomi Zeveloff, "The Story Behind Transgender & Jewish," in *Transgender & Jewish,* ed. id. (New York: Forward Association, 2014), V.

> teenth and early-twentieth centuries, or in earlier examples of same-sex erotic behavior. They similarly did not explore the experiences of people who self-consciously defied the gender categories they had been assigned at birth.[169]

Drinkwater further explained that this scholarship concentrated on homosocial or sexually ambiguous moments in Jewish history rather than documenting explicit Jewish homoerotic or homosexual experiences. In addition, trans* and nonbinary identities were almost completely neglected.[170]

This scholarship was specifically carried out in the early 2000s. The most important observation had been the assumption that "gender" and "Jewishness" are inextricably linked; "the history of the Jews" cannot be comprehensively analyzed without including questions about gender, sex, or sexuality.[171] In *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*,[172] Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini debated the linkage of Queerness and Jewishness. They claim that "the intersection between Jewish and queer identity has a long legacy, [...] a pejorative one."[173] As in earlier research, the editors particularly focused on antisemitism,[174] on how gender stereotypes were translated into racial differences, and on how Jews were regarded as embodying nonnormative sexual or gender categories, exemplified in the effeminization of Jewish men (the "weak Jew"), or in the both too excessively feminine (seductive) or unladylike, hard-working Jewish women.[175] They summarized: "[...] the circuit Jew-queer is not only theoretical but has had – and still has – profound implications for the ways in which Jewish and queer bodies are lived. (Certainly, the interconnections have had implications for how Jewish and queer bodies have died.)"[176]

The focus on the emergence of antisemitic stereotypes, especially taking gender into account, might serve as an important analytic tool for understanding how Jews were oppressed and how Jewish identity was shaped in relation to its oppres-

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169 Drinkwater, "Review of A Rainbow Thread."

170 Cf. Drinkwater, "Review of A Rainbow Thread."

171 Cf. Lisa Silverman, "Beyond Antisemitism: A Critical Approach to German Jewish Cultural History," in *Nexus. Essays in German Jewish Studies. Volume 1*, ed. William Collins Donahue and Martha B. Helfer (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), 38–41.

172 Boyarin, Itzkovitz and Pellegrini, *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question.*

173 Hoffman, *The Passing Game*, 9.

174 For example, cf. Boyarin, 1997. Another scholar who analyzed the effiminization of the male Jew in light of European antisemitism was Klaus Hödl (cf. Klaus Hödl, *Die Pathologisierung des jüdischen Körpers. Antisemitismus, Geschlecht und Medizin im Fin de Siècle* [Vienna: Picus-Verlag, 1997], 164–232).

175 Cf. Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini "Strange Bedfellows: An Introduction," in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, ed. id. (Berkeley: Columbia University Press, 2003), 3–6.

176 Boyarin, Itzkovitz and Pellegrini, "Strange Bedfellows," 1.

sion. Another point of interest were deliberations on how queer the Jews might be or what makes the Jew queer. Both queers and Jews shared their experience of oppression, being labeled as "the other."[177] They both tried to include their voices in the historical narratives or propose an alternative one.[178] However, the editors of *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question* warned against closing down "differences between, among, and within" these categories and against to ignoring "multiple social relations," often "elided in the work of analogy."[179] Eve Kofosky Sedgwick already noted in her *Epistemology of the Closet* that a Jewish secrecy or closet would differ "from the distinctive gay versions [...] in its clear ancestral linearity and answerability, in the roots [...] of cultural identification through each individual's originary culture of (at a minimum) in the family."[180]

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177 Janet Jakobson's article in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question* tried to put the categories "queer" and "Jewish" into proportion (cf. Janet R. Jakobsen, "Queers Are Like Jews, Aren't They? Analogy and Alliance Politics," in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, ed. Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini [New York: Columbia University Press, 2003], 64–89). She stated that simple analogies like "the Jew is like the Queer" cause inherent problems. So, Jakobsen tried to form an analogy "that can recognize the complexity of relation named by it" (Jakobsen, "Queers Are Like Jews, Aren't They?," 71). She suggested to see both "queer" and "Jewish" as something "that we do in complicated relation to the historical possibilities of who we are" (cf. Jakobsen, "Queers Are Like Jews, Aren't They?," 82). This performative character – as Butler described in *Gender Trouble* as "doing gender" – allows to see both terms with mobility and to respond to the context and complex history, invoked by the analogy. The "in-between-spaces in which no one difference is elevated about all others" (Boyarin, Itzkovitz, Pellegrini, "Strange Bedfellows," 9) were regarded as promising realms of constructing analogies. Jakobson resumed: "After all, queers, in all of their diversity and complexity, are not like Jews, in all of diversity and complexity. But, if read in a complicated manner, the analogy can be seen to sustain both similarity and difference" (Jakobsen, "Queers Are Like Jews, Aren't They," 65).

178 Cf. Friedman, *Rainbow Jews*, 5.

179 Cf. Boyarin, Itzkovitz, and Pellegrini, "Strange Bedfellows," 9.

180 Cf. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of The Closet*, 75. She revealed her concerns by means of the Biblical figure Esther who hid her Jewish heritage in order to marry the Persian king Ahasuerus. She "came out" as a Jew when the fate of the Jewish people was at stake and saved them from the official Haman who tried to get all Jews killed in Persia. Some thinkers (like Marcel Proust) tried to use her story to compare it to the experience of gays and lesbians who could learn from or relate to her brave coming-out story. Sedgwick names seven reasons why Esther's story cannot be compared to the fate of closeted gays and lesbians. 1. Her identity is not debatable, nobody questioned her status as a Jew because her lineage indicates that she is Jewish. 2. Esther has a sense of control over other people's knowledge about her identity. She expects it will be a surprise for her husband, and he is indeed surprised. The revelation of a gay identity can on the other hand have an unsuspected outcome. 3. Esther's revelation does not lead to any harm or damage to her or her husband. 4. Ahasuerus, the person closest to Esther, does not change his relationship to her, despite her religious/ethnic identity. 5. Ahasuerus is very likely not a Jew himself. Sedgwick indicates that many homophobic figures experience same-sex desire themselves. 6. Esther knows who her people are

The idea of comparing or analogizing Jews and queers might offer a methodology of how to read Jewish history as queer (in the meaning of being resistant, subversive, or against the Christian mainstream, in the words of Friedman "transgressional"[181]) history or to point to similar mechanisms of oppression or resistance and, thereby, deriving alliances. However, it falls short since this method neglects the perspective of queer, LGBTQ+, non-heterosexual, non-cisgendered Jews. They have a dual perspective: as (oppressed) Jews *and* as (oppressed) queers. Already in 1982, Evelyn Torton Beck pointed to the intersections of both of these unique identities and to the complexities they imply. Firstly, it is not easy to come out as a Jew because of antisemitism. Secondly, coming out as a lesbian is not safe within an anti-queer environment.[182] This experience was the starting point for the European groups portrayed in this study.

A third perspective comes into play when taking into account the exclusion that queers experience from the Jewish mainstream. Ri J. Turner exemplifies this in an article in *Balancing on the Mechitza.*[183] On the one hand, Turner experience's is that "it is inherently queer to be a Jew in US [D]iaspora"[184] since being "well-gendered" in the American society means, above all, to be Christian. As a Jew, Turner is already "genderqueer" in non-Jewish America. At the same time, Turner, as a genderqueer person, experienced in their Jewish community a feeling similar to that of other queers in mainstream society: the feeling of not fitting in.[185] Over the years, Turner realized that part of their genderqueerness stemmed from being Jewish. For example, they were fixated on their "ugly nose" for a long time. However, this did not have anything to do with their gender, but with their mother saying their nose is not Ashkenazi[186] enough.[187] This experience can be extended

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and can relate to them. Gays and lesbians do not always have a connection to or a sense for their community before coming out. 7. Esther acts within and perpetuates the system of gender subordination. She married a king who requires a woman to be subordinate to him (something his first wife, Vashti, refused to do). This gender-based subordination is very unlikely to happen in same-sex relationships (cf. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of The Closet*, 75–82).

181 Cf. Friedman, *Rainbow Jews*, 4.

182 Cf. Beck, "Why Is This Book Different," XXIX.

183 Cf. Ri J. Turner, "Queering the Jew and Jewing the Queer," in *Balancing on the Mechitza. Transgender in Jewish Community*, ed. Noach Dzmura (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2010), 48–59.

184 Turner, "Queering the Jew and Jewing the Queer," 48.

185 Cf. Turner, "Queering the Jew and Jewing the Queer," 50–53.

186 It has to be noted that the experience of Sephardic or Mizrahi Jews within the Jewish LGBTQ community is only regarded marginally. Jonathan Cohen commented that especially within a US-American context, "[w]e [queer Sephardic/Mizrahi Jews] [a]re a minority within the minority within the minority" (Simone Somekh, "A Space for LGBTQ Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews," Jewcy, April 11, 2018, https://www.jewcy.com/religion-and-beliefs/queer-mizrahi-jews/, accessed May 4, 2023).

187 Cf. Turner, "Queering the Jew and Jewing the Queer," 53.

to traditional Jewish values like getting married, raising children, or predefined gender roles. The accusation of not being Jewish enough is a common reproach queer Jews have to face.

Turner summarized that they had to learn that their "Jewness," Queerness, and "queerJewness" were not only painful, but rather that they could also be productive. They could become a source for community building.[188] A Queer Jewish History has to recognize this potential: queer Jews have a unique experience as Jews, as a proud "queer marginality," often confronted with antisemitism (experienced as *Jewish difference*[189]). Additionally, they are queer subjects within a (hetero-)sexist and binary structured society (experienced as *queer difference*), and they are queer Jews within a religious/ethnic group that had and still has its predefined assumptions, parallel to the general sexist society, about gender, sex, and sexuality (experienced as *queer difference in Jewish spaces*).

One more word on the question of identity (building): Ri J. Turner's story is an example of the challenge of bringing together different backgrounds into one's own identity. We need to remember that in a postmodern understanding, identity is fluid and a product of individual and collective experiences. Identity is also performative. In regard to writing about queer Jewish identities, we need to consider what Friedman underlined when writing about queer Jewish experiences in the performing arts. The terms "gay" and "queer" are interchangeable in this case: "Expressing one's gay, Jewish, or gay Jewish identity is also performative or linked to a certain set of behaviors and practices that are synonymous with the performers, but ultimately identifying as Jewish or gay can mean a variety of different things to different people in different contexts."[190]

Therefore, as in other fields of history, we need a careful contextualization of the terms we use. In particular, the terms "Jewishness" and "Queerness" are not one-dimensional but multilayered. This "multiplicity,"[191] as Friedman calls it, opens our understanding of the subjects we study beyond the limits of ethnicity, religion, gender, or sex(uality). Since it is so difficult to reduce our terms of interest to common denominators, our approach should rather favor "ambiguity over clari-

188 Cf. Turner, "Queering the Jew and Jewing the Queer," 58.

189 Lisa Silverman used the terminology *Jewish difference* in her analysis of German-Jewish history. She showed that the assumptions of who or what is Jewish or not is constructed similarly to gender: "I propose that we should take as a given that Jewish difference – the relationship between the constructed, hierarchal ideals of the Jew and the non-Jew – is a condition that can be as universal as gender, albeit one that is, again like gender, shaped and reshaped by historical and cultural circumstances" (Silverman, "Beyond Antisemitism," 30).

190 Friedman, *Rainbow Jews*, 3.

191 Cf. Friedman, *Rainbow Jews*, 3–4.

ty, multiplicity over singularity, movement over stasis."[192] This aligns with the general ambition of Queer Theory: to complicate seemingly given categories and conditions in order to depict complicated matters of individuality and society.

To sum, Queer Theory has not only the potential to indicate who or what is or might be gay, but "to reconsider the role that heterosexuality as an entire totalizing and organizing structure"[193] has on Jewish lives and what it means to be queer within a Jewish framework. Writing Queer Jewish History has to take this into consideration, to scrutinize the impact of heterosexuality, and to acknowledge that Jews had not only "to pass" along ethnic lines, but also along sexual lines.[194] It is fundamental for Queer Jewish History to consider the triple experience of *Jewish difference*, *queer difference*, and *queer difference in Jewish spaces* within the relevant historic and societal contexts.

Queer Jewish History's methodology is a work in progress. As Gregg Drinkwater and I have argued before, there is a critical need for histories, for a Queer Jewish Archive. In that matter, Queer Jewish History needs more of what the first phase of Queer History shaped: (academic) recovery of histor*ies*, i. e., fundamental work. The history of queer Jews has long been silenced; rediscovering is a part of community building, especially for trans* and gender-nonconforming Jews who have gained visibility only recently. History does not only serve itself, but has profound implications for a liberatory future.

Moreover, we should not only queer our subjects of interest, but our disciplines. Formerly, Jewish history was predominately written by and through the eyes of cisgendered men. Queering Jewish history/historiography means broadening our horizons, appreciatively accepting ambiguities as part of the whole, and constantly questioning categories. We can use queering history to question common discourses and research topics, but always reflect on our own research stance and ask ourselves why we look at something in a certain way – and whether we (un)consciously leave out other perspectives. As Noreen Giffney summarized, "Queer discourses touch us, move us and leave us unsettled, troubled, confused."[195]

An intersectional approach not only to Jewish history, but to Jewish Studies as a whole[196] might be especially important here. Intersectionality should not only be understood as an isolated look at two identities having contact at a stop light, but

192 Cf. Friedman, *Rainbow Jews*, 183.
193 Hoffman, *The Passing Game*, 8.
194 Cf. Hoffman, *The Passing Game*, 6.
195 Giffney, "Introduction," 9.
196 Cf. Wilkens, "Ein Fach neu denken," 10–12.

more as entangled, co-creating signifiers that complement each other.[197] Additionally, Jewish History should focus on intersecting identities not only because of their oppression,[198] but also look at their advantages. Consequently, intersectionality can serve as an empowering tool for oppressed groups. Intersectionality requires us not only to include the voice of queer Jews in historical studies, but also denominators like race, class, or ability whenever possible.[199] In doing so, we can evoke what Kunzel calls "the potential to disrupt the field's founding narratives and assumptions."[200] Moreover, general queer historiography might also be enriched by Jewish perspectives as well: "Jews are the epitome of intersectionality with their multidimensional identities, but are often not considered in intersectionality theories."[201]

Julia Yael Alfandari and Gil Shohat criticized further: "Despite their intra-Jewish diversity, Jews are often subsumed as a homogeneous entity under the structural label of 'white.' Whiteness connects skin color with power, social class, and privilege."[202]

What both authors described is the experience that Jewish voices often do not matter in queer-feminist discourses despite antisemitism and other forms of discrimination (e. g., as women or as queers).[203] The recent developments in academia

197 Cf. Marla Brettschneider, *Jewish Feminism and Intersectionality* (Albany, NY: State of New York University Press, 2016), 7–8.

198 Nevertheless, intersectional analyses are also very helpful to better understand the motives behind hate crimes. For example, Sarah Emanuel described in an article the experience of a physical attack on her and her partner. In retrospect, Emanuel understood the multilayered facets of the event: hate against queer people, against Jews, against white-passing, and privileges overlapped and led to a questioning of Emanuel's own self-perception as a queer and Jewish person (cf. Sarah Emanuel, "'How Pure Is Your Hate?': Reflections on Passing, Privilege, and a Queer Jewish Positionality," *AJS Perspectives. The Magazine of the Association for Jewish Studies* 2 (2020): 66–68).

199 Brettschneider deliberated in length about the potential to include intersectionality into a Jewish feminist thinking (cf. Brettschneider, *Jewish Feminism and Intersectionality*, 7–8). Her thoughts are more broad and mostly not about historiography, but still important for getting implications on how Jewish intersectional action (in a US-American setting) could look like.

200 Cf. Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1579.

201 Julia Yael Alfandari and Gil Shohat, "Welche Rolle spielen Juden*Jüdinnen in intersektionalen Ansätzen?," in *Frenemies: Antisemitismus, Rassismus und ihre Kritiker*innen*, ed. Meron Mendel, Saba-Nur Cheema, and Sina Arnold (Berlin: Verbrecher Verlag, 2022), 140–141.

202 Alfandari and Shohat, "Welche Rolle spielen Juden*Jüdinnen in intersektionalen Ansätzen?," 140–141.

203 For more on these experiences, at least in Germany and Austria, cf. Judith Coffey and Vivien Laumann, *Gojnormativität: Warum wir anders über Antisemitismus sprechen müssen* (Berlin: Verbrecher Verlag, 2021). For the sake of this study, one experience seems very important: At the Christopher Street Day/Pride Parade in Berlin in 2016, a speech was held from one of the floats that was filled with antisemitic codes. When a queer Jew went to the official "awareness team"

and beyond after the terrorist attacks of Hamas on October 7, 2023 reinforce this opinion. With studies like this, or Queer Jewish History in general, this circumstance can be combated since they place Jewish experiences into the intersectional discourse. Moreover, intersectional reflections of Jewishness and Queerness can serve to negotiate the still prevalent assumption that religions and/or religious traditions are *per se* anti-queer and do not tolerate any deviation from heterosexuality.

Queer Jewish History is an exciting new endeavor. We should proceed without implying a unity of identity or a narrative of development in a particular direction, as for example implied in "from discrimination to acceptance."[204] Thus, we can overturn the assumption that queer Jewish lives are contradictory to the Jewish tradition, and rethink how Jews, with their historic dimension over several thousand years, have understood gender and sexuality.[205] Thus, this study contributes to this newly emerging field. It fills a gap within the Queer Jewish Archive: not only does it include the history of three of the first queer Jewish organizations, it also includes a European perspective that has been mostly neglected so far. Taking a closer look at the history of the Jewish Gay Group, Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo, we recognize the field of tension between *Jewish difference*, *queer difference*, and *queer difference in Jewish spaces*. Thereby, this study is inherently intersectional and contributes both to the queering of Jewish history and to an inclusion of Jewish perspectives into Queer History.

Sarah Imhoff stated that Jewish Studies must devote itself to feminist issues and Gender Studies in order to become a more interesting version of itself.[206] I argue this is also true for Queerness. Ultimately, Jewish historiography must recognize that the Jewish past was always colorful and diverse: not only in terms of religious denominations and philosophical contributions, but also in terms of individuals who lived and loved beyond the heterosexual matrix. In doing so, we contribute to an empowering and more representative body of research.

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to complain about the speech, they were sent back immediately. The team assumed that the person complaining was non-Jewish and a white, Christian German with a family history on side of the perpetrators. The "awareness team" was not aware of the fact that a person can both be Jewish and queer (cf. Coffey and Laumann, *Gojnormativität*, 112–113).

204 Cf. Sienna, "Reflections on Writing Queer Jewish History," 4.

205 Cf. Sienna, "Reflections on Writing Queer Jewish History," 12.

206 Cf. Sarah Imhoff, "Women and Gender, Past and Present: A Jewish Studies Story," *Jewish Social Studies* 24, no. 2 (2019): 79.

3 Jewish and Queer – Contradictory Terms? Jewish Tradition and Modern Responses

The following chapter describes the general position of Jewish traditional literature on homo- and bisexuality, trans* identities and other gender concepts beyond the binary. This position remained unquestioned for hundreds of years. Only in the 1970s, influenced by the sexual revolution and the queer liberation movement, did Jewish denominations start to discuss the queer-excluding interpretations of traditional texts. The majority decided to adapt their positions on sexual orientation and gender identities. Since queer Jews were not immediately accepted in the Jewish mainstream, they founded their own synagogues in the United States. They created safe spaces, developed their own liturgy and rituals, and became engaged on behalf of queer inclusion in the Jewish domain. Additionally, these queer synagogues connected and introduced the International Conferences of Gay and Lesbian Jews and, eventually, the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations as an international umbrella organization of Jewish queers.

3.1 Jewish Traditional Literature and Its Position

Traditional interpretations of Jewish religious literature classify any sexual behavior apart from vaginal sex between a man and a woman as unnatural and against God's will. Defenders of these interpretations usually claim that nothing other than heterosexuality or the two genders (men and women) can exist within Judaism. In the following, I present these traditional interpretations and indicate where there are vacancies in the text themselves that were later taken up to justify deviations from the heterosexual norm. In this context, it has to be noted that neither today's concepts of homo- or bisexuality, of trans* identities, or any other sexual and gender identity existed at the time that the Hebrew Bible, the Mishnah, or the Talmud were written and canonized. Therefore, the following passages deal with sexual practices only, and not with a person's sexual inclination or with same-sex love. The situation becomes even more nuanced while looking at different gender identities.

To start with, Leviticus 18:22 is the most prominent point of reference for the rejection of homo- or bisexuality in the Hebrew Bible: "You shall not lie with a

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man as one lies with a woman; it is a *to'evah* (an abhorrence, an abhorrent thing, an abomination)."[1]

Since rabbinical interpretations consider a sexual act as being initiated by the penetration of a penis,[2] the "lying with a man as with a woman" is understood as anal intercourse. As with heterosexual partnerships, any other possible sexual act is prohibited due to the ban on masturbation and on "wasting semen." These are contradictory to the *mitzvah* of "being fruitful and multiply" in Genesis 1:28.[3]

The Hebrew Bible goes even further and demands capital punishment for penetrative sexual relations between two men: "If a man lies with a male as one lies with a woman, both of them have done a *to'evah*; they shall be put to death – they are in bloodguilt."[4] (Leviticus 20:13).

The idea of punishment by death may be connected to two ideas: firstly to the *keddushah*, the sanctification of the Israelites, claiming them to be morally pure, and secondly to the distinction from other peoples, namely the Egyptians and Canaanites. According to Leviticus 18:3, they accepted all kinds of sexual behavior.[5]

The Hebrew Bible seems to offer more stories connected to same-sex behavior. Arguably most famously, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis is interpreted as evidence that homosexuality is to be rejected as being against Jewish law. In this story, two angels meet Lot, son of Haran, in Sodom. Lot welcomed them in his home and when they wanted to lay down and rest. The city's men surrounded Lot's house and shouted (Genesis 19:5): "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that *ned'ah otam* [we may recognize them, lie down with them, have sex with them]."[6]

In what followed, God destroyed the city. Many (early) commentators regarded, and still regard, these implied homosexual acts as the reason for the city's destruction.[7] However, as other commentators have pointed out, it seems more accu-

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1 וְאֶת־זָכָר לֹא תִשְׁכַּב מִשְׁכְּבֵי אִשָּׁה תּוֹעֵבָה הִוא (Author's translation.)

2 Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 55b or Sotah 4a.

3 Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Niddah 13a–b.

4 וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אֶת־זָכָר מִשְׁכְּבֵי אִשָּׁה תּוֹעֵבָה עָשׂוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם מוֹת יוּמָתוּ דְּמֵיהֶם בָּם (Author's translation.)

5 Cf. Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 91. Here, Homolka cited Idan Dershowitz who did not agree with this reading. Dershowitz claimed that the book of Leviticus was revised over a long period and that only in a later edition was the ban of male-male sex introduced in order to distinguish it from a time in which it was probably once permitted (cf. Idan Dershowitz, "The Secret History of Leviticus," New York Times, July 21, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/21/opinion/sunday/bible-prohibit-gay-sex.html, accessed December 18, 2020).

6 וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל־לוֹט וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אַיֵּה הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ אֵלֶיךָ הַלָּיְלָה הוֹצִיאֵם אֵלֵינוּ וְנֵדְעָה אֹתָם (Author's translation.)

7 For example, in the Midrashim *Bereshit Rabba* and *Tankhumah* (cf. Gershom Frankfurter and Rivka Ulmer, "Eine Anfrage über Homosexualität im jüdischen Gesetz," *Zeitschrift für Religions-*

rate to assume that the disregard of hospitality and the violence conducted against foreigners was the cause for God's harsh punishment.[8] Both represented crimes in other ancient communities.

Besides the story of Sodom, the Hebrew Bible tells us about the "Concubine of Gilead" (Judges 19) with a similar outcome: a stranger, a Levite, was welcomed with his concubine to another man's house in Gibeah. The city's men surrounded the house and wanted to become intimate with him. The concubine was murdered, and a war broke out between the tribes of Israel and Benjamin.[9] Here, as with the previous example, pure violence and inhospitality are likely the main issues to warrant retribution, instead of the alleged homosexual activity of the perpetuators. Besides these two instances, homosexual activity is implicitly mentioned in the Bible in the prohibition of temple prostitution of both female and male prostitutes (Deuteronomy 23:18–19).

In rabbinic literature, the topic hardly comes up. It may coincide with the statement of Rabbi Yehudah who was convinced that Jews were not suspected of engaging in intercourse as explained in Leviticus 18:22.[10] However, the Talmud condemns these sexual engagements as the Bible did and demands death by stoning.[11] For the offender, a *kareth*, a "cutting off" of the soul and a denial for the world to come, would follow.[12] It has to be noted, though, that it is unlikely that death penalties were executed in post-biblical Judaism due to the lack of political executive power and the strict requirements for a conviction. These required that two eyewitnesses of the sexual act were needed for a person to be found guilty.[13] Instead of actually enforcing capital punishment for people's sins, the punishment was a radical description of a morally unacceptable act.[14]

In later rabbinic literature, Maimonides (12th century) drew upon the Talmudic statements and reinforced that Jewish men were not suspected of homosexual activity.[15] However, he endorsed lapidation as punishment if two men were caught in such an act.[16] Generally speaking, in Ashkenazi moral literature, homosexual acts

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und Geistesgeschichte 43, Issue 1 [1991]: 51); for accounts in Josephus Flavius' and Philo of Alexandria's writings, among others, cf. Eron, "Homosexuality and Judaism," 109.

8 Cf. Frankfurter and Ulmer, "Eine Anfrage," 1991, 51–52, and Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men*, 64–69.

9 Cf. Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 92.

10 Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 82a.

11 Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 54a.

12 Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Keritot 2a.

13 Cf. Eron, "Homosexuality and Judaism," 116–117.

14 Cf. Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 94.

15 Cf. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Issurei Bi'ah 22:2.

16 Cf. Maimonides, Hilkhot Issurei Bi'ah 1:4.

were not considered "an everyday sin," but regarded as perverse and repugnant.[17] However, medieval Sephardic literature judged homosexual intercourse between men less harshly, probably due to the (relative) openness towards sexual deviations in Muslim Spain.[18] In Sephardic literature, homosexual acts were rather regrettable violations that everybody was capable of committing.[19]

Until this point, only sexual acts between two men were mentioned. That is due to the fact that the Hebrew Bible does not mention sexual acts between women. Only in later texts was the prohibition expressed in Leviticus 18 and 20 extended to female same-sex activity. The first time female homoeroticism occurs in traditional Jewish literature is in *Sifra*, a rabbinical commentary of Leviticus from the second century C.E. Here,[20] the forbidden "practices of Egypt" according to Leviticus 18 were specified: they included marriage between two women.[21] It should not be assumed that the Egyptians really performed same-sex marriages, more likely the author of *Sifra* was influenced by their own Roman environment that accepted unions between members of the same sex.[22]

The later Talmud deals with the issue of female same-sex encounters only to clarify the question if a woman, who was sexually active with another, may marry a priest. Priests were only allowed to marry a virgin.[23] The majority of rabbis approved such a hypothetical marriage because two women would only perform a *mesolelah*, a sexual act which does not involve penetration.[24] This would mean that none of the women involved had lost their virginity. The rabbis legally regarded female same-sex activity as lewd and licentious behavior,[25] as a minor infraction.[26]

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17 Cf. Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 93.

18 Cf. Louis Crompton, "Male Love and Islamic Law in Arab Spain," in *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History, and Literature*, ed. Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 142–158, or Kotis, India, "'She is a Boy, or if Not a Boy, Then A Boy Resembles Her': Cross-Dressing, Homosexuality and Enslaved Sex and Gender in Umyyad Iberia," *The Macksey Journal* 1, Article 119 (2020): 1–23.

19 Cf. Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 93.

20 Cf. Sifra, Acharei Mot 9:8 and 13:8.

21 For a more detailed analysis of the text in *Sifra* that is connected to female same-sex activities, cf. Laliv Clenman, "A Woman Would Marry a Woman: Reading Sifra on Lesbianism," *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 49, no. 2 (2016): 78–86, and Admiel Kosman and Anat Sharbat, "'Two Women Who were Sportling with Each Other': A Reexamination of the Halakhic Approaches to Lesbianism as a Touchstone for Homosexuality in General," *PaRDeS. Zeitschrift der Vereinigung für Jüdische Studien e. V.* 13 (2017): 15–22.

22 Cf. Alpert, *Like Bread on the Seder Plate*, 29–30.

23 Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 76a.

24 Cf. Alpert, *Like Bread on the Seder Plate*, 30.

25 Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 76a.

Maimonides endorsed the Talmudic implementations, as well as rulings regarding virginity, and strictly forbade sexual acts between women. Women who breached the law should be punished by flogging and not by the death penalty, since they were "merely" rebellious. Maimonides attached significant value to the disruptive impact of female same-sex relations on the heterosexual marriage and the husband.[27] Relationships between two women were a threat to society when they affected a heterosexual marriage. However, they were regarded as less potent since no wasting of semen and no penetration were involved.[28]

In regard to trans* identities, Jewish traditional literature seems more ambiguous. First, it seems that the authors of the Bible thought in strict binary categories. This assumption started with Genesis 1:27: "And God created the human in his image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."[29] Genesis 2:22 follows: "And *adonai* fashioned the rib that he has taken from the (hu)man[30] into a woman and he brought her to the man."[31]

This binary runs throughout the Bible, and eventually through Judaism itself. Traditionally, Judaism is highly gendered, from the wedding and the roles taken on by the spouses to the seating arrangements in the synagogue. As Naomi Zeveloff put it: "[…] transgender individuals pose a unique challenge to an ancient faith built on strict gender roles."[32]

Deuteronomy 22:5 is especially referred to when negating or condemning trans* identities:[33] "A woman shall not wear the clothing of a man; nor shall a man put on the clothing of a woman. All who do these things are abhorrent to *adonai*, your God."[34]

This verse has nothing to do with gender identities. It rather addresses cross-dressing and the Bible only seems to prohibit it "when it is done for nefarious pur-

26 Cf. Alpert, *Like Bread on the Seder Plate*, 30.

27 Cf. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Issurei Bi'ah 21:8.

28 Cf. Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 94.

29 וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם (Author's translation.)

30 This quote reflects the second story of creation. In this precise moment, a non-gendered human being was turned into a man, as distinct to a woman.

31 וַיִּבֶן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַצֵּלָע אֲשֶׁר־לָקַח מִן־הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיְבִאֶהָ אֶל־הָאָדָ (Author's translation.)

32 Naomi Zeveloff, "Trans Pioneers in the Rabbinate," in *Transgender & Jewish*, ed. id. (New York: Forward Association, 2014), 1.

33 Cf. Stryker, *Transgender History*, 40–41.

34 לֹא־יִהְיֶה כְלִי־גֶבֶר עַל־אִשָּׁה וְלֹא־יִלְבַּשׁ גֶּבֶר שִׂמְלַת אִשָּׁה כִּי תוֹעֲבַת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כָּל־עֹשֵׂה אֵלֶּה (Author's translation.)

poses,"[35] e. g., idolatry or adultery. However, since the changing of a God-given gender is not possible in a traditionalist view,[36] being trans* would mean violating Deuteronomy 22:5.[37] Any kind of surgical alteration of one's genitals or sterilization is prohibited. This is justified by Leviticus 22:24:[38] "You shall not offer *adonai* anything bruised, crushed, torn, or cut. You shall not do so in your land."[39] Regarding male sex organs, Deuteronomy 23:2 serves as justification:[40] "One with wounded or crushed or cut off testicles shall not enter *adonai's* congregation."[41]

There exists no explicit prohibition of sterilizing women. Trans* men, therefore, do not face the same hurdles from a traditional standpoint as trans* women do.[42]

Controversially, rabbinic literature acknowledges more than just two genders. Besides male and female, there are up to five other genders identifiable in the Mishna, Talmud, and later traditional literature:[43]

- *Androgynos:* A person with both "female" and "male" characteristics.
- *Tumtum:* A person whose sexual characteristics are intermediate or unrecognizable. The Talmud recorded that Sarah and Abraham had been *tumtumim* and only later received female or male characteristics. Then, they were able to beget children.[44]
- *Ay'lonit:* An *ay'lonit* is identified as a "female" at birth and later (at puberty) develops "male characteristics." The *ay'lonit* is infertile.

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35 Elliot Kukla and Reuben Zellman, "To Wear Is Human, to Live – Devine. Parashat Ki Tetse (Deuteronomy 21:10 – 25:19)," in *Torah Queeries: Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Gregg Drinkwater, Joshua Lesser, and David Shneer (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 255.

36 On the debate in Jewish tradition/Orthodoxy about the possibility of a gender affirming surgery, cf. Hillel Gray, "Rabbinic and Halakhic Discourse on Sex-Change Surgery and Gender Definition," in *Homosexuality, Transsexuality, Psychoanalysis and Traditional Judaism*, ed. Alan Slomowitz and Alison Feit (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 263 – 299.

37 Cf. Aaron H. Devor, "Transgender People and Jewish Law," in *Transsexualität in Theologie und Neurowissenschaften. Transsexuality in Theology and Neuroscience*, ed. Gerhard Schreiber (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2016), 401.

38 Cf. editor's note to Beth Orens, "Judaism and Gender Issues," in *Balancing on the Mechitza. Transgender in Jewish Community*, ed. Noach Dzmura (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2010), 224.

39 וּמָעוּךְ וְכָתוּת וְנָתוּק לֹא תַקְרִיבוּ לַיהוָה וּבְאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ (Author's translation.)

40 Cf. Matlow, "Traditional Sources," 59 – 60.

41 לֹא־יָבֹא פְּצוּעַ־דַּכָּא וּכְרוּת שָׁפְכָה בִּקְהַל יְהוָה (Author's translation.)

42 Cf. Matlow, "Traditional Sources," 65.

43 Cf. Elliot Kukla, "Terms for Gender Diversity in Classical Jewish Texts," 2006, http://www.transtorah.org/resources.html, accessed December 22, 2020.

44 Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 64a–b.

– *Saris:* A saris is identified as "male" but develops "female characteristics" and/or is lacking a penis. There is a "natural" saris, the *saris khamah*, and a saris through human intervention, the *saris adam.*[45]

All these genders have to observe their own rules regarding marriage and marital status. However, this relative openness to gender differences in rabbinic thought did not change the hostility towards trans* individuals in Jewish history.

3.2 Jewish Denominational Reactions from the 1970s on

For centuries, there was almost no room for queer Jews within Jewish tradition. The interpretations of the Jewish scriptures made it difficult to come out and live a queer Jewish life. At the same time, queers were discriminated against by the mainstream, non-Jewish society. Eventually, the sexual revolution of the 1960s, the strengthened feminist movement, and the Stonewall Riots in 1969 shook up Western societies. Judaism in Western countries was also affected by these societal changes. Since then, Jewish queers have become visible and demanded a place within Judaism.[46] The power of their self-organizing will be the central topic of this study. The founding of the Jewish Gay Group in London and the world's first synagogue by and for Jewish queers, Beth Chayim Chadashim (BCC, "House of New Life"), in Los Angeles were starting points in 1972. In addition, queer Jews also chose to publish their experiences: *Nice Jewish Girls* by Evelyn Torton Beck did that for the first time or the later widely circulated *Twice Blessed* by Christie Balka and Andy Rose. In the latter, the authors wrote about their "double blessed experiences" as Jewish and queer, models of "queer Jewish lives," and community workers presented outlines for Jewish educational work on homosexuality. This increased self-confidence became a sign for a development that "could not be stopped."[47]

However, Jewish Orthodoxy in its overwhelming majority rejects any deviation from the heterosexual norm to this day. This position derives from the already mentioned passages in traditional literature. The Hebrew Bible and the oral teach-

45 For more on these categories and their position within rabbinic literature cf. Strassfeld, *Trans Talmud.*

46 It is noteworthy to mention that different sexual preferences and gender expressions have always existed among Jews throughout history, irrespective of what they were called – or if they were called nothing at all. They may have been accepted at some point in history, may have been visible, and even esteemed.

47 Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 98.

ings are taken literally as God's binding word.[48] As a "landmark article" on the issue,[49] Rabbi and *possek*[50] Norman Lamm outlined the stance of Orthodoxy with view to Leviticus 18 in 1974: "[…] the very variety of interpretations of *to'eva[h]* point to a far more fundamental meaning, namely, that an act characterized as an "abomination" is *prima facie* [sic!] disgusting and cannot be further defined or explained."[51]

Although he rejected homosexual activities, he urged for a distinction between the wrongness of the act itself and the culpability of "the sinner." The sinner may act under duress. Therefore, compassion for the sinner had to be balanced with the affirmation of the prohibition.[52] In 2004, Lamm extended his essay and finally labeled homosexuals as ill. Their "illness" could be cured by therapy. If the accused homosexuals were willing to do so, they were accepted into Orthodox congregations.[53] This stance has been, and still is, very common within (ultra-)Orthodoxy. The documentary *Trembling Before G-d* by Sandi Simcha DuBowski (2001)[54] speaks of the experiences of Orthodox Jews who love differently. Some of them had tried conversion therapy to "change" their sexuality. As recently as 2011, 223 Orthodox rabbis, congregational leaders, and "mental health professionals" signed the *Torah Declaration* in which homosexuality was strongly rejected and conversion therapies were promoted. The tone of the document showed no sympathy whatsoever with the accomplishments of the gay rights movement.[55]

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48 Cf. Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 90.

49 David Shatz, "The Writings of Rabbi Norman Lamm: A Bibliographic Essay," *The Torah U-Madda Journal* 15 (2008 – 09): 228.

50 A *possek* is a scholar who determines the position of the *halakhah* in cases where previous authorities were inconclusive or where no previous halakhic decision has been made yet.

51 Norman Lamm, "Judaism and the Modern Attitude to Homosexuality," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica Year Book 1974: Events of 1973*, ed. Louis I. Rabinowitz (Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1974), 198.

52 Cf. Shatz, "The Writings of Rabbi Norman Lamm," 228.

53 Cf. Norman Lamm, "Homosexuality in Judaism," in *The Encyclopaedia of Judaism. Volume 5, Supplement 2*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, and William Scott Green (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 2152 – 2153.

54 *Trembling before G-d*, directed by Sandi Simcha DuBowski, produced by id. and Marc Smolowitz (Cinephil, 2001).

55 The document and its corresponding website (https://www.torahdec.org/) was repeatedly activated and deactivated the years after its publication. Now, it has shut down permanently, probably because many of the signers no longer agreed with the tone of the document (cf. Rachel Delia Benaim, "Why Did the Ultra-Orthodox Anti-Gay Manifesto Disappear from the Web?," Haaretz, April 10, 2018, https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-anti-gay-manifesto-vanishes-from-web-1.5376764, accessed January 4, 2021). However, an archived version can be found here: https://web.archive.org/web/20180621202642/https://www.torahdec.org/declaration.html (accessed February 14, 2021).

However, it has to be noted that on an individual level, and within Modern Orthodoxy,[56] some changes in this position can be observed. Alison Feit even spoke about a quite sudden schism arising in Orthodoxy in the mid-2010s. An increasing number of Modern-Orthodox communities have begun to include and embrace openness toward deviating sexual and gender expressions. Additionally, they have started to address the religious interpretations that excluded queers from the tradition.[57] Prominently, Rabbi Steven Greenberg tried to reconcile an Orthodox and gay identity[58] and officiated his first Orthodox same-sex wedding in 2011. Greenberg founded Eshel, a US-American organization that promotes the acceptance of queer Jews in Orthodox communities. Today, a small number of Modern Orthodox rabbis, both in the United States and Israel,[59] perform same-sex commitment or wedding ceremonies.[60] The queer synagogue Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (CBST) in New York hired ultra-Orthodox Rabbi Mike Moskowitz as Schol-

56 Modern Orthodoxy is a non-organized, theologically and philosophically diverse branch of Jewish Orthodoxy. It is characterized by attempts to maintain an observant lifestyle and traditional theology, but at the same time, observers do not want to reject the modern world and have started engaging with it.

57 Cf. Alison Feit, "Preface," in *Homosexuality, Transsexuality, Psychoanalysis and Traditional Judaism*, ed. Alan Slomowitz and id. (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), XXVI.

58 Cf. Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men.*

59 The situation in Israel regarding LGBTQ+ issues is very complex. On the one hand, Israel is the most tolerant country regarding queer people in the Middle East with Tel Aviv as the country's magnet for queers around the world. On the other hand, the Orthodox rabbinate controls every issue of personal status as well as the right to marry as part of the "Status Quo" that is supposed to be maintained. Israel grants same-sex marriages which have been officiated abroad the same rights as heterosexual ones. Any legal change improving the status of LGBTQ+ people is only to be expected when religious, Orthodox parties vote in their favor, which is highly unlikely. Hila Amit examines the motivations that made queers emigrate from Israel and goes into details about the difficult relationship between Israel and its LGBTQ+ citizens (cf. Hila Amit, *A Queer Way Out. The Politics of Queer Emigration from Israel* [Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018]). In a more recent study, Orit Avishai examined how queer Orthodox Jews in Israel achieved becoming more visible in the country. By conducting more than 120 interviews with queer Orthodox Jews, Avishai portrayed fundamental changes in theology and religion, personal relations, and politics within and of Orthodox communities (cf. Orit Avishai, *Queer Judaism. LGBT Activism and the Remaking of Jewish Orthodoxy in Israel* [New York: New York University Press, 2023]).

60 Cf. Josefin Dolsten, "Small but Growing Number of Orthodox Rabbis Are Officiating Gay Weddings," Jerusalem Post, October 29, 2020, https://www.jpost.com/judaism/small-but-growing-number-of-orthodox-rabbis-are-officiating-gay-weddings-647279, accessed January 4, 2021, and Arno Rosenfeld, "LGBT Synagogues Confront a Changing Landscape," Forward, June 25, 2021, https://forward.com/news/472057/lgbt-synagogues-confront-a-changing-landscape/, accessed January 23, 2023.

ar-in-Residence for Trans and Queer Jewish Studies. In some cases, Orthodox rabbis allow trans* Jews to express their identity "for purposes of saving lives and for public order and propriety."[61] However, although powerful, these are exceptions within a mostly anti-queer (ultra-)Orthodox framework that promotes conversion therapies and ignores the identities of some of their followers. As Jack Drescher summarized: "Although change is happening slowly, it is nevertheless happening. The Orthodox community is now speaking aloud about *frum* LGBTQ people, which is always better than what happened in the past when they only talked about them in condemnatory whispers."[62]

In the last five decades, approaches other than these "condemnatory whispers" have dominated Jewish life and practice. By reading the Bible historic-critically, reinterpretations of those texts which seemingly condemn homo-, bisexuality, or trans* identities have become possible. These new interpretations relocate the texts in their historical context.[63] Additionally, queer Jews seized upon the notion in Judaism that God "continually unfolds,"[64] and that biblical texts are "initial frameworks" that can be rewritten from generation to generation and enriched, modified, and relativized throughout time.[65] Subsequently, queer Jews approached the texts differently to find their place within tradition. Another attempt was to identify the homoerotic potential in close relationships between protagonists in the Bible (e. g., between David and Jonathan [1 Samuel 18 et seqq.; 2 Samuel 1], or Ruth and Naomi [Ruth 1–4]).

These engagements with the Scriptures were first steps to improve the situation of queers in non-Orthodox branches of Judaism, i. e., Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism.[66] The extent of queer Jews' inclusion into Jewish

61 Devor, "Transgender People and Jewish Law," 410.

62 Jack Drescher, "Preface to Section I: Moving the Conversation Along," in *Homosexuality, Transsexuality, Psychoanalysis and Traditional Judaism,* ed. Alan Slomowitz and Alison Feit (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 5.

63 A stunning example for such an approach is the book *Torah Queeries.* In it, the *parashot* and holiday portions of the Hebrew Bible are read queerly and can be used to empower queer Jews in their approach to the Holy Scriptures. The book is a result of a long-ongoing process of discussion about the texts, mostly held online (cf. Drinkwater, Lesser, and Shneer, *Torah Queeries*).

64 Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 95.

65 Cf. Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 96.

66 Orthodox (with its different subdivisions), Conservative, and Reform Judaism are the three largest denominations in Judaism. It must be kept in mind, however, that a growing number of Jews do not wish to affiliate themselves with any denomination or resort to defining themselves as "trans-denominational." A smaller denomination is Reconstructionist Judaism with 2–3 % of US-American Jews affiliated. Reconstructionism regards Judaism as a progressively "evolving religious civilization," not as a religion. The *halakhah* is considered neither normative nor binding; the past "has a vote, not a veto." Nevertheless, a Reconstructionist Jew is committed to both tradition

denominations may be assessed by examining three benchmarks: first, the creation of spaces for queer Jews; second, the admission of queer Jews to theological seminaries, to the rabbinate, and cantorship; and finally the permitting of same-sex marriages.

After the first queer synagogue BCC was founded in 1972, it took the congregation only two years to become a member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC),[67] the umbrella organization of Reform congregations in the United States. It was the first LGBTQ+ institution ever to be recognized by a major mainstream religious organization. In the following years, Reform Judaism incorporated more queer synagogues. Others, like CBST, remained unaffiliated.[68]

In 1977, BCC promoted a UAHC resolution to end all legal discrimination against homosexuals and calling for equal human rights regardless of sexual orientation.[69] The rabbinical body of the Reform Movement, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), followed this example a few months later.[70] The Rabbinical Assembly, the international association of Conservative rabbis, adopted a similar resolution only in 1990.[71] The debate took longer because of Conservative Judaism's intermediary position between the binding laws of Jewish tradition and the adaptation of those laws for contemporary questions. The discussion carefully evaluated what part of the religious law was binding and what could be adapted to address today's social issues.

Whereas the call for equal rights for homosexuals occurred alongside the increasing visibility and acceptance of homosexuals in mainstream society, their ordination into religious positions was more challenging. This touched on more fundamental questions like representation and leadership. Already in 1984, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) accepted openly gay or lesbian appli-

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and to the search for a contemporary meaning of it. The denomination acknowledges the struggle that comes with this search (cf. Reconstructing Judaism, "Who is a Reconstructionist Jew?," December 2, 2016, https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/article/who-reconstructionist-jew/, accessed January 2, 2023).

67 On the history of queer synagogues in the United States, cf. Section 3.3.

68 Cf. Section 3.3.

69 Cf. "Resolution Adopted by the 45th General Assembly of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations Biennial, 1977: Human Rights of Homosexuals," in *Kulanu: All of Us. A Program and Resource Guide for Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Inclusion. Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Richard F. Address, Joel L. Kushner, and Geoffrey Mitelman (New York: URJ Press, 2007), 249.

70 Cf. "Resolution Adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis 88th Annual Convention, 1977: Rights of Homosexuals," in Address, Kushner, and Mitelman, *Kulanu*, 251.

71 Cf. Elliot N. Dorff, "Jewish Norms for Sexual Behavior: A Responsum Embodying a Proposal," 1992, https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/19912000/dorff_homosexuality.pdf, accessed January 6, 2021, 692.

cants. One year later, it ordained Deborah Brin as the first openly lesbian rabbi in the United States.

Whereas Reform and Liberal Judaism in the UK ordained their first lesbian rabbis Elizabeth T. Sarah and Sheila Shulman in 1989, the Reform Movement in the United States installed an "Ad Hoc Committee" to resolve this problem in 1986. It dedicated four years to deliberate the issue. Finally, in 1990, the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), the theological seminary of the movement, changed its admissions policy and allowed publicly outed homosexuals to study and become rabbis or cantors. The "Ad Hoc Committee" ultimately supported this decision and its report was approved in the same year by the CCAR.[72] Subsequently, in 2006, Elliot Kukla was ordained by HUC-JIR as the first trans* rabbi in history.

At the same time, Conservative Judaism was still deeply divided. The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS), the central authority for *halakhah* in the US-American Conservative Movement, saw itself forced to pass three main principles regarding homosexuality in 1992: 1.) No commitment ceremonies or marriages for homosexuals; 2.) No admission of publicly outed homosexuals to the rabbinate; 3.) Every congregation to decide on its own if and how to include homosexuals.[73] This decision did not stop the debate within Conservative Judaism, especially within the congregations. Nor did it stop rabbis and cantors coming out of the closet after their ordination. Finally, in December 2006, the CJLS revised its stance and opened the doors of their seminaries for homosexual applicants.[74]

On the matter of marriage or commitment ceremonies, the case is equally complex. On the one hand, the denominations had to take a stance on increasing same-sex marriage legalization at state level. On the other hand, there was the urgent question if a rabbi could perform a same-sex marriage and if these unions had to be considered *kiddushin* ("holiness"). If so, they would have the same status as heterosexual marriages on a religious level.[75] In 1993, Reconstructionist Judaism

72 Cf. "Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Homosexuality and the Rabbinate of the Central Conference of American Rabbis Annual Convention, 1990," in Address, Kushner, and Mitelman, *Kulanu*, 259–264.

73 Cf. Committee on Jewish Laws and Standards, "Consensus Statement on Homosexuality," 1992, http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/assets/public/halakhah/teshuvot/19912000/consensus_homosexual.pdf, accessed January 6, 2021.

74 Elliot N. Dorff, Daniel S. Nevins, and Avram I. Reisner, "Homosexuality, Human Dignity & Halakhah: A Combined Responsum for the Committee on Jewish Laws and Standards," 2006, https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/20052010/dorff_nevins_reisner_dignity.pdf, accessed January 6, 2021.

75 Cf. Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 101.

became the first Jewish denomination that performed same-sex marriages that were instantaneously considered *kiddushin*.[76]

US-Reform Judaism promoted the introduction of a civil same-sex marriage with several resolutions and public calls in the 1990s.[77] In March 2000, the CCAR finally approved same-sex marriages performed by Reform rabbis.[78] The resolution omitted the word *kiddushin*, and rabbis could decide whether the commitment is blessed by *kiddushin* or not. However, at the moment the resolution was passed, there were already several representatives arguing that same-sex marriages were of the same holiness as heterosexual ones.[79]

The UK's Liberal Judaism introduced blessings of same-sex couples as *brit ahavah* ("covenant of love") in the early 2000s and standardized them in 2005 by granting them the same rights as heterosexual marriages.[80] Finally, both Liberal Judaism and the Movement for Reform Judaism began to conduct marriage ceremonies in the same way as heterosexual ones after same-sex marriages became legal in the UK in 2014.[81] Finally, the climax of these developments was a resolution passed by the World Union of Progressive Judaism as a worldwide umbrella organization in 2013. It not only approved same-sex marriages in progressive movements around the world (as long as Jewish congregations were permitted to do so by national law), but it also called for civil same-sex marriages everywhere.[82] Reservations expressed by representatives from France and Russia were outvoted.[83]

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76 Cf. Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot and Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, *Homosexuality and Judaism: The Reconstructionist Position (The Report of the Reconstructionist Commission on Homosexuality)* (Pennsylvania: 1992), 36. These policy guidelines were finally passed in 1993.

77 For example, "Resolution Adopted by the 62nd General Assembly of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations Biennial, 1993: Recognition for Lesbian and Gay Partnerships," in Address, Kushner, and Mitelman, *Kulanu*, 281–282, or "Resolution Adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis 107th Annual Convention, 1996: Gay and Lesbian Marriage," in Address, Kushner, and Mitelman, *Kulanu*, 289.

78 Cf. "Resolution Adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis 111th Annual Convention, 2000: Same Gender Officiation," in Address, Kushner, and Mitelman, *Kulanu*, 329–330.

79 Cf. Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 103.

80 Benjamin Cohen, "Liberal Judaism Launches Gay Marriage Ceremonies in Britain," Pink News, November 25, 2005, https://www.thepinknews.com/2005/11/25/liberal-judaism-launches-gay-marriage-ceremonies-in-britain/, accessed December 14, 2022.

81 Cf. Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 103.

82 Cf. World Union of Progressive Judaism, "8. Proposed Resolution on Marriage Equality (Proposed by Resolutions Committee)," May 1, 2013, https://www.australianmarriageequality.org/2013/07/04/world-union-of-progressive-judaism-passes-resolution-in-support-of-marriage-equality/, accessed January 5, 2021.

Conservative Judaism decided on same-sex marriages together with the ordination of publicly outed homosexual rabbis and cantors in 2006. Two different resolutions were approved by the CJLS: the first enforced the decision of 1992 not to officiate same-sex weddings at any cost. The second by Elliot Dorff, Daniel Nevins, and Avram Reisner allowed unions to be formed between people of the same-sex.[84] However, this second resolution still upheld the ban of anal sex in male relationships (following Leviticus 18 and 20).[85] While this resolution explicitly did not attribute those unions *kiddushin*, the same authors explained in a guideline for officiating same-sex marriages and divorces a few years later that Conservative Judaism would celebrate these "with the same sense of holiness and joy"[86] as heterosexual marriages. Formally, Conservative leadership offered different legal positions on the issue to choose from, whether it be to ban homosexual behavior or to carry out marriage ceremonies. In practice, the overwhelming majority of Conservative Judaism followed the opinion of Dorff, Nevins, and Reisner. In the UK, for example, Conservative Judaism began, like Liberal and Reform Judaism, to hold marriage ceremonies when they became legal in 2014.[87]

The movements concentrated on homosexuals and same-sex marriages for a long time. Reform Judaism, however, concerned itself with trans* Jews in regard to Jewish practice quite early. This involved deliberations about which gender had to be considered for marriage after gender affirming surgery (1978), the right for trans* people to undergo a conversion (1990),[88] and the circumcision of a transgender female (2009). In 2003, the Social Action Commission of Reform Judaism passed a resolution to extend the 1977 resolution "Human Rights for Homo-

83 Cf. Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 104.

84 That the CJLS approved two contradictory resolutions is not unusual. The CJLS considers all passed resolutions as valid interpretations or analyses of Jewish law. Each rabbi, each congregation, and institution can choose which interpretation they want to follow.

85 Cf. Dorff, Nevins, and Reisner, "Homosexuality, Human Dignity & Halakhah," 19. Officially, Conservative Judaism has not passed a contrary resolution on this particular issue to this day.

86 Cf. Elliot N. Dorff, Daniel S. Nevins, and Avram I. Reisner, "*Rituals and Documents of Marriage and Divorce for Same-Sex Couples,*" 2012, https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/2011-2020/same-sex-marriage-and-divorce-appendix.pdf, accessed January 6, 2021, 2.

87 Cf. Homolka, "Jewish Perspectives on Homosexuality," 105.

88 Naomi Zeveloff noted that "[t]ransgender converts constitute a vocal – and same say growing – minority within the small community of LGBT Jews." The transitioning process was often revealing and "soul-searching," so that not only questions of gender identity were raised but also of spirituality (cf. Naomi Zeveloff, "Transgender People Who Find Judaism," in *Transgender & Jewish,* ed. id. [New York: Forward Association, 2014], 27).

sexuals" to bisexuals and transgender people.[89] Twelve years later, both the CCAR and the Union of Reform Judaism (UAHC's successor) passed a landmark resolution that affirmed Reform Judaism's commitment to equality, inclusion, and acceptance of gender expressions and identities. It stated that a person has the right to be referred to as they wished (name, gender, and pronoun). The resolution also positioned Reform Judaism against all discrimination and violence towards trans* and gender nonconforming individuals, and affirmed that they have a place in all congregations and institutions of Reform Judaism.[90]

Conservative Judaism dealt with trans* issues especially in 2003 when the CJLS decided that only someone who underwent sexual reassignment surgery could change their sex status.[91] In 2017, the CJLS revised this decision by means of Rabbi Sharzer who persuaded their fellow rabbis that gender identity is not the same as sexual identity. Sharzer's *responsum*[92] also extensively outlined consequences for Jewish practices like marriage and conversion resulting from this definition.[93] Already one year earlier, the Rabbinical Assembly passed a resolution to fully affirm the rights of trans* and gender nonconforming people, their self-given identity markers, and to fully embrace trans* Jews in Conservative Judaism.[94]

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89 Cf. "Resolution Adopted by the Executive Board of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, 2003: Support for the Inclusion and Acceptance of the Transgender and Bisexual Communities," in Address, Kushner, and Mitelman, *Kulanu*, 333–334.

90 Cf. Central Conference of American Rabbis, "The Rights of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals," March 16, 2015, https://www.ccarnet.org/ccar-resolutions/rights-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-indiv/, accessed January 6, 2021, and Union of Reform Judaism, "Resolution on the Rights of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People," 2015, https://urj.org/what-we-believe/resolutions/resolution-rights-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-people, accessed January 6, 2021, also the resolutions of 1978, 1990, and 2009.

91 Cf. Meyer E. Rabinowitz, "Status of Transsexuals," 2003, https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/assets/public/halakhah/teshuvot/20012004/rabinowitz_transsexuals.pdf, accessed January 6, 2021.

92 A *responsum*, pl. *responsa*, "answers to questions of Jewish law and observance written by *halakhic* scholars in reply to inquiries addressed to them; the role of responsa is similar to that of case law" (Edward Fram, "Responsa," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997], 581). Responsa can also represent the idea of a "general exchange of opinion in *halakhah*" (Shlomo Tal, "Responsa," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica. Second Edition. Volume 17, Ra–Sam*, ed. Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum [Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2007], 229).

93 Cf. Leonard A. Scharzer, "Transgender Jews and Halakhah," 2017, https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/2011-2020/transgender-halakhah.pdf, accessed January 6, 2021.

94 Cf. Rabbinical Assembly, "Resolution Affirming the Rights of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People," April 6, 2016, https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/resolution-affirming-rights-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-people, accessed January 6, 2021.

More recently, in 2022, the CJLS underlined that nonbinary Jews are allowed to be called to the Torah during services and outlined ways how to do so appropriately.[95]

Generally speaking, the situation for queer Jews is promising today. A majority of Jewish community members and congregations accept and welcome them. Even Orthodoxy is no longer monolithic in its refusal to accept anything outside the heterosexual norm. The situation today is only possible through the continuous dedication of queer Jews to change Judaism. They interacted with traditional texts that rejected them for centuries, they developed their own liturgical elements that were eventually adopted by the mainstream organizations, e. g., for same-sex marriages or gender neutral prayers.

Another major element of recognition and inclusion were organizations for queer Jews. These safe spaces enabled them to get to know each other, to share their experiences, to express their needs, and to become engaged with Jewish tradition. This study is dedicated to the European safe spaces for queer Jews. Whereas they were founded one by one in the 1970s/80s, a whole movement of queer synagogues came to life in the United States. For the context of the study, I will outline this movement since its members became important partners for the European groups.

3.3 American Developments: Queer Synagogues

After a 1970 attempt in New York failed to establish a congregation for and by Jewish queers under the name "Temple of David and Jonathan,"[96] Los Angeles' BCC – the "House of New Life" – became the world's first officially founded synagogue of this kind. BCC was just a starting point for other, similar endeavors which subsequently sprung up throughout the United States. Before going into detail, it has to be noted that the terminology for these synagogues was, and still is, not standardized. In its first months, BCC called itself as "a synagogue for the homophile community." Later, it appeared as a "homosexual" or "gay (and lesbian) synagogue."[97] With the rising number of these synagogues entering the Jewish mainstream, the UAHC insisted that they should use a term that did not exclude non-homosexuals potentially joining them. It preferred "special outreach synagogues," or, more pre-

95 Cf. Guy Austrian, Robert Scheinberg, and Deborah Silve, "Calling Non-Binary People to Torah Honors," (2022), https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/calling-non-binary-people-to-torah-honors-cjls-oh-139_3-2022-final.pdf, accessed March 13, 2024.

96 Cf. Wilkens, *"Jewish, Gay and Proud,"* 96, and Drinkwater, "Building Queer Judaism," 129, 156–165.

97 Cf. Wilkens, *"Jewish, Gay and Proud,"* 12–13.

cisely, "gay outreach synagogues."[98] The latter term was accepted by BCC and others, making it the most common term in the 1970s and 1980s. However, this term was not used continuously by all synagogues, nor did it include other sexual orientations and gender identities. Subsequently, the synagogues changed their self-description again, mostly to LGBTQ, "inclusive for all Jews," or queer. Returning to the inclusive character of the word *queer*,[99] I use the term "queer synagogues" when describing this phenomenon.[100]

The history of BCC started in a Christian church. The Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) was founded by Troy Perry in Los Angeles in 1968 as the first place in the city to address a religious/spiritual and queer identity. Through the political engagement of Perry beyond MCC, and the support he received from the local queer community, non-Christians were also attracted to MCC. Perry encouraged them to attend MCC services and other gatherings and events. This was especially true for Jews. Already during a Chanukah service hosted by MCC in 1971, the Jews attending spoke about forming an independent prayer group. A few months later in April 1972, four Jews were the only people to attend a weekly rap group in the church. When they realized that they were all Jewish, they discussed the possibility of forming a congregation of their own. Together with the support of Perry, this new congregation – by then called Metropolitan Community Temple – celebrated their first service on MCC's premises in June 1972. From here, the congregation was renamed BCC and developed a stable structure with a board and membership dues. It moved to the premises of LA's Leo Baeck Temple after a fire in MCC, and received a Torah scroll.[101] The services were almost entirely self-led in the first years, with some rabbinical support (and, after its admission to Reform Judaism, with interns from HUC-JIR[102]).

The second queer synagogue was Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (CBST) in New York. Through an advertisement in the queer newspaper *Village Voice*, Jacob Gubbay announced a Friday night service by a "gay synagogue." Ayelet Cohen described in her book about CBST's history that he did not really know anything about conducting a service or how to build or run a synagogue. He just knew that "the time had come" to create a space for queer Jews.[103] Ten to fifteen people

98 Cf. Dana Evan Kaplan, *American Reform Judaism. An Introduction* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 213.

99 Cf. Section 1.5.

100 For the debate on the terminology on queer synagogues also cf. Drinkwater, "Creating an Embodied Queer Judaism," 191.

101 Cf. Wilkens, *"Jewish, Gay and Proud,"* 26–49.

102 Cf. Wilkens, *"Jewish, Gay and Proud,"* 93.

103 Cf. Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History*, 14.

showed up for the first service in the Church of the Holy Apostles. The church, already known for its board's and members' social justice activism, had become a temporary home for several gay and lesbian organizations in the city like MCC's regional branch. The church's Father Robert Weeks took on a role similar to that of Troy Perry, and encouraged the Jews who subsequently met in his church to create their own synagogue.[104] The Yom Kippur War in October 1973 was a catalysis for this endeavor. CBST was officially established a few days after the war ended.[105] Within a year, the congregation had more than 100 people joining them at services.[106] By 1975, the synagogue was able to move onto its own premises in New York's Greenwich Village.[107]

An historic event for the further development of queer synagogues in the United States was BCC's admission into Reform Judaism in 1974. The congregation was eager to reach out to the Jewish mainstream very early on. Approaching, and later affiliating with, a denomination was regarded as beneficial for further growth, financial stability, and nonmaterial support. After meeting with different rabbis, Reform Judaism and the UAHC appeared the most promising. Consequently, and shortly after its foundation, BCC received support from the regional council of the UAHC, its president Erwin Herman, and his wife Agnes.[108] At first, the council supported the congregation by building up a basic infrastructure to conduct services. However, in June 1973, BCC handed in its application to officially join the UAHC. BCC's members traveled the country and lobbied for approval at the UAHC conferences. After delegates in different UAHC bodies supported the admission and voted in its favor, the Executive Committee of the UAHC Board of Trustees had to make a final decision in June 1974. Whereas other newly founded synagogues were admitted to the union without any debate, the committee covered BCC's application at length, and its representatives expressed various attitudes towards a synagogue by and for homosexuals. Eventually, the committee voted with a majority of 61 to 22 in favor, and made BCC the first LGBTQ+ organization ever to be recognized by a mainstream religious institution.[109]

The queer synagogues Etz Chaim (Miami, founded in 1974), Or Chadash (Chicago, 1975), and Sha'ar Zahav (San Francisco, 1977) followed BCC's example and joined US Reform Judaism before the mid-1980s.[110] Bet Ahavah (Philadelphia,

104 Cf. Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History*, 18.
105 Cf. Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History*, 18–19.
106 Cf. Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History*, 14.
107 Cf. Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History*, 23–24.
108 Cf. Wilkens, *"Jewish, Gay and Proud,"* 32–33, 35–37.
109 Cf. Wilkens, *"Jewish, Gay and Proud,"* 78–85.
110 Cf. Cooper, "No Longer Invisible," 93.

1975) did so in 1990.[111] Bet Haverim in Atlanta (1985) became the first queer synagogue to affiliate with the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot in 1989.[112] Others remained independent and did not affiliate with a Jewish denomination: CBST, B'nai Haskalah (Boston, 1973/4, replaced by Am Tikva in 1976), Bet Mishpachah (Washington, D. C., founded in 1975 as Metropolitan Community Temple Mishpocheh), and Tikvah Chadashah (Seattle, 1980). The reasons why those synagogues did not affiliate were varied. Jews were drawn to queer synagogues because they were Jewish and queer, not because of a synagogue's specific religious practices. Consequently, members had very different religious backgrounds. Deciding on one religious orientation would have excluded others. For example, and this is applicable to others, CBST had a very diverse membership while the early ritual leaders were connected to Conservative and Orthodox Judaism.[113] In 1989/90, CBST considered an affiliation again and met with representatives from the Reconstructionist, Reform, and Conservative Movement. Despite other queer synagogues being affiliated with Reform Judaism, "[t]he Conservative Movement would have been, in many ways, the most natural fit for CBST, if it weren't for its policies on homosexuality."[114]

However, CBST's Affiliation Committee was divided on the issue and ultimately did not make a decision.[115] Throughout the years, the congregation's members expressed different standpoints on an affiliation: from strong feelings of connection to a particular movement, to nonaffiliation being a matter of principle.[116] In the end, CBST as the biggest queer congregation did not depend on (financial) support from a particular denomination and was able to find a way to bring different religious and spiritual movements together.

The consideration of different religious backgrounds in CBST also became obvious during its search for a rabbi. Although the congregation debated the possible hiring of a rabbi several times, it finally decided on doing so in the early 1990s. After an extensive search, they decided on Sharon Kleinbaum, an openly lesbian rabbi trained by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC). She was raised

111 Cf. William Way LGBT Community Center, "John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives. Congregation Beth Ahavah Records, 1974–1987: Ms.Coll.6," July 17, 2019, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bdf5ea9266c07394b298351/t/5d2f3e7723cd0c0001fa1bba/1563377271939/MsColl06.pdf, accessed December 15, 2022.

112 Cf. Digest. The Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 8, no. 2, 1989, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT Community Center National History Archive New York (LGBT CCNHA), 2.

113 Cf. Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History*, 32–34.

114 Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History*, 88.

115 Cf. Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History*, 86–87.

116 Cf. Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History*, 88.

in a Conservative synagogue and graduated from an Orthodox High School. This assured the more conservative members of her credibility. Her training and her subsequent work in a Reform Judaism framework persuaded the more liberal Jews in the congregation that she was the right choice for CBST.[117]

However, the first queer synagogue that hired a rabbi[118] was Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco. In 1978, Allen Bennett came out gay as the first rabbi in the United States and was elected Sha'ar Zahav's rabbi one year later.[119] At that time, queer rabbis were not officially admitted to the rabbinical seminaries; Bennett only came out after his ordination. Hence, after BCC received help from rabbinical interns after its admission to Reform Judaism, the synagogue hired Janet Marder as its first, albeit heterosexual, full-time rabbi in 1983. After RRC began accepting homosexual rabbis from 1984 on, Linda Holtzman became the first openly queer rabbi to be employed by a queer synagogue (Bet Ahavah, Philadelphia) in 1985.[120] The fact that queer synagogues started hiring rabbis demonstrated that they were "more than a temporary phenomenon on the landscape of Jewish life."[121]

Generally speaking, queer synagogues were a result of US-American Jewish counterculture. This counterculture, or Jewish student movement, was characterized by a "loosely organized set of groups of young Jewishly-affirming communal/spiritual innovators"[122] which peaked between 1967 and 1972. These groups harshly criticized and confronted the Jewish establishment for its traditionalism and hesitancy toward social change. After 1972, the protagonists of the movement pursued professional careers and maintained the ideas and activities of the counterculture. Many entered the Jewish establishment they had previously criticized and became rabbis, educators, communal workers, or Jewish Studies scholars.[123] Jewish counterculture also continued in the Chavurah Movement, named for separatist religious fellowships that regularly met outside of synagogues, and the traditional Jewish framework for study, discussion, and prayer groups.

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117 Cf. Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History*, 98–99.

118 Cf. Drinkwater, "Creating an Embodied Queer Judaism," 178, 182–183, and Drinkwater, "Building Queer Judaism," 304–307.

119 Cf. LGBTQ Religious Archives Network, "Rabbi Allen Bennett | Oral History," August 2009, https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/allen-bennett, accessed December 29, 2022.

120 Cooper, "No Longer Invisible," 93.

121 Cooper, "No Longer Invisible," 93.

122 Norman L. Friedman, "Social Movement Legacies: The American Jewish Counterculture, 1973–1988," *Jewish Social Studies* 50, no. 3/4 (1988–1993): 127.

123 Cf. Friedman, "Social Movement Legacies," 127.

Queer synagogues, as Norman Friedman said, were "partly a result of the gay rights movement and partly through sympathy and encouragement from Jewish counterculture student newspapers."[124] The latter were supportive of the needs Jewish homosexuals expressed.[125] At least in their first years, they shared the idea of a lay-led community, with its own liturgy, nonhierarchical structures, and egalitarian worship with the Chavurah Movement.[126] Friedman summarized that these synagogues came into existence "with little strong resistance and considerable toleration from most American Jews."[127] Nevertheless, accepting them into their midst, recognizing them and the needs of Jewish queers as a valid part of US-American Judaism, remained points of debate. The previous deliberations on the stance of Conservative Judaism in this study show how difficult it was for Jewish queers from the 1970s to the early 2000s to make themselves heard there while Jewish Orthodoxy was not – and still is not in its majority – a place for any recognition.

Nevertheless, the queer synagogues became successful in bringing Jewish queers together and allowing them to express their religiosity/spirituality and their identity. As Gregg Drinkwater summarized: "Through these synagogues, a vision of a gay Jewish future emerged, re-imagining a Jewish world that affirmed and sanctified gay and lesbian people."[128]

In their heyday in the late 1980s and early 1990s, over two dozen queer synagogues existed throughout the United States.[129] They helped to reshape the relationship of gender, sexuality, and identity for their congregants, but also for American Judaism in general, and contributed to the high level of visibility that queer Jews in America have today.[130]

Even though their engagement began locally, and serving their members was their priority, queer synagogues quickly got to know each other. Frequently, founding members of one congregation had visited those already existing for inspiration,[131] and shortly after a new synagogue came to life, others reached out, and they started exchanging ideas and knowledge. However, a resolution passed by the United Nations in 1975 institutionalized their collaboration and subsequently gained worldwide importance.

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124 Friedman, "Social Movement Legacies," 128.
125 Cf. Friedman, "Social Movement Legacies," 139.
126 Drinkwater, "Creating an Embodied Queer Judaism," 178.
127 Friedman, "Social Movement Legacies," 139.
128 Drinkwater, "Building Queer Judaism," ii.
129 Cf. Drinkwater, "Creating an Embodied Queer Judaism," 177.
130 Cf. Drinkwater, "Building Queer Judaism," 3–4.
131 Cf. Drinkwater, "Building Queer Judaism," 179.

3.4 The World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Organizations

In the very beginning of the establishment of queer synagogues, the Metropolitan Community Churches became an important ally for the organizing of queer Jews. Throughout the United States, these churches came into existence in different cities after the first one was founded in Los Angeles in 1968. They became places for queer Jews searching for "camaraderie and support for religiosity."[132] BCC and Metropolitan Community Temple Mishpocheh (the later Bet Mishpachah) were founded within MCC of their city, and CBST had close contact with MCC in New York since they shared a meeting space in the Church of the Holy Apostles. That was the reason why the annual conferences of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches were opportunities to network and to share experiences with other queer Jews in the country. The informal meetings during the 1974 and 1975 conferences were especially important for this early movement of queer Jews.[133]

These connections became beneficial in late 1975. In November, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 3379 entitled "Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination" which determined "that [Z]ionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination."[134] Furthermore, it equated South African apartheid with Zionism.[135] This resolution triggered massive debates within US-American Jewry. Many Jews felt hurt and isolated by the international community and were shocked by the antisemitism that the resolution invoked.[136] The Jewish mainstream institutions in the United States quickly started protesting against the resolution.[137] As a reaction from queer Jews whose voices were not represented in the mainstream's interventions, CBST organized an "Emergency Conference on Antisemitism" as early as December 1975. The synagogue's newsletter put on record:

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132 Cooper, "No Longer Invisible," 84.

133 Cf. Cooper, "No Longer Invisible," 86.

134 United Nations General Assembly, "Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly [on the report of the Third Committee (A/10320)] 3379 (XXX). Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination," November 10, 1975, https://www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/gna/Quellensammlung/11/11_unresolution_1975.htm, accessed January 2, 2023.

135 This resolution was passed with 72 countries in favor, 32 abstaining, and 35 against. Only in 1991 was the resolution rescinded (Resolution 46/86, 111–13–25 with 15 absent votes).

136 Cf. Sharon Kleinbaum, "The World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations," in The World Congress, *Kol Koleinu,* 26.

137 Cf. Cooper, "No Longer Invisible," 86. For more on the immediate (non-Jewish) US-American reactions to the resolution cf. Sidney Liskowsky, "UN Resolution on Zionism," in *The American Jewish Yearbook 1977, Volume 77*, ed. American Jewish Committee and Jewish Publication Society of America (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976), 106–115.

"The Jewish community, and this synagogue in particular, will not sit helplessly by to watch the aftermath of this event unfold. [...] We will not allow 'anti-Zionism' to become a respectable slogan for those who would harm us for whatever reason."[138]

Four CBST members invited BCC, Metropolitan Community Temple Mishpocheh, Beth Ahavah, and B'nai Haskalah to New York. They constituted the first official meeting of queer Jewish organizations in the United States. The first outcome of this "emergency conference" was to condemn the UN resolution. The second was to record the desire to maintain close relationships with one another and to offer assistance to each other, and to newly emerging queer Jewish synagogues or organizations.[139] This meeting had profound implications for the understanding of the five synagogues as a joint movement: "We were finally together at an official gathering, giving us a taste of possibilities for a broader and stronger network in the future."[140]

A few months later, in the summer of 1976, Metropolitan Community Temple Mishpocheh invited its fellow synagogues from the meeting in December to Washington, D.C., alongside Etz Chaim and Or Chadash as well as representatives from the groups Naches (Montreal), Ha Mishpacha (Toronto), the Jewish Gay Group (London), and one proxy of the Society for the Protection of Personal Rights (SPPR, Tel Aviv). Together, they held the First International Conference of Gay Jews. The ultimate goal of the conference was "to form an international Gay Hebrew Alliance."[141] In practical terms, two resolutions were passed: the first established that each organization should appoint a liaison person responsible for the information flow between the organizations. The second determined that the organizations would hold an international conference on a rotating basis.[142] The purpose of these conferences should be: "[...] to provide mutual assistance in achieving more successful programming on all levels of organizational activity, to extend aid in the formation of new gay Jewish organizations, to promote gay Jewish awareness, and to provide moral support for gay Jews throughout the world."[143]

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138 Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History*, 256.

139 Cf. Cooper, "No Longer Invisible," 86.

140 Aliza Maggid, "Joining Together: Building a Worldwide Movement," in *Twice Blessed. On Being Lesbian, Gay and Jewish*, ed. Christie Balka and Andy Rose (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 160.

141 Conference of Gay Jewish Organizations Minutes of Business Meeting on August 14, 1976 at Kay Spiritual Center, American University, Washington, D.C., Collection 2012–133, box 22, folder 6, Beth Chayim Chadashim Records, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1.

142 Cf. Conference of Gay Jewish Organizations Minutes of Business Meeting on August 14, 1976, 1–2.

143 Conference of Gay Jewish Organizations Minutes of Business Meeting on August 14, 1976, 1.

The first conference was the starting point for a tradition that continued up until the 2020s. As Aaron Cooper stated: "Spirits were high as these Jewishly committed people perceived the beginnings of an international movement that would give voice to their concerns and validate their existence as legitimate segment of Am Yisroel (the People of Israel)."[144]

After Washington, D.C., the next conference took place in New York in 1977, organized by CBST. This conference introduced the general structure for every future conference: there was a Shabbat service, plenary sessions, workshops on queer and Jewish issues, leisure activities, "and, of course, lots of food."[145] For the third conference, hosted by BCC in 1978, the official name was changed to International Conference for Gay *and Lesbian* Jews to make the women in the movement more visible.[146] Until 1983, the conferences took place annually. After that, they were organized biannually.

Conference participants increasingly felt the need for an international umbrella organization to link queer Jewish groups and organizations worldwide. At the conference in San Francisco in 1980, the 16 attending groups drew upon the work of a structure committee that was installed to debate such an organization, and eventually founded the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations (WCGLJO). The objectives of the WCGLJO were:

1. To establish a network of communications among the member organizations.
2. To provide mutual assistance in achieving successful activities within the member organizations.
3. To extend assistance in the formation of new [g]ay and/or [l]esbian Jewish organizations.
4. To encourage outreach to both the Jewish and the [g]ay/[l]esbian communities.
5. To coordinate arrangements for the International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews, incorporating procedures which encourage input from unaffiliated individuals in all stages of planning.[147]

The World Congress was also equipped with a board and a president, responsible for administrative matters and representation.[148] The congress was a symbol for all queer Jews who struggled with their identity. The WCGLJO created safe spaces and a point of contact for all those who felt alone. The victory of one member or-

144 Cooper, "No Longer Invisible," 86–87.

145 Michael Levine, "The History of The World Congress – Keshet Ga'avah," in The World Congress, *Kol Koleinu,* 25.

146 Cf. Levine, "The History of The World Congress – Keshet Ga'avah," 25.

147 Digest. The World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations, June 1982, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 6.

148 Cf. Levine, "The History of The World Congress – Keshet Ga'avah," 25.

ganization became a shared victory for the common fight for acceptance and recognition.[149] Additionally, the WCGLJO funded and supported public education about homosexuality in the Jewish community, especially in the United States.[150]

However, the conferences became the centerpiece of the WCGLJO. Queer Jews all around the world came together here. It was not unusual that it was the first time for participants to speak about a queer and Jewish identity – or to meet like-minded people. Aliza Maggid recalled:

> These conferences were filled with the exuberance of coming together in a setting that most delegates had never before experienced. We felt proud together, and we were able to share our concerns in a completely accepting atmosphere. Warm and lasting friendships grew quickly and easily. We attended dozens of workshops on gay and Jewish subjects [...]. Business meetings were filled with debate and enlivened by the camaraderie developing among delegates from all over the world. We sang, danced, conducted religious services in many alternative forms, and of course enjoyed lots of eating and festivities.[151]

The conferences became places of knowledge exchange, e. g., on liturgy for queer Jews, on recruiting new members for the groups or synagogues, and on other forms of Jewish social action like *bikkur cholim*, or on how to work with the Jewish establishment.[152] The conferences were complemented by the WCGLJO's board meetings (either before or after the conference) to pass resolutions on current topics, or to discuss the organization's future. These meetings were well attended. Besides the actual board members, representatives from the member organizations also took part.

The World Congress grew significantly in its first ten years. By the end 1990, its membership included 29 groups or synagogues from the United Stated, Canada, Israel, the UK, France, and the Netherlands.[153] At its peak, at the turn of the millennium, more than 60 organizations were affiliated with the WCGLJO in one way or another.[154] This was also the time when the World Congress officially included the word "bisexual" in its name (World Congress of Gay, Lesbian *and Bisexual* Jewish Organizations). Another change in the late 2000s aimed to include trans* Jews.

149 Cf. Levine, "The History of The World Congress – Keshet Ga'avah," 25.
150 Cf. Cooper, "No Longer Invisible," 92.
151 Maggid, "Joining Together," 160–161.
152 Cf. Maggid, "Joining Together," 162–163.
153 Cf. Digest. Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 9, no. 2, 1990, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 2.
154 Cf. Digest. Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Jewish Organizations 18, no. 2, 1999, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 8.

Thus, the organization is today known as the World Congress of GLBT Jews: Keshet Ga'avah (Rainbow of Pride).

After its peak, the World Congress lost its significance for many reasons, including an exhausted board, the lack of women's representation, a general decline of queer Jewish groups, and the growing acceptance and inclusion of queers in Jewish mainstream organizations, especially in Reform Judaism.[155] However, the World Congress became a strong force for the rights of queer Jews in the 1980s and 1990s, and a fundamental feature for the queer Jewish groups in Europe that are the subjects of the following chapters.

155 Cf. Digest. Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 17, no. 1, 1998, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 5; Jonathan Falk, "Recollections of a Long-Serving Secretary," in The World Congress, *Kol Koleinu,* 27–28; Wahler, Bill, "Did We Do Our Job Too Well?," in The World Congress, *Kol Koleinu,* 35.

4 The Triangle London – Paris – Amsterdam

Before we can codify the history of the three queer Jewish groups, we need to discuss the environment in which they were founded. The triangle of London – Paris – Amsterdam is not new to academia. These three cities have experienced generally similar socioeconomic and political changes since the 19th century at the latest. After World War II, they played a major role as capitals of "the West," in front of the Iron Curtain, becoming hubs for social innovation with a very active exchange of ideas and high mobility among activists.[1] In regard to queer liberation, the three cities were places in which people could search for sexual encounters relatively free from restrictive legislation. Whereas Paris and London already had a reputation as sexual metropolises before the 20th century, Amsterdam developed one shortly after World War II, and founded the first European, postwar organization for the rights of queer people.[2] London, Paris, and Amsterdam became three important capitals in which European queers started changing society and becoming visible.

During the Weimar Republic, Berlin was a magnet for society's outcasts from all over the world.[3] However, the city was not able to regain its position in queer life and culture after the Nazi regime. During the 1950s, its scene was "lifeless [*verkümmert*]" and "rather pitiful [*recht kümmerlich*]."[4] That was primarily due to the Iron Curtain dividing the city and the country. Hamburg slowly established itself as an alternative in West Germany.[5] In addition, in regard to Jewish life: as the former center of the Nazi regime and with a significantly reduced Jewish com-

1 Cf. Andre Hussey, "Mapping Utopia: Debord and Constant between Amsterdam and Paris," in *Paris-Amsterdam Underground. Essays on Cultural Resistance, Subversion, and Diversion*, ed. id. and Christoph Lindner (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 38.

2 Cf. Robert Aldrich, "Homosexuality and the City: An Historical Overview," *Urban Studies* 41, no. 9 (2004): 1720–1721, 1724.

3 Florence Tamagne analyzed the history of homosexuality in Berlin, London, and Paris in the period between the two World Wars in an extensive comparative study. The three cities were particularly important for Europe in this time: politically, economically, commercially, military, socially, and culturally, which had significant influence on the rise of homosexual subcultures. This, indeed, changed after World War II with the persecution of queers and their imprisonment in concentration camps (cf. Florence Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe. Berlin, London, Paris, 1919–1939. Volume I* [New York: Algora Publishing, 2004], 8 et seqq., and Florence Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe. Berlin, London, Paris, 1919–1939. Volume II* [New York: Algora Publishing, 2004]).

4 Clayton J. Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany. Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945–69* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 114.

5 Cf. Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 114–118.

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munity, Berlin was not a place of quick recovery.[6] These were the reasons why Berlin was not able to contribute to the previously described queer and Jewish triangle.

The Netherlands' recovery from the tragic loss of Jewish lives was unexpected, and Dutch Jewry was successful in developing a new identity. London and Paris were, post-World War II, the Western European cities with the largest Jewish populations. A process of diversification, despite traditionalism and the prevalence of Jewish Orthodoxy, became apparent in European Jewry in which the three queer Jewish groups emerged. Karin Hofmeester compared the three cities in regard to Jewish workers and labor movements across the period 1870–1914.[7] She uses the cities as architypes in her comparison; their similar socio-cultural/political environments facilitate their comparison. The same developments are often attributed to London's and Paris' Jewry, whereas Amsterdam can be used as a foil to validate these developments.[8] Comparative research has the advantage of showing us what is unique and what is more general. Eventually, this thesis brings the queer Jewish groups into a relationship with each other, underlining their similar goals by acknowledging their specific environment in the same time period. Hence, in the following, I will broadly describe the situation for queers and Jews in London, Paris, and Amsterdam and their respective countries until the 1990s, the period covered by this study. Within this picture, we can place the Jewish Gay (and Lesbian) Group (JGG/JGLG), Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo in each of the following chapters.

4.1 The Three Queer Metropolises

Sexual activities between members of the same sex have always been a permanent feature of city life. Cities offer a greater variety of lifestyles,[9] with a larger selection of partners, appropriate meeting places, and anonymity, creating a measure of safety when deviant sexual activities were, or are, illegal.[10] London, Paris, and Amsterdam offered these advantages and became magnets for people whose sexual

6 Cf. Alexander Jungmann, *Jüdisches Leben in Berlin. Der aktuelle Wandel in einer metropolitanen Diasporagemeinschaft* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2007), 127 et seqq.

7 Cf. Karin Hofmeester, *Jewish Workers and the Labor Movement. A Comparative Study of Amsterdam, London and Paris, 1870–1914* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2004).

8 Cf. Hofmeester, *Jewish Workers and the Labor Movement*, 6.

9 Cf. David Higgins, "Introduction," in *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories Since 1600*, ed. id. 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001): 8.

10 Cf. Aldrich, "Homosexuality and the City," 1721.

preferences and gender identities did not serve the heterosexual norm. The cities had different points of departure, making the queer culture particularly "London-ish," "Parisian," or "Amsterdamish."

Before addressing the specific queer history of each of the three cities, it has to be acknowledged that, despite the cities' overall welcoming atmosphere, the legal situation was challenging for queer people. Especially male same-sex behavior was punished in the past in one way or another, sometimes generally or only if conducted in public. As a consequence, investigations and convictions – sources recorded by the persecutors – are the main sources of reconstructing male homosexual behavior before the 20th century. In contrast, female homosexual activity was never an issue of the law in any of the three cities. This makes it difficult to conduct research about female same-sex relationships. Additionally, in early modern Europe, women were subject to moral norms that did not allow them to leave home easily and be publicly present.[11]

Only the 20th century is regarded as "the century of sex."[12] Restrictive laws were gradually abolished and, most importantly, the so-called "sexual revolution" in the 1960s and 1970s changed views on sexuality dramatically. A complex mix of consumerism, medical-technological inventions like the birth control pill, the emergence of social movements, and activism led to a liberalization and growing acceptance of different sexual practices.[13] Overall, the following observations attempt to provide a broad overview of the cities' queer histories in order to understand why they became magnets of queer life in Europe. Nevertheless, trans* or nonbinary people were mostly not visible until the early 2000s and did not often leave records about their lives. That is why research often falls into the male-female binary, with a tendency to write male history. This has to be kept in mind while reading. We need to acknowledge that the cities' histories are multilayered and multifaceted, diverse, not single-tracked, and queer in their broadest meaning.

4.1.1 London

London was always a unique city within the UK as its financial, political, imperial, and cultural capital. It has also a profound history as a queer capital, as a national and international magnet for same-sex activity. However, the UK's queer history is

11 Cf. Higgins, "Introduction," 9.

12 Cf. Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe. A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1–5.

13 Cf. Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe*, 133–134.

one of strict persecution and prohibitive legislation. We, therefore, need to draw a nuanced picture of London as a "sexual metropolis."[14]

Since the 16th century, the Buggery Act rendered anal sex a capital offense, regardless of the perpetrators' gender; the sexual act itself was regarded a disgrace. It was harshly applied to men,[15] almost entirely of the middle and lower classes,[16] for over 300 years. The Labouchère Amendment (1885) repealed the death penalty, but all male homosexual acts remained illegal and punishment was severe. Additionally, the Vagrancy Act (1898) not only prohibited prostitution, but also homosexual "soliciting" behavior.[17] Remaining in force until the 1960s, these two acts led to thousands of convictions.

These restrictions did not stop London from evolving into a queer space, developing a distinctive homosexual subculture from the 18th century on.[18] Policing increased a century later, and this time also targeting the upper classes.[19] This approach played a pivotal role in the trial against Oscar Wilde. The author became increasingly less discreet about his relations with mostly young, working-class, men. In 1895, Wilde was sentenced for sodomy and spent two years in prison. Wilde's case had a widespread impact: the public reacted with great revulsion and disgust.[20] Especially in the press' view, London became the "nursery of vice."[21] However, for homosexuals the trial was formative: "Thanks to Oscar Wilde, homosexuality and homosexuals now possessed an identity – one that was witty, frivolous, and dandified [like Wilde himself] [...]."[22] Wilde's trial and the tightening of the law in the 19th century began to create a sense of homosexual identity; the developments were essential for the evolution of a modern homosexual consciousness in the UK.[23]

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14 Cf. Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London. Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–1957* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

15 Cf. Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out. Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present.* 2nd ed. (London: Quartet Books, 1990), 11–12.

16 Cf. Neil Miller, *Out of the Past. Gay and Lesbian History From 1869 to the Present.* 1st revised and updated ed. (New York: Alyson Books, 2006), 44.

17 Cf. Weeks, *Coming Out*, 12–15.

18 Cf. Weeks, *Coming Out*, 35–36.

19 Cf. Charles Upchurch, "Politics and the Reporting of Sex Between Men in the 1820s," in *British Queer History*, ed. Brian Lewis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 17–38.

20 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 43–48.

21 Peter Ackroyd, *Queer City. Gay Landon from the Romans to the Present Day* (London: Vintage, 2017), 200.

22 Ackroyd, *Queer City*, 49.

23 Cf. Weeks, *Coming Out*, 22.

At the beginning of the 20th century, academic interest in differing sexualities grew significantly. Havelock Ellis approached both female[24] and male homosexuality, and engaged in research about intersex or trans* identities.[25] In 1914, the British Sexological Society, based on the model of the German Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee, WhK),[26] was founded to combat legal discrimination of homosexuality and to promote a radical sex reform. Its success was limited as the society failed to communicate with or influence the general public.[27] In the late 1920s, the society experienced a short revival in cooperation with other European sexological societies. However, political changes and the death of the WhK's founder Magnus Hirschfeld brought this activity to an end.[28]

In World War I, the opportunities for queers grew with new clubs, bars, and pubs – including those for women. However, the scene was divided across class and wealth lines; richer men were still more likely to avoid persecution.[29] Soldiers came to London to find sexual self-fulfillment, not always with a label,[30] despite the British nation's disapproval of homosexual behavior.[31] The homosexual scene survived the war, but extravagant Berlin remained much more attractive

24 Sheila Jeffreys notes that the early sexologist's approach towards lesbianism was often accompanied with misogyny that regarded women's (romantic) friendships as a threat to male dominance (cf. Sheila Jeffreys, *The Lesbian Revolution. Lesbian Feminism in the UK, 1970–1990* [London: Routledge, 2018], 14–15).

25 Cf. Ackroyd, *Queer City*, 202–204.

26 The WhK was founded in May 1887 by Magnus Hirschfeld and other figures of public life in Berlin. It is considered the first organization for the rights of gays, lesbians, and trans* people. The founders and later members were not all homosexual themselves, though. The direct motivation for founding the WhK was the suicide of one of Hirschfeld's homosexual patients who could not stand the social and legal discrimination against them. The WhK promoted the view that sexual orientation is biological through educational programs and research and lobbied to remove German legislation against homosexuals. The WhK made Berlin the center for sexology and, until its brutal demolishment in 1933, the capital of homosexual rights activism (cf. Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin. Birthplace of a Modern Identity.* 2nd ed. [New York: Vintage Books, 2015], 40–41, 85 et seqq.).

27 Cf. Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe Vol. I*, 122.

28 Cf. James Gardiner and Peter Burton, "British Sexological Society," in *Goodbye to Berlin? 100 Jahre Schwulenbewegung: eine Ausstellung des Schwulen Museums in der Akademie der Künste, 17. Mai bis 17. August 1997,* ed. Schwules Museum Berlin and Akademie der Künste (Berlin: Verlag Rosa Winkel, 1997), 138.

29 Cf. Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 265.

30 Cf. Ackroyd, *Queer City*, 207. Within the military, homoeroticism is frequently documented in private documents, their practice was very limited though due to the military's strict restrictions (cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 86–90).

31 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 91.

than London.[32] Deviation from the heterosexual norms was possibly only been accepted in the upper classes and, when this was the case, then only on the surface.[33] Policing remained restrictive, relegating homosexual life mainly to urinals and parks.[34] In the 1920s, lesbians began to develop their own culture, mostly around particular (gender mixed) pubs and clubs,[35] despite the short-lived attempt to criminalize lesbianism in 1921.[36]

During the interwar period, the queer community solidified its presence in London.[37] At the same time, anti-queer rhetoric became rougher, especially as the financial crisis of the depression demanded conformity rather than the recognition of minorities' needs. In the 1930s, the homosexual subculture retreated, albeit not as much as in Nazi Germany.[38] This continued during World War II, which turned everything upside down.

Until World War II, the homosexual subculture was, with a few exceptions like the Oscar Wilde trial, mostly invisible in the UK. This changed after 1945.[39] The "foundation layer" for this development, the 1950s and the 1960s,[40] was shaped by increasingly restrictive policing: in 1955 the number of arrests of homosexuals in England alone was five times higher than during the 1930s.[41] The immediate postwar years were characterized by fear and suspicion with the press searching for scandals perpetuating homosexuality's image as a threat to society.[42] In light of these issues, the Conservative Party commissioned the Wolfenden Report, which in 1957 recommended the decriminalization of consensual homosexual behavior in private and fixing the age of consent at 21. Despite a mostly positive public reaction[43] and the founding of the Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS) to promote legal changes and to support "those suffering from intolerance, persecution and

32 Cf. Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe Vol. I*, 61–62.
33 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 96.
34 Cf. Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe Vol. I*, 62–68.
35 Cf. Jeffreys, *The Lesbian Revolution*, 15.
36 Cf. Tamagne, *History of Homosexuality in Europe Vol. II*, 150–153.
37 Cf. Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 264.
38 Cf. Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 246–256.
39 Cf. Chris Waters, "The Homosexual as a Social Being in Britain, 1945–1968," in *British Queer History*, ed. Brian Lewis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 188–189.
40 Cf. Ken Plummer, "The Lesbian and Gay Movement in Britain. Schisms, Solidarities, and Social Worlds," in *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics. National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement*, ed. Barry D. Adam, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and André Krouwel (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 133.
41 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 254–255.
42 Cf. Ackroyd, *Queer City*, 215–217.
43 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 257–258.

social injustice,"[44] it took until 1967 to change the corresponding law and to end the general criminalization of homosexuality with the Sexual Offenses Act.[45] Meanwhile, London police redoubled its efforts against homosexuals and, despite new and larger meeting places like clubs and bars and swinging within the city,[46] Ackroyd notes that 1960s London was not as sexually liberated as often suggested. Homosexuals were still discrete and subdued, women much more than men.[47] The situation changed after the legal changes: The first British gay publications emerged, vibrant gay discos began to replace clandestine clubs, and the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) – founded in 1964 and becoming the largest homosexual organization in the 1970s – was already arguing for a lower age of consent.[48]

The Stonewall Riots in New York radically changed gay and lesbian politics in the UK. Bob Mellors and Aubrey Walter took inspiration from the United States back to London where they founded London's Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in the basement of the London School of Economics in November 1970. GLF was more radical than the HLRS or CHE, and opposed to their assimilatory tendencies, demanded both legal equality and liberation from sexist British society. The organization celebrated random sexual encounters as liberatory and not dehumanizing in contrast to the views of CHE.[49] It employed a more public approach, e. g., organizing public performances or London's first Gay Pride Parade in 1972,[50] thus rais-

44 Ackroyd, *Queer City*, 217. The HLRS did not identify as a homosexual organization and mainly consisted of heterosexual front figures. Its approach was cautious and not revolutionary (cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 259 – 260). There were also politically active lesbians who shared the goals of the HLRS (cf. Jeffreys, *The Lesbian Revolution*, 16 – 17).

45 First, the law was only valid in England and Wales. Only in 1980 was the law reform extended to Scotland. The debate in Northern Ireland was much harsher. Only after the European Court ruled that the criminalization of homosexuality of 1885 violated the European Convention of Human Rights (Dudgeon vs. United Kingdom), did Northern Ireland pass the act in 1982 (cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 261 – 262).

46 Cf. James Gardiner and Peter Burton, "Glad to be Gay in Great Britain," in *Goodbye to Berlin? 100 Jahre Schwulenbewegung: eine Ausstellung des Schwulen Museums in der Akademie der Künste, 17. Mai bis 17. August 1997,* ed. Schwules Museum Berlin and Akademie der Künste (Berlin: Verlag Rosa Winkel, 1997), 275.

47 Cf. Ackroyd, *Queer City*, 218 – 220.

48 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 263.

49 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 360 – 361.

50 Cf. Kelly Kollman and Matthew Waites, "United Kingdom: Changing Political Opportunity Structures, Policy Success and Continuing Challenges for Lesbian and Bisexual Movements," in *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship*, ed. David Paternotte, Manon Tremblay, and Carol Johnson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 185.

ing the public's awareness of homosexuality. Plummer resumes: "GLF was the first and most triumphal of the radical wings of the social movements."[51]

GLF impacted the entire queer community, which grew massively and diversified with emerging various new groups (like JGG), magazines (*Gay News*, *Sappho*), and a growing commercial scene.[52] Due to inherent conflicts between members[53] – especially along political lines –[54] but more importantly due to an exodus of disenchanted women accusing the male-dominated group of sexism and male chauvinism, GLF dissolved in 1973. Highly influenced by the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), a feminist intellectual movement shaped by second-wave feminism,[55] lesbians founded their own groups, which, however, kept splitting due to political differences among their respective members.[56]

The more aggressive early 1970s and the waning of counterculture in general[57] left room for reconsideration as to what exactly these newly emerging social movements should demand. Consequently, CHE – with its self-image as a centralized lobby organization focused on respectability and legal reform – regained its position as the leading queer organization by the mid-1970s.[58] By the early 1980s, the lesbian and gay movement shifted from separatism to a renewed interest in affirming a gay/lesbian identity and developing political alliances, especially between men and women.[59]

The election of the Conservative Thatcher government in the late 1970s influenced queer life in the entire country. Thatcherism, characterized by economic conservatism, religious moralism, and a strong pro-family agenda, entertained a firmly anti-queer rhetoric.[60] When the HIV/AIDS epidemic reached the UK, the Thatcher government reacted slowly. At the same time, the general public reacted with indifference or even hostility, implying that gays "had brought it on themselves."[61] The queer community had to respond to the crisis on its own, leading

51 Plummer, "The Lesbian and Gay Movement in Britain," 146.
52 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 361–362.
53 Cf. Weeks, *Coming Out*, 183 et seqq.
54 Cf. Weeks, *Coming Out*, 205.
55 On the early history of the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, cf. Adam Lent, *British Social Movements since 1945. Sex, Colour, Peace and Power* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 64–78.
56 Cf. Jeffreys, *The Lesbian Revolution*, 18–26.
57 The divisions along different political, ideological, and strategic lines are nothing that happened solely to the gay and lesbian movement. All British social movements split and divided within the late 1970s and the early 1980s (cf. Lent, *British Social Movements*, 134 et seqq.).
58 Cf. Kollman and Waites, "United Kingdom," 186.
59 Cf. Plummer, "The Lesbian and Gay Movement in Britain," 136–137.
60 Cf. Plummer, "The Lesbian and Gay Movement in Britain," 135–136.
61 Cf. Ackroyd, *Queer City*, 224.

to a "policy from below."[62] It called for help from Labour-controlled cities and councils, such as the Greater London Council, hoping that they would implement anti-discrimination policies in their respective metropolitan areas.[63] This delayed broader, more intense activity against the virus until the mid-1980s.[64]

Although the queer community successfully allied with local Labour Party divisions, the national Labour Party remained hesitant towards pro-gay politics.[65] The Thatcher government actively undermined the victories of the queer community, with public opinion seemingly on Thatcher's side.[66] As a result, the damaging Section or Clause 28 of the Local Government Act (1988) mandated that local governments shall neither "intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" nor "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship."[67] Although its success was marginal on a prosecutorial level, it was powerfully symbolic.[68]

Both the HIV/AIDS epidemic and Section 28 damaged the British queer community on the surface. However, they ultimately strengthened the community, which developed a sense of belonging as a minority group,[69] and altered public and center-left policies on discrimination based on sexual orientation.[70] The movement was repoliticized[71] and the community rallied in opposition to the discriminatory law.[72]

Entering the 1990s, the queer space in London became significantly commercialized. Bars and clubs were more crowded than ever, and Soho's and Earl's

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62 Cf. Plummer, "The Lesbian and Gay Movement in Britain," 142.

63 Cf. Kollman and Waites, "United Kingdom," 186. The gay and lesbian movement was not the only social movement to call out for help. Most of the social movements of the 1980s turned to the Labour Party for social change, something the Thatcher government strongly rejected (cf. Lent, *British Social Movements*, 168–185).

64 HIV historian Virgina Berridge divided the AIDS policy in Britain into four main phases: the already mentioned "policy from below" from 1981–1986, "wartime emergency" in 1986 and 1987, a phase of "normalization" and "professionalization" between 1987 and 1989, leading to the 1990s when AIDS became "at the same time being mainstreamed and marginalized" (cf. Plummer, "The Lesbian and Gay Movement in Britain," 142).

65 Cf. Weeks, *Coming Out*, 239–240.

66 Cf. Kollman and Waites, "United Kingdom," 186, and Miller, *Out of the Past*, 473.

67 United Kingdom Local Government Act 1988, Section 28, 2 A.

68 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 477–478.

69 Cf. Ackroyd, *Queer City*, 224–225.

70 Cf. Kollman and Waites, "United Kingdom," 186.

71 Cf. Plummer, "The Lesbian and Gay Movement in Britain," 134.

72 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 478.

Court's status as the queer centers of the city was cemented.[73] A new generation of queer youth with new organizations (like Stonewall, Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, Outrage!) became the leading forces in the city. These organizations, although less focused on community building like other European organizations at that time, took advantage of the new visibility of the queer community and were at the forefront of legal reforms.[74] An initial success was the lowering of the age of consent for homosexual relationships from 21 to 18 in 1994. However, a profound political change occurred only with the election of the Labour Party in 1997: the age of consent was equalized at 16, gays and lesbians could serve in the military (2000), and Clause 28 was repealed (2000 in Scotland, 2003 in England and Wales; Clause 28 was never implemented in Northern Ireland). Civil partnerships for same-sex couples were eventually introduced (2004),[75] the right to adoption expanded, and the right to legally change one's gender granted (2005). Kollman and Waites resumed: "In the space of less than 10 years the UK has gone from partially criminalizing sex between adult men via unequal ages of consent to legally recognizing same-sex couples, allowing these couples to adopt children, and banning sexual orientation discrimination in the workplace and by private sector providers."[76]

London, as the UK's capital and place of opportunities, had been a magnet for queer people for centuries. However, for a long time, their subculture remained invisible. London police enforced strict laws against homosexual behavior, and Londoners, like the rest of the country, felt mostly disgust, stoked by newspapers that could not wait to publish one homosexual scandal after another. However, the changes, which the city had experienced since the 1960s, were fundamental. Homosexual subculture grew significantly, despite the political backlash, and new groups emerged after GLF provided an initial radical impulse. Additionally, the queer community understood that they needed to adjust their political tactics and struck alliances with more progressive political forces. Eventually, this led to a fast and impressive legislative overhaul in the late 1990s and early 2000s, leaving London's queer community increasingly liberated.

73 Cf. Ackroyd, *Queer City*, 225–226.

74 Cf. Kollman and Waites, "United Kingdom," 186–187, 189–190.

75 The first same-sex marriages in the UK were conducted in 2014 in England, Wales, and Scotland. In Northern Ireland, it took until 2020 for them to be legalized.

76 Kollman and Waites, "United Kingdom," 189.

4.1.2 Paris

The French capital has been described as a "queer metropolis" from the 19th century onwards. In particular, France's centralism fostered the accumulation of queers in the city.[77] After the French Revolution, the new penal code of 1791 decriminalized sodomy between consenting partners in the private sphere. Napoleon's *Code Pénal* of 1810 confirmed the decriminalization of sodomy but regarded it a *délit* (offense) against public decency when delinquents were caught in public,[78] which is where gay men predominately met. The whole city – the banks of the Seine, the Champs-Élysées, commercial arcades, parks, subway stations – became cruising grounds for gay men;[79] lesbians mostly stayed in private circles.

The implementation of the more liberal legislation varied throughout the years, though. A vice squad was reconstituted in the 19th century and patrolled the streets and parks of Paris. They prosecuted gay men based on legislation relating to sexual assault, incitement to debauchery, and public indecency.[80] Public reception remained hostile:[81] in the 1880s, popular literature and the press depicted Paris as a modern Babylon or Sodom.[82]

Homosexual literati, visible among the Parisian bourgeoisie, tried to encourage a debate about *invertis*[83] in the higher classes, which ended after the Alfred Dreyfus – allegedly homosexual himself – Affair in 1894. The Third Republic was highly divided and openly expressed chauvinism; antisemitism let the interest in other marginal groups recede.[84] In contrast to the UK (e. g., Havelock Ellis) or Ger-

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77 Almost half of all gay men in France lived in Paris in the 1990s (cf. Florence Tamagne, "Paris: 'Resting on its Laurels'?," in *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures: Europe since 1945*, ed. Matt Cook and Jennifer V. Evans [London: Bloomsbury, 2014], 240).

78 Cf. Christian Bouqueret, "Die Invertierten von Paris," in *Goodbye to Berlin? 100 Jahre Schwulenbewegung: eine Ausstellung des Schwulen Museums in der Akademie der Künste, 17. Mai bis 17. August 1997*, ed. Schwules Museum Berlin and Akademie der Künste (Berlin: Verlag Rosa Winkel, 1997): 142.

79 Cf. Michael D. Sibalis, "Paris," in *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories Since 1600*, ed. David Higgins. 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001), 17–22.

80 Cf. Julian Jackson, *Living in Arcadia. Homosexuality, Politics, and Morality in France from the Liberation to AIDS* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 21–24.

81 Cf. Sibalis, "Paris," 16.

82 Cf. Jackson, *Living in Arcadia*, 27–28.

83 *Invertis* (inverts) and *homosexuelles* became the most common terms for men having sex with other men from the 19th century on. Before that, *sodomites* (sodomist), *enculeur* (bugger), *pédérastes* (pederasts, especially in the 18th century) were used. The word *gay* has only been used in French since the 1970s (cf. Sibalis, "Paris," 15). *Queer* is not widely used, even today only in more in activist and academic contexts (cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 241).

84 Cf. Bouqueret, "Die Invertierten von Paris," 143–147.

many (e.g., Magnus Hirschfeld), homosexuals in France withdrew from public discourse at the turn of the century.[85]

The northern quarter of Montmartre had become "the center of anarchism, bohemianism and illicit sexuality, including prostitution, lesbianism, and male homosexuality."[86] The city attracted young people from France and abroad during the 1920s, as Paris was viewed as the capital of culture[87] and avant-gardism.[88] The queer subculture became the most important one in the city.[89] Lesbians also gained visibility, especially in literary circles, through increased emigration of women from the United States and England.[90]

However, the 1920s were not a breakthrough for the integration of homosexuals. In contrast to other countries, France lacked a sexual reform movement. The police remained hostile and the first homosexual magazine was labeled a transgression against public decency and closed after only four issues.[91] When France and Paris were occupied by Nazi Germany, homosexuals were spared as long they were not Jewish;[92] the German §175[93] was only implemented in the Alsace and the Moselle.[94] The Vichy Regime introduced Article 334 to French law in August 1942, increasing the age of consent for homosexual acts (both male and female) to 21, and punished transgressions with imprisonment.[95] The age of consent was retained after liberation until it was adjusted to 18 years in 1974. The separate age of consent for same-sex encounters was finally abolished under the socialist government of François Mitterrand in 1982.

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85 Cf. Jackson, *Living in Arcadia*, 30.

86 Sibalis, "Paris," 26.

87 One café for the homosexual subculture was run by an Algerian Jew named Moïse Zekri and became a hotspot for gay men and, unfortunately, of police raids that eventually led to its shutdown before World War I (cf. Sienna, *Rainbow Thread*, 190–194).

88 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 145.

89 Cf. Bouqueret, "Die Invertierten von Paris," 149.

90 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 145–151.

91 Cf. Bouqueret, "Die Invertierten von Paris," 147–149, and Jackson, *Living in Arcadia*, 35.

92 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 200–201.

93 §175 of the German criminal code existed from the beginning of the German Reich in 1871 (enacted one year later) to 1994. Always with different degrees of penalization, it completely prohibited sexual relations between men. Only a few women were convicted on the basis of §175's regulation of homosexual behavior (in earlier revisions, §175 also included the prohibition of bestiality, prostitution, and sexual abuse). §175 was completely abolished only in 1994.

94 Cf. Jackson, *Living in Arcadia*, 38.

95 There exists an intensive debate about the involvement of homosexuals in the groups of supporters of the Vichy and Nazi Regime, closely linked to the contentious issue of general French support of Nazi Germany (cf. Bouqueret, "Die Invertierten von Paris," 150–151, and Jackson, *Living in Arcadia*, 40–43).

The significance of Article 334 in the Fourth and Fifth Republic is not easy to evaluate since the age of consent was difficult to enforce. Consequently, after World War II, homosexuals were mostly convicted because of offenses against public decency.[96] In Paris, the legislation was harsher. In 1949, the city prohibited men to put on drag or dance with each other. However, this law turned Paris inadvertently into the "Western capital of trans* culture" since trans* people could subvert the ban by taking hormones and officially performing as their desired gender.[97]

In general, constraints for activism remained high. The homophile magazine *Future* (1952–1956) had to close after nineteen issues as its operators faced multiple lawsuits.[98] Only the magazine *Arcadie* proved to be more successful. Founded in 1954 by a former Catholic priest named André Baudry, Arcadie, France's first queer institution, "shaped the lives of many gays – and a few lesbians – in the capital,"[99] and through its eleven offshoots in the provinces. In 1957, it also opened a club with the same name in Paris. Arcadie tried to educate the public about homosexuality[100] and to stress that homosexuals are just normal people.[101] The organization rejected promiscuity and any behavior that could reinforce prejudices against gay men like effeminacy or pedophilia. Importantly, Baudry was a public figure and demanded an end to all discrimination.[102] Jackson underlined the significant role Arcadie played for the homosexual movement of France:[103] "For fifteen years it was the only homosexual organization in France, and for almost another fifteen it was the largest, despite also being by then in competition with others."[104]

However, Arcadie styled itself as an apolitical organization.[105] After "May '68," the six-week period of student demonstrations and general strikes that symbolized

96 Cf. Jackson, *Living in Arcadia*, 47.
97 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 242.
98 Cf. Jackson, *Living in Arcadia*, 52–53.
99 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 224.
100 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 225.
101 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 262–263.
102 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 225.
103 The importance of Arcadie was forgotten for a long time since the gay and lesbian movement of the 1970s erased its history almost entirely (cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 225). Jackson dedicated his efforts to reconstruct the history of Arcadie and was successful in changing the image of the organization. For an impressive insight into the organization's history, cf. Jackson, *Living in Arcadia.*
104 Cf. Jackson, *Living in Arcadia*, 8–9.
105 Cf. Christian Bouqueret, "Frankreich – Der literarische Beitrag," in *Goodbye to Berlin? 100 Jahre Schwulenbewegung: eine Ausstellung des Schwulen Museums in der Akademie der Künste,*

the French peak of the 1968 movement, a new liberation movement gained momentum.[106] It criticized Arcadie for being too accommodationist, conservative, bourgeois, Catholic, and, simply, too dismissive of political activism.[107] As a consequence, the Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire (Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action, FHAR) split from Arcadie in 1971, demanding homosexuals to "stop keeping a low profile,"[108] and to show their sexuality in public. They gained attention through inflammatory slogans and actions, especially through the trans* subgroup Gazolines, which loudly attacked heterosexism.[109] The FHAR was supported by the Mouvement de Libération des Femmes (Women's Liberation Movement), a space where predominantly, but not exclusively, lesbians met. Both organizations were Parisian inventions, but the FHAR spread out to other French cities and beyond.[110] Yet, the FHAR did not last long. By 1974, it had already split into various Groupes de Libération Homosexuelle (Groups of Homosexual Liberation, GLH) with different political agendas.[111] In Paris, the far-left GLH-PQ (Politique et Quotidien, Politics and Everyday Life) prevailed.[112] This fragmentation of LGBTQ+ organizations was characteristic for France in the 1970s. It was impossible to unite the different movements under one umbrella; seemingly marginal political differences (on the left) became insurmountable obstacles.[113] The most radical groups did not survive long.[114] However, the political parties of the left became very responsive to queer needs, and, after they gained power at the beginning of the 1980s, began to reform legislation in favor of demands from the queer community.

At the same time, and despite declining political activism,[115] Paris experienced a rapid growth and diversification of its queer community in the 1980s, e. g.,

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17. Mai bis 17. August 1997, ed. Schwules Museum Berlin and Akademie der Künste (Berlin: Verlag Rosa Winkel, 1997): 229 – 230.

106 For many, May '68 is the zero hour of the homosexual movement in France, despite the accomplishments of Arcadie. For example, Frédéric Martel starts his considerations in 1968 without mentioning the former impact of Arcadie (cf. Frédéric Martel, *The Pink and the Black. Homosexuals in France since 1968*, trans. Jane Marie Todd [Stanford: Standford University Press, 1999]).

107 Cf. Jackson, *Living in Arcadia*, 9.

108 Tamagne, "Paris," 245.

109 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 245.

110 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 363.

111 Cf. Martel, *The Pink and the Black*, 93.

112 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 246.

113 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 363 – 365.

114 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 246.

115 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 246 – 247. One victim of this transformation was Arcadie: both the club and the magazine were shut down in 1982. More on the reasons for Arcadie's end (e. g., the re-

through magazines as *Gai Pied Hebdo* or *Lesbia.* Martel called this phase "the era of socialization."[116] It led to the founding of a new queer space in Paris: Le Marais became the "new Castro/West Village of France"[117] through low rents and proximity to public transportation.[118] The quarter satisfied the need of queers to have a place "of their own," where they could express themselves freely and escape their anonymity.[119] It became "the symbol of the new visibility – and respectability – of the French gay and lesbian community."[120] However, in contrast to its American counterparts, Le Marais never fully replaced other queer spaces, and it did not become an "independent village" where queers lived, worked, and celebrated; it was more of an entrance to queer culture.[121] Additionally, Le Marais never was an exclusively queer neighborhood; it remained highly socially and ethnically diverse with bourgeois families, Orthodox Jews,[122] and immigrants.[123] Lesbian culture also emerged within Le Marais, yet to a lesser extent than the gay male culture. Lesbians often met in less central areas and more privately in less commercial sites.[124] However, a dense network of social, political, and apolitical groups for lesbians developed in the 1980s, contributing to the feeling that lesbians preferred women-only spaces.[125]

Despite the continued organization of the queer French world, French queers debated whether forming a "gay community" and fighting for "gay rights" was necessary. Critics decried these efforts as quintessentially US-American and a display of US-American "identity politics," concurrent with increasing commercialism and consumerism in queer spaces like Le Marais. They called it *communautarisme*, the idea that the individual has a responsibility for their (societal) environment and must be embedded in a community. Others did not condemn the "Americaniza-

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equalization of the age of consent for same-sex encounters in 1982) in Jackson, *Living in Arcadia*, 233 et seqq.

116 Cf. Martel, *The Pink and the Black*, 107 et seqq.

117 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 249.

118 Cf. Sibalis, "Paris," 29.

119 Cf. Sibalis, "Paris," 30.

120 Tamagne, "Paris," 252.

121 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 250.

122 David Caron describes the entanglement between the different cultures in Le Marais on a personal level as a gay son of a Hungarian Jew and Holocaust survivor who has a different approach to the quarter than his father, but also more academically with the combination of social, urban, and cultural studies (cf. David Caron, *My Father and I: The Marais and the Queerness of Community* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009]).

123 Cf. Sibalis, "Paris," 31.

124 Cf. Martel, *The Pink and the Black*, 174–175.

125 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 254–255.

tion" of European homosexuality, but remained critical of the lifestyle the new spaces promoted.[126]

When the HIV/AIDS epidemic hit Europe, France was at the forefront of medical research and treatment (the virus having been described by Luc Montagnier and Françoise Barré-Sinoussi in 1983).[127] Yet, despite this, the queer community was hit hard: AIDS became the leading cause of death among Parisian men between 25 and 44.[128] Until 1984, both the French press and government remained silent and regarded the virus as a US-American concern. It was illegal to promote the use of condoms until 1987. French Republican universalism, not recognizing specific group differences, did not acknowledge that the queer community was affected most by the disease,[129] and the relative absence of a political queer community did not lead to any pressure being put on government officials to act.

After the first shock, voluntary AIDS organizations were founded in Paris. The most important were Aides and ACT UP. The former favored an integrationist strategy and called out to the wider society for help. The latter had a strong political agenda and represented the notion that the queer community should fight against the epidemic that had hit them so badly.[130] Out of desperation and the lack of a sense of community, the Centre Gai et Lesbien (Gay and Lesbian Center, CGL, first called the Maison des Homosexualités and known today as the Centre LGBT de Paris et d'Île-de-France) was founded as a community center in 1989.

In the 1990s, HIV/AIDS and the tensions between universalism and communautarisme remained the central issues within the queer community. The latter was at the core of the newly emerging debate on same-sex unions and adoption rights: to what extent could a minority be granted their "own version" of civil unions? In 1999, this eventually concluded in the *Pacte civil de solidarité* (Civil Solidarity Pact), a union of two people regardless of their gender, granted with special rights before the law. The pact became a less binding alternative to marriage, which only became available to homosexual couples in 2013.

The 1990s also changed life for trans* people. In 1992, it became possible to legally change one's gender, despite "transsexualism" being classified as an illness

126 Cf. Sibalis, "Paris," 31–32.

127 Cf. Sibalis, "Paris," 64.

128 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 247.

129 Cf. James N. Agar, "Queer in France: AIDS Disidentification in France," in *Queer in Europe: Contemporary Case Studies*, ed. Lisa Downing and Robert Gillert (Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2011): 64–65.

130 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 247. For a more detailed history and internal struggles of Aides and ACT UP, cf. Martel, *The Pink and the Black*, 216–244 (Aides) and 285–309 (ACT UP).

until 2010. Slowly, recognition for trans* individuals increased within the queer community and beyond.[131]

Paris' history as a queer metropolis has to be scrutinized from different perspectives. Paris always struggled to create the feeling of a community that was united for a greater good.[132] In the eyes of Sibalis, Paris was an "invisible city" that gained visibility gradually.[133] As Tamagne summarized, Paris always stood in competition with other queer metropolises: in the 1920s with "much wilder" Berlin, in the 1970s with San Francisco, and in the 1990s with London "for good music and hard sex."[134] For Tamagne, Paris is mostly an "imagined" sexual geography, a fantasy nourished by cult names and references.[135] Indeed, its queer culture and history are not as obvious as in London or Amsterdam. Still, as Provencher argued, Paris had been, and still is (even with an evolving queer scene in other French cities), a central place within the French queer memory. Le Marais, in particular, is a "canonical gay reference."[136]

4.1.3 Amsterdam

In contrast to Paris, Amsterdam is often regarded as a European capital of sexual freedom and expression.[137] Nevertheless, this fact has not been invariable. The at-

131 Cf. Martel, *The Pink and the Black*, 247–248.

132 Guy Hocquenghem, a pioneering gay activist and an important member of the FHAR, said in 1980: "[W]e don't have a gay community in France. That is, we have a gay movement [...] but people do not feel part of a community [...] as they do [...] in New York City or in San Francisco, for example" (cited in Sibalis, "Paris," 29).

133 Cf. Sibalis, "Paris," 32.

134 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 255–256.

135 Cf. Tamagne, "Paris," 255.

136 Cf. Denis M. Provencher, *Queer French. Globalization, Language, and Sexual Citizenship in France* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2007), 152–153.

137 In the following, I will use secondary literature by Gert Hekma. Gert Hekma was a Dutch anthropologist and sociologist who published various articles and books about queer lives in the Netherlands and Amsterdam throughout the centuries, in both English and Dutch. His accomplishments in this field cannot be overlooked. However, Hekma was a very debatable and provocative figure. His statements about sexualities often caused debates (cf. Alexander Rik, "In memoriam: Oud-docent Homostudies Gert Hekma: 'Nederland is minder tolerant dan men denkt.' [In memoriam: Former gay studies professor Gert Hekma: 'The Netherlands is less tolerant than people think.']," Winq, April 27, 2022, https://winq.nl/articles/227277/oud-docent-homostudies-gert-hekma-mensen-denken-dat-nederland-heel-tolerant-is-maar-niets-is-minder-waar/, accessed December 1, 2022). Especially his stance on pedophilia and his support of the Vereniging MARTIJN, an association that promoted the legalization of sexual relations between adults and children that was inter-

titude towards non-heterosexual behavior changed, sometimes radically, over the centuries. Amsterdam, however, became highly independent and "a world to itself"[138] from the 18th century onwards.

Before the Dutch (Batavian respectively) Republic was incorporated into Napoleon's Empire in 1811, persecution of "sodomy" was very common. After the incorporation, the *Code Pénal* was introduced in the Netherlands. It was retained even after the Netherlands regained independence two years later, and further liberalized in 1886, when the age of consent for sex between members of the same sex was lowered to 16 years.[139]

During the 19th century, the Netherlands made progress towards sexual hygiene, medical support for prostitutes, and took the first steps into researching sexualities. Politically, however, more conservative Protestant and Catholics groups gained power towards the end of the century, leading to a revision of laws regulating sexuality in 1911: the age of consent for same-sex relations was raised to 21 years for both men and women (Article 248bis; in contrast to 16 years for heterosexual relations)[140] and the public's exposure to pornography, contraceptives, and abortion became highly regulated.[141]

As a response to these reactionary politics, the lawyer Jacob Schorer founded the first homosexual rights movement of the Netherlands in 1912: the Nederlandsch Wetenschappelijk Humanitair Komitee (NWHK) as a chapter of the German WhK. Schorer did most of the work himself (publishing reports and leaflets, establishing a "gay library," and connecting gay men throughout the Netherlands) and "lobbied for change in the criminal law and against social intolerance towards

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dicted by the Dutch Supreme Court in 2014, are hardly endurable (cf. Dirk Wolthekker, "Gert Hekma gaat met pensioen: 'Pfffff, iedereen is zo preuts en braaf geworden' [Gert Hekma goes into retirement: 'Pff, everyone has become so prudish and well behaved'],," Folia, June 29, 2017, https://www.folia.nl/actueel/111821/gert-hekma-gaat-met-pensioen-pfffff-iedereen-is-zo-preuts-en-braaf-geworden, accessed March 2, 2021). I strongly reject Hekma's mindset in regard to pedophilia. There should be neither room for encouraging adults to misuse their power nor any chance to harm children's well-being. However, his work constitutes a valid resource for reconstructing the queer history of the Netherlands.

138 Cf. Gert Hekma, "Amsterdam," in *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories Since 1600*, ed. David Higgins. 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001), 50.

139 Cf. Hekma, "Amsterdam," 54–55.

140 It has to be noted, though, that many more men than women were convicted under Article 248bis. This is why the debate about its abolishment was centered on male homosexuality. However, this did not change lesbians' fear of being blackmailed or repressed by the police (cf. Judith Schuyf, "Lesbian Emancipation in The Netherlands," *Journal of Homosexuality* 13, no. 2/3 [1986/87]: 20–21).

141 Cf. Hekma, "Amsterdam," 54–55.

homosexuals."[142] The NWHK was based in The Hague (with an offshoot in Rotterdam briefly), but never reached the same visibility as its German counterpart. Despite this, it still helped to establish a culture that enabled radical changes in attitudes towards homosexuality in the Netherlands.[143]

In the interwar period, Amsterdam's gay subculture remained quite small and played out in bars and a public circuit of toilets and parks where, for the most part, men met. Both male and female prostitutes worked in the city.[144] On the one hand, there were no laws prohibiting queer bars, on the other, there existed strict laws against public indecency.[145] Thus, the police often raided gay and lesbian bars.[146] Hekma describes the time between the wars as "extremely homophobic."[147] When the Nazis occupied the Netherlands, they introduced the harsher German legislation and §175. Yet, prosecution of homosexuals declined and new bars emerged underground, probably since the Nazis and the Dutch police had other political riorities.[148] After Germany's defeat, §175 was abolished and Article 218[bis] reinstated.

Directly after the war, in 1946, the Shakespeare Club in Amsterdam followed in the footsteps of the NWHK that had been shut down by the Nazis. Soon known as the Cultuur en Ontspannings Centrum (Center for Culture and Recreation, COC),[149] it published a newsletter (*Vriendschap*, later *Dialoog*) and organized lectures, social meetings, and parties, mainly in its own dance halls in the city. COC promoted equal rights and social acceptance. With its activities, it contributed massively to

142 Gert Hekma and Jan Willem Duyvendak, "The Netherlands: Depoliticization of Homosexuality and Homosexualization of Politics," in *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship*, ed. David Paternotte, Manon Tremblay, and Carol Johnson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 106.

143 Cf. Miller, *Out of the Past*, 113.

144 Cf. Hekma, "Amsterdam," 61.

145 Cf. Hekma, "Queer Amsterdam 1945–2000," in *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures: Europe since 1945*, ed. Matt Cook and Jennifer V. Evans (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 119–120.

146 Cf. Hekma, "Amsterdam," 61.

147 Cf. Hekma, "Nederlandsch Wetenschappelijk Komitee," in *Goodbye to Berlin? 100 Jahre Schwulenbewegung: eine Ausstellung des Schwulen Museums in der Akademie der Künste, 17. Mai bis 17. August 1997,* ed. Schwules Museum Berlin and Akademie der Künste (Berlin: Verlag Rosa Winkel, 1997), 135.

148 Cf. Hekma, "Amsterdam," 62.

149 COC changed its name again shortly after its foundation: in 1964 to Nederlandse Vereiniging voor Homofielen COC (Dutch Society for Homophiles COC) and in 1971 to Nederlandse Verening voor Integratie van Homoseksualiteit COC (Dutch Society for the Integration of Homosexuality COC). Since 2000, it has a federated structure of more than 24 local association and changed its name again to Federatie van Nederlandse Verenigingen tot Integratie van Homoseksualiteit COC Nederland (Federation of Dutch Associations for Integration of Homosexuality COC Netherlands).

the emergence of a separate gay/lesbian world in Amsterdam.[150] This growth attracted queers from other countries and led to an increasing internationalization.[151] Additionally, since the mid-1950s, the police had stopped controlling bars, dance halls, or evening meetings and focused on spaces like public bathrooms or parks.[152]

Due to these changes, Amsterdam was becoming the "gay capital" of Europe. In the 1960s, COC became a "serious cultural and political movement."[153] It began to cooperate with the Dutch Society for Sexual Reform (Nederlandse Vereniging voor Sexuele Hervorming). This was the major proponent of sexual liberation at that time, 200,000 members strong, and a viable political force.[154] Together, they achieved a revision of Article 248bis in 1971 making 16 the age of consent for all sexual relations and access to contraceptives for women part of general medical care.

The Netherlands changed rapidly from a conservative country to a frontrunner for sexual liberation and emancipation in the late 1960s and the 1970s.[155] The coalition of COC and the Dutch Society for Sexual Reform even became a close advisor for the government. This "Dutch exceptionalism"[156] cannot be fully explained. However, Hekma and Duyvendak offer six explanatory approaches, "a mix of religious, scientific, social, and [...] political, and legal changes:"[157] 1.) The country's political culture is based on the separation of church and state. Sexuality is a personal matter and should not be regulated by the state (corresponding to French's "republican universalism"). Even Christian parties never promoted prosecuting sexual practices in the private realm. 2.) Until the 1960s, every citizen was part of a community "pillar" (*zuilen*, either Roman Catholic, Protestant, Labor or Liberal) with corresponding schools, political parties, media outlets, sport events, etc. This model had always promoted coalition politics, but crumbled in the 1960s due to social mobility, secularism, and individualism. 3.) Especially within the Catholic and the (Calvinist) Protestant pillars, which had participated in almost all government coalitions in the 20th century,[158] sexual beliefs and values were re-

150 Cf. Hekma, "Amsterdam," 64.
151 Cf. Hekma, "Queer Amsterdam," 121–122.
152 Cf. Hekma, "Amsterdam," 64.
153 Hekma and Duyvendak, "The Netherlands," 107.
154 Cf. Hekma and Duyvendak, "The Netherlands," 107.
155 Cf. Hekma and Duyvendak, "The Netherlands," 104.
156 Hekma and Duyvendak, "The Netherlands," 104.
157 Hekma and Duyvendak, "The Netherlands," 114.
158 For a more detailed analysis of the political parties and government coalitions within the 20th century and their attitude towards homosexuality, cf. Judith Schuyf, Judith and André Krouwel, "The Dutch Lesbian and Gay Movement. The Politics of Accommodation," in *The Global Emergence*

considered when psychiatrists and social workers made the social situation of homosexuals visible. The two pillars started accepting homosexuals as people while still regarding their sexual activities as a sin. 4.) A general change in psychiatric medicine no longer regarded homosexuality as an illness and differentiated between homosexuality and pedophilia. 5.) Gay relationships became more accepted in the sense that homosexuals now tended to engage in long-lasting and loving relationships, and not only situational sex. 6.) Within the 1960s, youth, student, and feminist movements gained influence. The Netherlands had a large number of young people who urged a transition to a rather liberal sexual culture.[159]

The integrative approach of COC promoting homosexuals' integration into general society was not shared by the entire queer community, however. Student groups emerged like the Red Faggots or the lesbian movement Purple September (later Lesbian Nation). They demanded social change instead of the homosexual adapting in support of integration, and they feared assimilation through integration. They widely criticized the homophile movement for its sexism and demanded acceptance of all sexual and gender variations.[160] One driving issue for these radical groups was the lack of representation of women. COC was predominately male(-centered) and focused most of its work on gay men. Even though the situation for women within COC improved in the late 1960s, lesbians mostly relied on friendship networks, the bar culture, women's centers, and/or Amsterdam's cafés.[161] The latter became the center for political activism. However, the 1980s became "the golden age" of lesbian visibility in commercial spaces.[162] Lesbian political life stagnated at the end of the 1970s[163] and activists became involved in other social groups like the squatter's movement.[164] However, Lesbian Nation, a lesbian-feminist group, organized a street protest in Amsterdam in 1977. This protest was eventually perpetuated as Roze Zaterdag (Pink Saturday), following the example of the Pride Parades in the United States. From 1979 on, the Roze Front (Pink Front), a joint cooperation between gay and lesbian organizations, organized these street protests.

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of Gay and Lesbian Politics. National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement, ed. Barry D. Adam, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and André Krouwel (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 158–161.

159 Cf. Hekma and Duyvendak, "The Netherlands," 104–106.

160 Cf. Hekma and Duyvendak, "The Netherlands," 107, and Hekma, "Amsterdam," 66.

161 Schuyf, "Lesbian Emancipation in The Netherlands," 23–25.

162 Cf. Marieke Ekenhorst and Irina van Aalst, "Lesbian Nightlife in Amsterdam: An Explorative Study of the Shift from 'Queer-Only' to 'Queer-Friendly' Spaces," *Fennia* 197, no. 2 (2019): 201.

163 Cf. Hekma, "Queer Amsterdam," 125–126.

164 Cf. Schuyf and Krouwel, "The Dutch Lesbian and Gay Movement," 176.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Amsterdam's queer community grew significantly, and the increasing acceptance of homosexuality made Amsterdam very attractive for queer people. Over two decades, the community witnessed four generations of activists: closeted homophiles, homosexuals desiring personal integration, those looking for social integration, and, finally, queer separatists.[165] The latter did not outlast the 1980s, since separatism never became a strong force in the Netherlands.[166] However, they paved the way for separate queer organizations to emerge in political parties, trade unions, and other areas of social life. In consequence, the newly founded Amsterdam based newspaper *Gay Krant* replaced COC as a mouthpiece for the movement.[167]

Meanwhile, gay and lesbian organizations worked even closer together, and focused on projects that united them: the fight for equality in all domains and for rights concerning their relationships, i. e., same-sex marriage.[168] The prospects were promising: the queer movement "became a part of public culture and a source of advice for governments"[169] in the 1980s. The police began to protect queer spaces and events.[170] Another accomplishment was that from 1985 people could change their gender legally after undergoing surgery.[171]

Amsterdam was hit heavily by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, despite having the advantage that the virus arrived later than elsewhere and the community and health authorities had been able to prepare their response. The catastrophic impact (half of the Netherlands' deaths affiliated with the epidemic occurred in Amsterdam) may have been prevented if the city had closed saunas and darkrooms or promoted condoms. Instead, it focused advising gay men against anal sex. Eventually, the virus' victims received treatment in form of social security. The successful cooperation of health authorities, the community, and politics[172] proved to be less frantic and more constructive than elsewhere. While in other parts of the world, the queer movement radicalized during the epidemic, the Dutch movement depoliti-

165 Cf. Hekma, "Queer Amsterdam," 126–127.
166 Cf. Schuyf and Krouwel, "The Dutch Lesbian and Gay Movement," 176.
167 Cf. Hekma, "Amsterdam," 66.
168 Cf. Hekma and Duyvendak, "The Netherlands," 109–110.
169 Hekma and Duyvendak, "The Netherlands," 107.
170 Cf. Hekma, "Amsterdam," 67–68.
171 In 2013, the law was changed and surgery was no longer necessary for the right to change one's gender.
172 Cf. Hekma, "Amsterdam," 67.

cized as activists settled for the model of limited tolerance and social care provided by the state.[173]

The 1990s were still shaped by the fight against HIV/AIDS. However, the goal of same-sex marriage was within reach. On the one hand, the legal changes over the previous decades changed the perception of same-sex relationships. On the other hand, marriage itself lost both its value for heterosexuals and its religious connotation.[174] In 1997, the Labor-Liberal government introduced a "registered partnership" model for couples of all genders. Only four years later, in 2001, parliament passed a same-sex marriage bill making the Netherlands the first country to allow same-sex couples to marry. At the same time, Amsterdam's status as a "gay capital" began to decline. Some suggest that this is connected to the success in introducing same-sex marriage: the queer movement had achieved its main goal and would now become irrelevant.[175] The reasons were probably more multilayered. Increasingly, conservative politics in Amsterdam regulating, e. g., the Red Light District, and the growing internationalization of the queer movement might be additional factors. However, Amsterdam rightfully achieved its reputation as a tolerant and sexual city and queer metropolis, where queer lifestyles have been embraced for at least seven decades.

4.2 Jewish Life in Post-WWII Western Europe

London, Paris, and Amsterdam were the centers of Jewish life in the UK, France, and the Netherlands[176] and hubs for Jewish practice and innovation. However, World War II and the Shoah changed Europe: nothing was as it had been before, including the UK's Jewry that was spared from the direct mass murders of Jews. Countless communities in Europe did not survive, and the remainder could only recover slowly. In spite of this, and contrary to many expectations after the war,

173 Cf. Manon S. Parry and Hugo Schalkwijk, "Lost Objects and Missing Histories. HIV/AIDS in the Netherlands," in *Museums, Sexuality, and Gender Activism*, ed. Joshua G. Adair and Amy K. Levin (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 114–115.

174 Cf. Hekma and Duyvendak, "The Netherlands," 110.

175 Cf. Hekma and Duyvendak, "The Netherlands," 129. Of course, the queer movement does not end with same-sex marriages. Besides the challenging situation for trans* people, Hekma and Duyvendak point to the continued exclusion of LGBTQ+ in religious communities, negative attitudes in society like the necessity that a homosexual must not be "too sexual," or threats against LGBTQ+ lives (cf. Hekma and Duyvendak, "The Netherlands," 112–115).

176 Cf. for more recent but transferable data Sergio DellaPergola, "Jews in Europe: Demographic Trends, Contexts and Outlooks," in *A Road to Nowhere? Jewish Experiences in Unifying Europe*, ed. Julius H. Schoeps and Olaf Glöckner (Leiden: Brill 2011), 28.

European Jewish communities revived and constructed new Jewish life and institutions.

They all found that antisemitism did not cease after the victory over the Nazis. The State of Israel reassured Jews in Europe that there was a place to which they could return if their lives were threatened again. When Israel became close to its destruction during the Six Day War in 1967, solidarity in Europe increased massively. For European Jews, "Israel has become the ultimate alternate place to live, the safe haven [...]."[177] The "Israelization of Jewish identity," the connection between Jewish identity and Israel, is an important feature of post-Shoah European Jewry. This connection "is not something to be taken lightly, nor is it something that unites all Jews,"[178] it expresses itself differently both in different contexts and at an individual level.

From the 1970s onwards, European Jews started dealing with the direct aftermath of the Shoah. Survivors started speaking publicly and the Jewish communities internalized this historic event as part of their shared history in the 1980s. Moreover, secularism and individualism became more important – in accordance with similar developments in mainstream society. As a reaction to often inflexible traditional Jewish institutions, nondenominational organizations and groups were founded and attracted members on the grounds of urgent social issues.

4.2.1 The United Kingdom

During World War II, German bombs destroyed synagogues, community centers, and schools. The destruction of these institutions introduced the suburbanization of British Jews which only increased after the war.[179] Moreover, after the destruction of the European Jewry, the British Jewish community became the largest on the continent[180] and, therefore, gained new (representative) responsibilities.[181] Ap-

177 Olaf Glöckner, "Europe, Israel, the Jewish Communities, and Growing Antisemitism," in *Handbook of Israel: Major Debates*, ed. Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Julius H. Schoeps, Yitzhak Sternberg, id., and Anne Weberling (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2016), 966.

178 Ilan Zvi Baron, *Obligation in Exile. The Jewish Diaspora, Israel and Critique* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 191.

179 Cf. Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 229–230.

180 Until the mass migration of Jews from North Africa to France, cf. Section 4.2.2.

181 Cf. William D. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1996), 364.

proximately 55,000 war refugees migrated from Central Europe. 410,000 Jews were living in the UK in the early 1950s.[182]

The creation of the State of Israel did not have major implications for the UK's Jewry since it was divided on the issue. Non-Zionism was quite strong in the UK in comparison with other countries in Western Europe.[183] However, in a gradual process, and markedly after the Six Day War in 1967, Israel's well-being became a central concern and a pillar of self-identification for British Jews.[184] The threat of Israel's annihilation generated a huge wave of support, expressed both publicly and financially in terms of donations. The vigorous support for Israel from all sides was slightly diminished after the Lebanon War in 1982 when Israel's policies were massively criticized by both the Jewish left and non-Jews. However, this did not change the support of the Jewish mainstream which never has been greater than in the 1980s.[185] Endelman describes Anglo-Jewish devotion to Israel as "remarkable;" British Jewry linked their identity and fate to the events unfolding in Israel.[186] Israel's central position was fostered by the increasing analysis of the Shoah on the one hand, secularization and religious indifference that both resulted in a more rational approach for being Jewish on the other.[187] This did not translate into high migration numbers to the Middle East, though.[188]

Antisemitism in the UK did not affect this development. Directly after the war, fascists regrouped and started attacking Jewish institutions.[189] The conflicts between militant Jews and British soldiers in Palestine nurtured the violence of antisemites.[190] However, in the 1950s and 1960s, antisemitic activity calmed down, and when British fascism revived in later decades, it was more interested in attacking black and Muslim immigrants than in Jews.[191] One example, therefore, is the founding of the British National Party (and the violent National Front) in 1967 that undoubtedly boosted antisemitic rhetoric, but especially succeeded in invigorating racism and debates on unemployment.[192] Anti-Jewish (terror) attacks certainly did occur from the 1970s on, but concentrated on threats, desecration of prop-

182 Cf. Vivian D. Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1990), 252.
183 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 365–367.
184 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 234.
185 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 374–375.
186 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 237.
187 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 237–238.
188 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 235.
189 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 232.
190 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 367–368.
191 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 233.
192 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 382–383.

erty, and abusive behavior.[193] Rubinstein concludes that there has been a "general increase in tolerance"[194] in postwar UK especially because of the impact of the Shoah on the British consciousness.[195] Endelman summarizes that "violent anti-semitism did less damage [...] than ethnocentrism, cultural narrow-mindedness, and polite contempt."[196] In regard to Israel, the UK recognized the state at the beginning of 1950, which introduced an area of normalcy between both countries. Only after 1967 did the British far left's anti-Zionism, often indistinguishable from antisemitism, become very vocal, especially within student unions that excluded Jewish students. A generation gap between leftists who had experienced the Shoah and remained pro-Israel and anti-Zionist younger generations became obvious.[197] Left-wing antisemitism continues to be a controversial issue in British politics up until today.

Internally, the British Jewish community went through different changes in the decades after the war: the numbers of affiliated Jews shrank after its peak in the 1950s. The numbers were around 335,000 in the late 1970s, 308,000 in the mid-1980s, and 285,000 in the mid-1990s. Intermarriage was one reason for this development.[198]

The decline of religious observance was another important feature of British Jewish life after World War II.[199] Besides secularization, British Jewry became overwhelmingly middle class and made a remarkable shift rightwards in politics. Whereas Jews were more sympathetic toward the Labour Party shortly after the war, the switch towards the Tories happened at the end of the 1960s: left-wing anti-Zionism and antisemitism reached the Labour Party[200] at the same time as cooperation with the PLO.[201] It remained committed to socialism, which scared away the new middle class. The Conservative Party started embracing Jewish candidates, and Margaret Thatcher in particular had an affinity for the Jewish community. She consciously appointed several Jewish advisers to her government.[202]

In regard to the religious landscape of postwar British Jewry, the (unexpected) growth of strict Orthodoxy is striking. Until the 1930s, the Union of Orthodox He-

193 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 384–385.
194 Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 388.
195 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 388.
196 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 246.
197 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 376–378.
198 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 248.
199 Cf. Stanley Waterman and Barry Kosmin, *British Jewry in the Eighties. A Statistical and Geographical Guide* (London: Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1986), 28.
200 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 392–393.
201 Cf. Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain*, 236.
202 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 393–395, and Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 241–242.

brew Congregations, the umbrella organization for ultra-Orthodox Judaism, was marginal, but gained membership through the migration of observant refugees and Shoah survivors. After the war, its larger families contributed to higher membership numbers.[203] Ultra-Orthodoxy still remained a small minority (4.4% in 1983).[204] However, their influence was much greater: ultra-Orthodox Jews expressed their religious views more publicly. Additionally, there was a shortage of central-Orthodox rabbis, so congregations employed rabbis trained in an ultra-Orthodox setting. Consequently, central-Orthodoxy gradually moved to the right, not wishing to be outflanked by ultra-Orthodoxy.[205] The United Synagogue, the most important umbrella organization of central-Orthodoxy next to the smaller Federation of Synagogues, was intensively affirming the strictness of *halakhah* and deviated from its latitudinarianism, formerly characteristic for British Jewry.[206] However, the United Synagogue lost members every year.[207] This did not stop them insisting that they occupy the center of Jewish life in the UK.[208]

The "Jacobs Affair" demonstrated the new strictness of central-Orthodoxy: Rabbi Dr. Louis Jacobs, a respected yeshiva-trained scholar, questioned the literal interpretation of the Scriptures and argued that there is a human element within them.[209] When Jacobs wanted to rejoin his former congregation at New West End Synagogue after teaching at the Orthodox-Conservative Jews' College in 1964, the UK's Chief Rabbi Sir Israel Brodie forbade his appointment. Such an intervention from a Chief Rabbi had never happened before. The United Synagogue also replaced the New West End Synagogue's officers. Jacobs and over 300 members of the synagogue left for an independent congregation, the New London Synagogue with Jacobs as its rabbi. The synagogue became the pivot point of the Masorti Movement in the UK that stood for the moderate traditionalism that the United Synagogue rejected.[210] In 1985, the movement was institutionalized with the Assembly of Masorti Synagogues which has only played a minor role in British Jewry ever since.

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203 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 249–250.

204 Cf. Waterman and Kosmin, *British Jewry in the Eighties*, 28. The membership numbers are sometimes difficult to compare. While the Orthodox synagogues counted their memberships based on male members, Reform and Liberal Judaism used a system based on family memberships. That makes it hard to compare the denominations with each other. Therefore, the numbers given have to be regarded with some caution.

205 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 250–251.

206 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 413.

207 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 251, and Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 409.

208 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 414.

209 Cf. Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain*, 241–242.

210 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 253.

British Orthodoxy was also anxious to distance itself from the Reform and Liberal movements. In most cases, their rabbis refused to cooperate with their counterparts in public events or programmatically. They also did not approve conversions in a progressive setting and excluded Reform Jews from rituals in their synagogues. This undoubtedly led to a polarization within organized Judaism.[211]

Reform and Liberal Judaism were the other branches of Judaism besides ultra-Orthodoxy that gained members after World War II: from approximately 20 % of organized Judaism in 1970 to 30 % in 1990, with Liberal Judaism as the smaller of both factions.[212] This was partly because of German Jews who had migrated to the UK in the 1930s and had primarily grown up within the Reform movement.[213] On the other hand, Liberal and Reform Judaism were both willing to modernize, and moved gradually to the left and distanced themselves from Orthodoxy in their social attitudes.[214] Unlike other countries, Reform and Liberal Judaism split in the beginning of the 20th century and did not reunite.[215] Liberal Judaism (until 2002 the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues) remained the "more radical" branch, the "cutting edge of modern Judaism"[216] and is ideologically closer to the US-American Reform movement. It values Jewish tradition, practice, and faith, but wants them to be put in a contemporary framework. Judaism shall be "an active force for good" and the human need is more valuable than the legal technicalities of Jewish tradition.[217] The UK's Movement for Reform Judaism (until 2005 Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, RSGB) is more "conservative" in terms of liturgy (containing a high amount of Hebrew and Aramaic elements), rituals (use of *tefillin*, partial observance of the Shabbat, keeping *kashrut*), and gender equality (at least until the 2000s), which is why it is sometimes compared to the US-American Conservative movement.[218] However, in 1956, the two movements

211 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 252.

212 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 409.

213 Cf. Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain*, 241.

214 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 416.

215 Several attempts were made throughout the decades. In the 1980s, the two movements were closer than ever to reunite, but failed since the council of the Reform movement eventually voted against a reunification (cf. Anne J. Kershen and Jonathan A. Romain, *Tradition and Change. A History of Reform Judaism in Britain, 1840–1995* [London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995], 310–316).

216 John D. Rayner, John D. and Rabbinic Conference of Liberal Judaism (collective author), *Affirmations of Liberal Judaism.* Revisited ed. (London: Liberal Judaism, 2017), 4.

217 Cf. Rayner, John D., Rabbinic Conference of Liberal Judaism, *Affirmations of Liberal Judaism*, 4.

218 Cf. Jonathan Romain, "The Changing Face of British Reform," in *150 Years of Progressive Judaism in Britain. 1840–1990*, ed. Anne J. Kershen (London: London Museum of Jewish Life, 1990), 43–50, and David Englander, "Integrated but Insecure: A Portrait of Anglo-Jewry at the Close of the

agreed on a shared seminary for their rabbis and cantors, and founded the Leo Baeck College.[219]

Besides the central institutions of British Jewry, and a small Sephardic community with its own synagogues, independent religious and secular institutions, *minyanim*, and synagogues emerged, largely due to the rising dissatisfaction with central-Orthodoxy. The reasons for convening were various, but they were all alternatives to the "stuffy" mainstream congregations.[220] The Board of Deputies served as the representational body of British Jewry, lobbying on behalf of the Jewish community on nonreligious matters like Israel, antisemitism, or financial aid for Jewish institutions. Usually, a general consensus could be reached here between the denominations. That did not mean, however, that there were no discussions over the fact that central-Orthodoxy dominated the personnel policy.[221]

Postwar Jewish life in the UK was and still is characterized by several key elements: overwhelming support for the State of Israel (with exceptions from the left), the conflict with British antisemitism and ethnocentrism, increasing secularization, and a fracturing of Jewish institutions. As we will now see, the developments in France were quite different, with an even higher focus on Jewish Orthodoxy, marked by a mass migration process and violent antisemitism.

4.2.2 France

France was almost entirely liberated from Nazi Germany by the end of 1944. While between 180,000 and 200,000 Jews survived the Shoah, about one third of the Jewish population was murdered. Interestingly, only a very few chose to emigrate to Palestine or the United States directly after the war, since many hoped for a return to the situation prior to the Nazi occupation.[222] The almost complete collapse of the former Jewish infrastructure led to efforts to attempt to unite French Jewry under

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Twentieth Century," in *The Growth of Religious Diversity. Britain from 1945. Volume 1: Traditions*, ed. Gerald Parsons (London: Routledge, 1993), 109–114.

219 Cf. Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain*, 241.

220 Cf. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 254–255.

221 Cf. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 417.

222 Cf. Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present*, trans. Malcom B. DeBevoise (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 179.

one banner.[223] Since then, the French Jewish community has been represented by three bodies occupying three different spheres:

1.) The Consistoire central israélite de France (Central Jewish Consistory of France) managed and organized religious life in the country. It was already created by Napoleon in 1808, alongside the Catholic and Protestant Consistory, and has been controlling Jewish rites ever since. After the separation of state and church in 1905, the Consistory lost its status as a public institution.[224] Since then, the Consistory has still elected the Grand Rabbi of France and acted as the representative institution of Jewish religion. It was, and still is, dominated by Jewish Orthodoxy.

2.) Already founded in 1944, the Conseil représentatif des juifs de France (Representative Council of French Jews, CRIF) was created to represent all French Jews politically on a national and international level. It played a pivotal role in the restitution process. This sort of political representation by one body would have been unacceptable for French Jewry before the war. The Shoah, however, prepared the way for the transition from being a "Jewish Frenchwo*man" to a "French Jew." It took ten years until internal conflicts were eventually resolved and CRIF could start serving as the representational body for French Jewry.[225]

3.) The Fonds social juif unifié (United Jewish Welfare Fund, FSJU) was the socio-cultural representation of French Jewry. It was created after World War II to rebuild Jewish life in the country. Since then, it has coordinated and given financial support to culture, social work, and Jewish education.[226]

From the mid-1950s on, North African Jews from Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria migrated to France in massive numbers. This made France the country with the largest number of Jewish immigrants after Israel.[227] The independence of Tunisia and Morocco, the Suez War, and specifically the victory of the Algerian Liberation Front and the country's subsequent independence, triggered massive departures to other countries. Jews in possession of French citizenship decided for the most part to migrate to France, while others chose Israel.[228] By the 1960s, the Jewish population in France had grown to 360,000, and one decade later to 535,000. The center

223 For a detailed analysis of French Jewry's immediate postwar history, cf. Seán Hand and Steven T. Katz, eds., *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945–1955* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

224 Cf. Gross, "The History of Beit Haverim," 104.

225 Cf. Hand and Katz, 2015, 179–180.

226 Cf. Gross, "The History of Beit Haverim," 104.

227 Paula E. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 194.

228 Cf. Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 186.

of migration became Paris.[229] The newcomers changed the profile of French collectivity: greater religiosity, the idea of Judaism as something much more than just a practice in the private sphere, but something that affected every aspect of life,[230] the connection of religious tradition with the family rather than (confessional) institutions,[231] a less affluent lifestyle, and a Sephardic form of practice.[232] Former, destroyed places of worship and Torah study were renewed, and community centers were built. The newcomers created their own forms of communal life, revitalized an aging French Jewry, and led to an increasing Jewish visibility. Remarkably, and in contrast to other immigration policies in the past, the Jewish institutions neither attempted to impose their model of Jewishness nor enforced integration.[233]

The decolonization period led to a politicization of French Jews. While the official institutions remained almost silent, young French Jews demanded a clear Jewish stance on politics and French wars.[234] This political involvement increased in 1967 during the Six Day War: the unity provoked by the war broke down shortly after the Jewish left became critical of Israel's actions. Nevertheless, this could not undermine the new pro-Israeli consensus among religious leaders.[235] Arabic rhetoric for Israel's destruction roused painful memories of the Shoah,[236] and antisemitic tendencies in the press and public reemerged in France soon after the liberation.[237] Also, French politics changed its position towards Israel during the Six Day War: prior to the war, France was highly sympathetic. Now, the government feared losing alliances in the Arabic world that it needed after decolonization. A number of Jewish intellectuals and students, constituting a small minority, supported the Palestinian resistance.[238] They did not seek to reshape the community, instead they opted out.[239] These individuals became actively involved in the "May '68" protests. Experiences of fascism and the Shoah were at the center of their engage-

229 Cf. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, 194.
230 Cf. Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 187.
231 Cf. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, 195.
232 Cf. Ethan B. Katz and Maud S. Mandel, "'The French Jewish Community Speaks to You with One Voice': Dissent and the Shaping of French Jewish Politics since World War II," in *The Jews of Modern France. Images and Identities*, ed. Zvi Jonathan Kaplan and Nadia Malinovich (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 207.
233 Cf. Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 188.
234 Cf. Katz and Mandel, "The French Jewish Community Speaks to You with One Voice," 197–206.
235 Cf. Katz and Mandel, "The French Jewish Community Speaks to You with One Voice," 206–207.
236 Cf. Katz and Mandel, "The French Jewish Community Speaks to You with One Voice," 207–209.
237 Cf. Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 184–185.
238 Cf. Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 189.
239 Cf. Katz and Mandel, "The French Jewish Community Speaks to You with One Voice," 213.

ment.[240] As a result of these developments, being pro-Israel meant being a critic of the French government. Jewish political involvement increased, and even CRIF demanded that they start speaking publicly as Jews in national politics.[241] Later, during the First Lebanon War, French Jewry publicly debated about the war's implication for the Jewish community in France. What changed in comparison with 1967 was that the critique of Israel now entered Jewish institutions, questioning Israel's irrevocable stance.[242]

The Six Day War, the growing centrality of Israel in the Jewish consciousness, and the cultural and intellectual impacts of "May '68," changed French Jewry and its public expression in the 1970s.[243] French Jews came to terms with their Jewishness, with Israel,[244] and with their shared past of the Shoah.[245] Sociologist Dominique Schnapper described three types of French Jews in a study published in 1980:[246] 1.) Practicing Jews who were focused on religious traditions; due to the influx from North Africa and postwar Orthodox Shoah survivors, religious observance was more widespread in France in the 1970s than before in the 20th century. 2.) Militant Jews who introduced their Jewishness to the political realm and focused on Israel and Zionism, both pro-Israel and opposing Israel's policies towards the Palestinians. 3.) Assimilated Jews, following the footsteps of the *Israélites* and the emancipationist tradition. They did not deny their Jewishness, but kept it private. Secularism and individualism played a pivotal role. These Jews' understanding of Jewishness was shaped by a sense of shared fate with other Jews and a set of moral attitudes.[247]

Significant for all Jewish lives was the growth of antisemitism, a feature of French history perpetuating in both the far right and the far left.[248] Antisemitism

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240 Cf. Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 189–191.

241 Cf. Katz and Mandel, "The French Jewish Community Speaks to You with One Voice," 214–215.

242 Cf. Katz and Mandel, "The French Jewish Community Speaks to You with One Voice," 216–226.

243 Cf. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, 202.

244 Cf. Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 191.

245 Cf. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, 203, 212–213, and Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 192–193.

246 Schnapper's categories were questioned and further developed from 1980 on. More recently, Erik H. Cohen worked out four profiles of French Jewry: individualists, universalists, revivalists, and traditionalists. For more on that topic, cf. Erik H. Cohen, *The Jews of France Today. Identity and Values* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 113 et seqq.

247 Cf. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, 197–200.

248 Already in 1985, Pierre Birnbaum pointed to the manifestation of the myth that the Jews are *les gros*, "the bigwigs," of French society, which had been established from the 19th century to his time in both far right and far left antisemitic and anti-capitalist discourses (cf. Pierre Birnbaum, "Anti-Semitism and Anticapitalism in Modern France," in *The Jews in Modern France*, ed. Frances Malino and Bernard Wasserstein [Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1985], 214–223).

was certainly not absent from political life in postwar France. During the Six Day War, President de Gaulle held a press conference in November 1967 in which he declared the Jews as "an elite people, sure of themselves, and domineering." He was highly criticized and "solemnly authorized a new antisemitism" as political scientist Raymond Aron stated.[249] Physical violence against Jews did not occur until the late 1970s and 1980s, however.[250] By then, a number of shootings and bombings shocked Jewish communities around the country. In particular, the attack on the liberal synagogue in rue Copernic in Paris in October 1980 burned into the Jewish consciousness. Four people died and several more were injured. The press conference of then Prime Minister Raymond Barre left the Jewish community consternated: "[T]his odious attack aimed at Jews attending the synagogue, and which struck innocent Frenchmen who were crossing rue Copernic."[251]

This distinction between "innocent" passers-by and the Jews as the actual target of the attack was for many proof of antisemitism in higher ranks of French politics. The government did not react further, leaving the Jewish community on its own.[252] The incident at rue Copernic was not the last deadly attack: militant Palestinians carried out a bombing and shooting attack on the restaurant Chez Jo Goldenberg in rue des Rosiers (1982) as reaction to the First Lebanon War and left six people dead and 22 wounded.[253] The war changed public opinion of Israel, and the criticism raised was sharp with antisemitic undertones. Additionally, France became home to a vigorous branch of Holocaust deniers that claimed that the genocide on the European Jews never happened.[254] Even though the Mitterrand administration tried to position itself against extremist groups, French police showed a torpid response to the threats to the Jewish community.[255] As a result of these developments, increasing, but not massive, waves of emigration to Israel occurred.[256]

Despite the threats from the outside, Jewish life was vibrant again and became diversified. At the end of the 1980s, French Jews "were choosing their Judaism à la carte."[257] The majority moved outside communal institutions or joined them occa-

249 Cf. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, 200–202.
250 Cf. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, 209.
251 Cited according to Michael R. Marrus, "Are the French Antisemitic? Evidence in the 1980s," in *The Jews in Modern France*, ed. Frances Malino and Bernard Wasserstein (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1985), 225.
252 Cf. Marrus, "Are the French Antisemitic," 225.
253 Cf. Marrus, "Are the French Antisemitic," 228.
254 Cf. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, 210.
255 Cf. Marrus, "Are the French Antisemitic," 235–236.
256 Cf. Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 197.
257 Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 196.

sionally. In terms of religious affiliations, there existed a tripartition: one third of French Jews defined themselves through the Jewish faith, one third claimed to be agnostic, the other third had ties to the community, family, and historical traditions.[258] However, Orthodoxy was successful in maintaining its predominant position and as the leading force of French Jewry. Voting patterns in communal elections seem to confirm this. Reform Judaism was only a small branch (less than 5 % of affiliated Jews), even though it was able to attract more members during the 1980s and 1990s. The synagogue in rue Copernic – the Union libérale israélite de France (Liberal Jewish Union of France, ULIF) – was the only Reform congregation in France until 1977. Then, the Mouvement juif libéral de France (Liberal Movement of France, MJLF) split due to internal debates within ULIF. In 1995, MJLF split again into a third Liberal religious organization (Communauté Juive Libérale d'Île-de-France). Masorti or Conservative Judaism established itself only in the late 1980s and has remained marginal ever since. This "diversity of paths" is recognizable in the increasing number of groups and associations that decided to live a Jewish life without rabbis and without religion, following the French ideal of *laicité*, among them Beit Haverim.[259]

Summarized, "French Jews of diverse provenance" increasingly encountered French society and culture in the postwar period. This resulted in the imperative that they had to define, both for themselves and their community, exactly what the nature of "French Jewishness" is.[260]

4.2.3 The Netherlands

The Netherlands suffered a devastating loss of Jewish lives during World War II. Precise numbers differ, and were often simply taken from Nazi accounts.[261] Between 70 and 80 percent of the prewar Jewish community perished.[262] Official accounts in December 1945 stated that there were approximately 21,500 Jews left in the country. This must be considered a minimum figure. Many Jews refused to reg-

258 Cf. Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 196–197.

259 Cf. Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 198–199.

260 Cf. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, 213.

261 Chaya Brasz, "After the Shoah: Continuity and Change in the Post-War Jewish Community of the Netherlands," in *Dutch Jewry. Its History and Secular Culture (1500–2000),* ed. Jonathan Israel and Reinier Salverda (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 285–286.

262 David Weinberg, "Patrons or Partners? Relations Between the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Dutch Community in the Immediate Postwar Period," in *The Dutch Intersection. The Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History*, ed. Yosef Kaplan (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 405.

ister with the authorities after their traumatic experience during the occupation. There may have been as many as 30,000 Jews.[263]

The first phase of Dutch Jewish recovery, the immediate postwar period,[264] began in January 1945. When the southern part of the Netherlands was liberated a few months earlier than the north, Jews tried to reorganize. The first attempt to form a Jewish organization based on prewar models in Maastricht failed.[265] A more extreme group in Eindhoven that was not interested in reintegrating Jews into Dutch society, but rather representing a separate Jewish people, was more successful:[266] the Joods Coördinatie Commissie vor het Bevrijde Nederlandse Gebied (Coordination Committee for the Liberated Area of the Netherlands, JCC) claimed to represent all Dutch Jews, including those living abroad. The Dutch government did not recognize the JCC as the official Jewish body. However, international Jewish networks cooperated with it, especially the American Joint Distribution Committee that chose to support exclusively JCC's activities in the Netherlands.[267] Until the end of this US-American funding in 1948, the JCC distributed the funding. After complete liberation, the JCC expanded to cover the northern parts of the country. Additionally, the Nederlandse Zionistenbond (Dutch Zionist League, NZB) was the first prewar institution to be restored, and this exerted a massive influence on the JCC to underline its Zionist orientation.[268]

In 1947, both the JCC and the NZB agreed to reestablish the Nederlands-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap (Dutch Israelite Religious Community, NIK), the former Ashkenazi religious Orthodox umbrella organization. This took place due to the fact that religious affiliation and belonging to a certain *zuille* (pillar) had been much more important than nationalism. In consequence, the Dutch government was only willing to contribute to the Jewish community through the official prewar religious institutions.[269]

While the NZB tried (but failed) to reorganize the Dutch Jewish community on a Zionist basis,[270] the reestablishment of the NIK and the end of financial funding

263 Chaya Brasz, "After the Second World War: From 'Jewish Church' to Cultural Minority," in *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, ed. J. C. H. Blom, R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, I. Schöffer, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans and Erica Pomerans, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 361.

264 Cf. Brasz, "After the Shoah," 274.

265 Cf. Brasz, "After the Shoah," 280.

266 Cf. Brasz, "After the Shoah," 281.

267 Cf. Weinberg, "Patrons or Partner," 409–411.

268 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 347.

269 Cf. Brasz, "After the Shoah," 282–284.

270 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 348–349.

by the Joint led to the end of the JCC as the central communal authority.[271] The remaining Portuguese Jews (approximately 800) and their umbrella organization, the Portugees-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap (Portuguese Israelite Religious Community, PIK), as well as the even smaller Liberaal Joodse Gemeente (Liberal Jewish Community, LJG), refused to join the NIK and remained independent.[272]

Directly after the war, emigration from the Netherlands was important:[273] the United States and Israel were the most common destinations. Antisemitism was not eradicated with the liberation;[274] Jews were neither offered special assistance, nor was the community included in interdenominational debates with the authorities.[275] However, during the 1950s, and more quickly than in other European states, the Jewish community found new stability and an economic foundation; consequently, emigration numbers declined.[276] The NZB continued to be a very influential force and Zionism was promoted heavily. This led to a feeling of crisis, though: on the one hand, the Jewish community did not believe in the continuation of Dutch Jewry – on the other, it did not want to emigrate to Israel. "All of a sudden," the community "discovered that it still existed and continued to exist in the Netherlands."[277]

Dutch Jewry was reestablished along the old prewar lines by the middle of the 1950s, and relations with non-Jewish Dutch society improved.[278] However, the first indications of the shift into a second phase of postwar Dutch Jewry were already noticeable: The younger generation started criticizing the inflexibility of the Orthodox rabbinate in the NIK and its unwillingness to modernize.[279] Four factors changed Dutch Jewry from the 1960s on:

1.) The process of secularization and assimilation: A rising number of Jews in the Netherlands did not affiliate with the "organized" Jewish community, i. e., with the religious bodies or the NZB. "Organized" Jews became the minority (approximately 25 % by the end of the 1980s). The majority of Jews were far more difficult to place, as they had various personal and ideological backgrounds. Factors other than religion or Zionism (e. g., feminism, social intercourse, homosexuality in case

271 Cf. Weinberg, "Patrons or Partner," 418 – 419.
272 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 349.
273 Cf. Brasz, 351 – 353.
274 Dutch antisemitism did not lead to violet outbreaks as in France. An "antisemitic wave" ebbed quickly after the Netherlands absorbed a limited number of Jews after the war and did not flare up again until the 1990s and early 2000s (cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 342).
275 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 342 – 346.
276 Cf. Brasz, "After the Shoah," 276.
277 Brasz, "After the Shoah," 277.
278 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 361.
279 Cf. Brasz, "After the Shoah," 277.

of Sjalhomo) became the basic factors for the emergence of new Jewish organizations. Being Jewish gradually meant something different than in the intermediate postwar period; Brasz summarizes this by stating that the Jewish community started defining itself as a "cultural (Dutch) minority."[280]

2.) Internal changes within the religious community: Whereas membership in the NIK declined, the numbers in Liberal Judaism increased, although not proportionally.[281] LJG was attractive for those who felt that the NIK did not offer any kind of modernization, particularly patrilinear Jews. However, the Liberal Judaism in the Netherlands remained quite conservative compared to its counterparts in the United States until the late 1980s and early 1990s. The movement returned to traditions they had previously rejected such as an increasing importance of the *mikveh*.[282] Another, opposing trend was the increasing involvement and the outreach activities of the Lubavitch movement in Dutch Orthodoxy. Its very traditional Hassidism reinforced the NIK's strict Orthodox orientation and blocked any development of Orthodox alternatives.[283] Religious Dutch Jewry found that the denominations became more traditional by their own standards. The "two movements from abroad" – Liberal and Chassidic Judaism – changed Dutch Jewry, renovated it, stimulated it, but also polarized it. Between these two poles, mostly uncooperative, independent synagogues emerged. Other denominations only established themselves in the Netherlands in the 2000s. The NIK remained the largest organization and the first call for the authorities, and it certainly did not want to lose its central position. The Centraal Joods Overleg was founded only in 1997 as an umbrella organization for all Jewish organizations, both religious and secular.[284]

3.) From a country of emigration to immigration: After the emigration period after World War II, the Netherlands experienced an influx of Jews from the 1960s on. First, a fairly small number of Jews from Iran and Iraq were permitted to enter the country. However, more Israelis migrated to the Netherlands, approximately

280 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 364–366.

281 Membership in the PIK remained stable, remained independent, and did not fall under the NIK's strict Orthodox tendencies. Especially with the migration of Jews from Arabic countries and the influx of Israelis, the PIK was able gain more members (cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 363).

282 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 370–371.

283 Minny E. Mock-Degen analyzes the individual reasons and motives for a return to traditional Judaism in the Netherlands. So called *ba'alei* and *ba'alot teshuvah*, "bearers of the questions" (meaning Jews returning to Orthodoxy), became a very important element of Dutch Jewry (cf. Minny E. Mock-Degen, "The Return to Judaism in the Netherlands," in *The Religious Cultures of Dutch Jewry*, ed. Yosef Kaplan and Dan Michman [Leiden: Brill, 2017], 329–341).

284 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 371–372.

10,000 until the 1990s.[285] They predominately decided not to join Dutch religious institutions, but changed the makeup of Dutch Jewry, representing more than one quarter of Dutch Jews today.[286]

4.) Recognition of the Dutch Diaspora: Jewish identity was to a great extent defined by the State of Israel, especially after the Six Day War. The younger Zionist generation was frustrated that the NZB was not able to find adequate answers to the increasingly critical public opinion towards Israel. They left for Israel and the NZB gradually lost significance. For most Jews, however, identification with Israel took other forms: financial contributions, learning modern Hebrew, or engagement in more critical and less ideologically restricted organizations than the NZB. By the 1980s, Israel was "in a way taken for granted."[287] A dissolution of Dutch Jewry in favor of a migration to Israel did not happen; a continuity of a Dutch Jewish community in the Diaspora had become legitimate.[288] The estimated numbers of Jews in the Netherlands remained stable throughout the postwar period.[289]

In the 1960s, relations with the non-Jewish environment started to change. Dutch society expressed an increasing interest in its Jewish population, and in the role of the Dutch people in the Shoah. However, tension remained between Jews and non-Jews about guilt, political recognition, and restitutions.[290] Israel became another contentious factor in the relations between the Jewish community and the Dutch authorities, although the Dutch government never refused to recognize Israel's existence.[291]

Dutch Jewry was able to reorganize itself after its destruction in World War II. It relied on prewar patterns and institutions. While the NIK experienced a loss of members, LJG attracted more due to its general openness for modernization. However, religious institutions remained fairly conservative, and LJG of the 1970s and 1980s could not be compared with its counterparts elsewhere. Henceforth, secularization and the becoming of a "cultural Dutch minority" were much more important. Jewishness was not exclusively expressed in religion anymore, but in organizations that established themselves on the basis of a certain topic or agenda like Sjalhomo that focused on Jewishness and homosexuality.

285 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 352.
286 Cf. Brasz, "After the Shoah," 286.
287 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 382.
288 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 380–383.
289 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 361, and DellaPergola, "Jews in Europe," 19.
290 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 377–380, 385–390.
291 Cf. Brasz, "After the Second World War," 383–385.

4.3 Synopsis: An Environment of Change

By looking at the developments in the queer and the Jewish communities of the UK, France, and the Netherlands, we recognize the environment in which JGG/JGLG, Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo emerged. London, Paris, and Amsterdam were sexual metropolises, long before the postwar period. They established an infrastructure including bars and clubs, permitted anonymity, and facilitated meetings of queers. The three cities became major hubs for the societal changes in the 1960s, especially for the sexual revolution and gay liberation. The latter aspired to nothing less than the recognition, toleration, and acceptance of those people who did not fulfill heterosexual norms. The movement could have radical (e. g., GLF in London), or assimilationist approaches (e. g., COC in the Netherlands). Nevertheless, the queer movement in these cities radiated throughout Western Europe. Interrelations and entanglements between the cities' movements certainly existed,[292] and, as one example, the queer Jewish groups contributed to the importance of the London – Paris – Amsterdam triangle as later chapters will show.

This revolutionary atmosphere did not pass unnoticed by minorities within queer communities. Members of these minorities started realizing that they were not alone. The general queer community was not able to fully address their specific needs. Thus, they started getting organized, and more differentiated queer groups based on multiple experiences of discrimination came into existence. These groups focused on challenges, needs, and demands of their members. This was especially true for queer Jews. On the one hand, Jewish queers found that they could not be openly Jewish in the queer community. On the other hand, they strongly felt the traditionalism of European Jewish communities and did not feel welcome in the Jewish domain. The Orthodox communal institutions in the UK, in France, and the Netherlands were the largest in terms of memberships. Therefore, they claimed to speak on behalf of the whole Jewish community. The Reform or Liberal movement was quite small in Europe after World War II, and, generally speaking, more conservative than their counterparts in the United States. Consequently, queer Jews aligned themselves with the general trend of individualism, and Jewish organizing separated into traditional Jewish institutions and denominations, such as those of women in all-female *minyanim* or *chavurot*. After they became organized initially, they started educating European Jewry

292 These diverse entanglements besides the network of Jewish queers cannot be portrayed in the scope of this study. As reference for the exchange of queer movements in the UK and the Netherlands which started in the 1980s, cf. Jon Binnie, "Trading Places. Consumption, Sexuality and the Production of Queer Space," in *Mapping Desires. Geographies of Sexualities*, ed. David Bell and Gill Valentine (London: Routledge, 1995), 190 – 194.

about their existence and needs, and started advocating for their inclusion. The first group to do so was JGG in London, from there the developments spread to Paris and Amsterdam.

5 Jewish Gay (and Lesbian) Group (London)

Jewish queers in the UK had similar experiences in the beginning of the 1970s: it was almost impossible to either come out as queer in the Jewish community or come out as Jewish in the queer community. However, they started raising their voices within the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and founded the world's first group for Jewish queers. This group went through many name changes in its early years. Eventually agreeing on Jewish Gay Group (JGG), the group was inward-looking and kept a low profile. It was only in the 1980s that JGG increased its outreach, raised awareness for queer Jews, and offered various activities for its members, among others a *chavurah* for celebrating Shabbat. Aiming for women's inclusion into the group, its name was changed another time to the Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group (JGLG) in 1987. Entering another decade, the queer Jewish scene in the UK diversified and JGLG became only one player in the struggle for queer Jewish inclusion.

Short Recap: Queer and Jewish in the UK

The legal situation for queers in the UK began to change in 1957 with the Wolfenden Report, which recommended the decriminalization of sexual activities of members of the same sex. The Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS) was founded one year later to promote legal changes and support those who suffered under intolerance and injustice. However, the legalization of homosexual acts only took place in 1967 with the Sexual Offenses Act. The largest homosexual organization of the 1970s became the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE, founded in 1964) which aimed to assimilate homosexuals into mainstream society. Random sexual encounters were regarded as dehumanizing in CHE's view. After the Stonewall Riots in New York, GLF was founded in London as a radical alternative to the assimilatory tendencies of the HLRS and CHE. It demanded both legal equality and liberation from sexist British society, through demonstrations and public performances among other activities. It catalyzed a number of other diversified groups that eventually split from GLF. The front only lasted until 1973 because of internal conflicts and the male dominance in the group. Lesbians became increasingly involved in the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM).

By the early 1980s, the movement moved away from separatism to a renewed interest in affirming a separate identity and developing political alliances. CHE retook its leading position in the queer world. This world faced a new threat, this time from the Thatcher government. Clause 28, established in 1988 and prohibiting any "promoting of homosexuality" and teaching about homosexuality in school, became extremely influential. During the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the government also re-

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mained silent for a long time, which led to a repoliticization of the queer movement. Only from the mid-1990s, and particularly after the Labour government was elected in 1997, were significant changes for the legal equalization for queers undertaken.

Concerning Jewish life in the UK, after World War II, the country counted the highest number of Jews in Europe. Orthodox Judaism is the main representative of British Jewry, and, measured by its members, the largest denomination in the UK. central-Orthodoxy with its umbrella organization United Synagogue elects the country's Chief Rabbi. The United Synagogue was challenged by ultra-Orthodoxy that was one of the religious movements gaining momentum. Politically, British Jews leaned more to the right and started aligning with the Tories, since socialist policies did not appeal to them after they had become increasingly middle class. Additionally, both antisemitism and cooperation with the PLO were prevalent in the Labour Party.

Besides ultra-Orthodoxy, the progressive branch of Judaism experienced an increasing membership. In the UK, Reform and Liberal Judaism split in the beginning of the 20th century and never reunited. The Reform Movement (Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, RSGB) was more conservative in the second half of the century than their US-American counterpart. Liberal Judaism was more "radical" and the "cutting edge of modern Judaism."[1] However, both denominations agreed on the Leo Baeck College as their shared rabbinical seminary in 1956.

5.1 Coming Out and the Way to the Jewish Gay Group (1971 – 1974)

5.1.1 The Jewish Research Group

As mentioned previously, GLF provided the first opportunity for many queers in the UK to express their identity. The manifesto of GLF London stated:

> Homosexuals, who have been oppressed by physical violence and by ideological and psychological attacks at every level of social interaction, are at last becoming angry. [...] We will show you how we can use our righteous anger to uproot the present oppressive system with its decaying and constricting ideology, and how we, together with other oppressed

1 Rayner, *Affirmations of Liberal Judaism*, 4.

> groups, can start to form a new order, and a liberated life-style, from the alternatives which we offer.[2]

It further described how to fight for gay liberation:

> The starting point of our liberation must be to rid ourselves of the oppression which lies in the head of every one of us. This means freeing our heads from self-oppression and male chauvinism, and no longer organizing our lives according to the patterns with which we are indoctrinated by straight society. [...] By freeing our heads, we get the confidence to come out publicly and proudly as gay people, and to win over our gay brothers and sisters to the ideas of gay liberation. [...] Before we can create the new society of the future, we have to defend our interests as gay people here and now against all forms of oppression and victimization.[3]

Instead of assimilating, being different was the agenda. As Weeks points out, coming out (and, therefore, becoming visible) as homosexual was "a touchstone of involvement in GLF."[4] This was also true for homosexuals who were Jewish. The homosexual part of their identity drove them into GLF; but coming out as homosexual *and* Jewish was another step in freeing themselves from oppression. However, they sometimes experienced antisemitic remarks from GLF leftists.[5] Additionally, the manifesto attacked Judaism and Christianity directly for their exclusion of homosexuals.[6] During a meeting that was filled with some antisemitic tensions, homosexual Jews raised their voices as Michael Brown described:

> I sat with someone who was an Orthodox Jew and in the closet. People were talking about having a religious group and assuming that it would be about Christianity. [...] The other man stood up and said 'What about Jews?' and this brought the usual comments, which I protested about. Someone said 'Well, have your own group' and the other man said 'We will, then' and I agreed and so it started.[7]

Thus, these Jews organized a group within GLF that gathered Jewish members, very much in GLF's spirit of "coming together" and the idea "of solidarity and

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2 Lisa Power, *No Bath but Plenty of Bubbles. An Oral History of the Gay Liberation Front, 1970 – 73* (London: Cassell, 1995), 316.

3 Power, *No Bath but Plenty of Bubbles*, 328 – 329.

4 Weeks, *Coming Out*, 191.

5 Cf. Power, *No Bath but Plenty of Bubbles*, 205.

6 "Gay people have been attacked as abominable and sinful ever since the beginning of both Judaism and Christianity, and even if today the Church is playing down these strictures on homosexuality, its new ideology is that gay people are pathetic objects for sympathy." (Power, *No Bath but Plenty of Bubbles*, 317.)

7 Power, *No Bath but Plenty of Bubbles*, 205.

strength coming through collective endeavor."[8] The Jewish Research Group (JRG) was founded on December 2, 1971[9] by secular, "moderate religious,"[10] and former ultra-orthodox, Chasidic Jews.[11] The meeting place for the group was the University of London Union.[12] It complemented various other groups within GLF that addressed and discovered certain subissues within the gay liberation, such as the "Church Research Group," the "Women's Group," or the "Communes Group."[13] The JRG was a relatively small group; the core appears to have consisted of only two people, one of whom only played a (morally) supportive role, whereas the other was responsible for organizing and representing the group.[14] In a leaflet, the JRG described its position:

> Dear Brothers and Sisters, Because we are homosexual, we are constantly suffering from discrimination and oppression. However, because we are Jewish homosexuals, Judaism and the Jewish community discriminate and oppress us even more so. For this reason, [...] a group of Jewish homosexuals (Male and Female) has been formed in order to discuss and research on the biblical and sociological views.[15]

The group not only aimed to deal with religious matters, but certainly to address the Jewish community: "We also endeavor to approach our clergy and Jewish societies and arrange intermeetings. [...] There are many Jewish homosexuals who are afraid to reveal their identity. Now's Your Opportunity, because you are one of us."[16]

The Jewish community had to recognize that homosexual Jews "do [sic!] exist in large numbers."[17] The stance of British Jewry on this issue was clear as the "Ask

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8 Weeks, *Coming Out*, 191.

9 Cf. Gay Liberation Front Newsheet [sic!] and Information from Today until 8th December, 1971, HCA/GLF/1, folder 1, Gay Liberation Front Collection (GLF), Hall-Carpenter-Archives (HCA), London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), 1

10 Simon Benson, "The Jewish Homosexual in Society," *Come Together*, no. 12 (Spring 1972): 4.

11 Cf. no author, "Liberated Chasid," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5361 (January 21, 1972): 6.

12 Cf. Gay Liberation Front Diary, Wednesday 19th January to Wednesday 26th January, 1972, HCA/GLF/1, LSE, 1.

13 Cf. Groups within London Gay Liberation Front, 1972, HCA/GLF/3, folder 3, GLF, HCA, LSE.

14 Cf. Klesse, "Identity Formation and Society," 106.

15 Gay Liberation Front Jewish Research Group Shalom, probably 1972, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, box 14, folder 69, Albany Trust Collection, HCA, LSE.

16 Gay Liberation Front Jewish Research Group Shalom, probably 1972, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, HCA, LSE.

17 Benson, "The Jewish Homosexual in Society," 3.

the Rabbi" section of January 1971 in the *Jewish Chronicle (JC)*[18] reflected: homosexual relations were sinful, only the question of whether these relations should be criminalized by law in a secular state was debatable.[19]

Besides weekly meetings attended by Jews of different religious backgrounds, the JRG organized a public symposium ("The Jewish Homosexual in Society") at the University of London Union in February 1972. It was attended by over 60 people and the panel consisted of four individuals, all covering different aspects in the area of homosexuality and Judaism:

1.) Dr. Brian Barrett, a psychiatrist: he stated that homosexuality was not a medical condition, and that homosexuals are "simply natural, sexual human beings."

2.) Michael Butler, deputy director of the Samaritans (a charity to support people in emotionally challenging situations and, thus, to prevent suicide): he spoke about gays and lesbians in distress and those parents who disowned their children.

3.) Paul Shaw, student director of Hillel House (the major Jewish student center in London): he explained the changing nature of sexual morality and the large generation gap between students and their parents with regard to this. The audience loudly criticized him for asking for patience and stating that Jewish homosexuals' demands would be met eventually.

4.) Francis Treuherz, former senior social worker at the Association for Jewish Youth: he took the traditional Jewish stance towards homosexuality and compared homosexuals to drug addicts. His remarks provoked massive resistance from the audience.[20]

As correspondence suggests, organizer Simon Benson tried to get religious officials to attend the symposium. Recorded are three letters Benson received, two of which reflect the attitude of rejection towards homosexuality:

> As you have expressed, your organization realized that the Torah forbids the act of homosexuality, and you cannot expect any Rabbi or Minister openly to express any support for your Movement.[21] – Saul Amias of Edgware Synagogue (Orthodox)

> Whether homosexuality is a SIN [sic!] or a Sickness you and your friends must not expect to be given 'communal or organizational status[.]' It is like asking for all those who publicly violate the Shabbat and wish to call themselves 'THE SHABBAT VIOLATERS GROUP' [sic!] [t]o be given recognition. I do not consider homosexuality as a natural thing otherwise the TORAH

18 The Jewish Chronicle is London based, was founded in 1841, and is, therefore, the oldest Jewish newspaper of the UK. It was and still is nondenominational and features a broad range of news from Jewish life in the UK and abroad.

19 No author, "Ask the Rabbi," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5307 (January 8, 1971): 19.

20 Cf. Benson, "The Jewish Homosexual in Society," 3.

21 Letter from Rev. Saul Amias to Simon Benson, February 9, 1972, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

> [sic!] would not condemn it.[22]
> – Leslie H. Hardman, Hendon United Synagogue (Orthodox)

In fact, one of the responders supported Benson and the symposium:

> [...], I do want you to know that I appreciate your problems as a community desiring to be Jewish and that I am concerned.[23]
> – Rabbi Albert H. Friedlander, Westminster Synagogue (nonaffiliated Reform congregation)

Unfortunately, Rabbi Friedlander was not able to attend due to his busy schedule. The audience of the symposium, however, made harsh attacks against rabbis and Jewish leaders during the symposium since they had not dared to attend.[24]

Another important, and apparently noteworthy, aspect of the symposium was that a trans* or gender-nonconforming Jew raised their voice:

> Towards the end of the three and a half hour meeting, an [A]merican/Jewish transvestite called Rachel resented that the entire meeting had been dominated by two sex roles – only male and female – and she said that there are more than two types of sexuality, 'amazing' the audience by stating that in their transvestite club in London over 50 % are Jewish.[25]

This incident was neither explained further nor taken up in another context or, as far as it can be determined, in other group meetings. There is also nothing known about this Jewish-dominated "transvestite club" Rachel mentioned. It was only in 1980 that JGG's newsletter mentioned: "Young, London Jewish Transvestite group is now holding regular meetings in South Wembley."[26] This group does not appear in any other documents and it is unclear how long it existed and/or what, if any, impact it had.

In summary, the symposium marks the peak of the JRG. It was felt that no purpose for such a group remained within GLF, and the lack of active members seemed to reinforce this view.[27] The group went "into abeyance" in mid-March

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22 Copy of letter from Rev. Leslie H. Hardman to Simon Benson, February 7, 1972, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

23 Letter from Rabbi Albert H. Friedlander to Simon Benson, September 19, 1972, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

24 Cf. Benson, "The Jewish Homosexual in Society," 3.

25 Benson, "The Jewish Homosexual in Society," 3–4.

26 Cf. scattered newsletter pages titled "Typist Is this a magazine/Newsletter or an Ellie, Golda fan sheet," probably 1980, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

27 Cf. Benson, "The Jewish Homosexual in Society," 3–4, and London Gay Liberation Front Daily Dilatory Dipsy Distinguished Deranged Diary from Wednesday March 1, 1972, HCA/GLF/1, LSE, 1.

1972[28] and ultimately ceased with an official note on March 23, 1972.[29] Benson, however, was ready to organize another group for Jewish homosexuals outside of the GLF context when others would support it actively.[30]

5.1.2 The Jewish Homosexual Liaison Group

Indeed, Benson received enough responses from homosexual Jews who wanted to establish a "nationwide 'Jewish Lia[i]son Group.'"[31] To explain why this group was founded outside GLF, Benson distinguished it from the front's standpoint: Jewish homosexuals did not want to be different or radical, but sought to end the discrimination and condemnation against them by both the Jewish community and religion. His personal ideas for the group were to gather homosexual Jews, advise and support them with their coming out, offer social and cultural events, and to help form local groups.[32] Accordingly, the Jewish Liaison Group was formed and received the name of Jewish *Homosexual*[33] Liaison Group (J*Hs*LG) in September or October 1972.[34] Even though Benson initially tried to find members within GLF,[35] the J*Hs*LG became autonomous from GLF. He explained the discomfort homosexual Jews felt within GLF in a letter to Anthony Grey, the director of the Albany Trust, a counseling organization and complement of the former HLRS, which was now called the Sexual Law Reform Society:

> Many Jewish Gays and Lesbians are very interested in our Group [...] but do not agree with GLF and their anarchist anti-establishment views. Myself included. GLF seem to be getting more & more anti everything, we are therefore arranging that we are <u>not</u> [sic!] publicizing

28 Cf. Gay Liberation Front Diary from Wednesday 15th March, 1972, HCA/GLF/2, folder 2, GLF, HCA, LSE, 1.

29 Cf. London Gay Liberation Front Diary Wednesday 22nd March, 1972, HCA/GLF/3, LSE, 1.

30 Cf. London Gay Liberation Front Diary Wednesday 22nd March, 1972, HCA/GLF/3, LSE, 2, and Benson, "The Jewish Homosexual in Society," 4.

31 Cf. Gay Liberation Front (G.L.F.) "Jewish Liason Group" [sic!] (By Simon Benson), HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

32 Cf. Gay Liberation Front (G.L.F.) "Jewish Liason Group," HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

33 An invitation for the later "Think/Teach-In" in November suggests in the headline that the name was "Jewish Homophile Liaison Group (Organisation for Jewish Homosexuals)." Simon Benson signed the invitation with the name "Jewish Liaison Group" (cf. Jewish Homophile Liaison Group [Organisation for Jewish Homosexuals], Teach-In Invitation, 1972, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE). However, the group was called "Jewish Homosexual Liaison Group" in advertisements and reports in *Gay News*. A cohesive decision on the name was made in 1973, see Section 5.1.3.

34 Cf. letter from Simon Benson to Anthony Grey, August 23, 1972, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE, 3.

35 Cf. scattered document beginning with Local Group Addresses etc., HCA/GLF/3, LSE, 2.

> this [the group and the later "Think-In"] under GLF or any political Gay movement but imply independent, more on a sociological level, in order we can attract the many Jewish 'Gays' who do not wish to bring politics into it.[36]

As Christian Klesse commented, turning away from GLF meant dissociating from radical politics and the provocative style that was significant for GLF, but instead focusing on the social needs of homosexual Jews.[37]

The successor of the J*Hs*LG, the Jewish Gay Group – or the Jewish LGBT+ Group as it is called today, claims early 1972 as its time of foundation, being established before Beth Chayim Chadashim in Los Angeles, which held its first service on June 9, 1972. It is not entirely clear which event they view(ed) as the moment of foundation. Simon Benson saw the first queer Jewish group already realized with the JRG.[38] However, the JRG was a part of GLF, so the formation of the J*Hs*LG as an independent group, not working within in the framework of another organization, could also be regarded as the start of a long-lasting group, even though there was a transition from one group to another. Without a doubt, the JRG really started in 1972 – the last month of 1971 was a month of an initial consolidation with an unknown number of people involved, and the symposium in February was the first time in the UK that a gathering of many queer Jews discussed the issue of homosexuality publicly. Still, it would also be possible, and valid, to say that December 1971 is the birthdate of the first queer Jewish group in Europe (and the world).[39]

As its first activity, the J*Hs*LG members Benson and Peter Golds organized another panel discussion ("National Think-In") in November 1972 titled "Judaism and the Jewish Homosexual." It took place in the West Central Jewish Club in Holborn and was announced as an "important and thought provoking event."[40] It featured Dr. Alan Unterman, student chaplain and lecturer at Manchester University, the previously mentioned Anthony Grey, general practitioner Dr. Wendy Greengross, and Francis Treuherz, who had already participated in the symposium earlier that year. The group also invited former MP Ian Harvey who had to resign from

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36 Letter from Simon Benson to Anthony Grey, August 23, 1972, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE, 2–3.

37 Cf. Klesse, "Identity Formation and Society," 109.

38 Cf. Benson, "The Jewish Homosexual in Society," 3.

39 A scattered collection of clippings in the London Metropolitan Archives suggests that there was an attempt to form a small group of Jewish homosexuals at the University of Manchester. This was probably a loose group of students who shared their experiences. Up until the 1990s, there is no recording of an actual queer Jewish group in Northern England (cf. clippings of the Jewish Telegraph Manchester, February 4, 1972, LMA/4653/PR01/06/005, box 6, folder 5, Rainbow Jews Collection, London Metropolitan Archives [LMA]).

40 Cf. Jewish Homophile Liaison Group (Organisation for Jewish Homosexuals), Teach-In Invitation, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

his office following a sex scandal involving a man and subsequently became the vice president of CHE.[41]

For the first time, the J*Hs*LG advertised an event in the newly founded newspaper *Gay News.*[42] The "Think-In" was such a successful event given that more than 190 people attended,[43] even though many of them were not homosexual and/or Jewish.[44] But for many queer Jews, this ad and the "Think-In" was their first entry into the J*Hs*LG.[45]

The Jewish Chronicle initially refused to publish any advertisement for the J*Hs*LG: "We do not publish any advertisements which are contrary to Jewish law and for that reason we are unable to accept an advertisement promoting a homosexual society since homosexuality is condemned by all Jewish religious groupings."[46] However, the newspaper also stated:

> On the other hand, one appreciates that a problem does exist, and we have, in fact, discussed this problem in both featured articles and in our news columns. While, therefore, we cannot accept an advertisement for the Group, we would be willing to deal with their 'Think-In' as a news story provided that it turns out to be a newsworthy event.[47]

Subsequently, the JC reported about the different standpoints shared during the event:[48] addressing the Jewish homosexuals in the room, Greengross expressed her sympathy for their cause. She encouraged them to campaign for their needs

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41 Cf. Ian Harvey, *To Fall Like Lucifer: The True Story of a Very British Scandal* (London: Biteback, 1971).

42 Cf. Editorial Team, "Paper Turns Down Ad," *Gay News* 10 (November 1972): 6, and Editorial Team, "Information," *Gay News* 10 (November 1972): 16.

43 Cf. leaflet "Introducing the Gay & Lesbian Group," HCA/LGCM/7/30, box 7, folder 30, Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement Collection (LGCM), HCA, LSE.

44 Cf. Correspondent, "Problems of being 'gay'," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5405 (November 21, 1972): 10, and Jakov Geismann, "National Jewish Talk In," *Gay News* 12 (December 1972): 5.

45 Cf. Norman Goldner, Interview Rainbow Jews Project (RJ201321 A and RJ201321B), interviewed by James Lesh, transcript by Hannah Platt, http://www.rainbowjews.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Norman-Interview-Transcript.pdf, accessed February 7, 2022, 2, and David Rubin, Interview Rainbow Jews Project (RJ201307 A), interviewed by Zack Shlachter, transcript by John Clarke, http://www.rainbowjews.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/David-Rubin-transcript-summary-.pdf, accessed February 7, 2022, 2.

46 Letter from Jewish Chronicle's editor William Frankel to Francis Treuherz, October 26, 1972, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

47 Letter from Jewish Chronicle's editor William Frankel to Francis Treuherz, October 26, 1972, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

48 Unfortunately, the article did not include the standpoint of Francis Treuherz. A commentary in *Gay News* noticed that Ian Harvey gave "his famous Dunkirk speech that everyone has heard before" (Geissmann, "National Jewish Talk In," 5).

and to actively work for acceptance, showing that Jewish homosexuals are no different to any other Jewish group. Anthony Grey reported about his experience working with Jewish homosexuals who were divided between their sexuality and remaining part of their Jewish families. Alan Unterman tried to connect the traditional standpoint towards homosexuality with the claim for acceptance and integration expressed by Jewish homosexuals. Being unable to get married or have children (at least in the 1970s), homosexuals fell short in one area of a traditional Jewish life. Hence, they should concentrate on other ways to contribute to Judaism, the Jewish community, and society in general.[49] The JC article refrained from commentary, but carefully reproduced what happened during the daylong event.[50] In the next issue of the JC, however, a reader was especially indignant about Greengross' remarks. His letter to the editor repeated homosexuality's "condemnation" in the Torah and noxiously expressed his disgust about homosexuals.[51] This outburst against queer Jews was answered by two other readers that clearly disagreed with the remarks made. They resented the tone, called for compassion, and appealed to the concept of "live and let live."[52] This was the first time that homosexuality was discussed widely in the JC.

Gay News, however, in addressing the JC article and the following debate stated: "Jewish Press Lashes Gays."[53] The queer newspaper took the opportunity to report about the "Think-In:" it began with a more polemic piece by Jakov Geissmann. He was bored during the event and neither appreciated the guests or the atmosphere, nor the fact that Jews, for whom the event was held, were actually the minority in the room.[54] Simon Benson responded to this report and stated, for the reader's sake, "it's my duty (as organizer of this think-in) to emphasize the positive structure and climax of this meeting."[55] He underlined the success of the "Think-In." The entire J*Hs*LG shared this evaluation, especially because the majority of homosexual Jews who attended the meeting spoke up and shared their experiences

49 Underman was Orthodox himself, but this did not hinder him in demanding compassion for homosexuals and a welcoming attitude also from an Orthodox perspective. He renewed his stance in 1993 in an article in the journal *Jewish Quarterly*, cf. Alan Underman, "Judaism and Homosexuality. Some Orthodox Perspectives," *Jewish Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (1993): 5–9.

50 Cf. Correspondent, "Problems of being 'gay'," 10.

51 Cf. Gerald Jacobs, "The Sin of Homosexualism," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5406 (December 1, 1972): 25.

52 Cf. Samuel Litvin, "Homosexual Practices 'Not Sinful'," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5407 (December 8, 1972): 27, and Penelope Goodwin, "'Bigoted Attitude'," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5407 (December 8, 1972): 27.

53 Cf. Editorial Team, "Jewish Press Lashes Gays," *Gay News* 14 (January 1973): 5.

54 Cf. Geissmann, "National Jewish Talk In," 5.

55 Simon Benson, "Correcting False Impressions," *Gay News* 13 (December 1972): 2.

for the first time. Simon also defended the invited speakers against Geissmann's attacks of not having enough solidarity with the group's cause. However, more importantly, through a questionnaire at the end of the meeting, Simon received "a massive response" from Jewish homosexuals who wanted to be active and continue the J*Hs*LG.[56]

5.1.3 Becoming the Jewish Gay Group

The "Think-In" was an overwhelming success, not only for the queer Jewish scene in the UK, but also for the J*Hs*LG in particular. The event was its last public one, and from that moment on, the J*Hs*LG concentrated on private meetings and parties.[57] There is a lack of evidence of what happened in 1973 and 1974. By studying the material, it becomes obvious that there were more changes in the name of the group. Until January 1973, the group published advertisements, as already mentioned, under the name Jewish Homosexual Liaison Group. Then, the 16th issue of *Gay News* (beginning of February 1973) suggests that there were two groups recruiting members – the J*Hs*LG and the Jewish Homophile Group: "Jewish Homosexual Liaison Group welcomes new members, also advice and befriending service for all Jewish gays. Please write only to Simon Benson [...]. Jewish Homophile Group welcomes new members of either sex. For further information please write to Timothy Goldard [...]."[58]

What is striking, besides the two different group names, is that there are different people to contact. While the first ad names Benson, the second refers to Timothy Goldard – a pseudonym that was used by the group for a long time, so no member had to reveal their identity in public announcements.[59] This suggests a split in the group, probably connected with Benson, who does not reappear as a leading figure and is said to have withdrawn in 1973.[60] The meeting minutes of the Jewish *Homophile* Liaison Group (J*Hp*LG) of April 1973 mentioned that there had been an inaugural meeting preceding this particular meeting.[61] Melvyn Fishman,

56 Cf. Benson, "Correcting False Impressions," 2.
57 Cf. minutes of a meeting of the Jewish Homophile Liaison Group held at 80 Chambers Lane on Sunday April 15th 1973, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.
58 Editorial Team, "Information," *Gay News* 16 (February 1973): 16.
59 Conversation with Russell Van Dyk via zoom on October 26, 2021.
60 Cf. Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 59.
61 Cf. minutes Sunday April 15th 1973, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

Peter Golds, and Ian Lennard were considered the founders of this group.[62] The meeting minutes also stated that a bank account was opened under the name J*Hp*LG.[63] In later issues of *Gay News*, the group appeared under the name Jewish Homophile Group.[64]

The constant name changes reflect the uncertainty about the direction in which the group should proceed. There was a need for a group gathering Jewish homosexuals, but it was not entirely clear how. The more assertive word "homosexual" was especially claimed by the Gay Liberation Movement in opposition to the more conservative "homophile."[65] Although Benson did diverge from GLF, he did not turn away from more political involvement and creating outreach. This is reflected, for example, in the panel discussions that attracted many (also non-Jewish) people. Choosing a less political name with the emphasis on "homophile" helped to stress the social, more intimate character of the group which it pursued after the "Think-In."

The J*Hp*LG set itself the goals of organizing Jewish homosexuals, discussing common aims and ideas, and establishing contacts with other Jewish homosexuals in order to strengthen the group.[66] Sociability became the essential function of the J*Hp*LG. In this approach, the first Passover Seder was held in a member's home in April 1973 and attended by 21 members. The few female members prepared the food, and the Haggadah was recited by an Israeli visitor invited for this occasion. A special focus of the Seder was to commemorate the persecution of Jews throughout the decades. The group believed that this was the first "Gay Seder" in history.[67] The group's first social party followed a month later.[68] There were almost no aspirations anymore to present the group in the public arena. The apparently final evening discussion held by the group was recorded in March 1973.[69] Members who were active in the group still demanded the end of all discrimination and oppression by the Jewish community, but the group did not appear publicly anymore.

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62 Cf. JGG Newsletter October 7, 1977, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records), LGBT CCNHA, 1.

63 Cf. minutes Sunday April 15th 1973, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

64 Starting with Editorial Team, "Information," *Gay News* 17 (February 1973): 16.

65 Cf. Section 1.5.

66 Cf. Gloria Tessler, "Clamour for 'Liberation'," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5470 (February 22, 1974): 14.

67 Cf. Editorial Team, "First Gay Seder," *Gay News* 23 (May 1973): 8.

68 Cf. document titled "Jewish Homophile Liaison Group" and dated May 13, probably 1973, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

69 Cf. Editorial Team, "Club Activities, etc.," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5421 (March 16, 1973): 39. It is worthwhile noticing that the JC declined any responsibility for the advertisements in this section: "Certain functions are held in premises which do not comply with the local authority's safety regulations." (Editorial Team, "Club Activities, etc.," 39.)

This led to the impression stated by JC reporter Gloria Tessler: "[...] since the initial flourish with which the group was formed, little has been heard of it, and this, despite suggestions by some of its sympathizers that homosexuality within the Jewish community is the same *pro rata* [sic!] as that within the general community in Britain."[70]

The same reporter denied that the group had been a powerful pressure group and predicted that it would soon dissolve.[71] She was, in fact, proven wrong as the group reinvented itself by emphasizing the privacy of its members, at least in its early years, in contrast to being very public.

Eventually, the group changed its name again to the Jewish Gay Group (JGG). It is difficult to determine what the reasons for the change were – it probably reflects discussions about the terms at that time.[72] Alexander Eisenberg was not able to determine when the group changed its name, he suggested "at some point between 1974 and 1975."[73] Since no original documents from the group that recorded the name change were passed on, the group's ads in *Gay News* are more informative: in August 1974, ads started mentioning the Jewish Gay Group.[74] This new name was retained until the late 1980s and introduced a "period of consistence"[75] for this British group of Jewish queers.

5.2 Coffee Evenings and Parties: JGG's Early Years (1974 – 1979)

This period was shaped by the group's institutionalization. The group was determined to become a private, not publicly visible group that would only serve the social needs of its (predominately male) members. This meant a limited circle of allies, and organizational problems arose when the members, on whom the group relied, did not contribute to the events. However, this did not prevent JGG from growing in number, enabling it to further develop throughout the 1970s.

70 Tessler, "Clamour for 'Liberation'," 14.
71 Cf. Tessler, "Clamour for 'Liberation'," 14.
72 Cf. Section 1.5.
73 Eisenberg, "Exclusive Recognition," 25.
74 Cf. Editorial Team, "Ads & Infos," *Gay News* 55 (August 1974): 19.
75 Eisenberg, "Exclusive Recognition," 25.

5.2.1 Organizational Structure, Goals, and Membership

Around the same time the group changed its name to JGG, its members also agreed on a constitution to structure the collective, and determine how the group should work.[76] The number of people loosely affiliated with the group rose to over 150, so it was also necessary to establish membership standards.[77] The constitution established that the group should be managed by a committee consisting of a chairperson, a treasurer, a secretary, and six additional members. The committee was to be elected at each annual general meeting, at which resolutions would be passed on the group's future direction. It was decided that the group "shall be completely independent and shall not affiliate itself to any religious, political, semi-religious or semi-political group, organization, or society."[78] This was especially important in order to not discourage Jews from whatever religious background. In fact, the group represented the whole range of Jewish identity, from the atheist to the ultra-Orthodox Jew.[79] The group's former experiences with GLF – the dissociation from radical politics and GLF's provocative style – led the group to assert itself as an apolitical entity. The main objective was to provide a meeting place with a friendly and sociable atmosphere for any Jewish queer and to organize activities that would be of interest to them. Leaving (Jewish) politics behind was regarded as a means of creating a safe space without additional fragmentation. Besides this, the group would provide lecturers to any other organization to speak about homosexuality and guidance to anyone (especially Jews) seeking help regarding their homosexuality.[80]

With regard to membership, any Jew – of birth and faith – could join the group, regardless of their sexuality. However, non-Jewish queers were not allowed to receive membership status and could only join as visitors or guests of other Jewish members.[81] All members were obliged to pay dues; the constitution sets out strict payment regulations.[82] With these standards in place, the group numbered 83 mem-

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76 Cf. Timothy Goldard, "So You Think That You Have Problems?," *Gay News* 57 (November 1974): 12.

77 Cf. Goldard, "So You Think That You Have Problems?," 12.

78 Jewish Gay Group – Constitution, box A–90 304, Special Collections, Hebrew Union College, Klau Library Cincinnati (HUC), 1.

79 Cf. report of the Chairman Bernard D. David, September 6, 1978, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

80 Cf. Jewish Gay Group Constitution, box A–90 304, HUC, 1.

81 Cf. Jewish Gay Group Constitution, box A–90 304, HUC, 2.

82 Cf. Jewish Gay Group Constitution, box A–90 304, HUC, 2.

bers in 1975.[83] With a few ups and downs,[84] the number of members reached almost 90 three years later.[85] Above all, as Norman Goldner said, this was "only the top of the Jewish Gay 'iceberg'."[86] The membership structure included Jews from all age groups – "from teens to over 60."[87]

The constitution addressed both men and women, even making it clear that members of both sexes could take office.[88] Indeed, there were women present in the first years, although not many. Just a few names occasionally pop up in documents of that time.[89] However, sometimes, the number of women attending the meetings even surprised the organizers.[90] A few of them were active in the committee, but only until the second half of 1975.[91] The group developed into a predominately male group which perpetuated itself due to the fact that women felt uncomfortable when they were the only woman in the room, and never came back. The experiences of lesbian Jews in the UK are described at a later point in this chapter, but it is worth noting that JGG did not create a space for them in the 1970s and through most of the 1980s despite not excluding them formally. As Bernard D. Davis summarized in the annual report of 1978: "[W]e have regrettably failed to attract many women members."[92]

5.2.2 Offering Sociability: Intimate Meetings and Parties

In the spirit of the decision to organize a nonpolitical, but rather socially-centered group, the main offer to JGG's members were meetings in an intimate, private set-

83 Cf. Jewish Gay Group, Chairman's report for year ending August 31, 1975, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

84 Cf. Chairman's Report 1976/1977, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

85 Cf. JGG Newsletter September 7, 1978, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

86 JGG Newsletter November 11, 1977, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

87 Cf. letter from Norman Goldner to the Serials Department of the Hebrew Union College Library, box A–90 304, Special Collections, HUC.

88 Cf. Jewish Gay Group Constitution, box A–90 304, Special Collections, HUC, 1 – 2.

89 For example, in the minutes from Sunday April 15 1973, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

90 Cf. JGG Newsletter September 9, 1975, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

91 Cf. Chairman's report for year ending August 31, 1975, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, and Annual Report – 1975/6, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

92 Cf. Report of Bernard D. Davis, September 6, 1978, LGBT CCNHA.

ting. In the first two years, the committee organized a monthly meeting which could include a quiz, a talk by a guest, discussions (e.g., with Anthony Grey[93]), or musical evenings. These meetings, offering a special topic or event, were later organized more irregularly. However, what became a regular, central, feature of JGG's activities, were the coffee evenings.[94] Planned to occur weekly, one member opened the door of their home to welcome the members for coffee, drinks, and snacks. JGG did not have a fixed venue for its activities; therefore, the group was dependent on the hospitality of its members. The importance of the coffee evenings becomes clear with a frivolous statement made in the newsletter: "Coffee evenings are now so firmly fixed in your diaries for Monday evening, I picture London's Gay Jewry coming out of their homes, trance-like, to attend as the clock strikes eight o'clock – and boy, what a sight!"[95] Other "socials" were parties, also held at members' homes. The group was eager to offer parties for members to socialize, to get in contact with other gay Jews, and – as interviews suggest – also to find sexual partners.[96] By all means, parties were very popular among the members.[97] Occasions could be Jewish holidays like a "Simchat Torah disco"[98] or a theme party.[99] The pen friend section in the newsletter in which Jewish queers tried to meet (inter)nationally through JGG was another means of connecting people.[100]

One name linked with the social activities of JGG in its first years is that of Freddie Kobler. Born in Czechoslovakia, he fled to the UK during World War II, became the owner of Grand Metropolitan Hotels, and quickly became a millionaire. He developed into "a sort of benefactor to the group,"[101] and irregularly invited the group's members up his home in London and his country estate until his death in

93 Cf. minutes Sunday April 15 1973, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

94 Cf. Chairman's report for year ending August 31, 1975, HCA/Albany Trust/14/69, LSE.

95 JGG Newsletter September 21, 1976, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

96 Cf. Interview with "Gordon" (8340 7083), June 6, 2008, LMA/4653/PR01/06/014, box 6, folder 14, Rainbow Jews Collection, LMA.

97 Cf. JGG Newsletter October 7, 1977, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

98 Cf. JGG Newsletter September 9, 1975, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

99 Cf. JGG Newsletter May 12, 1976, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

100 Cf. JGG Newsletter May 12, 1976, LGBT CCNHA, 1, and JGG Newsletter June 15, 1977, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

101 Cf. notes on chat with Peter Golds, June 13, 2008, LMA/4653/PR01/06/014, box 6, folder 14, Rainbow Jews Collection, LMA.

1984.[102] These visits to an exclusive and expensive world are remembered by many (former) JGG members.[103] Nothing is known about any financial contributions to the group beyond the membership dues, but Kobler offered the space and catering for coffee evenings, social meetings, and parties. During and after his lifetime, he and his trust fund respectively contributed to many philanthropic charities, especially in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Among others, he founded the Kobler Outpatient Clinic at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital for HIV patients.

For the Jewish part of JGG's activities, the annual Passover (or "Gay Seder") was the only feature that offered "religious overtones."[104] Even though the Seder was mostly held in a traditional manner,[105] the function was less to satisfy religious needs and offer religious guidance than to honor Passover as a part of Jewish tradition. The members could be reminded of the rich Jewish heritage.[106] However, more importantly in respect to the social impact of the group, the Seder was necessary for those who did not have anyone to celebrate it with, either because they had lost their families, or were unwelcome due to their coming out as queer. The group created space for belonging. As Laurence Brown put it: "We are kind of extended family across the age-groups. And like every family we shall be having a Seder which shall be held on the th[ir]d night of Pes[s]ach."[107]

In the 1970s, JGG's "religious" element meant bringing members even closer together at times when being alone felt even worse. Occasionally, members opened their doors during other important holidays like the fast-breaking on Yom Kippur.[108]

It is apparent that JGG was a strictly social group in the first years, focusing on networking and relationship building within the queer/gay Jewish scene. Given their status as outcasts both from the Jewish world and the UK in general, meeting privately was important for the members. Even the checks for dues could be issued to the "Jewish Liaison Group,"[109] so nobody would be exposed by paying the fees. JGG was the first group to come out publicly in Europe, so these initial years were shaped by their more intimate setting, and the creating of a sphere in "just" getting

102 Cf. scattered newsletter pages titled "Social Programme May 1984," Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

103 Cf. "Social Programme May 1984," LGBT CCNHA; Interview with "Gordon," Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA; conversation with Russell Van Dyk.

104 Annual Report – 1975/6, LGBT CCNHA.

105 Cf. JGG Newsletter May 12, 1976, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

106 Cf. Goldard, "So You Think That You Have Problems?," 12.

107 JGG Newsletter April 11, 1978, HCA/LGCM/7/30.

108 Cf. JGG Newsletter September 9, 1975, LGBT CCNHA.

109 Cf. Jewish Gay Group Constitution, box A–90 304, HUC.

to know oneself. This did not mean that everything went smoothly and without occasional frustration.

5.2.3 Small Number of Venues and Low Participation

Since JGG did not have a fixed meeting place, it was dependent on its members to host events like coffee evenings or other social activities. The committee was aware that this meant no offers for venues equals no meetings.[110] Only a few people agreed to open their homes. For the year 1975/76, chairman Peter Golds stated that the social function of the group was curtailed through a lack of such offers. He feared this lack of interest could have a disastrous effect on the group and concluded: "[…] however, so many of our members seem interested in just what they can get from the Group and giving little or nothing – except convenient knives in shoulder blades – in return."[111]

In July 1976, some coffee evenings were cancelled due to a lack of venues.[112] An enquiry among JGG's members about what they wanted from the group (such as having meetings on another day of the week or other activities[113]) was also mostly ignored.[114] The year 1976/77 was not an easy one for the group: there were not only a limited number of venues, which challenged JGG's ambitions, but also a lack of interest, for example, in the Silver Jubilee event that ended up having to be cancelled.[115] This left the committee wondering about the group's future.[116] Norman Goldner acknowledged that while membership figures were better than ever, however, "apathy and reluctance to participate do not bode well for the future."[117] In his portrayal of JGG, Alexander Eisenberg focused very heavily on these problems of a lack of venues and on the lack of involvement.[118] Despite these problems, it would not be appropriate to associate JGG's early years purely with these troubles, and it would be false to assume that these troubles were existential threats to the group. Even though events were cancelled, and frustration arose among the com-

110 Cf. JGG Newsletter September 9, 1975, LGBT CCNHA.
111 Annual Report – 1975/6, LGBT CCNHA.
112 Cf. JGG Newsletter June 9, 1976, 1, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.
113 Cf. JGG Newsletter May 12, 1976, LGBT CCNHA, 2.
114 Cf. JGG Newsletter June 9, 1976, LGBT CCNHA, 1.
115 Cf. JGG Newsletter June 15, 1977, LGBT CCNHA, 1.
116 Cf. JGG Newsletter October 7, 1977, LGBT CCNHA, 1.
117 Cf. JGG Newsletter June 15, 1977, LGBT CCNHA, 1.
118 Eisenberg, "Exclusive Recognition," 25–30.

mittee, the number of cancellations was low in comparison to what the group was able to achieve. Besides, the absence of members during the meetings did not have any troubling effect on finances.

The group's aim was not to organize large-scale events. The group's primary aim was to connect people and, as Goldner stated, if only one member has made one friend through JGG, the committee was convinced that the group was relevant.[119] Or, as Peter Golds put it: "[...] if our group has helped just one person to find happiness within him/herself, then our existence is justified."[120]

As a reaction to the indifference, however, the committee thought about what to change to make the meetings more attractive. The newly elected representatives of the 1977/78 year decided to revive an old idea and held coffee evenings with specific themes.[121] For example, they invited more guests to these coffee evenings, like the well-known psychiatrist and sexologist Charlotte Wolf.[122] The purpose was to "provide both intellectual and social stimulation."[123] Additionally, new faces showed up which gave new ideas and possibilities for venues.[124] These efforts proved successful, and there were more events with appropriate venues in the beginning of 1978.[125] The annual report of the 1977/78 year concluded: "The past year has seen a continuation in the pattern of activities set by previous Committees [...]. We are indebted to our members who have given us much generous hospitality and have hosted our functions. Without them the Group could not function."[126]

This did not mean that all of the problems were solved. The same report complained about the lack of cohesion in the group since its members came from so many different backgrounds. It was not possible to find mutually appreciated activities outside of the traditional group setting like theater visits, since tastes were so different.[127] The group experienced common challenges when working with a number of people that were a) voluntarily involved and b) connected only through one denominator (being Jewish and queer) while having different lifestyles beyond that. However, these challenges did not stop the group in its aspirations, and nor did the partially hostile environment in which the group found itself.

119 Cf. JGG Newsletter September 7, 1978, LGBT CCNHA, 1.
120 Chairman's report for year ending August 31, 1975, LGBT CCNHA.
121 Cf. JGG Newsletter November 11, 1977, LGBT CCNHA, 1.
122 Cf. JGG Newsletter April 11, 1978, HCA/LGCM/7/30, LSE.
123 JGG Newsletter April 11, 1978, HCA/LGCM/7/30, LSE.
124 Cf. JGG Newsletter July 27, 1978, HCA/LGCM/7/30, LSE.
125 Cf. JGG Newsletter February 23, 1978, HCA/LGCM/7/30, LSE.
126 Report of the Chairman Bernard D. Davis, September 6, 1978, LGBT CCNHA.
127 Cf. report of the Chairman Bernard D. Davis, September 6, 1978, LGBT CCNHA.

5.2.4 A Limited Circle of Allies

Within these early years, JGG only had a limited number of partners to work with. The group had more than 400 people or institutions on their mailing list by 1977.[128] These were mostly queer Jews from all over the UK and the world. In addition, queer synagogues in the United States and their partners received the group's newsletter. Very early on, the group welcomed guests from other countries to their meetings.[129] Since it was the first queer Jewish group in Europe, it attracted Jews who were visiting the UK.

Despite this, the early JGG was not able and (due to their social and intimate focus) for a great part not willing to establish strong connections with UK partners. If they occurred, they were mostly situated within the queer community. One of them was *Gay News*. Not only did the group advertise several campaigns for new members in the newspaper,[130] they also had the chance to write articles about their experiences of being queer and Jewish. In the first article in 1974, the group described the problems and pain of a homosexual raised in a Jewish family. They explained the need for their group and introduced it to the public.[131] The second article, published in 1977 by Laurence Brown, is a more philosophical piece about the similarity between the Jewish and queer community and their identities:

> The Jew must decide – and it is not one decision but a continuous series – whether to assimilate with the non-Jewish majority and deny, or try to ignore, his or her Jewishness, or to affirm it [...]. Many who despise their heritage and seek to suppress their background find it difficult to do so and live at peace with themselves. [...] Most gays will recognize this picture only too well, but just as being gay can be a burden or guilt or a blessing or joy, depending on one's attitude of mind, so being Jewish and gay can be either a double burden or a double blessing.[132]

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128 Cf. letter from Norman Goldner, box A–90 304, HUC.

129 Cf. JGG Newsletter February 2, 1976, Collection no. 65 box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA; JGG Newsletter July 8, 1976, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA; Annual Report – 1975/6, LGBT CCNHA.

130 Cf. JGG Newsletter March 15, 1976, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA; JGG Newsletter November 11, 1977, LGBT CCNHA, 1; JGG Newsletter July 27, 1978, HCA/LGCM/7/30, LSE.

131 Cf. Goldard, "So You Think That You Have Problems?," 12. This article is used throughout this chapter as a reference to reconstruct the group's history.

132 Laurence Brown, "Jewish and Gay: Conflict or Comfort?," *Gay News* 116 (April 1977): 21.

Brown further stated that the major problem facing JGG's members was the coming out process to their parents: "Some parents' reactions are savage. They feel betrayed and, where there is only one child, cheated of grandchildren."[133] Brown took the chance with this article to both present JGG, and set out their shared challenges on a more abstract level.

When *Gay News* faced troubles in 1977 because the paper and the editor were persecuted for blasphemous libel,[134] JGG launched a call for donations since "many of you will agree that the loss of *Gay News* would be A Great Shame [sic!]."[135] JGG saw itself as part of the queer community and wanted to mobilize on behalf of their partner and the longest running queer media at the time as many others did.[136]

Another exchange is recorded with an organization that was, in effect, the Christian counterpart of JGG: the Gay Christian Movement, established in April 1976. Another connection was made with the Open Church Group. Both invited JGG to their activities and parties. JGG returned the favor[137] and, for Gay Pride 1977, the Christian groups asked JGG to march with them under the banner "Gay Jews and Christians."[138] More examples of collaboration are not recorded after 1977. However, it probably did not stop here since JGG was included in the Gay and Lesbian Interfaith Alliance in 1984.[139] This was a space in which queer religious groups in London exchanged their knowledge. Besides JGG, there were only Christian movements present (e. g., the Metropolitan Community Church). The impact was limited, though. After 1986, there are no more meetings recorded.[140]

As per their main objectives, JGG was giving lectures and attended Q&As about the queer Jewish experience. CHE and its local branches seemed to be interested in this offer. For example, in 1976, the group spoke to CHE London group on "[a]tti-

133 Brown, "Jewish and Gay: Conflict or Comfort?," 21.

134 The newspaper published the poem "The Love that Dares to Speak its Name" by James Kirkup which sexualized the body of Jesus Christ after the crucifixion and said that Jesus had had sexual relations with other men. It was the last successful blasphemy trial in the UK. The editor of *Gay News* received a nine-month suspended jail sentence and, together with *Gay News*, a fine.

135 JGG Newsletter March 30, 1977, HCA/LGCM/7/30.

136 *Gay News'* readership grew from 8,000 to 40,000 after the trial (cf. British Library, "Gay News 1972," no date, https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item107459.html, accessed February 16, 2022).

137 Cf. JGG Newsletter December 9, 1976, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1, and JGG Newsletter January 26, 1977, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

138 Cf. JGG Newsletter June 15, 1977, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

139 Cf. minutes Gay Religious Groups Liaison Committee (GRCLC), March 22, 1984, HCA/LGCM/7/24, box 7, folder 24, LGCM, HCA, LSE.

140 Cf. Minutes GLIA (Gay Lesbian Interfaith Alliance), October 30, 1986, HCA/LGCM/7/24, LSE.

tudes towards homosexuality in the Jewish community,"[141] and later, the group attended an evening held by CHE in Winchester as a detailed report describes.[142] In accordance with its overall low profile, these appearances were only sporadic during these early years.

Whereas JGG made contact with some alliances within the queer community, the prospect of engaging with the British Jewish community seemed daunting. The most affirmative incident occurred in the summer of 1977 when a 21-year-old, male, observant Orthodox Jew, wrote to the "Help!" section of the JC that he was attracted to other men but did not want to self-identify as homosexual. He had no one to talk to in a homophobe environment which made it very difficult for someone who was only even suspected to have a homosexual desire. Counsellor Sally Marks first validated his feelings and advised him to find someone to talk to. She obviously knew about JGG and its sibling organizations around the world, but she "would not recommend that you contact them at the moment, since by associating yourself with other homosexuals, you could become identified and accepted as one."[143] Since traditional Judaism did not offer help nor any room for such a conversation, Marks mentioned that a group of Progressive/Reform rabbis had studied homosexuality and were willing to talk with those affected.[144]

The reactions to this piece by JC readers reflected the complex situation homosexuals faced in UK's Jewry at that time. The first by Colin Roth was more empathic with the young man. He rejected Marks' implication that Jewish organizations for homosexuals "exist to procure young men to join their own ranks."[145] These organizations would be the more appropriate place to find someone to talk about the difficult situation than any outside adviser. Roth ended his letter by writing that there is no contradiction between being homosexual and being integrated in a local Jewish community. This letter led to a quite negative reaction from Rabbi Isaac Nodel of Ilford Federation Synagogue in Essex. He wrote that he "was astounded and shocked to read that [g]ay organizations exist among our people."[146] After that, he refers to the prohibitions of homosexual acts in the Torah and concludes: "Some months ago, my local paper published a two-page article on homo-

141 Cf. JGG Newsletter December 9, 1976, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

142 Cf. Newsletter July and August 1979, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 2–3.

143 Sally Marks, "'I'm Attracted to Other Men'," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5645 (July 1, 1977): 14.

144 Cf. Marks, "'I'm Attracted to Other Men'," 14.

145 Colin Roth, "Gay Problems," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5646 (July 8, 1977): 20.

146 Isaac Nodel, "Gay Practices," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5647 (July 15, 1977): 20. This comment was sardonically revisited in JGG's newsletter (cf. JGG Newsletter September 1, 1977, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA).

sexuality. As a result of this, many readers wrote defending the practice, but regretfully not a single religious leader *denounced* [sic!] this perversion."[147]

Moshe Davis, the Executive Director of Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits' office, stood by Rabbi Nodel and rejected Marks' advice to refer to Reform rabbis in this matter. Davis asserts that the rabbis would be unaware of the traditional material on this topic. In Davis' (and ultimately Jakobovits') view, Norman Lamm's traditional halakhic deliberations about homosexuality[148] would be the best guide for the Jewish world.[149]

These two replies triggered one of JGG's members to write their own piece to contribute to the debate. The letter was signed under the group's pseudonym Timothy Goldard. It starts with the stirring words: "I am that I am, both Jewish and gay. I am neither proud nor ashamed, I am me. For not by choice am I and others Jewish, and not by choice either are we gay. We do not defy or abuse God's words or commandments, […]."[150]

The author stressed that all Jewish homosexuals are normal people, created in God's own image, and coming to peace with one's own identity can be excruciating enough. Rabbi Nodel's words were painful to read, so the author asked why so many only see sexual creatures in gay people, but no normality in them. The author underlined the necessity for groups of Jewish homosexuals to realize that they are not alone. Despite all resistance from others, they do exist and only wish the blessing of the Jewish mainstream.[151] With this letter, the debate in the JC ended. It made clear that homosexuals still had a difficult position among UK's Jewry. In fact, the mere organization of Jewish homosexuals per se was not appreciated.

However, the debate insinuated that there was some kind of change noticeable in the more progressive Reform branches. As early as in 1974, JGG had stated that from this part of British Jewry "hope for the gay Jew emanates."[152] And, indeed, JGG did set up connections with those rabbis who wanted to discuss their (counseling) role when engaging with homosexual Jews.[153] The group also made contacts with the Orthodox community[154] which did not prove to be very fruitful at that time. Lionel Blue was the first ordained rabbi to make an appearance at JGG in

147 Nodel, "Gay Practices," 20.
148 Cf. Section 3.2.
149 Cf. Moshe Davis, "Gay Practices," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5649 (July 29, 1977): 16.
150 Timothy Goldard, "Gay Practices," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5651 (August 12, 1977): 17.
151 Cf. Goldard, "Gay Practices," 17.
152 Cf. Goldard, "So You Think That You Have Problems?," 12.
153 Cf. Chairman's Report 1976/1977, LGBT CCNHA.
154 Cf. Chairman's Report 1976/1977, LGBT CCNHA.

June 1978.[155] He was well-known for his work as a rabbinical radio broadcaster and author. Blue gave a talk to the group about the Jewish tradition and homosexuality. Since "everyone had known for ages,"[156] it is fair to assume that Blue spoke about his own homosexuality and experiences as a homosexual Jew during that lecture. However, only three years later, he became the first rabbi in UK's history to come out publicly and published his highly anticipated speech "Godly and Gay" that he gave during a meeting of the Gay Christian Movement.[157]

While JGG struggled to obtain at least acknowledgement from the Jewish mainstream, there was one incident when an established Jewish organization appreciated JGG: in 1977/78, the Jewish Blind Society asked the group for donations. Since the committee did not feel that it would be appropriate to use the group's funds to donate to other organizations, they asked the members to donate money to JGG's bank account so that it could be forwarded to the society – this process "would help establish the Group amongst other organizations."[158] In this case, 22 pounds sterling were collected.[159] The opportunity to donate to a social group reflected the "underlying feeling" of some members "whose roots may well have been political."[160] Meanwhile, it is not unsurprising that a society campaigning for another minority in the Jewish community would appreciate JGG's help. Although in different ways, both experienced exclusion within the Jewish community.

It becomes apparent that JGG was, on the one hand, a social, intimate group during the 1970s. Initially, careful steps towards increased outreach were made, but those with the Jewish community testified to the still existing resentment towards queer people. However, these first links with the outside were consolidated from 1979 on, when the group became more engaged with its environment.

155 Cf. JGG Newsletter July 27, 1978, HCA/LGCM/7/30, LSE.

156 Lionel Blue, Interview Rainbow Jews Project (RJ201301), interviewed by Sharon Rapaport, transcript by Anna Barker, http://www.rainbowjews.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Transcription-Rabbi-Lionel-Blue-full-version-edit1.pdf, accessed February 17, 2022, 19.

157 A version can be found in Lionel Blue, "Godly and Gay," in *Jewish Explorations of Sexuality*, ed. Jonathan Magonet (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995), 117–131.

158 JGG Newsletter November 11, 1977, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

159 Cf. JGG Newsletter February 23, 1978, HCA/LGCM/7/30, LSE, 2.

160 Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group – An Early Potted History, January 2009, LMA/4653/PR01/06/013/002, box 6, folder 13/002, Rainbow Jews Collection, LMA.

5.3 More Social, More Religious, More Recognition. And Yet Another Name (1979 – 1987)

The private and intimate setting of JGG was a feature for many years. However, the newsletters indicate that this was increasingly becoming a subject of debate. In 1979, the newsletter's editor received a letter from an Israeli reader. He complained about a seemingly negative portrayal of London's Gay Pride Week in one of the previous newsletters and expressed his disappointment: "If the Jewish Gay Group chooses to ignore any Gay Political [sic!] issues it is entitled to do so, sad as this stand may be. If the JGG disassociated itself from political activities it should at least remain neutral to them, rather than adopt a negative attitude [...]."[161]

Norman Goldner, the editor, was forced to stress that all editorial comments were his own opinion and did not reflect JGG's stance.[162] Nevertheless, the reader had a valid point, and JGG had to face the criticism. As Peter Golds, who was the group's chairman for most of the time since its founding, put it, JGG was "without doubt the least adventurous"[163] among all queer Jewish groups at the time: "[I]nstead of setting a style we have scarcely progressed from that afternoon in 1972."[164]

Unfortunately, the group also had a bad reputation abroad. During a trip to the United States, Golds met four people who had had bad experiences with the group before. These people could even name the members responsible for them not feeling welcomed.[165] Golds was not the only one who travelled abroad, visiting other queer Jewish groups and synagogues, and concluded from these experiences that JGG should broaden its horizons.[166] The early involvement with the International Conferences of Gay Jews made the differences visible.[167] As a consequence of these differences, the committee decided to refocus the group. Peter Golds stated: "On balance the decision of 1972 to not hold any kind of services, in face to embrace agnosticism was wrong. This, our heritage, is the foundation of Judaism."[168] The most defining change was that the committee started introducing its own

161 JGG Newsletter July and August 1979, LGBT CCNHA, 2.
162 Cf. JGG Newsletter July and August 1979, LGBT CCNHA, 2.
163 JGG Newsletter July 1980, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.
164 JGG Newsletter July 1980, LGBT CCNHA, 1.
165 Cf. JGG Newsletter July 1980, LGBT CCNHA, 1.
166 Cf. no author, "You Don't Have to Be Gayish," *Capital Gay* 147 (June 8, 1984): 9.
167 Cf. Eisenberg, "Exclusive Recognition," 31.
168 JGG Newsletter July 1980, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

Shabbat and holiday services. Additionally, the group gained more visibility by coming out of its shell and working towards an increased outreach.

5.3.1 Changes in the Group's Activities

Regarding the group's activities, JGG decided to offer more religious activities, to introduce services, and to establish a *chavurah*: a get-together for the purpose of celebrating Shabbat "in a relaxed, extended family circle."[169] Moreover, the committee initiated new social activities besides the weekly coffee evenings that had been the group's most prominent social feature.

5.3.1.1 Becoming a Chavurah and Support from a Reform Synagogue

After Peter Golds stated that it was a mistake to rule out religious elements for JGG in July 1980, a *selichot* service to begin the period of the Jewish New Year was scheduled for September of the same year.[170] This was the first service in the group's history and a starting point for a new tradition that continues to this day. On Friday nights, the members came together, lit the Shabbat candles, did *kiddush*, celebrated the beginning of the Shabbat, and concluded the evening by eating, drinking coffee, and chatting.[171] In the beginning, the services took place irregularly, but, after only a short time, they occurred monthly.[172] During selected holidays like Rosh HaShanah or Chanukah (depending on availability of hosting members), the group offered special services. The services were performed in members' homes[173] and are likely to have offered a mix of different liturgical styles, influenced by the members conducting the services and their religious background. It is known that the group used a degenderized prayerbook.[174] The services were shaped by the engagement of JGG's members and were self-led to begin with. However, the group succeeded inviting guest rabbis and speakers. Rabbi Lionel Blue, in particular, became a recurring visitor to the services in the *chavurah's*

169 No author, "You Don't Have to Be Gayish," 9.
170 Cf. scattered newsletter pages titled "Diary Dates" starting with August 28, 1980, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.
171 Cf. Newsletter June – August 1981, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 2, and no author, "You Don't Have to Be Gayish", 1984.
172 Cf. JGG Newsletter February 1981, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 3.
173 Cf. no author, "You Don't Have to Be Gayish," 9.
174 Cf. no author, "You Don't Have to Be Gayish," 9.

first years. Occasionally, he prepared services only for JGG.[175] Another supporting rabbi was Jonathan Magonet,[176] the later principal of the Leo Baeck College in London.[177] In July 1981, Allen Bennett, often referred to as the first openly gay rabbi in the United States and serving the queer synagogue Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco, made a guest appearance that was even covered by the JC. In this article, JGG's Laurence Brown spoke about two homosexual British Reform rabbis who attended their services and a few Orthodox ones who were afraid of joining them.[178] It becomes obvious that, when the group welcomed rabbis, they were all affiliated with Liberal or Reform Judaism. This meant that the services leant more in these directions.[179]

A major breakthrough occurred in early 1982. The North West Reform Synagogue at Alyth Gardens, affiliated with the UK's Reform Movement, invited JGG to use their Youth and Community Center (not the synagogue room itself) for their *chavurah*. The group was allowed to use these facilities at their own responsibility as long as their meetings remained private.[180] As soon as in 1974, the synagogue's rabbi, Dow Marmur, had indicated that he did not want to oppose homosexuals, and would permit meetings of homosexual Jews on his congregation's premises.[181] The decision to host JGG's events had been made by the synagogue's council.[182] The congregation was subsequently informed about the details and did not object.[183] JGG could now continue their *chavurah* with the acknowledgement of a denominational synagogue and, therefore, from part of the organized Jewish mainstream. Peter Golds reacted to this joyful occasion:

> When our group was established, […], none of the founders believed that any of the above [i. e., recognition by parts of the British Jewish community and an invitation by a shul] would be conceivable. I know, I was present and moved at those first meetings from idealism

175 Cf. JGG Newsletter June – August 1981, LGBT CCNHA, 1.
176 Cf. JGG Newsletter March/April 1982, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.
177 The newsletters give account of the Rabbis Barbara Borts and Julia Neuberger (today DBE) also visiting the services in 1982 (cf. JGG Newsletter March/April 1982, LGBT CCNHA, 1).
178 Cf. Jewish Chronicle Reporter, "Gay Rabbi Holds Service," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5857 (July 24, 1981): 4.
179 Today, the *chavurah* of the Jewish LGBT+ Group follows mainly progressive/Reform traditions.
180 Cf. JGG Newsletter February/March 1982, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.
181 Cf. Tessler, "Clamour for 'Liberation'," 14.
182 Cf. Birgit Grant, "What the Rabbis Say," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6084 (November 29, 1985): 11.
183 Cf. JGG Newsletter February/March 1982, LGBT CCNHA, 2. Even though some members disagreed with this decision, they were neither loudly opposed nor tried to thwart JGG's meetings in the premises (cf. Grant, "What the Rabbis Say," 11).

> to scepticism. For some a dream is beginning to come true, let us hope that others of our membership will join in these exciting times.[184]

And, indeed, the *chavurah* had made JGG more open to the Jewish world.[185] Two years after their introduction, the group's then-chairman stated that the *chavurah* has "been successful beyond the expectations of us all."[186] Later, it even made a semantic shift: in 1984, the *chavurah* was named as the "main function" of the group.[187] There were now members turning to the group for social, political, *and* religious reasons. However, the members still came from various backgrounds, also religiously – some were observant, others secular, while others only had superficial contact with Judaism.[188] On the one hand, there were members who tried to express solely their Jewish identity through the group, often with political ambitions to change the attitude in the Jewish community towards Jewish queers and to combat racism and sexism, while, on the other hand, there were now others who JGG helped to reconcile their religious needs with their queer identities. JGG became "a forum for the [multifold] expression of Jewishness."[189]

5.3.1.2 More Social Activities

The *chavurah* became an additional feature of JGG, although it was not mandatory, nor was it the only way to participate. There were still members who did not want to engage in religious activities. Besides the *chavurah* having a distinct social character, with questions of changing Jewish liturgy and religious practice playing a very minimal role, JGG also expanded its social activities beyond the coffee evenings. The latter were valorized by further inviting guest speakers, especially from the queer community, as well as the speakers already invited to the *chavurah.* This demonstrated the stronger relationships the group was able to establish.

Additionally, more purely social events were introduced: poetry or quiz evenings, discussions, day trips, Yiddish classes, and musicals. Another quite successful feature became dinner evenings, first in member's homes, then in restaurants. In 1984, pub evenings were launched mostly held at the Kings Arms, a gay male bar in Soho. The group put a sign with only the acronym "JGG" on a bar table, so that

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184 Cf. JGG Newsletter February/March 1982, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

185 Cf. JGG Newsletter November 22, 1982, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

186 Chairman's Report, October 1982, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

187 Cf. no author, "Yes, but What Do You Do?," *Capital Gay* 147 (June 8, 1984): 9.

188 Cf. no author, "A Ghetto within a Ghetto?," *Capital Gay* 147 (June 8, 1984): 9.

189 No author, "A Ghetto within a Ghetto?," 9.

immediate recognition of the group's purpose was not possible.[190] These get-togethers became the most regular social event besides the coffee evenings. Meanwhile, JGG tried to branch out and reach queer Jews outside London.[191] Thus, in 1982 the chairman concluded something that JGG members probably had not dared to think about just a few years earlier: "The number of new ideas has attracted new members, and people are now actually contacting the commit[t]ee to ask whether we would like to hold a coffee evening at their homes […]."[192]

Besides regular weekly and monthly activities, JGG still organized its Seder, held Chanukah candle lightings, and celebrations for Purim.[193] In 1984, the group rented a hall from the Unitarian Church and presented a *Purim spiel* that was widely publicized. They adapted the story of Esther, established queer characters, and developed a love story between Ahasuerus and Esther on the one hand, and "Mrs. Mordechai" and "Harry Haman" on the other. The play was undeniably camp and was performed in drag. It was such a success that the same *spiel* was repeated, and another *spiel* introduced in the years after.[194]

In 1983, JGG adopted the idea of holding an annual conference, i. e., a weekend in the Staffordshire countryside. At the first conference, titled "Jewish Gayfest," representatives of the Dutch group Sjalhomo joined them. JGG created a homey atmosphere by enabling its members to celebrate the Shabbat morning and by playing Yiddish and disco music. The group was able to unite the different lifestyles of its members: food was served kosher-style and the program designed in such a way that the Shabbat could be respected.[195] Members could attend services, but were not obliged to do so.[196] A series of workshops completed the program.[197]

190 Cf. Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 86 – 87.

191 Cf. JGG Newsletter December and January 1978 – 9, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

192 Chairmans Report, October 1982, LGBT CCNHA.

193 Cf. Birgit Grant, "Kosher – and Gay," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6084 (November 29, 1985): 11.

194 Cf. mashup "Purimspiel is smash hit musical at Golders Green," leaflet "Jewish Gay Group presents a Purim Spiel," and "Spielers' Purim Triumph!", 1984/1985, LMA/4653/PR01/06/007, box 6, folder 7, Rainbow Jews Collection, LMA, and JGG Newsletter Winter 1987, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

195 Cf. program "Jewish Gayfest," LMA/4678/02/01/005, Gay Organisations and Activities, Organisations, folder 5 'Jewish Gay Group'/Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group, Gerald Kremenstein Collection, LMA, and no author, "A Weekend in the Country," *Capital Gay* 147 (June 8, 1984): 9.

196 Cf. letter "Jewish Liaison Group Festival June 1983," LMA/4678/02/01/005, Gay Organisations and Activities, Organisations, folder 5 'Jewish Gay Group'/Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group, Gerald Kremenstein Collection, LMA.

This conference was repeated in 1984, and a third was planned, but eventually did not take place due to lack of funding.[198]

In short, the period from 1979 onwards is characterized by a redefinition of the group. The shift, from a strictly areligious group that defined Jewishness only through its traditions and ethnicity, to the installment of a *chavurah* was the most significant change. These major changes seemed to be willingly accepted by the group's members.

The group's outreach program similarly reflects this change in JGG's agenda. The group developed from a less public to one that did not hesitate to be visible anymore.

5.3.2 Gaining More Visibility

In the first years of JGG's existence, their relationship with the major Jewish newspaper JC was either nonexistent or was troublesome. The paper not only refused to publish any advertisements for the group, but it also tried to avoid reporting on the issue of homosexuality altogether. However, the JC could not avoid the subject forever, particularly given the increasing involvement of Reform rabbis with the topic, as Sally Marks had already indicated in her counseling advice in 1977. Two years after Marks' piece, the JC published a whole page about JGG since "it is becoming increasingly apparent that the Jewish homosexual is no mere oddity."[199] The article featured a statement by Rabbi Rodney Martner who set up the working group on sexual minorities in the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain (RSGB). He expressed his sympathy with the cause of Jewish homosexuals: "[…] if we exclude them [Jewish homosexuals], we are losing a group of people with the potential to enrich Jewish life."[200]

What followed were three interviews with JGG members (two men and one woman). They spoke about their experiences of coming out and reconciling their Jewish and queer identity. For example, Geoffrey joined the group as a pious Jew and explained the dilemma he faced. He supported the fight for equal rights, however, by doing so, he felt disassociated from his beliefs: "All the gay Jews I know from my own kind of background have either tried to opt totally for Judaism

197 Cf. program Second Annual Conference, LMA/4678/02/01/005, Gay Organisations and Activities, Organisations, folder 5 'Jewish Gay Group'/Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group, Gerald Kremenstein Collection, LMA.

198 Cf. minutes Gay and Lesbian Interfaith Alliance, June 17, 1985, HCA/LGCM/7/24, LSE.

199 Gerald Jacobs, "Young Gay and Jewish," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5749 (June 29, 1979): 9.

200 Jacobs, "Young Gay and Jewish," 9.

or for homosexuality."[201] He underlined that he did not want to associate with Progressive Judaism even though it might be more open to his sexual preferences. He would live celibately if he could – but his sexual feelings were too strong. Rachel, on the other hand, described the experience of a lesbian Jewish woman which will be discussed at a later point in this study. Lastly, David described his coming out to his family and focused on the fact that many Jewish homosexuals escaped into a heterosexual marriage which caused them harm and distress. In fact, many married men were members of JGG. He concluded with: "Nobody asks to be gay. We pray to God and observe Jewish laws as best we can, like anybody else."[202]

The article did not impose any judgement on homosexuality, but rather gave a neutral, one could even say empathic, description of the fate of Jewish homosexuals. It was directly followed by another article about the situation of homosexual Jews in the United States.[203] This new engagement of the JC with JGG is considered another breakthrough – for the first time, the JC showed a genuine interest in the group. Four years later, the JC allowed JGG to publish its pub evenings and announce its annual meetings in the club activities section.[204] Nevertheless, the relationship with the editorial team remained difficult as the JC declined to publish JGG activities again at the end of 1980s.[205]

Besides the (minimal) recognition from the JC, JGG started working together with institutional Judaism. The group was instrumental in the publication of Wendy Greengross' booklet *Jewish and Homosexual*. Greengross had known JGG since its foundation and was a spokesperson for the reevaluation of Judaism's stance on homosexuality since she was an experienced counselor and practitioner. RSGB asked Greengross to write a public statement, the first by any Jewish denomination in the UK, on Jewish attitudes towards homosexuality. The result, published in 1982, was a landmark publication and the start of a dialogue within British Progressive Judaism. As Rabbi Tony Bayfield explains in the booklet's introduction, the biblical prohibitions of homosexuality were no longer applicable in modern day Judaism. Thus: "Judaism may have condemned homosexuals in the past but we can no longer continue to do so. It is time to welcome our fellow Jews into the community of which they have as much right as we to be a part."[206]

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201 Jacobs, "Young Gay and Jewish," 9.

202 Jacobs, "Young Gay and Jewish," 9.

203 Cf. William Frankel, "'Coming Out in the USA'," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5749 (June 29, 1979): 9, 21.

204 Starting with Editorial Team, "Club Activities, etc.," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5958 (July 1, 1983): 34.

205 Cf. report from the Chair, 1988/89, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA

206 Wendy Greengross, *Jewish and Homosexual* (London: Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, 1982), 2.

In her eight chapters, Greengross addressed different assumptions about sexuality, described how society developed anti-homosexual feelings, acknowledged the difficult situation for parents of children who came out, and the specific Jewish problem with homosexuality, concluding with a call for a broad integration of homosexuals into the Jewish community. As Eisenberg correctly pointed out, this booklet was an important institutional, albeit conditional, recognition for Jewish homosexuals and JGG: homosexuality itself was no longer condemned, but still was ultimately regarded as negative in Jewish terms since it purportedly undermined the value of the (Jewish) family. The publication also did not mean that support was unanimous, or that the UK Reform Movement would pass on binding resolutions like their counterpart had in the United States.[207] It marked the start, not the end, of the changing climate in the UK Reform Movement.[208] This was also a point of critique for JGG since Greengross took a rather "defensive stand in the booklet."[209] In general, however, the group's members were pleased with the booklet[210] and even raised money for its publication.[211]

The booklet introduced a debate that could no longer be ignored. Simultaneously, JGG appeared much more open, not only with the JC (as with another article about the group in 1985[212]), but also in magazines from the queer communi-

207 Cf. Eisenberg, "Exclusive Recognition," 46 – 48.

208 Greengross' booklet not only provoked debates in RSGB, but also beyond. For example, the UK's Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits responded to the publication in the JC: "This is another indication of the Reform movement's contempt for Jewish law and tradition, and falls into line with the general attitude of rejecting the authenticity of the Torah" (Julian Robinson, "'Sympathy' for Homosexual Problems," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5927 [November 26, 1982]: 4). Chaim Bermant, Orthodox himself and author of the JC column "On the other hand," wrote a polemic against Greengross and more specifically against the Reform movement: "What is wrong with the Reform movement is that it has no rigid ideas about anything [...] I had thought that if there was something which all our religious denominations had in common, it was a devotion to family life [...]. But this no longer seems to be the case. [...] But one does not have to be a believing Jew, or, indeed, a Jew at all, to regard homosexuality with a shudder. One has only to be a natural, rational human being. [...]" (Chaim Bermant, "On the Other Hand," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5932 (December 31, 1982): 15). Even though he generally supported meeting homosexuals with sympathy (not with their acts, though), Bermant's comment made clear that British Orthodoxy did not see any room for discussing the marginalizing attitude towards queer people.

209 Cf. Robinson, "'Sympathy'," 4.

210 Cf. Timothy Goldard, "Bending the Torah," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5928 (December 3, 1982): 22.

211 Cf. scattered newsletter pages titled "Jewish Gay Group Programme" starting with October 24, probably 1982, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

212 Cf. Grant, "Kosher – and Gay," 11.

ty.[213] After the Israeli reader of the newsletter complained about JGG being reluctant to engage with political activities like the Pride March in 1979, there were more and more members joining the group. They were attracted by the political impact a group such as JGG could have.[214] This is why, in 1985, the group decided to officially participate at Pride for the first time. JGG not only took part in the march, but was also present with a bagel stall,[215] which became a regular feature at future Pride events.[216] From a closeted group that did not necessarily want to engage with its environment, JGG slowly lost its diffidence and developed into a group that took a stance.

Another example of the increasing political involvement of JGG was a press release published in March 1984. After the group invited human and LGBTQ+ rights activist and politician Peter Tatchell, they allowed the publication of a press release with the name of the group on it. It summarized the arguments Tatchell made during the meeting. He criticized the Thatcher government for creating an intolerant and authoritative atmosphere in Britain and claimed the Tories to be riddled with racists, neo-Nazis, and homophobes.[217] JGG's new political engagement became even more obvious when JGG stepped in when UK's Jewry discussed the upcoming AIDS crisis.

5.3.3 Dealing with the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

After the first diagnosed cases of HIV in 1981, the disease quickly spread around the UK and cost the lives of mostly homosexual men. The Terrence Higgins Trust, an HIV education and sexual health charity, was created shortly after the first deaths of HIV patients. Helplines for infected people and self-help groups were established in the mid-1980s. Around the same time, the UK government became – with certain and disastrous delay – aware of the problem and started pro-

213 Cf. Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 86.

214 Cf. no author, "A Ghetto within a Ghetto," 9.

215 Cf. JGG Newsletter April/May 1985, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

216 Cf. Van Dyk, Interview Rainbow Jews Project, interviewed by Surat Knan, transcript by id., http://www.rainbowjews.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/transcript-Russell-Van-Dyk.pdf, accessed April 5, 2022, 5.

217 Cf. Press Release, version March 10, 1984, HCA/LGCM/7/24, LSE.

moting educational campaigns.[218] JGG reacted with concern for the first time in 1985:

> There can now be no question that the Gay Community is facing its biggest crisis for decades. […] There is now real fear amongst many people within the community, not only amongst those who fear the disease but amongst those who worry at the possible reactions from the wider community. […] Let us all, together, be prepared to face a backlash should it happen.[219]

As a first step, JGG criticized the government for its inaction, donated 100 pounds sterling to the Terrence Higgins Trust, and encouraged their members to donate individually. They also addressed the situation at that year's Seder.[220] Following the Seder, representatives from the trust were invited to the group's meetings to talk about the risks of contracting HIV and how to prevent an infection. At the first such meeting in late 1986, 20 people participated. One of the conclusions reached that evening was that it would not be beneficial to advocate for chastity to prevent infections. Rather, the group promoted the use of condoms and assured members that it would help and advise anyone with an infection, even though, at the time of the meeting, nobody in the group was (openly or knowingly) HIV positive.[221]

JGG also became increasingly active in speaking up about the topic of HIV/AIDS in the Jewish community. The UK's Chief Rabbi Jakobovits said that AIDS had to be a concern for the Jewish world, and that Jewish moral teachings ought to make a contribution.[222] The Reform movement organized public debates to discuss the issue and to consider the contribution they could make.[223] In contrast, there were many misconceptions about the disease, with homophobic undertones contaminating the discourse that needed to be had. For example, in 1987, a series of debates about the Jewish approach to HIV/AIDS appeared in the reader's section of the JC. JGG's chairman Michael A. Lee felt forced to intervene twice. In his first intervention, he set out five main premises that any debate about the disease had to respect: 1.) AIDS is not a moral agent for punishment, but an infection; 2.) No group, no individual deserves an HIV infection; 3.) The main issue is not moral,

218 Cf. Terrence Higgins Trust, "Our History. 1980s," no date, https://www.tht.org.uk/our-work/about-our-charity/our-history/1980s, accessed March 3, 2022.
219 JGG Newsletter March/April 1985, HCA/LGCM/7/24, LSE, 1.
220 Cf. JGG Newsletter March/April 1985, HCA/LGCM/7/24, LSE.
221 Cf. Editorial Team, "Gays Changing Lifestyles," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6144 (January 23, 1987): 8.
222 Cf. Jenni Frazer, "Aids Also an Issue for Jews, says Chief Rabbi," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6134 (November 16, 1986): 9.
223 Cf. Editorial Team, "Matter of Concern," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6156 (April 17, 1987): 20.

but practical: people do not want to be infected and those who are do not want to transmit it; 4.) Prevention and education are necessary to fight the disease; 5.) The queer community is made up of responsible people and does not take the disease lightly.[224] In his second statement a few months later, Lee criticized that the debate had shifted to a moral debate along Liberal/Orthodox lines about whether or not the Torah condemns homosexual lifestyles. He emphasized that heterosexuals were also among AIDS victims. Lee used the opportunity to explain again that homosexuality was not an illness to be cured. He concluded: "To use the AIDS epidemic as an excuse to attack gay men and lesbians, especially under the guise of some spurious 'medical' expertise, is disgraceful, especially in the columns of a Jewish newspaper."[225]

This letter was picked up by other people in the Jewish community who were involved in AIDS research and counseling. They contacted JGG directly.[226] As a result of these intensified exchanges, the Jewish National Aids Co-ordinating Council was established in September 1987. Different members of the Jewish community, including JGG members, came together to raise awareness everywhere among the UK's Jewry. Educating the community, counseling, and helping Jewish HIV patients were its aims since it was the council's strong belief that AIDS would become an increasingly troubling issue for Jews as well.[227] The council was later to become the Jewish Aids Trust (JAT) as explained later in this chapter.

For JGG, it was essential that its members stayed safe and healthy. That is why, in their newsletters, they promoted safe sex, the use of condoms, and the avoidance of contact with body fluids. The message was clear: "Be safe, be careful and be with us for a long time."[228]

5.3.4 The Situation of Women and Their Inclusion into the Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group

The evolution of JGG from an intimate group with the aim of connecting queer Jews on a private basis to a group with an increased outreach and involvement in contemporary debates was undertaken almost entirely by men. As described

224 Cf. Michael A. Lee, "The Tragedy of AIDS," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6143 (January 16, 1987): 25.
225 Michael A. Lee, "AIDS Debate: Confusing the Issues," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6158 (May 1, 1987): 29.
226 Cf. JGG Newsletter Winter 1987, LGBT CCNHA, 2.
227 Cf. Jewish Chronicle Reporter, "Help for Aids Victims," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6181 (October 9, 1987): 7.
228 Cf. JGG Newsletter Winter 1987, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

previously, despite some involvement of women in the earlier years of the J*Hp*LG/JGG, the group developed predominately into a space for gay men.

Rachel was one of the few female members, and was interviewed by the JC for the groundbreaking 1979 article. In here, she explained the absence of women: first, she said that, while she generally enjoyed the company of the other male members, she quickly noticed that she was one of the only few female members:

> One of the main aims of the group is to remove the individual's sense of isolation, of being a freak. And it's hard enough to come forward in the first place, so it's a shame to find yourself in the minority once more. Lots of girls come once or twice and then don't return. Unfortunately, a lot of us feel we are the victims of a triple oppression – as Jews, as women, and as lesbians.[229]

This oppression made it sometimes even harder for women to come out and to start to reconcile all these parts of their identity.[230] JGG did not provide a space for these difficult questions from Jewish lesbians. Moreover, the atmosphere in the group became "very sexist" due to its male dominance.[231]

Jewish women engaged in other institutional settings within the 1970s and the early 1980s: many heterosexual women chose traditional Jewish institutions to influence Judaism in their favor. In the late 1960s, the Leo Baeck College in London decided to train women, and the first female rabbi of the UK was ordained in 1975.[232] Feminist circles of the British Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) were arenas in which both heterosexual and homosexual Jewish women became active. This meant, however, that their Jewish identity either had to be concealed or take a back seat. Nevertheless, these empowering feminist contexts often worked as a catalyst for the self-assurance of lesbian Jews. As Elizabeth T. Sarah, one of the first lesbian rabbis in the UK, recalls: "My engagement with feminism, my increasing awareness that lesbians not only existed but celebrated their lives, helped me to come out."[233]

While the male Jewish gay experience took a nonpolitical and nonideological approach, Jewish lesbians engaged with feminism, which massively shaped their identity.[234] Due to the fact that women could not easily embrace their Jewishness

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229 Jacobs, "Young Gay and Jewish," 9

230 Cf. Brown, 1977, 21.

231 Cf. Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 88.

232 Cf. Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 64.

233 Elizabeth T. Sarah, "Being a Lesbian Rabbi," in *Lesbian Rabbis. The First Generation*, ed. Rebecca T. Alpert, Sue Levi Elwell, and Shirley Idelson (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 77.

234 Cf. Eisenberg, "Exclusive Recognition," 34.

in the feminist movement, Jewish feminists started forming their own spaces. In February 1974, the Jewish Women's Group was founded in order to raise consciousness for the Jewish woman. Addressing female homosexuality was not part of their goals; some of its 20 members were even not familiar with this issue. Rather, the group created a *chavurah* and organized events to explore Judaism from a female point of view and to address patriarchic structures in the UK's Jewry. After three years, the group already dissolved: the division between Orthodox, liberal, and secular women could not be resolved, and the low turnouts and the lack of any organizational structure or affiliation with the Jewish establishment weakened the endeavor.[235]

Also in 1974, the Jewish Lesbian Feminist Group was announced through the WLM's newsletter.[236] American-born Sheila Shulman was among the group's few members. She was later ordained, next to Elizabeth T. Sarah, as one of the UK's first lesbian rabbis. However, her group convened only a couple of times. The members experienced a "furious backlash" from their non-Jewish partners and other women engaging in the WLM. Antisemitism was a serious issue.[237]

After the failure of these two groups, Jewish lesbians stayed active in the WLM alongside their heterosexual sisters. They further discarded their Jewishness[238] until a new attempt was undertaken to get organized. This was catalyzed by a split between those women who solely wanted to explore their Jewishness from a feminist point of view, and those who wanted to be more radical with their political agenda.[239] Around late 1979, the Jewish Feminist Group (JFG) was founded as a representative of radical feminism in which both Jewish lesbians and heterosexual women came together. Shoshana Simons, one of the JFG's founders, summed up the thinking behind the group as follows:

> [...] most of the women involved [in the JFG] had rejected their religion. They could not identify with the stereotype of the Jewish wife and mother who stayed at home and raised her family, so they remained outside the community. There was almost a feeling that being Jewish and a feminist amounted to a contradiction in terms. [...] In fact, we have realized that many

235 Cf. Sonja Lyndon, "Women Lost Golden Opportunity," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5641 (June 6, 1977): 22.

236 Cf. Jeffreys, *The Lesbian Revolution*, 24.

237 Cf. Sheila Shulman, Interview Rainbow Jews Project (RJ201318, transcript 1), interviewed by Surat Knan, transcript by Alison Turner, http://www.rainbowjews.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/RJ-Rabbi-Sheila-Shulman-interview-1.pdf, accessed March 7, 2022, 3, and Sheila Shulman, Elizabeth T. Sarah, Lilian Mohin, Bev Gold, Hannah Aziz, Lin Davidson, Linda Bellos, and Jenny Lovell, "About Anti-Semitism," *Spare Rib*, no. 123 (October 1982): 21.

238 Cf. Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 67.

239 Cf. Shulman, Interview Rainbow Jews Project, 3.

> of our strengths as feminists come from being Jewish because we have all been used to having strong women in our families.[240]

The JFG became a space for Jewish lesbians to address their needs, even though it was not a queer-exclusive space. The group organized the first Jewish Feminist Conference in January 1982. Since this event was regarded as a breakthrough for the group,[241] they organized further conferences, including some only for Jewish lesbians.[242]

One of the unifying factors for the JFG was the difficult situation for Jews within the WLM. This is demonstrated by a quite problematic article in the movement's most important magazine, *Spare Rib*, in August 1982. As a reaction to the Lebanon War that had begun just a few weeks earlier, the magazine's collective published an article whose subtitle already indicated its direction: "If a Woman Calls Herself Feminist She Should Consciously Call Herself Anti-Zionist."[243] In this piece, Zionism was equalized with oppression and racism and claimed: "To be anti-Zionist is to be anti-imperialist, and to be against the fact that Zionism (and the founding of the state of Israel) caused Palestinians to be refugees."[244] In the views of the authors, feminism meant to oppose any kind of oppressive force. Additionally, they regarded kibbutzim and, since they were the most prominent manifestation of Zionism, Zionism itself as male-dominated: women had to do the "traditional female" jobs within just another patriarchic society.[245]

The article provoked many conflicts between its non-Jewish and Jewish members within the *Spare Rib* collective and the magazine "received a flood of letters in response."[246] The collective decided to publish two of these responses of opposing standpoints – one from the JFG that appeared as "London Jewish Lesbian Feminist Group," another one from the faction "Women for Palestine." In their response, the JFG explored their stance as Jewish feminists (and lesbians) within the WLM:

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240 Barbara Lantin, "Jewish Sisters under the Skin," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 5905 (June 25, 1982): 28.
241 Cf. Lantin, "Jewish Sisters under the Skin," 28.
242 Cf. Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 99; Jewish Lesbian Conference, 1985, LMA/4653/PR01/06/005, box 6, folder 5, Rainbow Jews Collection, LMA; and Spare Rib Planner no. 74R–548 "National Jewish Feminist Conference," October 1981, LMA/4653/PR01/06/005, box 6, folder 5, Rainbow Jews Collection, LMA.
243 Spare Rib Collective, "Women Speak Out Against Zionism. 'If a Woman Calls Herself Feminist She Should Consciously Call Herself Anti-Zionist'," *Spare Rib*, no. 121 (August 1982): 22–23.
244 Spare Rib Collective, "Women Speak Out Against Zionism," 22.
245 Spare Rib Collective, "Women Speak Out Against Zionism," 22.
246 Cf. Shulman, Sarah, Mohin Gold, Aziz, Davidson, Bellos, and Lovell, "About Anti-Semitism," 20.

> The messages I receive in the feminist movement are very contradictory. On the one hand, being a feminist means demanding the space to become more articulate about my own oppression and trying ways of taking control over my life. On the other hand, as a Jew I am silenced on precisely these issues. In fact, as a Jew, the issues are reinterpreted for me. Control is about wanting to dominate and becoming aware of my oppression as a Jew is nothing short of paranoia.[247]

The group accused the movement of not opposing antisemitism and willingly allowing the oppression of Jewish feminists.[248] Even though the *Spare Rib* collective tried to stop the continuing debate,[249] readers with different, conflicting, and individual positions did not stop writing letters that often became very personal. Eventually, and under pressure, *Spare Rib* started publishing them.[250] At least for Jewish feminists/lesbians, *Spare Rib* and the WLM as a whole, lost their significance from that point forward.[251]

As reaction to this incident, Jewish consciousness only rose among lesbian Jewish feminists. Thus, some Jewish lesbians like Elizabeth T. Sarah decided to join the Jewish mainstream. She started her training as a rabbi at the Leo Baeck College, together with Sheila Shulman, in 1984: "I was tired of the feminist and lesbian agenda being confined to the margins, and I was entering the mainstream in order to assist in the struggle to bring it center stage. For that to happen, more Jewish women, more lesbian Jews, had to achieve leadership positions within the Jewish community."[252] Others joined short-lived, mostly inward-looking and non-radical groupings.[253] The JFG, however, remained active, reached up to 30 members, and published a newsletter. James Lesh summarized the group's activities as such: it continued to address antisemitism and the inclusion of Jewish women and lesbians in the Jewish and feminist communities, rediscovered women in Jewish history, and debated the intersections of identities.[254] In addition to its newsletter, the JFG also published *Shifra – A Jewish Feminist Magazine* between 1984 and 1986. The magazine was supposed to reflect all aspects of the Jewish woman's life: articles, biographies, poems, recipes, and photographs reflecting contemporary and historical approaches to female Jewishness. After two issues, the editorial team identified an overabundance of historical contributions and

247 Shulman, Sarah, Mohin Gold, Aziz, Davidson, Bellos, and Lovell, "About Anti-Semitism," 20.
248 Cf. Shulman, Sarah, Mohin Gold, Aziz, Davidson, Bellos, and Lovell, "About Anti-Semitism," 20.
249 Cf. Spare Rib Collective, "Editorial," *Spare Rib*, no. 130 (May 1983): 4.
250 Cf. Spare Rib issues 131 (June 1983) to 137 (December 1983).
251 Cf. Sarah, "Being a Lesbian Rabbi," 77, and Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 101–102.
252 Cf. Sarah, "Being a Lesbian Rabbi," 79–80.
253 Cf. Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 102.
254 Cf. Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 102.

wished for an active involvement in current affairs. This led to an end of the publication after only four issues.[255] Overall, the JFG lost its radical impetus and slowly faded away until it ceased to exist in 1989.[256] Their most important figures like Elizabeth T. Sarah and Sheila Shulman had already entered established Jewish organizations and were no longer their opponents.

JGG became one of these established organizations. The group saw more women attending their activities from the mid-1980s on. Elizabeth T. Sarah, for example, started carrying out services for the *chavurah*. This did not mean, however, that the women agreed with what they found at JGG. At the end of the 1980s, it was still common for a woman to be the sole female attendee at JGG events.[257] Several female members wanted to change that, and began a conversation about the integration of women into JGG.[258] The Tenth International Conference of the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations (WCGLJO) in Amsterdam in 1987[259] served as a catalyst for this debate where JGG's delegates, both male and female, exchanged their ideas for more female inclusion.[260] As a first step to attract more women,[261] the group decided to change its name to the Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group (JGLG) during the annual general meeting in September 1987.[262] In 1990, Belinda Ganon, one of the women that proposed the name change, was elected the first female chairperson of the group.[263]

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255 Cf. Karen Sayers, "'Shifra': A Voice for Jewish Feminists," no date, https://celebratingjewisharchives.org/stories/shifra-a-voice-for-jewish-feminists/, accessed March 14, 2022.

256 Cf. Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 103.

257 Cf. Peggy Sheerwood, Interview Rainbow Jews Project (RJ201322 A), Audio Clip (2013), http://www.rainbowjews.com/peggy-sherwood-twice-blessed/, accessed March 14, 2022.

258 Cf. Conversation with Belinda, June 13, 2008, LMA/4653/PR01/06/014, box 6, folder 14, Rainbow Jews Collection, LMA.

259 Cf. Section 7.2.2.

260 Cf. An Early Potted History, LMA/4653/PR01/06/013/002.

261 Cf. An Early Potted History, LMA/4653/PR01/06/013/002, and Jewish Chronicle Reporter, "Professor Backs New AIDS group," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6193 (January 1, 1988): 9.

262 In 1982 and 1983, there were other attempts to change the name of the group, but the women's issue was not a reason at that time. The committee mainly thought about giving the group a more recognizable and distinguishable name (cf. JGG Newsletter March/April 1982, LGBT CCNHA, 7). However, newsletter editor Barry (Bernard) Davis thought about broader adjustments. He suggested changing the name to the "Jewish Gay Community." A group only served the needs of its members, so Davis. A community is "something to which people belong because it reinforces their sense of identity" (letter from Barry to the group, May 1983, LMA/4678/02/01/005, Gay Organisations and Activities, Organisations, folder 5 'Jewish Gay Group'/Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group, Gerald Kremenstein Collection, LMA). In such a community, different groups for different purposes could form. For him, JGG should be more ambitious and think more broadly in order to extend its purview. Even building up a synagogue and hiring a rabbi was an option for him (cf. letter from Barry

The new name did not instantly change the internal problems, though. Peggy Sherwood recalls that she was handed a list of those women who had attended the group's events once but never came back. She called all of them individually and invited them to an all-women event in a pub. Additionally, she publicized information about the event in several newspapers. Eventually, about 30 women showed up to this forerunner of more women-exclusive events within JGLG.[264] The group started offering two pub evenings a month, one traditionally in the Kings Arms, which was a bar specifically for gay men, and another in bars in which women felt more included and comfortable.[265] The group was now, around 15 years after its foundation, more aware of the needs of women in a queer Jewish group. Based on this, there was a chance that lesbians could also "grow into the community" that JGG had created.[266]

5.4 Diversification in UK's Queer Jewish Landscape and Settling Down (1988 and Beyond)

Within a decade, JGG/JGLG had developed from a discreet, private group to one that no longer rejected outreach or having a public presence. However, by the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, JGLG was no longer the only group for British Jewish queers. A diverse range of congregations, charities, and groups for different audiences had emerged. This made it difficult for JGLG to stand out. Nevertheless, these groups worked together for their shared goals of fighting against prejudice and for acceptance, as well as the integration of queers into British Jewry. Besides, JGLG went on to attempt to address more people with a variety of events in the 1990s.

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to the group, May 1983, LMA/4678/02/01/005). All these deliberations were dropped eventually without any visible changes for JGG.

263 Cf. Conversation with Belinda, LMA/4653/PR01/06/014.

264 Cf. Sheerwood, Interview Rainbow Jews Project.

265 Cf. JGLG Newsletter August 1989, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, and JGLG Newsletter December 1989–January 1990, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

266 Cf. no author, "You Don't Have to Be Gayish," 9.

5.4.1 New Organizations Create Alternative Spaces to JGLG

Four alternative organizations for Jewish queers were established as the 1990s began, and diversified in ways that both challenged JGLG in its position, and enabled it to explore new possibilities:

1.) Then-JGG planned to start a telephone helpline for Jewish homosexuals at the start of 1987. These plans were driven by the possibility that people may have been insecure about their sexuality or wished to discuss elements of their identity confidentially.[267] It took until February 1988 to set up the telephone line which was established as the Jewish Gay and Lesbian Helpline (JGLH). Even though initiated by JGG, JGLH was independent. At first, it operated only on Monday and Thursday nights,[268] and later from Monday to Thursday.[269] The helpline's aims were to counsel, inform, and support homosexual Jews who wanted to maintain a Jewish identity. Problems with friends and family could be addressed, as well as problems in relationships and concerns about HIV/AIDS. Isolation and loneliness, something queer people often experienced, were also addressed.[270] The line was serviced by volunteers of the organization who were trained to answer questions, give advice, and forward the callers to other specialists if necessary. Two years after its establishment, the volunteers had already received 400 calls,[271] and, after five years, they totaled over 1,500.[272] In 1992, JGLH gained charitable status, so they could apply for more regular funding and forge links with other Jewish organizations.[273] The Assembly of Reform Rabbis endorsed the helpline and sent appeals for funding to its congregations.[274]

JGLH stayed closely associated with JGLG, yet maintained its own mission and aspirations. It became a member of the WCGLJO shortly after its establishment as

267 Cf. Michael A. Lee, "Gay Helpline," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6158 (March 27, 1987): 28.
268 Cf. Editorial Team, "Gay Link," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6197 (January 29, 1988): 10.
269 Cf. Anna Maxted, "Increasing Calls on the Jewish Gay Helpline," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6459 (February 9, 1993): 9.
270 Cf. flyer "Jewish Lesbian and Gay Helpline," January 1988, HCA/LSE/Ephemera/944, Ephemera, folder 944, HCA, LSE.
271 Cf. Laura Granditer, "Keeping Silent about Coming Out," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6334 (June 29, 1990): 52.
272 Cf. Maxted, "Increasing Calls," 9.
273 Cf. Anne Sacks, "World Jewish Gay and Lesbians to Meet in UK," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6409 (February 21, 1992): 6.
274 Cf. Maxted, "Increasing Calls", 9.

one of the first social service projects,[275] and presented itself as an individual part of the queer Jewish community. Besides its counseling services, the organization developed an education program for the whole Jewish community, including youth centers, Jewish societies, and the Jewish crisis helpline called Miyad. During a one-day seminar called "Being Jewish, Being Lesbian, Being Gay" in 1992, they spoke to over 80 members of the Jewish world about the needs and experiences of Jewish homo- and bisexuals.[276] The helpline's secretary Jack Gilbert summarized after the seminar: "Organizations that don't have a religious axe to grind are, through the helpline, beginning to address the issue."[277] JGLH also became visible in the press; for example, they gave several radio interviews.[278]

2.) JGLH also understood itself to be a focal point for queer Jewish gatherings. This proved very useful for Hineinu ("Here we are"), a group for young gay, lesbian, and bisexual Jews that used JGLH as their contact address in the first months of its existence. The group was founded in early 1989 and organized its first gathering for "Young Jewish Lesbians, Gay Men and Bi-Sexuals" during a weekend in April 1989.[279] All of its members felt that there was no space for young Jewish queers in the UK.[280] JGLG's reputation was that it only served older Jewish men who did not encourage the involvement of younger members, and even pushed them away.[281] Moreover, Hineinu committed itself to a more balanced relationship between men and women[282] and to recognize bisexuality as a separate sexual orientation. The group described its main aim as follows: "[…] to enable Jewish lesbian, gay and bisexual young people to meet, learn, develop and grow in a safe, non-oppressive, and comfortable environment and discover, express and explore their Jewish lesbian/gay/bisexual identities."[283]

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275 Cf. Digest. The Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 10, no. 1, 1991, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

276 For the seminar's program, cf. The World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations – Quarterly Newsletter of the Eastern Hemisphere, no. 7, June 1992/Siewan 5752, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 3.

277 Simon Rocker, "Rabbi Blue Keynotes Seminar on Jewish Gays," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6416 (April 10, 1992): 8.

278 Cf. flyer "The Jewish Lesbian and Gay Helpline and Its Exclusion from Walkabout – Pluralism or Prejudice?," 1992, LMA/4653/PR01/06/005, box 6, folder 5, Rainbow Jews Collection, LMA, 1.

279 Cf. flyer "Hineinu. Young Jewish Lesbians, Gay Men and Bi-Sexuals First National Gathering. 28–30 April, 1989," LAGNA/EPH/1239, Epherma no. 1239, Lesbian and Gay Newsmedia Archive (LAGNA), Bishopsgate Institute Archives (BIA).

280 Cf. Granditer, "Keeping Silent about Coming Out," 52.

281 Conversation with Rabbi Mark Solomon at "The Parcel Yard" (London) on October 8, 2021.

282 Cf. Conversation with Belinda, LMA/4653/PR01/06/014.

283 Quarterly Newsletter of the Eastern Hemisphere, no. 7, 1992, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

Like JGLG, they wanted to raise awareness for their cause and to provide support for other young Jewish queers.[284] Hineinu had 20 to 30 members who were between 18 and 26 years old (the latter was the upper age limit). They met fortnightly at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre and at a youth center in Islington. Hineinu offered space for personal exchange, informative evenings with guest speakers,[285] and provided their own Seder, Chanukah, and Purim festivities.[286] The group did not exist for long, however, and slowly faded away, probably because the group of young people was not able to decide on further steps, and had no firm direction in terms of their agenda.[287] By no later than mid-1998, the group ultimately ceased to exist.[288] After Hineinu, more groups explicitly addressing young British Jewish queers appeared, some of which were short-lived.[289]

3.) In March 1990, one year after her ordination, Sheila Shulman and a group of her friends founded the congregation Beit Klal Yisrael (BKY) and had a launch event with over 250 people in attendance.[290] The concept went back to a conversation with Lionel Blue at a party. He said to Shulman, who already thought about creating a space for "outsiders" in the British-Jewish mainstream: "Go on, start a congregation. That's what the Hasidic rebbes used to do."[291] From that moment on, Shulman was successful in acquiring funding and a Torah scroll from the Reform movement.[292] In the beginning, BKY associated with RSGB and named itself the "North Kensington Reform Synagogue,"[293] until it eventually affiliated with the UK's Liberal Judaism. Shulman considered an official affiliation as an important step in becoming publicly recognized.[294] Additionally, the first years of the congre-

284 Cf. Quarterly Newsletter of the Eastern Hemisphere, no. 7, 1992, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

285 For example, a discussion with the first openly gay male MP and later Cabinet Minister Chris Smith (cf. Quarterly Newsletter of the Eastern Hemisphere, no. 7, 1992, LGBT CCNHA, 2).

286 Cf. Quarterly Newsletter of the Eastern Hemisphere, no. 7, 1992, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

287 Cf. Allan David, Interview Rainbow Jews Project (RJ201438 A and RJ201438B), interviewed by Surat Knan, transcript by Hannah Platt, http://www.rainbowjews.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Allan-Davis-Interview.pdf, accessed March 16, 2022, 2.

288 Cf. Digest. The Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Jewish Organizations 18, no. 1, 1998, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 8.

289 Cf. Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 113.

290 Cf. Lindsay Schusman, "Why This Community Will Be Different…," *Jewish Chronicle London Extra.* Jewish Chronicle no. 6312 (April 6, 1990): 1.

291 Sheila Shulman, *Watching for the Morning. Selected Sermons* (London: Peter Daniel Publisher Services, 2007), 12.

292 Cf. Shulman, *Watching for the Morning*, 12.

293 Cf. leaflet Beit Klal Yisrael/North Kensington Reform Synagogue, probably 1993, EPH590 54, box 1, LGBTQ+ Ephemera: Health & Religion, Wellcome Collection.

294 Cf. Granditer, "Keeping Silent about Coming Out," 52.

gation were shaped by ideological discussions about which direction the congregation should take. The backgrounds of the earlier members were very diverse – from heterosexual and radical lesbian feminists, former JFG members, and former members of traditional synagogues searching for a new spiritual home. Gay men were resented in the first weeks of the congregation's existence because some of its members had experienced the misogynic atmosphere in JGG.[295]

BKY and its aims were not solidified at this point, although a core group worked towards the long term.[296] The fluctuation in the early years notwithstanding, the general aim of the congregation was clear: "We welcome all [...] members and participants, especially those who are distanced or estranged from many facets of contemporary Jewish communal life. Many people have found that life in and around traditional synagogues offers only a conditional welcome, no real place, and no recognition of their legitimate needs as Jewish people."[297] Queer Jews, in particular, found themselves represented in these words. Irrespective of that, BKY was not designed to be a queer synagogue. Instead, BKY was supposed to become a feminist, open place for all Jews disenfranchised from the Jewish mainstream: this included women who felt oppressed in other Jewish settings, as well as queers, patrilinear Jews, "secular"/impious Jews, and questioning Jews.[298] Non-Jews were able to join as friends.[299] These conditions were similar to those under which several Reform or Reconstructionist synagogues in the United States operated. Shulman summarized: "We are appealing to people who feel strongly Jewish [...] but who may be uncertain how to express it, and are not sure whether they want to be part of a congregation or not."[300]

BKY offered alternating Friday night and Shabbat morning services, celebrated the major Jewish holidays, and, alongside traditional ceremonies, introduced new ones meant to meet the needs of their members. These ceremonies included events like menopause, retirement, or the coming out process. In addition, a cultural program was introduced with discussions and study groups.[301] For Shulman, it was fundamental that the congregation would be "consciously experimental."[302]

295 Cf. Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 97.
296 Cf. Shulman, *Watching for the Morning*, 13.
297 Leaflet Beit Klal Yisrael, Wellcome Collection.
298 Cf. leaflet Beit Klal Yisrael, Wellcome Collection.
299 Cf. Marc Iwand, "Zweite europäische Konferenz schwuler und lesbischer Juden in Amsterdam," *Magnus. Das schwule Magazin* 2, no. 6 (June 1990): 35.
300 Schusman, "Why This Community Will Be Different," 1.
301 Cf. leaflet Beit Klal Yisrael, Wellcome Collection.
302 Schusman, "Why This Community Will Be Different," 1.

BKY developed into an explicitly religious space for queer Jews,[303] comparable to the queer synagogues in the United States, even though BKY did not self-identify as such. In contrast, JGLG remained a primarily social group. Its *chavurah* increasingly served a more social than a religious purpose. It was not a space for a regular engagement with the Jewish faith.

However, BKY and JGLG had many points of contact. There were members that joined BKY instead of JGLG, while others saw in BKY an addition to their involvement in the queer Jewish scene.[304] That notwithstanding, JGLG did establish deeper contacts with JGLH and Hineinu than with BKY in the 1990s, probably because of the resentment of BKY's female members towards the still male-dominated JGLG. In recent years, however, both groups have celebrated Shabbat services together.

4.) Both JGLG and JGLH increasingly had to face the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the late 1980s. Thus, they worked together with the Terrence Higgins Trust to publish a flyer about the disease and the Jewish responses to it. It described the *mitzvah* of *bikkur cholim* and the religious obligation for Jews to help those infected with the virus. Even Chief Rabbi Jakobovits stated that the disease was not a punishment for individuals and their actions, but required the Jewish community to help, understand, and show compassion. This flyer also listed JGLG and JGLH as useful contacts for those who needed help and counseling.[305] Additionally, JGLG raised awareness for HIV patients during their Passover Seder in 1991 when they specifically invited them to participate.[306]

With the Jewish National Aids Co-ordinating Council (renamed in 1988 as the Jewish Aids Trust),[307] the responsibility for being active in educating about and promoting safe sex slowly shifted towards this new organization. A strength of JAT was that its volunteers in the first years were both male and female[308] and were therefore able to address different social groups divided along the lines of gender. Additionally, the trust had the backing of a panel of medical professionals and aimed to reach out to the whole Jewish community – from Orthodox to secular Jews.[309] They substantiated their involvement with five traditional duties in Jewish

303 Cf. Lesh, "Queer Jewish London," 97.

304 Cf. Rainbow Jews Project, Interview with David Rubin.

305 Cf. flyer "AIDS and the Jewish Community," probably 1989, EPH511 27, box 2, AIDS ephemera: Terrence Higgins Trust, Wellcome Collection.

306 Cf. Staff Reporter, "Seder for Gays," *Jewish Chronicle London Extra.* Jewish Chronicle no. 6361 (March 15, 1991): 4.

307 Cf. Jewish Chronicle Reporter, "Aids Trust," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6216 (June 10, 1988): 6.

308 Cf. minutes of the Meeting of JAT Steering Committee held at 32 Tenterden Gardens, London NW4, September 6, 1988, box 1, folder 2, Michael Brown Papers, HCA, LMA.

309 Cf. Jewish Chronicle Reporter, "Professor Backs New AIDS Group," 9.

tradition: respect for fellow human beings (חסד ואמת, *chesed v'emet*), caring for the sick (ביקור חולים, *bikkur cholim*), Jews being responsible for each other (כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה, *kol yisrael arevim zeh bazeh*), preservation of life (פקוח נפש, *piku'ach nefesh*), and putting oneself in the position of the other (שיתוף בצער, *shituf betza'ar*).[310]

Besides raising awareness and offering educational resources concerning HIV/AIDS, JAT supported Jewish patients[311] by providing practical help and training volunteers who could counsel those in need.[312] It also opened its own hotline[313] that started competing with JGLH, at least for those who had questions about HIV/AIDS. JAT quickly became a recognized charity and was funded by national donors, queer organizations, several synagogues, and individual donors.[314] It still exists to this day, even though its active years are probably behind it.

It is obvious that JGLG was no longer the only organization for queer Jews by the 1990s. JGLH complemented JGLG and was formed from its ranks, Hineinu was founded because JGLG did not include its audience, and BKY created a different, religious space including, but not exclusively for, Jewish queers. JAT consolidated efforts to raise awareness for HIV/AIDS and to take care of Jewish patients. The queer Jewish scene in the UK diversified entering the last decade of the 20th century. These organizations collaborated in those cases when the joining of forces proved very fruitful.

5.4.2 Collaboration and Cooperation Among UK's Queer Jewry

In 1988, during the First European Regional Conference of the WCGLJO,[315] the different groups representing the UK's queer Jewry decided to collaborate more closely.[316] A first opportunity came when the Thatcher government introduced Clause 28: resistance formed in many parts of the UK. Jews were also shocked by this

310 Cf. flyer "The Jewish Aids Trust. One Family, One Community, One Responsibility," 1995, LMA/4653/PR01/06/005, box 6, folder 5, Rainbow Jews Collection, LMA,

311 JAT estimated the number of Jewish HIV patients with 900 in 1988, cf. no author, "'Aids Ignorance Is a Problem'," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6212 (May 13, 1988): 6.

312 Cf. Brenda Freedman, "Help Aids," *Jewish Chronicle London Extra*, Jewish Chronicle no. 6227 (August 26, 1988): 3.

313 Cf. flyer "The Jewish Aids Trust," LMA/4653/PR01/06/005.

314 Cf. flyer "The Jewish Aids Trust," LMA/4653/PR01/06/005.

315 Cf. Section 8.2.2.

316 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen [Newsletter for Jewish homo- and bisexual women and men], October 1988, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), University of Amsterdam Library (UoA), 2.

law that effectively censored anyone who wanted to talk about homosexuality publicly, and particularly in schools. Thus, a loose group of Jewish individuals came together as "Jews Against the Clause" in London in March 1988 (similar groups formed in Bristol and Bradford).[317] Members came from various political and religious backgrounds, even socially conservative Jews who wanted to resist the Clause.[318] Resistance members were homosexual and heterosexual, some of them parents of homosexuals.[319] The homosexual members came from JGLG and JGLH. Jews opposed to the Clause drafted a declaration and an additional briefing paper. The declaration stated that Clause 28 was deplored and that there was a "generalized climate of bigotry and discrimination aimed at lesbians and gay men."[320] Moreover: "As Jews, we feel for many reasons – not least the testimony of history – a need to be vigilant in defending threatened minorities. The manipulation of the AIDS issue and the related scapegoating of one sector of the population are particularly abhorrent."[321] The briefing paper went more deeply into the subject, explained the implications of Clause 28, and discussed why Jews could not accept any such kind of law, simply drawing from their own history of exclusion and persecution. Finally, "at the same time, much of the language used against homosexual people today carries powerful echoes of antisemitic invective."[322]

JGLG and JGLH publicly backed the group and its declaration.[323] They also attended the "Stop the Clause March" in London on April 30, 1988. The two groups initiated several protests by their WCGLJO partner organizations in the United States, such as that in front of the British Embassy in Washington.[324]

"Jews against the Clause" as such did not last long as a lobby group, however. Besides the declaration that was eventually signed by more than 50 well-known Jewish individuals,[325] "Jews against the Clause" organized occasional events, like

317 Cf. Press Release "Jews against the Clause Mobilize Jewish Protest against Section 28," 1988, HCA/STC/2/6, box 2, folder 6, Stop the Clause Campaign (STC), HCA, LSE.

318 Cf. Iwand, "Zweite europäische Konferenz," 35.

319 Cf. Press Release, HCA/STC/2/6, LSE.

320 Jews against the Clause Declaration, 1988, HCA/STC/2/6, LSE.

321 Jews against the Clause Declaration, HCA/STC/2/6, LSE.

322 Briefing paper "Jews, Democracy and Clause 28," 1988, HCA/STC/2/6, LSE.

323 As an example, cf. Jewish Chronicle Reporter, "Call for Clause 28 Protest," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6205 (March 25, 1988): 13.

324 Cf. Digest. The Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 7, no. 2, 1988, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

325 Among others: Rabbis Jonathan Margonet, Tony Bayfield, Lionel Blue, Julia Neuberger, Colin Eimer, Barbara Borts, Albert Friedlander, and Raymond Goldman (director Union of Liberal and

a commemoration ceremony for the anniversary of Harvey Milk's assassination, or a big celebration on the anniversary of the declaration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[326] Eventually the group discontinued its activities in 1989.

Another incident that required cooperation was JGLH's exclusion from the "Walkabout" as the inauguration for Jonathan Sacks as the new Chief Rabbi in July 1992. Sacks planned a sponsored walk through Hyde Park to which he invited all Jewish religious and charitable organizations. This was intended to demonstrate the unity of the Jewish community.[327] The JGLH, however, was not allowed to participate because it was "not family-orientated."[328] The group decided to bring this to wider attention. The JC started reporting about this incident in May;[329] the Reform and Liberal movements reacted with anger.[330] The Chief Rabbi's office had not anticipated the backlash that followed.[331] JGLG and Hineinu were involved in the opposition to the ban. Since these were not registered as charitable organizations, they had not been included in the Walkabout from the beginning. But reactions to JGLH's exclusion came from across the UK's Jewry: Jewish student and youth organizations supported JGLH,[332] and the Chief Rabbi received around 250 protest letters. During the Walkabout, JGLH supporters wore pink armbands and raised awareness about the matter.[333] Daniel Lichman concluded: "[The] Walkabout was hugely embarrassing for Sacks."[334] This was an unprecedented case of widespread support for a queer Jewish organization. As a consequence, Jonathan Sacks started a dialogue with queer Jews to avoid such incidents reoccurring in the future.

Progressive Synagogues) and Rosita Rosenberg (later executive director of Liberal Judaism). No Orthodox official signed (cf. Jewish Chronicle Reporter, "Gay Rights Defended," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6342 [December 9, 1988]: 12).

326 Cf. Digest. The Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 8, no. 1, 1989, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

327 Cf. Lichman, "Hot Potatoes," 26.

328 Cf. flyer "The Jewish Lesbian and Gay Helpline," LMA/4653/PR01/06/005, 1.

329 Cf. Simon Rocker, "Gay and Lesbian Group Banned from Chief's Charity Walkabout," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6419 (May 1, 1992): 9.

330 Cf. Simon Rocker, "Gay and Lesbian Group Banned," 9, and Simon Rocker, "Chief Puts Off Meeting over Gay Controversy," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6427 (June 26, 1992): 13.

331 Cf. Lichman, "Hot Potatoes," 24–25.

332 Cf. Simon Rocker and Anna Maxted, "Students Back Gay Helpline in Fight against Ban from Chief's Walkabout," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6422 (May 22, 1992): 9.

333 Cf. Lichman, "Hot Potatoes," 26.

334 Lichman, "Hot Potatoes," 27.

This reaction was further bolstered when the then Orthodox Rabbi Mark Solomon came out as homosexual during an interview. Solomon recalls Sacks replying to his outing:

> And then he [Sacks] launched into a talk about why he thinks Judaism and homosexuality are not compatible, but ultimately he was quite decent and [...] treated me quite well [...]. He allowed me to work out my six months' notice at Watford [Solomon's synagogue of deployment at that time], which was nice of him and he wished me well.[335]

In consequence, Solomon left the United Synagogue, and eventually joined Liberal Judaism. Sacks subsequently changed his attitude towards homosexuals. Whilst he was not necessarily embracing them, he began speaking with and about them compassionately.[336]

A more joyful occasion took place in the spring of 1993: JGLG, JGLH, and Hineinu co-organized the Bat/Bar Mitzvah (13th) International Conference of the WCGLJO in the Britannia International Hotel in Central London. It was the peak of the groups' cooperation. They prepared the conference together with different subcommittees[337] and jointly raised funding from individual donors.[338] According to the general idea of these conferences, this one aimed to reach out to and unite queer Jews from all around the world, "no matter how isolated or how established."[339] Jack Gilbert explained in the JC that the reasons for participants to attend the conference ranged from an exchange of knowledge on how to build and develop their queer communities, to wanting guidance on how to deal with the straight Jewish community, or trying to find a place to deal with personal issues like shame and guilt.[340] However, more importantly, the social character and the welcoming atmosphere of the conferences were the main reasons to attend.

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335 Mark Solomon, Interview Rainbow Jews Project, interviewed by Surat Knan, transcript by id., http://www.rainbowjews.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/TRANSCRIPT-Rabbi-Mark-Solomon.pdf, accessed April 5, 2022, 8.

336 Cf. Lichman, "Hot Potatoes," 29–30.

337 Cf. JGLG Newsletter January and February 1992, LMA/4678/02/01/005, Gay Organisations and Activities, Organisations, folder 5 'Jewish Gay Group'/Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group, Gerald Kremenstein Collection, LMA, 1.

338 Cf. letter from Gillian Gholam (Conference Fundraising Subcommittee), February 22, 1993, HCA/LGCM/7/30, box 7, folder 30, LGCM, HCA, LSE.

339 Leaflet "The Thirteenth International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews," 1993, FL/EPH/C/774, Ephemera no. 774, Feminist Library Ephemera Collection C, BIA, 2.

340 Cf. Anna Maxted, "Gays Meet in London for International Conference," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6470 (April 23, 1993): 6.

The conference included parties, cabaret, day trips, a "Bat/Bar Mitzvah ball," and services which were, among others, led by the publicly out rabbis Mark Solomon and Elizabeth T. Sarah. A special Friday evening service was written for the event, too.[341] Additionally, the conference offered over 50 workshops, which were at the core of similar conferences. The workshops' topics included the fate of queers in the Holocaust, the relationship of Ashkenazi and Sephardic/Mizrahi Jews, lesbian and feminist history, Jewish responses to AIDS, Israel and the Middle East, the development of new rituals and ceremonies for queer Jews, the invisibility of Jews with disabilities[342],[343] antisemitism and fascism in Europe, and new approaches to sexuality.[344] Being conscious of gender issues, the conference additionally provided a women's-only space to enable female participants to feel more welcomed and comfortable to share their experiences.[345] Lionel Blue, the politician and Academy Award winning actor Glenda Jackson, MP Chris Smith,[346] authors Sarah Schulman, Jyl Lyn Felman, and Lev Raphael[347] were announced as flagship speakers at the conference. It was a successful event for the organizing groups, with more than 300 people from all over the world attending, even though the event was ignored by most of British Jewry, as the relatively small coverage in the JC and the general attitude towards homosexuality suggests.

JGLG was a protagonist in the struggle to gain more recognition within the UK and its Jewish community. However, its social and generally less political nature prevented it from being at the forefront. When the Union of Jewish Students passed a resolution in 1991 that welcomed homosexuals in their midst, it was JGLH and Hineinu that were mentioned as those organizations that promoted the equality of Jewish homosexuals.[348] JGLG also refrained from joining any emerging debates on same-sex commitment ceremonies that evolved in the mid and late 1990s in the JC. One exception is a general statement from JGLG and JGLH to the setting up of the working group "commitment ceremonies" by the Assembly of Reform Rabbis, which they welcomed. However, both groups were "seeking a clear

341 Cf. Friday Evening Service and Bar/Bat Mitzvah Celebration, LMA/4653/PR01/06/025, box 6, folder 25, Rainbow Jews Collection, LMA.
342 The conference was organized in such a way that it was completely wheelchair-accessible.
343 Cf. "The Thirteenth International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews," FL/EPH/C/774, BIA, 2.
344 Cf. Maxted, "Gay meet in London," 6.
345 Cf. "The Thirteenth International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews," FL/EPH/C/774, BIA, 2.
346 Cf. Press release International Jewish Gay & Lesbian Conference, FL/EPH/B/187, Ephemera no. 187, Feminist Library Ephemera Collection B, BIA.
347 Cf. "The Thirteenth International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews," FL/EPH/C/774, BIA, 2.
348 Cf. no author, "Gains for Gays and Lesbians," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6401 (December 27, 1991): 14.

assurance" that the Assembly would characterize "the 'tolerance and sensitivity that we have come to expect.'"[349]

JGLG, despite its transformation in the 1980s, still considered itself primarily as a space for queer Jews to socialize, make friends, sometimes to find a partner, and to have a good time. (Political) outreach efforts remained few and far between and were limited to deliberately chosen instances. The other groups, especially JGLH, seemed to take care of representing the UK's queer Jewry to the outside world.

5.4.3 JGLG's Program in the 1990s

However, JGLG had an impressive list of activities for its members at the end of the 1980s. Besides twice-monthly pub evenings (one for a predominately male audience, one more inclusive of women), the social subcommittee organized theater, cinema, restaurant visits, discussions, different social evenings, and day trips.[350] At the same time, JGLG decided not only to offer their *chavurah* on Friday nights, but also Shabbat morning services at the Quakers'[351] Meeting House in Euston. After a few meetings which were poorly attended, they became established as regular feature in the 1990s. The group also created an offshoot in the north of England in 1990. JGLG-North served Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Nottingham, Birmingham, and Liverpool.[352] It was founded by members who had moved north and could not attend events in the capital. It pursued the same goals as JGLG in London. The offshoot planned social events, attended the Pride March in Manchester, and a Passover Seder.[353] However, the northern division had only a small impact for British queer Jewry[354] and only lasted until 1997.[355]

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349 Charlotte Seligman, "Lesbians Call Off 'Wedding' after Bar on Officiating Rabbi," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6650 (October 4, 1996): 56.

350 Cf. report from the Chair, 1988/89, LGBT CCNHA.

351 The stance on homosexuality is not uniformly regulated in Quakerism. Quakers in Britain, however, already underlined in 1963 that the quality of a relationship is essential and not the sex of those involved. They recognized homosexual relationships in 1988. Same-sex marriage was then introduced in 2009 (cf. Quakers in Britain, "Quakers and Same-Sex Marriage," no date, https://www.quaker.org.uk/about-quakers/our-history/marriage-equality, accessed March 29, 2022).

352 Cf. Digest 10, no. 1, 1991, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

353 Cf. Digest 10, no. 1, 1991, LGBT CCNHA, 1, and The World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations – Quarterly Newsletter of the Eastern Hemisphere, no. 4, August 4, 1991/Elloel 5751, HCA/CHE2/12/16, box 12, folder 16, Campaign for Homosexual Equality Collection, HCA, LSE, 2.

354 Cf. Conversation with Belinda, LMA/4653/PR01/06/014.

355 Cf. Digest 18, no. 1, 1998, LGBT CCNHA, 8.

In 1994, JGLG changed its location for its religious activities. From the North West Reform Synagogue at Alyth Gardens, they moved to the newly built Montagu Centre, the headquarters of Liberal Judaism in the UK. The change was connected with Rabbi Mark Solomon, who took over the leading of the *chavurah.* He became the rabbi of the West Central Liberal Synagogue, which shared the building with the Montagu Centre. Additionally, Liberal Judaism as a denominational organization undertook intense deliberations on the matter of homosexuality at this time. It published an official statement at the end of 1994, in which the movement presented guidelines on how to deal with homosexuality. They not only called for compassion and support, but allocated a space for homosexuals in Liberal Judaism and recognized their special situation in regard to traditional Jewish values like family and procreation.[356] Eleven years later, Liberal Judaism introduced *Brit Ahavah*, "covenant of love," as a guideline to conduct commitment ceremonies for same-sex couples. It was written by Mark Solomon and was the first of its kind in the UK.[357]

The UK's Reform Judaism was not at that point yet.[358] However, Rabbi Elizabeth T. Sarah, who was publicly out as a lesbian rabbi, became the director of programs for RSGB and deputy director of the Sternberg Centre, a campus for several Reform institutions. JGLG used this campus for its Shabbat morning services from 1994 onwards.[359] From time to time, the group dedicated services and the *chavurah* to specific topics that addressed the needs of the community: family and friends or the "extremely successful women's focus."[360] Events and evenings just for women were further developed.[361]

In the mid-1990s, newly elected president Richard Morris wanted to widen the outreach of JGLG and specifically to raise the profile of women. At that time, the group had 120 members;[362] at the end of the century, this rose to around 200.[363]

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356 Cf. Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, Where we stand on homosexuality, 1994, LMA/4653/PR01/06/020, box 6, folder 20, Rainbow Jews Collection, LMA.

357 Cf. B'rit Ahavah, Covenant of Love – Service of Commitment for Same-Sex Couples, Liberal Judaism, 2005, LMA/4653/PR01/06/027, box 6, folder 27, Rainbow Jews Collection, LMA.

358 Rabbi Mark Solomon describes that he encountered homophobia while attending meetings of the Reform movement in the 1990s (cf. Rainbow Jews Project, Interview with Rabbi Mark Solomon, 10 – 11).

359 Cf. Digest. The Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 16, no. 1, 1997, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 5.

360 Digest 16, no. 1, 1997, LGBT CCNHA, 5.

361 Cf. Digest 16, no. 1, 1997, LGBT CCNHA, 5.

362 Cf. no author, "New Chairman of Gay Group Plans Support for Parents," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6610 (December 29, 1995): 7.

Morris' objective was reached in terms of attracting members. He was further successful in establishing a support group for parents of Jewish gays and lesbians.[364]

With view to publicity and political engagement, JGLG remained more reserved and maintained a low profile. Even though the group celebrated its 25th Jubilee weekend (1997) with its members and other queer Jews from Europe, the group refrained from any formal celebration with guest speakers or representatives.[365] In the following years, the group's aims were described as: "[…] to provide an atmosphere of friendship and support […], to organize social, religious and informative events for members and guests, and to act as ambassadors between the gay world and the Jewish world, trying to dispel ignorance and prejudice."[366] In addition, the group withdrew from the debates within the queer community about how to represent the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities. JGLG had concerned themselves with bisexuality in the 1990s; however, the leaflet for the Jubilee weekend did not formally include bisexuals.[367] The binary of male gayness and female lesbianism appeared cut in stone and the image of JGLG as the old-fashioned, more reserved, more "conservative," and gay-male-dominated group seemed revalidated. It was only in 2018 that the group changed its name to the Jewish LGBT+ Group following pressure from the trans* Jews joining them.[368]

Nevertheless, at the point of writing, the group still exists. It may not, and might never have been, the most outward-looking institution, but what matters is that a gathering of queer Jews in GLF initiated the longest running queer Jewish institution in the world. It went through many changes, including name changes, and from time to time it needed to reinvent itself throughout the decades. By providing its members a safe space to meet, get to know each other, and not to feel alone in a quite traditional Jewish community, JGG/JGLG influenced many lives for the better and it continues to do so.

363 Cf. Gabriela Pomeroy, "Out and About," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 6786 (May 14, 1999): 49.

364 Cf. An Early Potted History, LMA/4653/PR01/06/013/002.

365 Cf. Digest 16, no. 1, 1997, LGBT CCNHA, 5.

366 Tony Walton, *Out of the Shadows: How London Gay Life Changed for the Better after the Act. History of the Pioneering London Gay Groups and Organizations, 1967–2000.* 2nd ed. (London: Bona Street Press, 2011), 69.

367 Cf. leaflet "Introducing the Jewish Gay & Lesbian Group," 1997, HCA/LGCM/7/30, LSE.

368 Cf. Simon Rocker, "Who'll Wash Me for Burial? I Don't Care, I Will Be Dead," *Jewish Chronicle*, no. 7853 (October 25, 2019): 10.

6 Beit Haverim (Paris)

Jewish queers in the UK were not the only ones who felt that their identity did not match the expectations of mainstream Judaism. In 1977, queer Jews started meeting in the Centre du Christ Libérateur (Center of Christ the Liberator, CCL) in Paris. The CCL was a rare meeting place in France that allowed combining a religious/spiritual and queer identity at that time. These Jews founded Beit Haverim (House of Friends) and ran the group within the CCL's framework. In 1980, they separated from the CCL and developed into a vibrant and engaged group that pursued change within the French Jewish community. However, the community was not yet ready for this. Internal challenges saw Beit Haverim go into a period of silence in the mid-1980s, and it was only revived in the 1990s. This time, a new generation took over and was eager to invest time and other resources into the group. They were able to establish Beit Haverim as the representative of queer Jews in the country, even though the Jewish community took until 2019 to fully recognize the group as part of French Jewry.

Short Recap: Queer and Jewish in France

Since Napoleon's Code Pénal (from 1810), homosexual acts were not punished when they were performed in private. The persecution of public sexual engagement was especially high in Paris. After World War II, Article 334, regulating different ages of consent for hetero- and homosexual acts, was the major point of concern regarding the legal situation of queers. It was eventually equalized again in 1982.

Constraints against political activism were generally high in France. Arcadie became the first organization for homosexuals (founded in 1954). It published a magazine and opened a club in Paris. Arcadie wanted to educate the French public, rejected promiscuity, stressed that homosexuals are conventional people, and saw itself as "apolitical." After "May '68," more political organizations emerged and demanded that homosexuals be able to show their desires publicly. Among them was the Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire (FHAR) that split from Arcadie and the Mouvement de Libération des Femmes, a place where especially, but not exclusively, lesbians met. The queer movement as such became fragmented, and it was impossible to unite them all under one banner. Especially in Paris, the queer scene was very diverse and catered to the needs of their specific audience (e.g., through newspapers like *Gai Pied* or *Lesbia*). One area of difference was the debate between forming a community as queers and French universalism (summarized under the buzzword *communautarisme*).

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This debate was also mirrored during the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The French public refused to acknowledge that one group was primarily targeted by the disease, and this led to a delayed response (e. g., the use of condoms was prohibited until 1987). For the queer community, the epidemic became a unifying factor. It led to the founding of the Centre Gai et Lesbien (Gay and Lesbian Center, CGL), which became a focal point of the community. In the 1990s, the community was able to speak with one voice. This culminated in the *Pacte civil de solidarité* in 1999.

After World War II, French Jewry was unified and represented by three bodies: Consistoire central israélite de France (reestablished prewar institution, Orthodox-dominated, responsible for the religious rites), Conseil représentatif des juifs de France (CRIF, founded in 1944, political representation), and Fonds social juif unifié (FSJU, rebuilt after the war, sociocultural representation). From the mid-1950s on, more than 250,000 Jews from North Africa migrated to France due to the end of the colonization there. This reshaped the French Jewish community, renewing it, but also making it more Orthodox.

The decolonization period led to increasing political activity by French Jewry. While the Six Day War in Israel unified the community and its response, leftist Jews became active in "May '68." They were increasingly critical of the Jewish state, especially after the First Lebanon War. At the same time, antisemitism and Holocaust denial was on the rise in France. The deadly attacks on the synagogue in rue Copernic (1980) and on the restaurant Chez Jo Goldenberg (1982) were the tragic manifestation of this. French politicians failed to condemn the rising antisemitism.

In the 1990s, Jewish life was once again vibrant. Besides Orthodoxy in its various forms, Reform Judaism attracted more members even though it remained a small denomination. The denomination split into three separate organizations: Union libérale israélite de France (ULIF), Mouvement juif libéral de France (MJLF, founded in 1977), and Communauté Juive Libérale d'Île-de-France (founded in 1995). In short, French Jewry was characterized by a "diversity of paths," making it one of the most vibrant communities in Europe.

6.1 The "Creation of a Jewish Homosexual Movement" – Beit Haverim's First Years (1976/7 – 1980)

Beit Haverim was founded within a Christian environment.[1] The CCL had become a safe space for Christian homosexuals in Paris. However, the CCL was not de-

1 Cf. document entitled "Vers La Creation D'Un Movement Juif Homosexuel?," March 1, 1977, Beit

signed as a place exclusively for (religious) Christians. Since it was the only place in the city to combine a religious and queer identity, and one of the few "queer centers" in general, Jews attended the meetings, too. This is where a new group explicitly for queer Jews was established. Its members set an agenda with their own activities and events. The monthly meetings on the CCL's premises opened up ways of connecting queer Jews. Therefore, in order to understand Beit Haverim's early years, it is important to describe how the CCL came into existence.

6.1.1 Le Centre du Christ Libérateur: A Meeting Place for (Religious) Outcasts

The history of the CCL is substantively connected with Joseph Doucé. Born in Flanders (Belgium) in 1945, Doucé was raised a traditional Catholic, and started his studies at a Catholic seminary in Limoges. However, Doucé increasingly struggled with Catholicism. In 1967, he converted to Baptism after experiencing the kindness of Baptist friends, and decided to become a minister. Subsequently, Doucé received his theological diploma in 1971 from a seminary in Switzerland, and he started serving congregations in northern France. Homosexual himself, Doucé was fascinated by psychology and sexology in trying to understand human sexual desires. Thus, he studied both subjects at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (graduating in 1975),[2] and specialized in the spiritual and psychological problems of sexual minorities.[3]

When Doucé moved to Paris in 1976, he wanted to create a safe space for all those who felt excluded in society due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. In such a place, those affected could not only benefit from his education in pastoral and psychological care, but they would be also safe from the negative public opinion against them, and at a distance from the exclusion of their family, their work, or their churches.[4]

Haverim Archives, "La Maison du Beit" (Beit Haverim's Community Center), 5 rue Fénelon, 10th Arrondissement, Paris (BHA).

2 Cf. Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Le Scandale d'une Disparition. Vie et Œuvre du Pasteur Doucé* (Paris: Editions du Libre Arbitre, 1990), 17–38.

3 I.L.I.A. (Il libère, Il aime) – Bulletin d'information et d'Entr'aide du Centre de Christ Libérateur, no. 1, Winter 1976, 4–JO–33912, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Site Tolbiac/François Mitterrand (BNF), 9.

4 Cf. I.L.I.A, no. 1, BNF, 1.

Therefore, in October 1976, alongside thirty others, Doucé founded the CCL.[5] For about a year, the first meeting place was the Love Théâtre (today Comédie de Paris) in Montmartre, which served as a gay pornographic cinema at that time. Doucé was able to use the premises on Sunday mornings for his meetings and services. It is suggested that this was the only place that would accept a group like Doucé's to meet on their premises.[6] Even the Arcadie did not want to host them or publish the CCL's events.[7] However, after a long search, the CCL was eventually able to inaugurate its own meeting space in the 18th arrondissement during its first anniversary celebrations.[8]

From the onset, the idea was to put the CCL on a legal footing and to get it recognized as the first association for sexual minorities under the law of July 1, 1901. This law regulates the establishment of associations in France. It grants those recognized the right of free assembly, the right to sign legal contracts like a bank account, the right to demand membership fees, and to receive donations and subsidies. This official registration would enable the CCL to fight appropriately for their goal of queer people's integration into society in general.[9] From then, it took the CCL almost one year (until November 28, 1977) to receive recognition as an association under French law.[10] This notwithstanding, the French churches refused any cooperation with the CCL, which also did not receive any government funding.[11]

Besides weekly meetings for different occasions like Christian services, Bible studies, or meals, the CCL created its newsletter *I.L.I.A. (Il libère, Il aime),*[12] and installed a telephone line (SOS Homo Téléphone) in 1978 through which trained volunteers offered advice for people with sexual problems. One year later, Doucé also introduced "blessings on homosexual friendships," marriage-like ceremonies for same-sex couples.[13] This was the main reason why his Baptist church excommunicated him in 1985.[14]

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5 Cf. I.L.I.A. (Il libère, Il aime), no. 7–8, September–October 1978, P 493, Centre documentaire de l'Institut Protestant de Théologie Paris (IPT), 1.

6 Cf. LGBTQ Religious Archives Network, "Joseph Doucé – Profile," March 2007, https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/profiles/joseph-douce, accessed July 5, 2022.

7 Nicholas Powell, "Church Opens in Theatre," *Gay News* 107 (November 1976): 6.

8 Cf. I.L.I.A, no. 7–8, IPT, 1.

9 Cf. I.L.I.A., no. 1, BNF, 1.

10 Cf. I.L.I.A. (Il libère, Il aime), no. 12, February 1978, P 493, IPT, 5.

11 Cf. I.L.I.A. (Il libère, Il aime), no. 27–28, September–October 1979, P 493, IPT, 4.

12 "He liberates, he loves." "He" refers to Jesus Christ.

13 Cf. Martel, *The Pink and the Black*, 393.

14 Cf. Arno Schmitt, "Doucé wußte zu viel!," *Magnus. Das schwule Magazin* 2, no. 11 (November 1990): 27.

Most importantly, the CCL organized subgroups within its membership.[15] These aimed to help people to address their sexual problems in an understanding atmosphere, to consider their sexual orientation without taboos, to find other people with the same desires, to do away with all prejudices in the sexual domain, and to live their sexuality freely. The first groups established were dedicated to physical handicaps and sexuality, to the parents of homosexuals and children with sexual problems, to transvestites and transsexuals,[16] to pedophiles,[17] to sado-masochists, to young people questioning their sexual identity, to older homosexuals, and to married homosexuals/bisexuals. All these groups were supervised by Doucé himself (an exception was the women's group created in February/March 1978[18]) and met once a month in different locations within the city. Despite Doucé's background and the general presentation and orientation of the center, the meetings were not conducted in any religious manner. This meant that also non-Christians were invited.[19] The CCL's self-portrayal once stated: "We are neither a church nor a sect, but a social charity open for everyone, with the only condition to be at least 18 years old."[20] This is how Beit Haverim came into existence.

15 Within its first year, the CCL was contacted by around 800 people. At the end of its third year, this number rose to 3,000 and 600 of them were paying members (cf. I.L.I.A., no. 27–28, IPT, 4).
16 For the impact of the CCL's work on the history and promotion of rights for trans* people in France, cf. Maxime Foerster, "On the History of Transsexuals in France," in *Transgender Experience: Place, Ethnicity, and Visibility*, ed. Chantal Zabus and David Coad (New York: Routlegde, 2014), 19–30.
17 For Joseph Doucé, pedophiles were a sexual minority just like homosexuals or trans* people with their own demands. His views, and of the CCL consequently, in regard to pedophilia were highly problematic as portrayed in an entire book that Doucé published to address the problem (cf. Joseph Doucé, *La Pédophilie en question* [Paris: Imprimerie S. E.G., 1988]). Doucé never explicitly condemned sexual relations with children. On the contrary, he demanded their decriminalization. It is unclear, however, if he enabled pedophiles to exchange criminally relevant information and documents after CCL meetings (cf. Liliane Binard and Jean-Luc Clouard, *Le drame de la pédophilie. État des lieux – Protection des enfants* [Paris: A. Michel, 1997], 100–102). Doucé's standpoints were already regarded problematic at this lifetime (cf. Schmitt, "Doucé wußte zu viel," 27). Today, his work is used as a reference to "Christian progressiveness" by organizations that promote a legalization of sexual relations with children.
18 Cf. I.L.I.A. (Il libère, Il aime), no. 13, March 1978, P 493, IPT, 10.
19 Cf. I.L.I.A., no. 1, BNF, 9.
20 "Nous ne sommes ni une Eglise, ni une secte, mais une oeuvre sociale ouverte à tous, à la seule condition d'avoir au mons 18 ans." (I.L.I.A., no. 27–28, IPT, 3. Author's translation.)

6.1.2 Jews Creating an Informal Group within the CCL

By the end of 1976, Joseph Doucé had made the acquaintance of Dan Vide. He was Jewish and attended the first Christian service Doucé gave for the CCL's members. Doucé told him about the queer synagogues in the United States. Vide was impressed about what queer Jews could achieve if they organized. He was convinced that there were many more Jewish homosexuals in Paris and France.[21] On this assumption, Doucé and Vide discussed the possibility for Jews to come together within the CCL's framework.[22] They placed a small ad in the magazine *Nouvel Homo* outlining the conditions under which Jews lived in France and highlighting that homosexuals belonged to this community, too. The ad announced monthly meetings to be set up by the CCL. People interested in these might contact Joseph Doucé directly.[23]

The first meeting of Jewish homosexuals, together with Minister Doucé, took place on February 1, 1977. Even though a few people responded to the ad,[24] only one other Jew, besides Vide and Doucé, showed up to the meeting.[25] The three decided to issue a press release to promote the newly founded group. They sent the release to different newspapers and magazines, including Jewish ones. Only the left-leaning newspaper *Libération (Libé)* decided to publish it. It stated:

> On Tuesday, February 1, 1977, the first group for meetings and studies for Jewish homosexuals was created in Paris. [...] This new group has set itself the goal to examine once again the different reasons for the reservation towards homosexuality within Judaism, to help people who feel concerned in this way and to inform French-speaking Judaism about this topic. [...] Confidentiality guaranteed.[26]

The press release ended with a short announcement about the 1977 International Conference of Gay Jewish Organizations at Congregation Beit Simchat Torah in

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21 Cf. I.L.I.A. (Il libère, Il aime), no. 24, April 1979, P 493, IPT, 6.

22 Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 11.

23 Cf. no author, "Homoflashes," *Nouvel Homo*, no. 18 (December 1976): 54.

24 Cf. I.L.I.A., no. 24, IPT, 6.

25 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 11.

26 "Mardi, le 1er février 1977 s'est créé à Paris le premier groupe en France de rencontre et d'études pour juifs homosexuels. [...] Ce nouveau groupe s'est fixé pour buts d'examiner de nouveau les différentes raisons de cette réserve envers l'homosexualité à l'intérieur du judaïsme, d'entraider les personnes qui se sentent ainsi concernées et d'informer le judaïsme francophone sur ce thème. [...] Discrétion assurée." (No author, "Juifs homosexuels," *Libération*, no. 957 [February 19–20, 1977]: 12. Author's translation.)

New York.[27] Any joy about the publication was clouded by a caricature that was printed alongside the text. It showed the crucified Jesus saying: "What do you have against Jewish fags?"[28] Doucé complained about the caricature's "bad taste."[29] In spite of this, the publicity made more Jews aware of the group. Around ten people, men and women, of all ages, and from varied cultural and social backgrounds, showed up to the second meeting in March. They all expressed the desire to create a "Jewish homosexual movement"[30] in France. The first step in doing so was admitting to oneself and to others, that one is homosexual *and* Jewish. Secondly, the participants raised questions that needed addressing to bring this new movement to realization: who should be considered a Jew (matrilinear, patrilinear, by self-declaration)? What should a homosexual life without isolation and solitude look like? How could the group address homosexuality in the Jewish community and Jewish officials like rabbis? Is the general public able to accept homosexuality after all? Is it likely that prohibitions relating to homosexual behavior will be reduced? The participants divided the early group into two subgroups to discuss these questions and to explore options to reach out to the Jewish community. These debates were pursued in the months to come – not always with a definitive answer or a resolution adopted by the group. Moreover, the early members agreed at their second meeting in March to convene regularly on the first Tuesday of every month.[31]

During the meeting of June 1977, the group decided to give itself the name Beit Haverim – Foyer des Amis (House of Friends).[32] This name reflected the group's social nature. Beit Haverim was imagined as a "social-cultural-sexual collective."[33] The group stated that "nobody of the group is religious,"[34] i. e., observant, and would not impose any religious, political, or philosophical orientation.[35] The main objective was to facilitate encounters of queer Jews in the spirit of mutual

27 Correspondence with Bill Fern in New York shows that Joseph Doucé reached out pretty early to Congregation Beit Simchat Torah and to the organizing committee of the international conferences (cf. two letters from Bill Fern to Joseph Doucé, March 12, 1977 and April 14, 1977, BHA).
28 "Qu'est-ce que vous avez contre les juifs pédés?" (No author, "Juifs homosexuels," 12. Author's translation.)
29 Cf. I.L.I.A., no. 24, IPT, 6.
30 Cf. "Vers La Creation D'Un Movement Juif Homosexuel?," BHA.
31 Cf. "Vers La Creation D'Un Movement Juif Homosexuel?," BHA.
32 Cf. Compte rendu de la réunion 7 juin 77, BHA. In the first months, the transcription of the Hebrew בית חברים still went back and forth between *Beith*[-] and *Beit* Haverim.
33 Bulletin d'information et d'entr'aide du Beith-Haverim (Foyer des Amis), no. 2 (Annexe I.L.I.A no. 12), February 1978, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 3.
34 Report from the Jewish Gay Group "Beit Haverim" of France," June 8, 1977, BHA.
35 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 11 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 22), February 1979, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 4.

aid. Together, the loneliness and nonacceptance they all experienced should be opposed. Cultural events should create dialogue between members, and an improvement of their personal situations.[36] Finally, the group acknowledged both its Jewish[37] and its queer heritage. The members wanted to explore both.[38]

Despite this agenda, the first year of the group's existence is remembered as difficult. No more than a dozen Jews tried to work together.[39] In the beginning, it was unclear whether the meetings were too formal, or why the group did not form "collective enthusiasm."[40] The small number of people involved left the group fragile, and the need for more publicity to increase membership became obvious.[41] It was also very challenging to reach out to the Jewish community, since no one wanted to report on the group. New members were only reached by word of mouth.[42] The group also needed to establish a financial structure, and introduced membership dues in order to be viable.[43] More generally, there were basic questions about the group that had to be considered: what was the group's definition of Jewishness or how should the group take a political stance, e. g., regarding Jewish-Arabic relations?[44] These questions hung over the group, without being answered quickly. The protocols of the first meetings testify that the group needed to consolidate and validate its existence, to broker its position, to let the members get to know each other, and to collect information about homosexuality and Judaism.[45] The latter could be achieved through an exchange by letter with the queer synagogues in the United States.[46]

Beit Haverim's first year was characterized by many uncertainties, hesitancy, and fragility. The involvement of the members, called *amis* ("friends"), was crucial. Without them, no aspect of mutual help and support would have been achievable.

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36 Cf. letter to the members of December 1977, BHA, 1.

37 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 11, BNF, 4.

38 Cf. Bulletin du Beith-Haverim, no. 2, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 3.

39 Cf. I.L.I.A., no. 24, IPT, 6.

40 Cf. Bulletin du Beith-Haverim, no. 2, BNF, 4.

41 Cf. Compte rendu de la réunion du 4 mai – Group des Juifs Homosexuels, BHA.

42 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 11.

43 Membership dues were 100 French francs (50 reduced) for half a year (cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 6 [Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 17], June 1978, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 15). It was important for the group that nobody should feel excluded if a regular payment was not possible. Therefore, the group called on all those who could give more to cover the fees of those who could not (cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 13 [Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 24], April 1979, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 21).

44 Cf. Compte rendu 4 mai, BHA.

45 Cf. Compte rendu 7 juin 77, BHA; Compte rendu de la réunion du 4 octobre 1977, BHA; letter of December 1977, BHA, 1–2.

46 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 11; Compte rendu 7 juin 77, BHA; letter of December 1977, BHA, 1.

This was especially true for those who did not live in Paris, but in the provinces. Those members from farther away were supposed to feel equally included.[47]

Eventually, the influx of younger Jews at the beginning of the second year stabilized the group significantly.[48] The short and simple written protocols of the monthly meetings were replaced by a newsletter that was published as a supplement to the CCL's newsletter *I.L.I.A.* Slowly but surely, Beit Haverim became more structured, and thus increased its range of activities.

6.1.3 Creating a Safe Space: Internal Agency

By mid-1978, the group received a "new breath"[49] from new members willing to invest their time in Beit Haverim. The most prominent manifestation of this new drive was the newly established monthly, several-page-long newsletter, the bulletin.[50] This became not only the mouthpiece of the group, but also served as a first gateway to get in contact with it.[51] One year later, in April 1979, the group numbered around 100 members and sympathizers across France.[52]

From the moment of this increased member involvement onwards, Beit Haverim offered a wider range of events and activities. The group met monthly on CCL premises to discuss everyday issues and to plan the group's future. Sometimes, the meeting would have a specific theme[53] or include a guest speaker.[54] Generally speaking, Beit Haverim's members were invited to join any other activity of the CCL, but the group also collaborated directly with other subgroups of the CCL such as the one for young homosexuals.[55] On one occasion, Beit Haverim advertised a CCL lecture about transsexuality with a medical professional.[56] Since the CCL had their own group for "transvestites and transsexuals," it is likely that Beit Haverim's members came in contact with the subject and affected people, even though trans* issues were not raised at least in early newsletters.

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47 Cf. Compte rendu 4 octobre, BHA.

48 Cf. I.L.I.A., no. 24, IPT, 6–7.

49 Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 6, BNF, 3.

50 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 7 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 18), October 1978, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 3.

51 Cf. Bulletin d'information et d'entr'aide du Beith-Haverim (Foyer des Amis), no. 1 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 10), December 1977, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 2.

52 Cf. I.L.I.A., no. 24, IPT, 7.

53 Cf. Compte rendu 4 mai, BHA.

54 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 11, BNF, 18, and Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 21 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 32), February 1980, BHA, 7.

55 Cf. Bulletin du Beith-Haverim, no. 1, BNF, 3–4.

56 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 13, BNF, 20.

Besides monthly meetings, the group organized other social activities through which the members could get to know each other better. As a regular feature in the second year, monthly card game evenings were held in member's homes.[57] Other activities included restaurant visits,[58] theater trips,[59] or special themed afternoons and evenings (like dance parties[60]). Additionally, members were occasionally invited to spend time outdoors outside of Paris,[61] if possible also for a weekend or even for a whole week.[62] The group also offered an *ulpan*, a Hebrew language course.[63] This was not only instituted because of the idea of connecting more deeply with Jewish heritage, but also for members preparing to visit Israel.

For Jewish holidays, Beit Haverim organized celebratory meetings and parties. This served to provide additional opportunities for social gathering, especially on these potentially emotional dates. The first holiday celebrated was Chanukah in 1977. In a rather more spontaneous than planned manner, members lighted the candles during the monthly December meeting.[64] In the following years, the group also celebrated Rosh HaShanah[65] and Sukkot.[66] In 1979, it held a big Purim party which was attended by 25 people and included a Purim spiel called "Esther" that involved drag performances by the members.[67] Passover was not celebrated together at this stage, because celebrating this holiday with family and friends was considered more important. However, the group asked its members to invite those to their homes who were alone during the holidays.[68]

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57 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 8 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 19), November 1978, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 11.
58 Cf. Compte rendu 4 mai, BHA, and Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 11, BNF, 17.
59 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 19–20 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 30), December 1979/January 1980, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 6.
60 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 9 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 20), December 1978, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 4, and Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 13, BNF, loose leaf announcing "Soiree Unique."
61 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 6, BNF, 8.
62 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 8, BNF, 4–5; Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 9, BNF, 5; Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 10 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 21), January 1979, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 4.
63 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 7, BNF, 26, and Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 27 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 37), September 1980, BHA, 4.
64 Cf. Bulletin du Beith-Haverim, no. 1, BNF, 3.
65 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 7, BNF, 12.
66 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 16–17 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 27–28), September/October 1979, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 3.
67 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 12 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 23), March 1979, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 10–11; Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 13, BNF, 19; stage play titled "Esther," BHA.
68 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 13, BNF, 7.

Moreover, not all members knew how or why to celebrate a Jewish holiday. Hence, the newsletter's editors published articles explaining Jewish holidays.[69] These were later replaced by a whole page and more about the months of the Jewish calendar that not only mentioned the holidays, but also included a timeline indicating what had happened during the respective month.[70]

The bulletin provides evidence for further topics that were important for the group. Besides articles about leisure activities like movie[71] and literature reviews,[72] the editors dedicated pieces to general Jewish history and culture: for example, they dedicated their fourth issue to the 100th birthday of philosopher Martin Buber.[73] Another bulletin series explained the legal situation of Jews in the history of France.[74] In view of the strong influence of migration from North Africa on French Jewry, Beit Haverim investigated the history of Algerian and Tunisian Jews through several issues of the newsletter.[75] This was despite the fact that the group only consisted of Ashkenazi Jews at that time. There are several reasons for this. Generally, Jews migrating from Northern Africa were socially more conservative and more religious than Jews born in France. Homosexuality was regarded even more pejoratively in their home countries than in France. It seems natural that the hurdles to coming out (internally and externally) were much higher and access to information about homosexuality was much more restricted for Sephardic, recently migrated Jews. There is nothing recorded that would indicate any conflicts between those of Ashkenazi or Sephardic origin, so there is no indication that Sephardic Jews would not feel welcomed within the early group. From the 1990s on, Sephardic Jews came to Beit Haverim in much higher numbers and continue to shape the group until this day.[76]

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69 For example, cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 13, BNF, 7; Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 5 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 15), May 1978, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 2–3; Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 16–17, BNF, 2.

70 For example, cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 21, BHA, 2–3, and Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 23–24 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 35), May 1980, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 1.

71 For example, cf. Bulletin du Beith-Haverim, no. 1, BNF, 7–8, and Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 18 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 29), November 1979, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 11.

72 For example, cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 7, BNF, 5–8, and Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 19–20, 1979/80, BNF, 7–9.

73 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 4 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 14), April 1978, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 1–2.

74 For the series "Ghetto," cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 19–20 and no. 23–27, BNF, and Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 21, BHA. Apparently, the series was also continued in no. 22 which cannot be found in either the BNF or in Beit Haverim's archive.

75 For the series on "Jews of Algeria," cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 6 to 8 and no. 10, BNF; for the series "Jews of Tunisia," cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 15 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 26), June 1979, 4-JO-35315, BNF, and no. 18, BNF.

76 Cf. Section 6.4.

Topics distinctively relevant for queers were also addressed in the bulletin, if to a lesser degree: the newsletter approached issues of (sexual) health even before the HIV/AIDS epidemic,[77] the complex question of who might inherit one's estate after one's death since most queers were childless,[78] queer symbols like the Greek letter lambda,[79] or what to do when getting into a police raid, e. g., in a queer bar.[80]

The interests of Beit Haverim were manifold and covered a wide range including Jewishness, Queerness, everyday issues, and leisure. Since the group identified itself as a place where queer Jews could meet, the newsletter also listed contact advertisements for French-speaking Jews around the world.[81] Some members even took the opportunity to speak about their own experiences of being Jewish and queer. For example, one member, Michel, reported very emotionally: "I was born homosexual and, from the age of 3–4, I knew without knowing the name, that is before knowing culturally that it was a sin, that I was not part of the ambient desire, and that I had to hide, but without knowing why."[82] He went on and described his relationship with his Jewishness. He felt ashamed to be a Jew and hid his Jewish identity:

> for the same reason that I had to hide the fact of being homosexual – the feeling of being alone, isolated, always in the minority in face of an aggressive majority, and the fear of racism ready to crush me. Racism kills Jews because they are Jews, nothing more; [...] homosexuals [are killed] for the same reason because they are homosexuals.[83]

Michel was not reporting an isolated experience. Other members shared similar ones reconciling their double identities. That notwithstanding, there were many

77 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 3 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 13), March 1978, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 7–9.
78 Cf. Bulletin du Beith-Haverim, no. 2, BNF, 9.
79 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 9, BNF, 17.
80 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 4, BNF, 3–5.
81 For example, cf. Bulletin du Beith-Haverim, no. 1, BNF, 5, and Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 6, BNF, 14.
82 "Je suis né homosexuel et, dès l'âge de 3–4 ans, je savais sans en connaître le nom, c'est à dire avant de savoir culturellement que c'était un péché – que je ne faisais pas partie du désir ambiant, et qu'il me fallait me cacher, mais sans savoir pourquoi." (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 12, BNF, 13. Author's translation.)
83 "Pour la même raison qui faisais qu'il fallait cacher le fait d'être homosexuel, le sentiment d'être seul, isolé, toujours en minorité face à une majorité aggressive, prête à m'écraser la peur du racisme. Le racisme tue les Juifs parce qu'ils sont juifs, sans plus; [...] et les homosexuels pour la seule raison qu'ils sont homosexuels." (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 12, BNF, 14–15. Author's translation.)

members that decided not to appear under their own name (or just with a pseudonym) in the newsletter, due to their fear of being identified.[84]

In its early days, Beit Haverim directed its efforts internally, towards its members. They wanted them to feel comfortable and have the opportunity to meet other Jews who had similar experiences. The newsletter testifies to an extensive exchange on many different topics that were important to the members or that arose in their daily lives. One of these topics became a very important element in these early discourses: the State of Israel.

6.1.4 Israel

Israel became of particular interest to Beit Haverim, whereas for the Jewish Gay Group in London, the topic rarely came up in newsletters or at events. One signifier of this was the *ulpan* that was installed and hosted by a member who was a native Hebrew speaker.

Israel was the Jewish state that every Jew could turn to as reassurance, but was also the country of Jewish heritage. Several members travelled frequently to Israel,[85] lived there (temporarily), or even served in the Israeli army. Others were invited to contact these members when they had questions regarding vacation plans, an introduction into the queer scene in the country, or immigration.[86] Beit Haverim cared for the lives of Jewish homosexuals in the country and criticized Israel's anti-sodomy laws very early on.[87] Those had been imposed by the British government before the founding of the state and were still in effect.[88]

Beit Haverim also came in contact with the Society for the Protection of Personal Rights (SPPR) in Tel Aviv. The SPPR functioned as the spokesperson for queers in Israel, and one of its missions was to contact queer Jewish groups and synagogues worldwide to keep them informed about the difficulties they faced in Israel. Accordingly, it placed a lengthy article about their situation in Beit Ha-

84 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 5, BNF, 4–6.

85 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 3, BNF, 1.

86 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 7, BNF, 26.

87 Same-sex sexual activities were only legalized by the Israeli Knesset in 1988. That notwithstanding, a ruling by the Supreme Court decided in 1963 that the British Buggery Act of 1533 (cf. Section 3.1.1) should not be enforced on consenting same-sex adults engaging in sexual activities (cf. Satchie Snellings, "The 'Gayification' of Tel Aviv: Examining Israel's Pro-Gay Brand," *Queer Cats Journal of LGBTQ Studies* 3, Issue 1 [2019]: 28).

88 Cf. Compte rendu de la réunion 7 juin 77, BHA.

verim's newsletter.[89] The SPPR and members of Beit Haverim residing in the country[90] established a network that members could rely on when in Israel.

Another topic associated with the State of Israel was its well-being. Even though there was no unity among the members regarding Israeli-Palestinian relations, threats to Israel's existence were acknowledged and criticized. This became evident during the Iranian Revolution and the return of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979. Beit Haverim member Olivier expressed his concern that something similar to the Holocaust might happen again after the Ayatollah came to power. The antisemitism in the world, and the animosity directed at Israel should concern everyone, not only the Jewish people. However, no one, neither in the United States nor in France, seemed to notice, let alone intervene.[91] Nevertheless, Olivier argued: "The only difference: […] the Jewish people in Israel and in the Diaspora of today learned how to defend itself, and do not expect greetings from others."[92]

In another article, Olivier pointed out that the hatred towards Israel was only one aspect of the new Iranian leadership: the possible implications for women who were obliged to wear a black veil from that moment onward were daunting. Moreover, homosexuals were being killed because of their sexual practices.[93] This was something very concerning for Beit Haverim. Olivier resumed: "It is not only on the Iranian woman that the black chador of intolerance fell but on a whole people, and to a certain extent on the world…"[94]

It becomes apparent that Beit Haverim's members were heavily invested in issues revolving around Israel – the state that on the one hand welcomed them based on their belonging to the Jewish people, but on the other hand needed to improve so much more in its stance towards queer life at the end of the 1970s.

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89 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 16–17, BNF, 2.

90 Beit Haverim's longtime president (1982–1994), André Urwand, suggested during a phone call on April 28, 2022 that there was a member in particular who felt responsible to open their house in Tel Aviv to French-speaking, homosexual Jews. It seems that they referred prospects to Beit Haverim (cf. also Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 14). However, I was not able to confirm Urwand's statement that this member also published the offer in the Spartacus International Gay Guide. The Spartacus issues from the 1970s and 1980s neither mention the proposed name nor any other gathering of queer French-speaking Jews in Israel.

91 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 12, BNF, 3–4.

92 "Seule différence, […], le peuple juif en Israël et dans la Diaspora d'aujourd'ui [sic!], a appris à sa défendre, et n'attend pas d'autrui le salut." (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 12, BNF, 3–4. Author's translation.)

93 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 13, BNF, 5–6.

94 "Ce n'est pas seulement sur la femme iranienne que s'est abattu le tchador noir de l'intolérance mais sur tout un peuple, et dans une certaine mesure sur le monde…" (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 13, BNF, 6).

6.1.5 The Situation of Women Coming to Beit Haverim

From its inception, Beit Haverim was a largely male-dominated space: the founding members were men, and Joseph Doucé acted as the primary contact for almost every other subgroup in the CCL. Shortly after the group's inception in September 1977, Doucé received a letter from Patricia J. who had attended a meeting of Beit Haverim and was the only woman in the room. She experienced a "largely misogynous position" from certain members.[95] She noted that "it is very difficult for me to move forward in solving my sexual problems" since "female homosexuality is different than male homosexuality."[96] She further stated:

> [...] it would seem to me rather unfortunate that in a group of this type people do not get along because of a difference of sex[.] It seems to me that it would be more intelligent to do some things together and if a female presence poses problems of understanding [...] to someone, I think that they are not ready to address their homosexual position within a heterosexual society.[97]

She called on both men and women to reflect on how it might be possible to achieve stronger collaboration between the sexes.[98] This appeal did not seem to be realized in the following months. The fact that there was often only one woman present at the meetings did not change quickly.[99] Moreover, complaints about misogynistic language in the first issue of the newsletter were simply rejected, indicating the respective passage as "whimsical" and not discriminatory.[100]

A place in which Jewish women could express their frustration and disappointment became the women's group of the CCL, the only subgroup Joseph Doucé did not oversee. In fact, there was a serious debate within this subgroup about female representation within the CCL. In response, some women pleaded for a more separatist approach, while others favored the idea of men and

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95 Cf. letter from Patricia J. to Joseph Doucé, September 22, 1977, BHA, 1.

96 "[...] il m'est très difficile d'avancer dans la resolution de mes problèmes sexuels, l'homosexualité feminine était differente de l'homosexualité masculin." (Letter from Patricia J. to Joseph Doucé, September 22, 1977, BHA, 1. Author's translation.)

97 "[...] il me purait [sic!] assez regrettable que dans un groupe de ce type les gens ne s'entendent pas à cause d'une différence de sexe il me semblerait plus intelligent de faire quelques choses ensemble et si une presence [sic!] féminine pose des problèmes d'entent à certain je pense qu'il ne sont pas prêts [sic!] à résoudre leur position d'homo face à une société hétéro." (Letter from Patricia J. to Joseph Doucé, September 22, 1977, BHA, 1–2. Author's translation.)

98 Cf. letter from Patricia J. to Joseph Doucé, September 22, 1977, BHA, 2.

99 Cf. Bulletin du Beith-Haverim, no. 2, BNF, 4, and Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 12.

100 Cf. Bulletin du Beith-Haverim, no. 2, BNF, 5.

women coming together under one roof and to enhance their situation together. The latter argued that the movement of homosexual men was too young to think about the inclusion of women, and that they needed time to get themselves organized first.[101] In the view of one Jewish lesbian participating in these meetings, Beit Haverim had to face the question of female inclusion no matter what. In her view, Jewish heritage and culture demands an inclusive approach to all Jews. Furthermore, the many painful experiences in Jewish history require Jews to care for all minorities (such as the women in the movement).[102]

When the group received an influx of younger people in mid-1978, a few more women were among them, and they eventually became involved in the publication of the newsletter.[103] It was now possible to read articles written by women and reflecting their experiences. One example is the member Rifka who visited the queer synagogue Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco and joined a women's group there. In France, she had not been familiar with this experience and the power of Jewish women sitting together and discussing.[104]

Even if female attendance was still low,[105] occasionally women started presenting topics they particularly cared about during the monthly meetings such as female/lesbian literature.[106] Moreover, the few women engaging in Beit Haverim slowly got to know each other. They started spending time together outside of the group setting and went out to explore Parisian nightlife.[107] In the group, they wanted to raise awareness of female sexuality and, in particular, the fact that bisexuality was very common among their female peers.[108] Bisexuality was still very underrepresented or not represented at all in Beit Haverim's agenda.

Women were almost not present in the early months of Beit Haverim. By 1978, when attempts were made to reinvigorate the group, an influx of more female members started changing the sex ratio in the group, albeit slowly. At least the quest for an improvement of female representation was now on the table and enhanced the debate about the group's further direction.

101 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 5, BNF, 5.
102 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 5, BNF, 6.
103 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 6, BNF, 2.
104 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 13, BNF, 16–17.
105 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 9, BNF, 4.
106 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 19–20, 1979/80, BNF, 3.
107 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 18, BNF, 7–8.
108 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 18, BNF, 8–9.

6.1.6 Becoming Politically Active: Member Organization of CUARH

These deliberations about the group's future also included an increase in outreach. First and foremost, Beit Haverim was a group in which Jewish homosexuals could come together. Most of Beit Haverim's efforts were directed towards its members. However, it became increasingly clear that Beit Haverim could also have a political impact. With the CCL and Doucé, they had partners which were very visible within the French gay liberation movement. Thus, Beit Haverim's first appearance outside the CCL occurred when the Comité d'Urgence Anti-Répression Homosexuel (Emergency Committee Against Homosexual Repression, CUARH) came to life. Created by individuals during the "Homosexual Summer School"[109] in Marseille in July 1979, CUARH claimed to work against any repression of homosexuals – mainly in the workplace, but also in politics, law, and everyday life.[110] After the summer school, the founders invited different organizations to discuss forming a coalition and to move the project forward. Besides the group for homosexual Christians David & Jonathan,[111] the lesbian group of Paris and the Comité Homosexuel de l'Education Nationale (Homosexual Committee for National Education), the CCL, and Beit Haverim were also invited to one of the early meetings.[112] Representatives of Beit Haverim joined the project during its weekly meetings[113] until February 1980, when CUARH was officially founded as a coalition of many different homosexual organizations.[114] CUARH decisively acted as a mixed-sex group, choosing a political agenda, and favoring dialogue with political parties and trade unions. Since it focused on normalization, integration, and public recognition of homosexuality, CUARH was oriented towards pragmatic demands and did not appear militant like the

109 Between 1979 and 1985, these "Summer Schools" in Marseille attracted French activists of homosexual organizations from all different stripes of the movement to discussions and debates (cf. Martel, *The Pink and the Black*, 397).

110 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 18, BNF, 10.

111 David & Jonathan was founded in 1972 after a group of self-aware Christians split from the Arcadie. The group was nondenominational, but overwhelmingly Catholic in practice. The group had three main aims: providing a place of pastoral care and charity for homosexuals, reconciling homosexuality with the Christian faith, and working towards an acceptance of homosexuality within and outside the church. David & Jonathan was more moderate in their political language and appearance than the CCL, and in terms of their demographics, male and middle-class (cf. Dan Callwood, "Re-evaluating the French Gay Liberation Moment 1968–1983" [PhD diss., Queen Mary University of London, 2017], 116–128).

112 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 18, BNF, 10.

113 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 19–20, BNF, 3, 17.

114 Cf. Martel, *The Pink and the Black*, 127.

FHAR.[115] Because of its more moderate approach, CUARH became the key negotiator on the issue of homosexuality with the newly elected socialist government of François Mitterrand from May 1981 on.[116]

Thanks to the initiative and with the help of CUARH, Beit Haverim sent a telegram to representatives in the Assemblé Nationale in 1979. It concerned changes made by the Senate regarding the revision of articles 330 and 331 of the Code Pénal that defined punishments for public outrage: "The Jewish homosexuals express their indignation at the modification of the bill voted unanimously by the Senate concerning the reform of the Code Pénal in its articles 330 and 331 relating to the notions of outrage to modesty and sexual majority. They ask you to support the non-revised bill. – Beit Haverim –"[117]

Moreover, CUARH mobilized its supporters for public demonstrations promoting their agenda. An example of this can be found in October 1980, when the French Senate refused to pass a law that aimed at changing the age of consent for same-sex sexual acts to 15 years, which would then match the minimum age of consent for heterosexual relations.[118] The highest visibility was achieved by a large "March for the Rights of Homosexuals and Lesbians" in April 1981.[119] Beit Haverim officially took part in these demonstrations.[120]

The group's involvement in the coalition was a starting point of increased outreach and alliance building. Beit Haverim set up closer contacts with David & Jonathan with which they shared their experiences of being excluded from religious spaces.[121] Additionally, the group was invited to and took part in numerous roundtables and panel discussions about homosexuality, e. g., in CUARH or the Arcadie.[122]

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115 Cf. Martel, *The Pink and the Black*, 127–128.

116 Cf. Martel, *The Pink and the Black*, 127.

117 "Les juifs homosexuels vous font part de leur indignation devant la modification du projet de loi voté à l'unanimité par le sénat concernant la réforme du code pénal en ses articles 330 et 331 relatifs aux notions d'outrage à la pudeur et de majorité sexuelle. Ils vous demandent de soutenir le projet de loi intégral. – Le Beit Haverim –" (Beit Haverim, Bulletin, no. 19–20, BNF, 5. Author's translation.)

118 Cf. no author, "Homos réprimés: Les libertés sont en danger!," *Homophonies. Périodique d'Information et de Liaison des Lesbiennes et Homosexuels*, no. 1 (November 1980): 3.

119 Cf. Martel, *The Pink and the Black*, 127.

120 For example, cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 27, BNF, 3, 10.

121 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 21, BHA, 7. Unfortunately, the contents of joint meetings or debates are not recorded and, on basis of the material acquired for this study, the full extent of the contact with David & Jonathan cannot be evaluated for the early 1980s.

122 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 25–26 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 37), September/October 1980, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 5.

These growing partnerships proved useful for the group when they decided to leave the CCL and become an independent organization in late 1980. The affiliation with the CCL was a subject for debate from the very beginning. Beit Haverim's members were not always happy with Doucé's demeanor and the Christian character of the organization.

6.1.7 Debating Affiliation with the CCL

Joseph Doucé was the primary figure in the CCL and, to a greater or lesser extent, every activity that took place. When someone wanted to get in contact with Beit Haverim, they had to write to Doucé[123] or call him.[124] He was omnipresent, even going so far as to participate in the Fourth International Conference of Gay Jews in Israel (1979) on behalf of Beit Haverim.[125]

Beit Haverim's archive stores the first letters Doucé received from Jews interested in the group. They expressed gratitude for the attempt to create a space like Beit Haverim. However, Doucé himself spoke about a "great mistrust" he felt from members at the beginning.[126] They felt uncomfortable with a cross hanging in the rooms they met in,[127] and feared that Doucé might try to convert them.[128] Daniel Vide, one of the founders, was forced to intervene quite early in this conflict. He admitted that the CCL was a distinctly Christian place:

> But the theological connotations of the acronym [i.e., CCL] do not really interest us. In any case, we note that, in an era in which vocations of confraternity are being affirmed, a form of ecumenism is precisely realized at the CCL[.] If it is legitimate for any group to preserve the cultural achievements that the times have bequeathed on it, let us admit that the homosexuals give, in this case, a kind of example.[129]

A point for discussion became the question of whether non-Jews should be allowed to attend Beit Haverim's meetings. Doucé insisted on opening the doors to all sym-

123 Cf. Bulletin du Beith-Haverim, no. 1, BNF, 5.
124 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 7.
125 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 16–17, BNF, 5–7.
126 Cf. I.L.I.A., no. 24, IPT, 6.
127 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 7, 12.
128 Cf. I.L.I.A., no. 24, IPT, 6.
129 "Mais la connotation théologique du sigle ne nous intéresse pas à vrai dire. Nous constatons, en tout cas, en une époque où se sont affirmées des vocations de confraternité, [...], qu'une forme d'oecuménisme se réalise précisément au CCL; S'il est légitime à tout groupe de conserver les acquis culturels que les temps lui ont légués, admettons que les homosexuels donnent, en cette circonstance, une manière d'exemple." (Bulletin du Beith-Haverim, no. 1, BNF, 3. Author's translation.)

pathizers and referred to a practice in US-American synagogues in which non-Jews could become members, take part in debates, but could not vote on propositions.[130] This led to the February 1978 meeting in which non-Jews outnumbered Jews. Many Jews attending were furious about this and felt attacked, i. e., that their safe space was being intruded upon.[131] The event left David Vide uncertain about his feelings. He both saw the potential of an exchange with other queers, but also the risk of usurpation. Nevertheless, he concluded that the group should learn a lesson from the small number of Jews who were there, and reach out to attract new members.[132]

The evidence suggests that this instance did not repeat itself, and after a while, Beit Haverim came to terms with Doucé and the CCL as a whole. Doucé himself felt an increasing friendship arising from this cooperation.[133] However, it was very clear from the start that the arrangement with the CCL was not a permanent solution.[134] The time for an appropriate breakaway was regularly debated. In June 1979, member Willy stated: "[…] I understand those who would like 'the house of friends' be larger, freer, more independent. I would also like it to be this way[.] I also sometimes feel a certain discomfort at knowing that our group is under the tutelage of Christians."[135] However, Willy also explained what a departure from the CCL would mean. Becoming independent would require new premises to host the group's events, and to have some kind of office. In order to pay for such a place, the membership dues would have to be raised significantly. In addition, someone would need to be present at the new premises to take phone calls and to do administrative work. To run such a place would also require at least one member to put their name on official documents – something the group was very hesitant to do, even in the newsletters. The same would be needed for official registration as an association under the law of July 1, 1901: the law required three members[136] to serve as legal representatives of such an association.[137] In

130 Cf. Bulletin du Beith-Haverim, no. 2, BNF, 5.

131 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 3, BNF, 1.

132 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 3, BNF, 1–3.

133 Cf. I.L.I.A., no. 24, IPT, 6.

134 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 29, November 1980, BHA, 8, and I.L.I.A. (Il libère, Il aime), no. 41, January 1981, P 493, IPT, 8.

135 "[…] je comprend ceux qui voudraient que 'la maison des amis' soit plus vaste, plus libre, plus indépendante. Moi aussi, je la voudrais ainsi, moi aussi, j'éprouve parfois une certaine gène à savoir notre groupe sous la tutelle de chrétiens." (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 15, BNF, 4. Author's translation.)

136 It should be noted that these three members have to be French. Joseph Doucé was not able to become the official president of the CCL until he became a French citizen in 1982. Until then, other CCL members served as representatives in official matters.

light of this, Willy did not support attempts to leave the CCL at this point. He even cautioned that such a step might even lead to mere chaos. Ultimately, such an endeavor would insult Doucé and his hospitality. He concluded: "In case a majority of people vote for an experiment that I think has no future, I will stop participating in the group immediately."[138]

The debate did not end there. In 1980, there were serious doubts about the future of Beit Haverim within the CCL. The necessity for an own constitution or directive principles became apparent. The proponents were convinced that the affiliation with the CCL had muddled Beit Haverim's aspirations. It was regarded as necessary to define more precisely what Beit Haverim was, stood for, and what political position it was to take in political debates.[139] Beit Haverim's past reticence was, according to a member called Norbert, the reason why the group "did not take off yet."[140] In his view, this reticence was caused by Beit Haverim's position in the CCL: "Our affiliation with the CCL is strangely similar to the case of the young boy who lives with his parents in fear of facing the outside world."[141] His conclusion was clear: "We need a place [sic!] where we can really feel like we are building a home together. […] Just as Israel cannot exist without a land, Beit Haverim cannot be revived until it manages to build its house."[142] Due to these and similar demands, Beit Haverim eventually set up a fund to sponsor a future home outside the CCL in September 1980. Every member was invited to donate money to facilitate the independence.[143] Regardless, it did not take long until the final decision was made to leave the CCL – catalyzed by the terrorist attack on a Parisian synagogue.

137 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 15, BNF, 4.

138 "Au cas ou une majorité se trouvait pour voter une expérience que je juge sans avenir, je cesserai immédiatement de participer au groupe." (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 15, BNF, 5. Author's translation.)

139 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 21, BHA, 8, and Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 25–26, BNF, 4.

140 Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 25–26, BNF, 3.

141 "Notre appartenance au CCL ressemble étrangement au cas du jeune garçon qui habite chez ses parents de peur d'affronter le monde extérieur." (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 25–26, BNF, 4. Author's translation.)

142 "Il nous faut donc un local [sic!] où nous puissions avoir réellement le sentiment de bâtir ensemble un foyer. […] De même qu'Israel [sic!] ne peut exister sans une terre, le Beith Haverim ne pourra renaître que s'il parvient à construire sa maison." (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 25–26, BNF, 4. Author's translation.)

143 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 27, BHA, 8.

6.2 Independence and First Heyday (1980 – 1985)

6.2.1 The Attack on Rue Copernic and Its Consequences

As explained earlier in this study,[144] the liberal synagogue in rue Copernic in the 16th Parisian arrondissement was attacked on October 3, 1980, during Shabbat services on Simchat Torah. This was the first deadly attack against Jews in France since World War II, killing four people. The attackers came from a neo-Nazi organization in collaboration with Palestinian nationals. The Jewish community was shocked by this new hatred they had to face. Besides the attack itself, French Jewry was additionally disgusted by, and frustrated about, Prime Minister Raymond Barre's remark about the "innocent Frenchmen" that were struck passing by rue Copernic, making them distinct from the Jews in the synagogue.[145]

For Beit Haverim, the days after the attack became very decisive. To start with, the queer community appeared equally concerned: they were reminded that Jews and homosexuals were both persecuted under the Nazi regime.[146] CURAH specifically acknowledged Beit Haverim as part of their community and expressed its solidarity.[147] The group David & Jonathan sent a telegram to the group stating: "The members of the movement David and Jonathan pray for their brothers of Beit Haverim who were so hard hit in their dignity as humans and believers by the recent attacks and especially the one in rue Copernic."[148]

A few days after the attack, CUARH organized an antiracist march to demonstrate their solidarity in which around 2.000 people participated, Beit Haverim

144 Cf. Section 4.2.2.

145 Barre was criticized several times for antisemitic remarks. Shortly before his death in August 2007, he said on a radio show that "the Jewish lobby" had orchestrated the criticism against him regarding his remarks in 1980. In the same interview, he also argued that Maurice Papon, a senior official under the Vichy regime, became a "scapegoat" for this "lobby" (cf. BG, "The French Can Be Just As Contemptible As the Jews," Jewcy, March 6, 2007, https://jewcy.com/post/the_french_can_be_just_as_contemptible_as_the_jews, accessed August 12, 2022).

146 Cf. Gérard Bach, "Rue Copernic: L'étoile jaune et le triangle rose," *Homophonies. Périodique d'Information et de Liaison des Lesbiennes et Homosexuels*, no. 1 (November 1980): 10.

147 Cf. Vincent Legret, "Solidarité," *Homophonies. Périodique d'Information et de Liaison des Lesbiennes et Homosexuels*, no. 1 (November 1980): 10.

148 "Les membres du mouvement David et Jonathan prient pur leurs frères de Beit Haverim si durement éprouves dans leur dignité d'hommes et de croyants par les récents attentats et plus particulièrement celui de la rue Copernic." (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 28, October 1980, BHA, 5. Author's translation.)

members among them.[149] Overall, group members joined several different rallies and demonstrations in the days after the incident.[150]

More importantly, the attack was the moment for Beit Haverim to finally depart from the CCL. On October 4, 1980, one day after the attack, the group came together for their long-planned Simchat Torah meeting. Twenty members showed up and engaged in an emotional debate about the group's future. The meeting quickly turned from a friendly, social one to a work meeting. As a result, Beit Haverim decided to put all meetings at the CCL on hold.[151] The time had come to declare itself independent from the Christian "mother organization,"[152] underlining the Jewish character of the group. Such an emphasis seemed more important than ever: the members wanted to position themselves publicly as Jews and did not want to hide away. One member was assigned to tell Joseph Doucé about the decision.[153]

The decision was not uncontroversial within Beit Haverim. The members that were absent during the meeting on October 4 criticized that this meeting, originally arranged to celebrate Simchat Torah, made decisions that only a general meeting could make. The meeting in question "presented the absentees with a *fait accompli.*"[154] In particular, the fact that this decision was made without consulting Joseph Doucé left some members angry. Member Roland wrote: "[Previously] we assured the pastor [i. e., Doucé] that our departure from the CCL would happen in a certain way, in a way that there would be no ambiguity in the eyes of the others about the reasons of our departure."[155] Another member called Israel stated: "[…] when I learnt that the group had left the CCL 'like thieves,' without even warning anyone, I searched […] for a word to describe this course of action and the first that came into my mind was: 'disgusting;' yes, that is right, perfectly disgusting."[156] He went further and added:

149 Cf. Legret, "Solidarité," 10.

150 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 28, BHA, 5.

151 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 29, BHA, 10.

152 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 7.

153 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 29, BHA, 10.

154 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 29, BHA, 4.

155 "[…] nous avons donné l'assurance au Pasteur que notre départ du CCL se ferait dans certaines formes, de façon à ce qu'il n'y ait aucune ambiguïté, au regard des autres, sur les raisons de notre départ." (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 29, BHA, 4. Author's translation.)

156 "[…] quand j'ai appris que le Groupe était parti 'comme des voleurs' du C.C.L., sans même avertir personne, j'ai cherché, […], un mot peur qualifier cette manière de faire et le premier mot qui m'est venu à l'esprit était: 'dégueulasse'; oui, c'est bien çà [sic!], parfaitement dégueulasse." (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 29, BHA, 7. Author's translation.)

> No grievance against the CCL, whatever it may be, or, even less, personally against Pastor Doucé, could justify such an attitude on the departing of the group. [...] These members [supporting the departure] often disregard all the difficulties that had to be overcome to get to this point, that the group was still founded under the impetus and inspiration of Pastor Doucé, that the group has continued to exist thanks to CCL.[157]

Another incident exacerbated the situation: the member that was originally assigned to speak with Doucé about the departure did not fulfill their mission. This meant that Doucé learnt about it through a casual conversation he had with Beit Haverim members. The motive for not telling Doucé is not retraceable, although this failure led to a further complication for both the proponents and opponents of the departure.[158] Beit Haverim was then forced to write an official letter to Doucé in which they had to apologize for the way he became aware of the situation. They further added:

> Our departure is neither motivated by any aggression, nor because of any grievance against you or the CCL. It is obvious that all members of the group are perfectly aware of all that you have done for the foundation and the survival of that group. We hope that all members of CCL understand the legitimacy of our desire for independence. [...] We believe that all equivocations will be removed and that we will have a serene and fraternal relationship going forward.[159]

Doucé replied in an article for CCL's newsletter.[160] He did not hide his disappointment about Beit Haverim's departure, taking into account what he did for the group from its very beginning. The way of departure troubled him: "Alas, this autonomy, long anticipated, was carried out in a very hasty way, under the pressure

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157 "Aucun grief, quelqu'il soit, envers le C.C.L., ou encore moins personnel envers le Pasteur Doucé ne peut justifier une telle attitude de la part du Groupe. Ces membres ignorent bien souvent tout des difficultés qu'il a fallu surmonter pour en arriver là, que le Groupe a quand même été fondé sous l'impulsion et l'inspiration du Pasteur Doucé, que le Groupe apu [sic!] continuer d'exister grâce au C.C.L." (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 29, BHA, 7. Author's translation.)

158 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 29, BHA, 2, 8, 11.

159 "Notre départ n'est motivé ni par une agressivité, ni à cause de griefs à votre encontre, ni à l'encontre du C.C.L. Il est bien évident que tous les membres du groupe sont parfaitement conscients de tout ce que vous avez fait pour la création et la survie de ce groupe. Nous espérons que l'ensemble des membres du C.C.L., comprendra la légitimité de notre désir d'indépendance. [...] Nous pensons que toute équivoque étant levée, nous aurons à l'avenir des rapports sereins et fraternels." (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 29, BHA, 12. Author's translation.)

160 Cf. I.L.I.A., no. 41, IPT, 7–9.

of some excited people, too novice to be well aware of the true nature of our relations, and furthermore unable to explain the reasons of their attitude."[161]

Doucé could not ignore the fact that, on many occasions, he felt a certain amount of animosity from several members because he was non-Jewish: "Just as I denounce all forms of antisemitism, I reject all forms of reverse racism with the same vigor."[162] He predicted Beit Haverim would undergo "a difficult period" of transition.[163] However, he wished them the best of luck, hoped for a fraternal and courteous relationship, and left the door open for the group and its members to ask for help or guidance.[164]

As it becomes apparent from analyzing the newsletters, Beit Haverim was never ungrateful for what Doucé did for them.[165] It recognized Doucé's contribution in the years after the split,[166] and Beit Haverim still thanks him for his support up until this day.[167] However, the departure from the CCL started a new era for the group. It started a process in which the members had to think about the group's further direction and what Beit Haverim would stand for. Eventually, it introduced the first heyday of Beit Haverim – with a new spirit and drive to move the group forward.

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161 "Hélas, cette autonomie, prévue depuis longtemps, s'est réalisée de façon pour le moins précipitée, sous la pression de quelques excités trop novices pour être bien au fait de la vraie nature de nos rapports, et incapables par ailleurs d'expliquer les raisons de leur attitude." (I.L.I.A., no. 41, IPT, 8. Author's translation.)

162 "Comme je dénonce toute forme d'antisémitisme, je refuse avec la même vigueur toute forme de racisme à l'envers." (I.L.I.A., no. 41, IPT, 9. Author's translation.)

163 Cf. I.L.I.A., no. 41, IPT, 8.

164 Cf. I.L.I.A., no. 41, IPT, 9.

165 For example, cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 27, BNF, 2.

166 Doucé was kidnapped in July 1990 and was found dead in the forest of Fontainebleau in October. The murder was never solved but it is claimed that a corrupt and criminal branch of the French national police (*Rensignements Generaux*) targeted Doucé (cf. LGBTQ Religious Archives Network, "Joseph Doucé"). Beit Haverim reacted to his murder with grief – contemporaneously with gratitude for what Doucé had done for the group – as well as with the same outrage (cf. Ha Mikhtav – La Lettre du Beit Haverim, no. 4, December 1990, BHA, 2) as the rest of the queer community in France and worldwide (for example, cf. Schmitt, "Doucé wußte zu viel," 27, and Alexander Schwartz "Der Entführungsfall Joseph Doucé," *Magnus. Das schwule Magazin* 2, no. 11 [November 1990]: 26 – 27).

167 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 7.

6.2.2 Structure of the Independent Beit Haverim

Despite the ongoing debate within the group and the still unresolved misunderstanding with Doucé, Beit Haverim officially handed in its newly composed statutes to the Paris Prefecture of Police on October 14, 1980. The goal was to be recognized as an association under the law of July 1, 1901. At the end of October 1980, the creation of Beit Haverim (Maison des amis) as such an association was publicly announced in the French government gazette *Journal officiel de la République française.*

As the group's objectives, the gazette cited those set out in the statutes: the "aid of any Jewish person, notably in relation to the defense of the freedoms and rights of the human being." All of its activities will be "of Jewish inspiration." Only at the end, it specified the already mentioned defense of freedoms as "particularly related to problems of sexuality and more specifically to homosexuality."[168] This rather cautious wording was used so that the recognition as an official association under French law would not be jeopardized. Beit Haverim was first and foremost portrayed as a Jewish organization that was engaged in human rights, and not solely aimed at assisting homosexuals.

One requirement for Beit Haverim's official recognition was that its members were willing to give their names to the prefecture and enroll as the group's representatives. The prospect of registering as both Jewish and homosexual with the police did not tempt anyone.[169] Eventually, Martine Gross agreed to become the first president of Beit Haverim. She did not have many family members and worked in an "extremely open environment,"[170] which meant that she felt less threatened by the prospect of being "out" as homosexual. Marc Ofman joined her as treasurer and Elisabeth Gelrubin as secretary.[171]

The newly written statutes further described the framework in which Beit Haverim should operate in the future. Most importantly, they defined who could become a member. Prospective members had to be Jewish (by self-definition),[172] a French citizen, and at least 18 years old.[173] There were active and supportive mem-

168 Cf. Journal officiel de la République française, Publication no. 19800254, Announcement no. 132, October 30, 1980.

169 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 13.

170 Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 13.

171 Cf. Statuts Beit Haverim, October 14, 1980, Fonds Thierry Meyssan, Académie Gay et Lesbienne, Conservatoire des Archives et des Mémoires LGBTQI (AGL), 8.

172 From the beginning on, there were several members with gentile parents, either on the mother's or the father's side (cf. report "Beit Haverim," BHA, 1977).

173 Cf. Status Beit Haverim, AGL, 8.

bers. Active members paid membership dues and were allowed to participate and vote in the "executive general assembly." Supportive members gave a monetary contribution to Beit Haverim, and were able to influence the group through a "consultative general assembly," although their votes were non-binding.[174] The statutes gave the organization's board the duty to approve a membership application, while it was allowed to deny anyone's request.[175] This was taken seriously: at least from 1982 on,[176] prospective members had to meet an already approved member and go through an interview process to ascertain their genuine desire to support the group, in order to prevent antisemites or homophobes joining Beit Haverim. This practice was in place until the 1990s,[177] even though some saw this procedure as a severe obstacle to attracting more members.[178]

Besides the establishment of its own statutes and its recognition as an association of July 1, 1901, Beit Haverim sought to rent its own place where meetings and events could take place. Meanwhile, the group met in the apartments of its members[179] or went to a park, cinema, or restaurant.[180] Through the membership dues and additional donations, the group was finally able to find a suitable location in 88 rue Marcadet in the 18th arrondissement. It was inaugurated in January 1982.[181] The group stated: "We were among us, finally independent. It is true that the place is small, expensive, far away from the capital's center, but since last Cheshvan [i.e., January], every week, we meet each other there, make decisions, and organize leisure evenings or Jewish parties."[182]

For three years, the space became the linchpin of Beit Haverim's members. When the group did not need to access the room (especially during the day), they sublet it to psychotherapists to conduct their sessions with patients there.

174 Cf. Status Beit Haverim, AGL, 2 – 3, 9 – 10.

175 Cf. Status Beit Haverim, AGL, 2 – 3.

176 Cf. Bulletin de Liaison du Beit Haverim, no. 41, December 1982/January 1983, BHA, 4 – 5.

177 Conversation with Sylvain Cypel on April 25, 2022, in their private home (Paris).

178 Cf. Beit[-]Haverim – Notre Journal, no. 3, Teveth–Adar 5743 (December–March 1983), BHA, 15.

179 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 33, May 1981, Cote 20150654/10, Liasse 30, Papiers Gérald de la Mauvinière, Relations avec d'autres associations et groupes français, Beit Haverim (groupe mixte homosexuel juif), 1980 – 1983, Association David & Jonathan (Cotes 20150654/1 – 20150654/57), Archives Nationales de France (ANF), 3 – 4.

180 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 29, BHA, 13.

181 Cf. I.L.I.A. (Il libère, Il aime), no. 51, January 1982, P 493, IPT, 10.

182 "[N]ous étions chez nous, enfin indépendants. Certes ce local est petit, couteux, loin du centre de la capitale, mais depuis Heschvan dernier, toutes les semaines, nous nous y réunissons, y prenons des décisions et y organisons des soirées loisirs ou des fêtes juives." (Beit[-]Haverim – Notre Journal, no. 2, July–September 1982, BHA, 2. Author's translation.)

In this way, the group had another income to pay the rent.[183] Additionally, the place had a telephone line with an answering machine, which made it easier for people to reach out.[184] Martine Gross was further able to host a post box for mail correspondence and to pay the membership dues anonymously.[185]

With all these formal adjustments, the group was able to enter their first period of independence with a diverse range of activities, an increased outreach program, and increased awareness for the needs of its female members.

6.2.3 Activities and Points for Debate

With its departure from the CCL, Beit Haverim was able to offer a broad range of activities, parties, and other events, particularly after renting the location in rue Marcadet. The group flourished and was able to provide a variety of meetings several times a week, sometimes even daily.[186] A popular feature became debate or "reflection" nights. Members were invited to discuss a preselected topic like marriage between two homosexuals or to choose a topic on site.[187] Other regular events were the "cinema club" or visits to a bar to socialize.[188] Social parties were now easier to organize since the group could host them on their premises.[189] That notwithstanding, the group did not shy away from renting even bigger places for parties[190] or even hosting concerts in large auditoriums.[191] Beit Haverim became a place in which up to 150 members and sympathizers[192] met on a regular

183 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 7.

184 Cf. Bulletin du Liaison du Beit Haverim, no. 43, April–May 1983, folder "Bulletin de Liaison du Beit Haverim," Internationaal Homo/Lesbisch Informatiecentrum en Archief LGBTI Heritage (IHLIA), 6.

185 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 12–13.

186 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 47, January–March 1984, BHA, 3–4, and Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 48, April/May 1984, BHA, 6–7.

187 Cf. Bulletin de Liaison du Beit Haverim, no. 38, February/March 1982, BHA, 15, and Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 48, BHA, 6–7.

188 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 29, BHA, 13; Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 47, BHA, 3–4; Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 48, BHA, 6–7.

189 Cf. Beit[-]Haverim – Notre Journal, no. 1, April–July 1982, BHA, 5, and Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 47, BHA, 4.

190 Cf. Beit[-]Haverim – Notre Journal, no. 4, Nisan–Sivan 5743 (March–June 1983), BHA, 24, and Invitation "Une Grande Soiree Dansante," April 27, 1985, BHA.

191 Cf. Tickets for Beit Haverim Concert, September 25, 1983, box A VIII, tracts LGBT divers, Inventaire du fonds Catherine Gonnard, Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand.

192 Cf. Journal, no. 3, BHA, 30.

basis, and in various different settings, so that they could deepen their relationships.

Beit Haverim also increased its investment in organizing Jewish holidays. Now, meetings for celebrating Shabbat were not unusual.[193] There were even attempts to attend a synagogue service together (with concealed identities, though).[194] In addition, the group organized events for all other holidays, this time including Passover. The first Passover celebrations in rue Marcadet lasted two days and were held in the Ashkenazic style.[195] When the holidays were not celebrated on the group's premises, members hosted them at their homes.[196]

Another focus for Beit Haverim was the participation in a variety of demonstrations and rallies.[197] Despite their difficult position within the French Jewish community, which will be described in greater detail at a later point,[198] the members joined French Jewry openly as Beit Haverim at public events, such as commemoration ceremonies for the victims of the Shoah.[199] More frequently, Beit Haverim appeared at demonstrations from the queer community. It did not matter whether these demonstrations were preorganized (e. g., the annual Pride March)[200] or rather spontaneous (e. g., concerning the refusal to grant the homosexual radio station Frequence Gaie a public frequency in 1982)[201] – Beit Haverim participated, always with their banner that they created for such occasions.[202] The group had become more politically engaged: "Beit Haverim has allowed us to get to know each other to better resist a de facto exclusion and to prepare a response together that will be heard, because the worst exclusion is ignorance."[203] The group also directed their energies to the wider world. It introduced a "journal," a more extensive version of a newsletter. This journal featured not only articles about Beit Haverim itself, but also about different social issues, Jewish life, and col-

193 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 41, BHA, 4 – 5.
194 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 28, BHA, 5.
195 Cf. Journal, no. 1, BHA, 4.
196 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 48, BHA, 6.
197 Cf. Beit Haverim, "Gai Shalom," *Lesbia*, no. 22 (November 1984): 11.
198 Cf. Section 6.2.5.
199 Cf. Journal, no. 2, BHA, 4.
200 Cf. Journal, no. 1, BHA, 6.
201 Cf. Journal, no. 2, BHA, 11 – 12.
202 It was titled "Groupe Juif Homo Mixte Beit Haverim," cf. Journal, no. 1, BHA, 6, and Journal, no. 2, BHA, 11 – 12.
203 "Le Beit-Haverim [sic!] nous a permis de nous connaître pour mieux résister à une exclusion de fait er préparer ensemble une réponse qui se fasse entendre car la pire exclusion c'est l'ignorance." (Ithamar Ben Knaam, "La maison des amis. Un group d'entraide en France," *Gai Pied*, no. 31 [October 1981]: 42. Author's translation.)

lected clippings from newspapers throughout France about the group or other relevant topics.[204] It was published in four issues until mid-1983 and complemented the newsletters that now took a back seat. Since it was much more labor-intensive to publish the twenty to thirty-five-page long journal, the editors ceased their production quickly and the newsletter once again became the group's primary mouthpiece after 1983.

However, these publications give an idea about which topics were debated within the group. Given the above-described thematic focus of the early years, it is not surprising that Israel was a major point of debate. The lives of Jewish homosexuals were closely followed,[205] and the 1982 war in Lebanon led to intensive debates within the group. There seem to have been members that spoke of an "Israeli aggression" towards Lebanon and criticized the Israeli government. Others demanded full solidarity with the Jewish state.[206] The evaluation of the situation was further stoked by the deadly attack on the Jewish restaurant Chez Jo Goldenberg in rue des Rosiers (Paris) by a terrorist group that had splintered from the PLO. Apart from conflict-laden reunions on the Beit Haverim premises, the members exchanged their differing views in the journal.[207] As a group that did not make absolute and final decisions about politics, members represented a cross-section of French Jewry.[208] Thus, the different emotions and opinions of Beit Haverim's members reflected the general difficulties and disagreements Diaspora Jews had regarding the First Lebanon War.[209] Besides the ongoing engagement in Israel, the journals also show attempts to let members reconnect with their Jewish heritage, be it through profound deliberations about Jewishness,[210] explanations of the holidays,[211] or Jewish recipes.[212]

Another point of interest was education about sexually transmitted diseases. Beit Haverim wanted to educate their members about the risks of infection and

204 It is not unlikely that Beit Haverim was inspired by Sjalhomo's *krantje* that was designed in the same fashion (cf. Section 7.1.1).

205 Cf. Journal, no. 4, BHA, 18.

206 Cf. Journal, no. 2, BHA, 5.

207 Cf. Journal, no. 3, BHA, 4–11.

208 Cf. Stéphane Kaplan, "Feigele, Gayele et Pedele. Juif et homosexuel, ou comment atteindre à la double indifférence," *Gai Pied Hebdo*, no. 46 (December 1982): 21.

209 For example, cf. Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe. The American Jewish Conflict over Israel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 42 et seqq.

210 Cf. Journal, no. 4, BHA, 4–5.

211 Cf. Journal, no. 4, BHA, 6, and Journal, no. 3, BHA, 24.

212 Cf. Journal, no. 3, BHA, 25–26.

how to receive appropriate treatment.[213] The group started very early to mention reports about HIV/AIDS before this was a common publicly debated subject.[214]

To summarize, Beit Haverim established a wide-ranging program to better take care of its member's needs. Joseph Doucé's estimation that the group would go through a difficult time after leaving the CCL did not turn out to be correct. On the contrary, the group was robust and busy organizing spaces for meetings and the exchange of experiences and opinions. However, the question of whether women were equally represented and had their issues appropriately addressed was still an open one.

6.2.4 Women's Issues

After Beit Haverim decided to part from the CCL, it started presenting itself as "groupe mixte," a mixed group consisting of both men and women (with no awareness of other gender identities).[215] Beit Haverim members declared in an interview: "A very important feature of 'the Beit' is the group's gender mix."[216]

However, the dossier of the 22nd issue of *Lesbia*, the French magazine for the lesbian movement, was dedicated to the female members of Beit Haverim and stated: "One of the biggest problems of Beit Haverim is the gender mix, even though the group was founded by a majority of women.[217] But, very quickly, men came in and inevitable discrepancies of experiences and desires appeared."[218]

How can this difference between ambitions and reality be explained? Despite the enhancements after the group's foundation, major problems for women were not resolved. Not only were they in the minority at almost every meeting,[219] they

213 Cf. Journal, no. 2, BHA, 14 – 16, and Journal, no. 3, BHA, 29, 37.

214 Cf. Journal, no. 2, BHA, 18.

215 Cf. Journal, no. 1, BHA, 7.

216 "Une spécifiticité très importante du Beit c'est la mixité du groupe." (Chris Boyer-Jones, "Juifs – Homos. Entretien avec le Beit Haverim," *Masques. Revue des Homosexuelles*, no. 14 (Summer 1982): 115. Author's translation.)

217 As the newsletters suggest, many women were active in the departure from the CCL and making Beit Haverim an independent organization (cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 29, BHA, 5, 9). However, it is not possible to validate this statement since no membership lists from that time were passed on. This quote cannot refer to the original founding in 1977.

218 "Un des gros problèmes du Beit Haverim, c'est la mixité, bien que le groupe ait été créé par une majorité des femmes. Mais, très vite, les hommes ont afflué et d'inévitables décalages d'expériences et de désirs sont apparus." (Beit Haverim, "Shalom, Beit Haverim!," *Lesbia*, no. 22 [November 1984]: 11. Author's translation.)

219 Cf. Boyer-Jones, "Juifs – Homos," 113.

also could not address their own sexual problems.[220] The men in Beit Haverim still occasionally used misogynistic and "macho" language.[221] Elisabeth Gelrubin, one of the three original board members, went so far as to say that the registration of Beit Haverim as a mixed group in the statutes was "in a way an alibi" for promoting something that was not there.[222]

The difficult situation of the *mixité* led to an appeal from Beit Haverim's then-president André Urwand[223] in the fourth journal (1983). He called the absence of women a "malaise."[224] At the same time, he was not totally aware of the reasons for this absence and what was required to facilitate more female participation. Therefore, he suggested an intensive dialogue between male and female members without any verbal confrontation. Urwand rejected the notion of male members who claimed to be intimidated by "the terrorism of the lesbians."[225] He added: "[…] Beit Haverim exists for mutual aid, for friendship, also for love; it exists to work together, towards an opening towards the others, towards the Jewish community, towards other national communities, in order to reach a better everyday life for homosexual men and women, for the benefit of all."[226] Only with homosexual women, so Urwand, is the group complete and can thrive for a better future.[227]

Due to a lack of evidence, it is not possible to reconstruct the response by female members to Urwand's appeal. However, few attempts were made to attract and, above all, keep the women who were already visiting Beit Haverim. The most prominent example were meetings within Beit Haverim's agenda only for women. These were specially themed evenings that also attracted nonmembers and non-Jewish women[228] held in rue Marcadet,[229] or excursions and bar eve-

220 Cf. Boyer-Jones, "Juifs – Homos," 115.

221 Cf. Journal, no. 3, BHA, 14.

222 Cf. Journal, no. 3, BHA, 14.

223 Martine Gross had already stepped down as president in 1982. She understood her role as "very modest" and wanted to secure Beit Haverim's future by acting as the first president (cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 13). After this initial process was over, she decided not to run again. Subsequently, André Urwand was elected president and served up until 1994.

224 Cf. Journal, no. 4, BHA, 14.

225 Cf. Journal, no. 4, BHA, 14.

226 "[…] le Beit Haverim existe pour l'entraide, pour l'amitié, pour l'amour aussi; il existe pour travailler, en commun, à une ouverture vers les autres, vers la communauté juive, vers les autres communautés nationales, afin d'atteindre à un meilleur quotidien pour les homosexuels hommes et femmes, pour le bénéfice de tous et des toutes." (Journal, no. 4, BHA, 14–15. Author's translation.)

227 Cf. Journal, no. 4, BHA, 23.

228 Cf. Boyer-Jones, "Juifs – Homos," 113.

229 Cf. Bulletin de Liaison du Beit Haverim, no. 37, December 1981, Cote 20150654/10, Liasse 30, Papiers Gérald de la Mauvinière, Relations avec d'autres associations et groupes français, Beit Ha-

nings.[230] However, these meetings did not occur regularly throughout the year, and they were sometimes cancelled due to a lack of female involvement.[231] There is also a meeting for all members recorded that took female homosexuality and its (alleged) differences to the sexuality of homosexual men into account.[232] This meeting was of an educational nature and had the purpose of developing mutual understanding, without any decision being made by the group. Additionally, the female members were often active in other lesbian and/or feminist settings and groups like the Mouvement d'Information et d'Expression des Lesbiennes (Movement for Lesbian Information and Expression) that was originally established by CUARH.[233] This was not only a way to get to know other lesbians, but apparently also an opportunity to talk about and share their experiences of male dominance within the queer community.

The group also tried including female experiences when the group was presented in community magazines.[234] The most prominent example is the already mentioned dossier in the 22nd and 23rd issue of the newspaper *Lesbia* that were both dedicated entirely to lesbian Jews. In sum, six Jewish lesbians of various ages and personal and religious backgrounds wrote about their lives, their coming-outs, and how they tried to achieve inclusion in the Jewish community.[235] They all experienced a trifold exclusion: as women, as lesbians, and as Jews. Marthe described a common feeling among Jewish lesbians: "I think that lesbianism and Judaism come together because lesbians and Jews are minorities, two marginalized groups. To be aware of being lesbian and Jewish is not to accept, to oppose the values of the dominant [i. e., patriarchic] culture."[236] She went fur-

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verim (groupe mixte homosexuel juif), 1980 – 1983, Association David & Jonathan (Cotes 20150654/1 – 20150654/57), ANF, 4, 6, and Beit Haverim, "Shalom, Beit Haverim!," 11.

230 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 48, BHA, 9.

231 Cf. Boyer-Jones, "Juifs – Homos," 113.

232 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 38, BHA, 4 – 11.

233 Cf. Boyer-Jones, "Juifs – Homos," 118.

234 For example, cf. Sarah, "Pas frigide, lesbienne," *Gai Pied*, no. 31 (October 1981): 43.

235 Cf. Danielle, "Si je disais dans une assemblée que je suis homosexuelle, je me ferais lapider," *Lesbia*, no. 22 (1984): 12 – 13; Valérie, "La première oppression, c'est celle d'être une femme," *Lesbia*, no. 22 (1984): 13; Véronique, "Les juifs et les homosexuals entretiennent un délire de persécution," *Lesbia*, no. 22 (1984): 15; Penelope, "Etre lesbienne m'a rendue plus consciente de mon judaïsme," *Lesbia*, no. 23 (December 1984): 13; Marthe, "Je suis une réfugiée, j'ai connu la fuite et la terreur...," *Lesbia*, no. 23 (December 1984): 14; Nicole, "Je suis le stéréotype conscient de celle qui provoque l'antisémitisme," *Lesbia*, no. 23 (December 1984): 15.

236 "Je pense que le lesbianisme et le judaïsme se rejoignent parce que lesbiennes et juifs forment des minorités, deux groupes marginalisés. Avoir conscience d'être lesbienne et juive, c'est ne pas accepter, s'opposer aux valeurs de la culture dominante." (Marthe, "Je suis une réfugiée," 14. Author's translation.)

ther and explained that despite these shared experiences of Jews and lesbians, Judaism does not accept homosexuality. This circumstance was difficult for lesbians to acknowledge. However: "Despite this, we feel the attachment to Judaism as an unbreakable bond regardless of what Judaism means to us and how we live it."[237]

Véronique described how she experienced that her Jewish environment did not accept lesbianism, and, as a matter of fact, even ignored the existence of lesbians entirely: "One can very well claim a complete lesbian-Jewish identity because one is what one is. We are lesbians but we also belong to something (else). One can add whatever one wants after *lesbian* [sic!], another particularity that accentuates the oppression, but before being lesbian-Jewish, it would be necessary to be a lesbian quite simply."[238] Valérie also expressed the difficulties of coming out, and, furthermore, of the implications of "Jewish lesbianism" on one's own identity: "It is difficult to claim a lesbian-Jewish identity. I always pose as a woman. The problem is not to be Jewish or lesbian: the problem is how, and as what, to approach people. It is a problem of identity, my identity, and not of a Jewish or lesbian identity."[239]

These personal accounts testifying about the struggles of being Jewish and lesbian were complemented by more analytical observations about the situation of Jewish lesbians in France.[240] Not all of these authors were members of Beit Haverim. The group, however, connected them to the editorial team of *Lesbia.* This prominent example made the experience of Jewish lesbians visible to other French lesbians.

Therefore, the situation within Beit Haverim was challenging for women all the way through to the early 1980s. Beit Haverim did, at least, start to understand itself as a "mixed group" and there was a raised awareness within the board that the lack of cooperation between the sexes had to be addressed. Interestingly

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237 "[M]algré cela, nous ressentons l'attachement au judaïsme comme un lien indéfectible indépendamment de ce que le judaïsme représente pour nous, de la façon don't nous le vivons." (Marthe, "Je suis une réfugiée," 14. Author's translation.)

238 "On peut très bien se revendiquer d'une identité complète lesbienne-juive parce qu'on est ce qu'on est. On est lesbienne mais on appartient aussi à quelque chose. On peut ajouter ce qu'on veut après *lesbienne* [sic!], une autre particularité qui accentue l'oppression, mais avant d'être lesbienne-juive, il faudrait être lesbienne tout court." (Véronique, "Les juifs et les homosexuals," 15. Author's translation)

239 "C'est très difficile de se revendiquer une identité lesbienne-juive. Je me pose toujours en tant que femme. Le problème, ce n'est pas d'être juive ou lesbienne: le problème, c'est comment aborder les gens, en tant que quoi. C'est un problème d'identité et pas d'identité juive ou lesbienne: en tant que moi." (Cf. Valérie, "La première oppression," 13. Author's translation.)

240 Cf. Christiane Jouve, "Lesbiennes et Juives," *Lesbia*, no. 22 (1984): 9–11, and Muriel Goldrajch, "Lesbianisme et minorités: Lesbiennes Juives," *Lesbia*, no. 23 (1984): 12–13.

enough, the lesbian Jews of Beit Haverim started reaching out to other organizations where they could speak about their unique experience, and which had an impactful outreach in *Lesbia.* This points to another development in Beit Haverim's heyday: the group as a whole enhanced its outreach and started building alliances after becoming independent.

6.2.5 Outreach and Alliance Building

For the independent Beit Haverim, it was not ideal to be living in a kind of queer Jewish ghetto, i. e., being among themselves without no contact to the outside. So, the group was very open to cooperation with other organizations.[241] Beit Haverim continued to engage in CUARH[242] and members were also concurrently active in different queer groups around Paris.[243] The group used the queer community's publications, alongside the leftist newspaper *Libération*, to place ads for events and to provide general information.[244] Additionally, the largest queer newspaper in France at that time, *Gai Pied* (later *Gai Pied Hebdo*), published several in-depth articles about the group that are also referenced in this study.[245] This helped to draw attention to the issues that Jews faced within the queer community.

Beit Haverim knew about the importance of successful outreach to the queer community. The French Jewish community did not appear likely to become a partner any time soon: Orthodoxy represented the huge majority of French Jewry; a membership in the Conseil représentatif des juifs de France (CRIF) was far from being within reach. The former Grand Rabbi of France, Jacob Kaplan (1955 – 1980), put homosexuality on an equal footing with zoophilia.[246] However, there were individual occasions on which Beit Haverim was able to interact with Jewish institutions and the Jewish community.

The first instance occurred on June 4, 1981. During a panel discussion titled "The Difference" during the 30th anniversary of the reunited Fonds social juif unifié (United Jewish Welfare Fund, FSJU), a member of Beit Haverim went to the microphone and explained their and the group's situation. He asked the panel about

241 Cf. Boyer-Jones, "Juifs – Homos," 118.
242 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 38, BHA, 2.
243 Cf. Boyer-Jones, "Juifs – Homos," 118.
244 Cf. Journal, no. 3, BHA, 30, and Journal, no. 4, BHA, 19.
245 Cf. Ben Knaam, "La maison des amis," 42; Sarah, 1981; Daniel Cohen, "Culture gaie yiddish," *Gai Pied*, no. 31 (October 1981): 43; Hillel, "Un conte," *Gai Pied*, no. 31 (October 1981): 43; Kaplan, "Feigele, Gayele et Pedele," 21.
246 Cf. Ben Knaam, "La maison des amis," 42.

how the Jewish religion and community stand towards homosexuality. About 700 people were present in the room, and some of them applauded the member for his remarks. Even though the chair of the panel tried to move the focus on to other topics, the rest of the debate revolved around homosexuality. Observers noticed a tense atmosphere, probably because the topic was not anticipated by the organizers.[247] The panel – consisting of a sociologist, a journalist, and two writers – was sympathetic overall to the position of homosexuals and called for tolerance for differences within the Jewish community. The sociologist Henri Cohen-Solal said that Jews, because of their own experience, had the responsibility for being tolerant towards other minorities.[248] However, the responses from the audience reflected all the prejudices towards homosexuality. For example, Franklin Rausky, a history professor visiting from the United States, asked whether one should "accept homosexuality as an alternative way of life, at the risk of losing one's soul?"[249] The French department of the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* summarized the debate: "The questions and the debate that followed were passionate. As soon as it comes to the problem of difference, sensibilities sometimes clash, which is a sign that it [the problem] is not resolved."[250] Beit Haverim itself evaluated the debate as follows: "Although there was no substantive debate, our first outing [to the Jewish community] was a success."[251]

Indeed, the debate at the FSJU was just the beginning of the group's struggle for recognition within the French Jewish community.[252] As part of further developing their dialogue with the community, the group was able to get featured in the programs on French Jewish radio stations. While Frequence Gaie, the queer radio station, often cooperated with Beit Haverim,[253] the relationship with the Jew-

247 Cf. Vincent Legret, "Bravo au Beit Haverim," *Homophonies. Mensuel d'Information et de Liaison des Lesbiennes et Homosexuels,* no. 8/9 (July/August 1981): 27.

248 Cf. Legret, "Bravo au Beit Haverim," 27.

249 "[…] accepter l'homosexualité comme un mode de vie alternatif, au risque de perdre son âme?" (Legret, "Bravo au Beit Haverim," 27. Author's translation.)

250 "Les questions et le débat qui suivit furent passionnés. Dès qu'il s'agit du problème de la différence, les sensibilités se heurtent parfois, ce qui est signe qu'il n'est pas résolu." (Legret, "Bravo au Beit Haverim," 27. Author's translation.)

251 "Bien qu'aucun débat de fond n'ait pu s'instaurer, notre première sortie a été un succès." (Bulletin de Liaison du Beit Haverim, no. 35, July–August 1981, Liasse 30, Papiers Gérald de la Mauvinière, Relations avec d'autres associations et groupes français, Beit Haverim [groupe mixte homosexuel juif], 1980–1983, Association David & Jonathan [Cotes 20150654/1–20150654/57], ANF, 3. Author's translation.)

252 Cf. Ben Knaam, "La maison des amis," 42.

253 Cf. Journal, no. 1, BNF, 3; Journal, no. 2, BNF, 3; Bulletin de Liaison du Beit Haverim, no. 45, August–October 1983, Liasse 30, Papiers Gérald de la Mauvinière, Relations avec d'autres associa-

ish stations was more complicated. Of the four French Jewish community radio stations that existed in the 1980s, Judaïques FM was the most politically independent and had already broadcasted a program about Beit Haverim in early 1982. The group received several responses to this program from both non-queer and queer listeners that were unfortunately not passed on in detail.[254] However, Judaïques FM – like all other Jewish stations and newspapers – refused to mention Beit Haverim's press release following the attack on Chez Jo Goldenberg.[255]

In 1984, Radio Shalom, a station that was characterized through its pacifist stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and more secular approach, held two debates about homosexuality with Beit Haverim. These caused such a scandal that Radio Shalom refused to schedule further debates on this topic. Nevertheless, Beit Haverim recognized the positives: this debate was a step to break the silence about homosexuality among French Jewry, similar to the events in June 1981 at the FJSU.[256] The other two Jewish radio stations were culturally and religiously more conservative, closer to the communal structures of French Jewry, and, therefore, did not feature Beit Haverim at this point in time.

Besides Jewish radio, the group collaborated occasionally with other Jewish groups or institutions: for example, a politically leftist, Zionist, nonreligious group called Michmar was in contact with Beit Haverim and invited members to their own group sessions.[257] A more unusual connection was made with Chassidic Jews of Chabad-Lubavitch. In close proximity to Beit Haverim's premises in rue Marcadet was a Chabad community center. In 1982, two Lubavitchers were passing by the premises and observed the posters indicating Beit Haverim's existence. They entered the house to learn more. Even though the group told them about their purpose, the Lubavitchers invited them for Shabbat.[258] In the same year, during Rosh HaShana, Lubavitchers from the nearby center came to wish the group a happy new year. The group was invited to a lecture and study session afterwards. Although the Chassidic Jews did not allow much of a dialogue during Beit Haverim's visit in their center, there existed a point of contact.[259] However, the contacts with Chabad-Lubavitch were a contentious subject within the group. Not

tions et groupes français, Beit Haverim (groupe mixte homosexuel juif), 1980 – 1983, Association David & Jonathan (Cotes 20150654/1 – 20150654/57), ANF, 6 – 7.

254 Cf. Journal, no. 1, BNF, 3.

255 Cf. Journal, no. 2, BNF, 3 – 4.

256 Cf. Jouve, "Lesbiennes et Juives," 9.

257 Cf. Boyer-Jones, "Juifs – Homos," 117.

258 Cf. Journal, no. 1, BHA, 3.

259 Cf. Journal, no. 3, BHA, 22.

all members were eager to meet with Orthodox Jews,[260] and the evidence suggests that these interactions were only short-lived. Nevertheless, this connection was unusual, probably for both sides, and is remembered as having been very friendly in nature.[261]

After this analysis, it emerges that Beit Haverim's outreach significantly increased after their independence from the CCL, even though the French Jewish community was not open to debate about homosexuality, and the group experienced setbacks here. However, Beit Haverim became more visible in the queer community and was also loosely connected with the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations (WCGLJO). This all was only short-lived, though. In 1985, the group suspended all of its activities.

6.3 Between Stagnation and Revival (1985 – 1994)

6.3.1 Beit Haverim Reducing Activities (1985 – 1988)

As early as 1983, a Beit Haverim member complained publicly about different issues they noticed about the group: Beit Haverim was lacking structure, there was a lack of contact persons (especially for new members after their interview for security reasons), and the group had a significant number of inactive members. In addition, people faced high obstacles to become a member in the first place (especially through the interview process), and religious members left due to the rejection they felt, e. g., through the fact that no kosher food was served at events. The latter left the criticizing member asking which kind of identity the group maintained – it could hardly be Jewish since Jews were excluded through their eating habits.[262]

Beit Haverim struggled to unify its members and motivate them to actively partake in the group's activities. This led the board to rethink their approach. In consequence, they wanted to increase their activities from 1984 on. One of the members was installed as coordinator to plan and harmonize all activities. Others could turn to this coordinator in case they wanted to organize an event or had any other suggestion. The general idea was to give the group new life.[263]

However, this did not turn out to be successful. In 1985, Beit Haverim had to give up their premises in rue Marcadet since the rent was becoming too expensive

260 Cf. Journal, no. 3, BHA, 22 – 23.
261 Conversation with André Urwand.
262 Cf. Journal, no. 3, BHA, 14 – 16.
263 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 47, BHA, 2, 6 – 7.

and the group's dues could not cover for the expenses.[264] General monetary as well as organizational problems, a completely burned out board,[265] and a lack of memberships[266] were the reasons for the cessation of almost all group activities. The last event is recorded for April 1985,[267] and the newsletter was no longer published. Beit Haverim went into a period of silence and inactivity. There is almost no information about what happened in this phase.[268] Nevertheless, the group continued existing formally and personal contacts amongst group members were maintained.[269] It took about three years until the group was able to regain strength and reclaim a purpose.

6.3.2 Revival (1988 – 1994)

6.3.2.1 Reorganization

Beit Haverim still existed formally during its inactive phase. Thus, the members stayed informed about what was happening in other countries, and, outside of the group, members partook in matters related to its cause. Consequently, several members participated in the Tenth International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews in 1987, hosted by Sjalhomo in Amsterdam.[270] Here, Beit Haverim came into contact with other groups, and, importantly, the very successful Sjalhomo. Conversations about the French group and its future came up during the conference. It was strongly advised by other European groups to collect all the addresses of former members, contact them, and to (re-)establish a widely distributed newsletter. This appeared to be a more complex plan than expected, since president André Urwand took the list of addresses with him during a long-term stay in Brazil. Additionally, the personal situations of the members – their discrimination by the

264 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 7.

265 Cf. report of the development worker Eastern Hemisphere of the first year in office (to Jack Greenberg), August 15, 1988, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 359, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

266 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 17.

267 Cf. Une Grande Soiree Dansante, BHA, 1985.

268 An exception are two articles published in *Gai Pied Hebdo* in 1987 (cf. Pascale Braun, "Juif? Ça rend fou, mais j'me soigne!," *Gai Pied Hebdo*, no. 266 (April 1987): 22 – 23, and Jesse Laferty, "Faites-vous l'amour cascher!," *Gai Pied Hebdo*, no. 266 (April 1987): 24 – 25). The magazine featured perspectives on Jewish homosexuals and not Beit Haverim as a group. However, Beit Haverim member Pascale Braun explained that the group only came together on certain occasions and that especially personal connections were maintained (cf. Braun, "Juif?," 23).

269 Conversation with André Urwand.

270 For this conference and its impact on the group Sjalhomo, cf. Section 7.2.2.

Jewish community and general society – had not improved over the years. Discretion was therefore very much required and this complicated any attempt to reach out. Despite these difficulties, Beit Haverim was able to bring enough people together in April 1988 in order to reactivate the group.[271] An advertisement in *Lesbia* in its June issue stated: "Beit Haverim (mixed Jewish homosexual group) is meeting anew. If you are interested, you can contact them."[272] At first, the group was not able to recover its previous high profile. At the start of the 1990s, the number of members was still very small. Around 30 people were officially affiliated with Beit Haverim.[273] As its internal mouthpiece,[274] the group reintroduced the newsletter – now called *HaMikhtav*[275] ("the letter") – in 1990. A year later, the group revised an important detail in its statutes: a prospective member no longer needed to be Jewish, it was enough to "share the cause of the Jews."[276] This revision was probably made because members increasingly had non-Jewish partners, and the group generally wished to expand the membership.

Social meetings now took place "like the wandering Jew"[277] in members' apartments in a very private atmosphere. The group went back to the original cycle of one monthly general meeting,[278] complemented by special events like film screenings,[279] restaurant visits,[280] or parties.[281] From 1992 at the latest,[282] the group used the facilities of the Association pour la Gestion d'un Centre d'Animation sociale et culturelle (Association for the Management of a Social and Cultural Animation Center) in the 11th arrondissement. This was a nonprofit organization without po-

271 Cf. report of the development worker Eastern Hemisphere, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

272 "Le Beit Haverim (groupe juif homosexuel mixte) se réunit à nouveau. Si vous êtes intéressées, vous pouvez le contacter [...]." (No author, "Beit Haverim," *Lesbia*, no. 62 [June 1988]: 5. Author's translation.)

273 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 17.

274 In 1991, it was still negatively remarked upon from the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations (WCGLJO) that Beit Haverim did not have a high level of outreach with a broadly publicized newsletter (cf. letter of Erwin Brugmans (development management east of the WCGLJO), probably July 18, BHA, 1991). Henceforth, the new newsletter only served internal purposes.

275 The transcription of the Hebrew word המכתב was not consistent and changed over the years. In this case, I used the consistent transcription with other Hebrew words in this study.

276 Cf. Beit Haverim Extrait des Resolutions Adoptees à l'Assemblee Generale Mixte des Adherents du 24 Mars 1991, Fonds Thierry Meyssan, AGL, 3.

277 Beit Haverim Extrait des Resolutions Adoptees, AGL, 8.

278 Cf. Ha Mikhtav – La Lettre du Beit Haverim, no. 3, September 1990, BHA, 9.

279 Cf. no author, "Beit Haverim," *Lesbia*, no. 112 (January 1993): 4.

280 Cf. no author, "Beit Haverim," *Lesbia*, no. 118 (July–August 1993): 5.

281 Cf. no author, "Beit Haverim," *Lesbia*, no. 89 (November 1990): 4.

282 Cf. HaMi'htav – La Lettre du Beit Haverim, November/December 1992, BHA, 4.

litical or religious attachment that used the premises of a former church as a community center. This refurbished venue was rented for free to other associations and charities.

From the beginning of 1995 onward, monthly meetings were held in the Centre Gai en Lesbien (CGL). This was founded in December 1990 as a coalition of Paris' queer organizations. Badly hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the queer community urgently needed a focal point as a resource center (particularly for questions about HIV/AIDS) and a place for more intense networking.[283] It was clear from the beginning that catering to such needs would require a physical space.[284] In 1994, the CGL was able to buy their own premises in rue Keller (11th arrondissement). Beit Haverim was among the first organizations that took part in the project[285] and was therefore able to use the center not only as a meeting space, but later also as an official place of business and contact address for any kind of correspondence.[286]

The problems of Beit Haverim were not resolved within these few years.[287] However, the group was able to restore the conviviality for its (few) members. Slowly, Beit Haverim started engaging again with topics that were of interest for the people engaged in the group.

6.3.2.2 Reconnecting with Core Questions

With the CGL, Beit Haverim made new connections within the queer community. For the community, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was one of the main concerns in the 1990s. After restrictions were lifted,[288] sexual health education finally became possible in France, and a public debate about the disease began. In this climate of fear and political powerlessness, Beit Haverim started again to visibly participate in Paris' Gay Pride.

In 1990, they participated in a *Journée Sida* (AIDS day) during Pride week. Besides being present at a conference with many debates on the topic, Beit Haverim organized a silent prayer and a silent procession along the Seine river together

283 Cf. Pablo Rouy, "Centre Gai. Forcing?," *Gai Pied Hebdo*, no. 448 (December 1990): 18.

284 Cf. Pablo Rouy, "Centre Gai. Au numéro 25 de la rue Lecomte," *Gai Pied Hebdo*, no. 453 (January 1991): 13.

285 It has to be noted in this context that CUARH, the queer community-wide forum in which Beit Haverim became active in the beginning of the 1980s, was disbanded in 1987.

286 Up until today, Beit Haverim is a board member of the Centre LGBT de Paris et d'Île-de-France and remains closely connected to it.

287 Cf. letter of Erwin Brugmans, BHA.

288 Cf. Section 4.2.2.

with David & Jonathan and the CCL.[289] The group had experienced its first causalities from the virus at the end of the 1980s;[290] a general sense of fear and precaution was always present. A generalized hesitancy to enter queer group settings might have also been a contributor to Beit Haverim's slow restart.[291] AIDS hung over the group "like the sword of Damocles."[292]

Beit Haverim started addressing the issue, and not only just in France. For example, the group sent a letter to the Israeli ambassador in France after various media outlets reported that Israel's Health Ministry would start denying HIV positive people stays of more than three months in the country, as well as banning them from immigration. Beit Haverim argued that the problem was not the disease, but the lack of knowledge about its transmission. Hence, an immigration stop of people with HIV/AIDS would not stop the disease's spread. Additionally: "As Jews, we are concerned that our right of return to Israel is being questioned under the pretext that people who are HIV positive and who have AIDS represent a danger to public health, whereas science does not allow us to justify this viewpoint at the present time."[293] The group received a vague answer from the embassy: nothing had been decided yet and the group would be informed about the legislation's progress.[294] Eventually, Israel did not implement any law of this kind.[295]

It may not come as much of a surprise that another point of concern was the (re-)connection to Judaism. The group reintroduced the explanatory articles about Jewish holidays and the calendar in the newsletter.[296] Furthermore, they also instigated collective visits to different synagogues in Paris, regardless of the synagogue's religious orientation.[297] There was also a "spiritual committee" in place

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289 Cf. Etienne Doumé, "Du 16 au 23 juin, un grande festival gay et lesbien à Paris… et en province," *Adonis. Nouvelles de Garçons*, no. 22 (July 1990): 27.

290 Cf. Gross, "The History of Beit Haverim," 103, and Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 15.

291 Conversation with Sylvain Cypel.

292 Cf. Ha Mirtav – La Lettre du Beit Haverim, November 1991, BHA, 7.

293 "En tant que juifs et juives, nous sommes atterés [sic!] de voir notre droit au retour en Israël remis en question sous prétexte que les personnes séropositives et atteintes du SIDA représentent un danger pour la santé publique alors que la science ne permet aucunement à l'heure actuelle de justifier ce point de vue." (Lettre ouverte à son excellence l'ambassadeur d'Israël, December 1, BHA, 1992. Author's translation.)

294 Cf. answer letter by Dori Goren (Information Officer), January 13, 1993, BHA.

295 I thank Professors Moshe Sluhovsky and Yuval Yonay for clarifying the legislative process in regard to the Health Ministry's proposal.

296 Cf. Ha Mikhtav, probably June 1990, BHA, 4–6, and Ha Mikhtav, no. 3, BHA, 7–10.

297 Cf. HaMi'htav, November/December 1992, BHA, 2, and no author, "Beit Haverim," *Lesbia*, no. 130 (September 1994): 5.

that tried to find ways to (re-)connect Beit Haverim to Judaism and its traditions.[298] The success of this committee was limited and any outcomes are not recorded. Overall, there were almost no contacts with the Jewish (denominational) world, and those few established at the beginning of the 1980s seemed to have vanished.[299]

One exception, however, was Pauline Bebe who was ordained by the Leo Baeck College London in 1990. She became the first female rabbi in France and was directly employed by the Mouvement juif libéral de France (MJLF). She was responsible for caring for marginalized people that were rejected by the religious mainstream organizations (e.g., drug addicts or homeless people).[300] The start of Bebe's rabbinate was not easy because she was a woman. Beit Haverim reached out to her shortly after her ordination. She replied: "I was very touched by your show of support for me. I will gladly meet you and your association."[301] Their first meeting occurred in early 1991. It had to be carried out privately and without formally involving the MJLF.[302] Despite these challenges around their initial encounter, Bebe became an ally, not only for Beit Haverim, but for the queer community in general. For example, she met regularly with HIV patients, listened to their needs, and participated in national AIDS days to promote the use of condoms.[303] Her being trained in the UK might have helped her in carrying out the office, given that she experienced the liberal atmosphere at Leo Baeck College and had Rabbi Lionel Blue as her teacher. Based on her liberal training, Bebe always tried to meet everyone on an equal footing.[304] She became the first contact for Beit Haverim in the Jewish establishment. Until the 2020s, she has remained involved with the group and is remembered by (former) members as very important with view to a *Jewish* recognition of the group.[305]

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298 Cf. Calendier previsionnel des activities du Beit Haverim pour Novembre et Decembre 1991, BHA.

299 Cf. Quarterly Newsletter of the Eastern Hemisphere, no. 4, HCA/CHE2/12/16, LSE, 1.

300 Cf. François Devinat, "Pauline Bebe. La rabbine par qui le scandale arrive," Liberation, May 4, 1995, https://www.liberation.fr/portrait/1995/05/04/pauline-bebe-la-rabbine-par-qui-le-scandale-arrive_134345/, accessed September 5, 2022.

301 "J'ai été très touchée par votre manifestation de soutien à mon égard. Je vous rencontrerai vous et votre association avec plaisir." (Letter of Pauline Bebe to Beit Haverim, November 23, 1990, BHA. Author's translation.)

302 Cf. letter of David Freedman in English with regards to the 3rd European/Israeli Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews, May 1991, BHA.

303 Cf. Devinat, "Pauline Bebe."

304 Conversation with Rabbi Pauline Bebe via Google Meet on May 2, 2022.

305 Conversations with André Urwand, Sylvain Cypel, and with François Spirot in Parc Monceau (Paris) on April 26, 2022.

Another important issue for the group was, as portrayed earlier, the position of women. After the period of inactivity from 1985 to 1988, the position of women within the group, and in the Jewish community in general, became of interest again. Beit Haverim was still presented as a "mixed group" of men and women. In 1990, the smaller number of members established a *commission femme* (female committee) to create a space for female members alongside the monthly meetings. The committee organized female-only events like discussion forums or nights out,[306] and allowed women to exchange and reflect their viewpoints in an open and tolerant atmosphere. The committee did not see itself as a splinter group, but as an enrichment of the whole group to provide important contacts with the lesbian community.[307] The female committee increased the publication of the group's events in *Lesbia* in order to attract more women.

Overall, it appears that Beit Haverim still had a problem with attracting new female members in the early 1990s. However, those women who were already involved increased their engagement for equality and pursued increased female visibility. This became especially apparent when Beit Haverim organized its first big international event in 1992.

6.3.2.3 The Third European/Israeli Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews

Beit Haverim made connections with the WCGLJO early on, as evidenced by its participation in the congress' international conferences.[308] However, the group did not become a member of the organization until late 1989/early 1990.[309] The reason for this delay remains unclear. It might have been connected to paying the membership dues. The group had other priorities (e. g., paying for 88 rue Marcadet until 1985, or surviving with fewer paid memberships after that). An official affiliation was regarded as unimportant as long as it was still possible to participate in the WCGLJO's conferences.

After the Tenth International Conference in Amsterdam in 1987, Beit Haverim and its European partners strengthened their relations as explained later in this study. This cooperation led to the development of European (and Israeli) Conferen-

306 Cf. no author, "Femmes du Beit Haverim," *Lesbia*, no. 94 (May 1991): 5.

307 Cf. HaMirtav, November 1991, BHA, 7.

308 Cf. Ben Knaam, "La maison des amis," 42.

309 Cf. Digest. The Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 9, no. 1, 1990, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1. The group stated once in *Lesbia* that they joined the WCGLJO in 1988 (cf. no author, "Beit Haverim," *Lesbia*, no. 99 (November 1991): 6). This is not verifiable, nor is any prior official affiliation.

ces, i. e., regional editions of the WCGLJO's international conferences.[310] First held in London (1988) and Amsterdam (1990), Beit Haverim decided to host the event from May 28 to 31, 1992.

It was the first time that the group had organized a large-scale event, which was not easy since fewer than ten members were involved. However, the female committee demanded to play a vital part and to explicitly introduce female issues to the conference.[311] The WCGLJO, and especially Sjalhomo from Amsterdam, also offered assistance.[312] Another problematic aspect was the acquisition of funding for the conference. There was no institutional support in terms of financial contributions for the conference.[313]

These difficulties were overcome by making adjustments. For example, the conference's venue was located rather far from the Parisian city center, and the program was reduced with fewer planned activities.[314] Nevertheless, around 150 people from 14 countries[315] came to Paris to experience four days of workshops and excursions. This was a notable success for a group that was smaller than their counterparts in the UK and the Netherlands.

The conference was opened by Paulette Goodman, the president of the US-American organization Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays; she was a Jewish survivor of the German occupation of France during World War II. The workshops included general topics like the rights of homosexuals, how to become a parent as a homosexual and how to raise a child in a Jewish way, homosexuality and religion, and the rise of antisemitism. It also offered more France-focused topics like the French reaction to the AIDS epidemic,[316] and political developments in the country and across Europe.[317] A special feature were four women-only workshops. The most notable was the workshop about female rabbis, something quite new for France and many other European countries. The other workshops dealt with Jewish, female, and lesbian identity, and the exclusion of Jews within the les-

310 The general phenomenon of the European (and Israeli) Conferences of the WCGLJO will be further explained in Section 8.2.2.

311 Cf. no author, "Beit Haverim," *Lesbia*, no. 99, 6.

312 Cf. letter of Erwin Brugmans, BHA, 1991.

313 Cf. Catherine Durand, "Beit Haverim – Etre juif et homo… une gageure," *Gai Pied Hebdo*, no. 514 (April 1992): 8.

314 Sylvain Cypel reported in our conversation that the Americans who participated were surprised by the minimalistic design of the conference.

315 Cf. Catherine Durand, "IVe Conference des juifs gais – Un succès!," *Gai Pied Hebdo*, no. 524 (June 1992): 13.

316 Cf. Durand, "IVe Conference des juifs gais – Un succès!," 13, and Nathalie Magnan, "Homos juif – Congrès du Beit Haverim à Paris," *Gai Pied Hebdo*, no. 518 (April 1992): 10.

317 Cf. no author, "Beit Haverim, conférence européenne," *Lesbia*, no. 107 (July–August 1992): 12.

bian movement. A designated space in the conference venue was provided for women in which they were able to debate their experiences and challenges within queer Jewish groups.[318] Thanks to Pauline Bebe, the conference's attendees were also able to visit the offices of the MJLF. Unfortunately, there is no record of how this visit was received, nor to what extent a dialogue between the movement and the participants happened that day.

In order to include a perspective on French Jewish history, Beit Haverim conducted a commemoration ceremony at the Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation (Memorial to the Martyrs of the Deportation) close to Notre Dame. Beit Haverim also offered leisure activities in the city center and a closing party with a focus on Israeli music and food.[319]

For Beit Haverim, the conference was a huge success. It was the first time group members were able to present and introduce themselves to their international partners. The group saw the conference as an opportunity and, in many ways, as a fresh start. After the conference garnered interest from the queer community, Beit Haverim increasingly publicized its events and activities in community magazines such as *Lesbia*. The conference was also a gateway for members who subsequently became deeply involved in the group, like Beit Haverim's president from 1997 to 2000, Sylvain Cypel. From the mid-1990s on, the membership structure of Beit Haverim changed considerably. A new, younger generation joined[320] and changed the group again in the direction of a more visible, more involved, and more diverse space for French Jewish queers.

6.4 Stabilization and Continuation (from 1994 Onwards)

1994 can be described as another turning point for Beit Haverim. Most significantly, André Urwand, the group's president since 1982, decided not to run for office again. With David Freedman, a newer member took over. Originally from the United States and acquainted with the queer synagogues there, Freedman, along with his fellow board members, had aspirations and new ideas, and wanted to broaden the group's outreach. In the following months, the group started using the CGL for its monthly meetings. After Beit Haverim had to give up their premises in rue Marcadet, the CGL became the new headquarters for the group. Subsequently, a new, younger generation came to Beit Haverim. These new members were explicitly

318 Cf. Magnan, "Homos juif," 10.

319 Cf. Le 3ème Conference Européenne / Israëlienne des Juifs Gays et Lesbiennes – Projet de Programme, December 1991, BHA.

320 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 17.

driven towards conviviality and were predominately Sephardi. Beit Haverim had been an almost purely Ashkenazi space until that point. The influx of Sephardi queer Jews started changing the image of the group. As Sylvain Cypel recalled: "The monthly meetings became more open and welcoming, with everyone contributing to a shared buffet."[321]

6.4.1 Action, Introduction of Forums, and HIV/AIDS (1995 – 2000)

Initially, not much changed in terms of the group's activities: Beit Haverim still offered its monthly meetings, holiday meetings (mostly at members' homes), and other events in cinemas, bars, or restaurants. However, the members started partaking in cross-community events like commemoration ceremonies for the victims of the Shoah,[322] Gay Pride Parades,[323] or panel discussions more frequently.[324] Female-only and women-focused events (e. g., a "conference" at the CGL about lesbian writers in the 1920s)[325] still took place. The female committee was institutionalized by granting its president a seat on Beit Haverim's board.[326]

With yet another change to the board in 1997, and a new president in Sylvain Cypel, the group went through changes in both the internal structure and outreach strategy once again. The most important change was the introduction of Beit Haverim's "forums." The forums were subgroups within Beit Haverim that dealt with specific issues that members were interested in. Four regular forums were active up until the mid-2000s. They comprised: one on Judaism and homosexuality (later, this forum was complemented by the forum "religion and spirituality"[327] that invited different rabbis from all denominations[328] and interviewed them about their position on homosexuality), one on homosexual parenthood, one on AIDS, and the "friends forum"[329] that was responsible for communicating with, and the recruitment of, allies. For example, the "friends forum" worked closely to-

321 "[…] les mensuelles devinrent plus ouvertes et accueillantes, chacun contribuant à un buffet partagé." (Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 17. Author's translation.)

322 Cf. Ha Mihtav – La Lettre du Beit Haverim, February–March 1995, BHA, 1.

323 Cf. Ha Mihtav – La Lettre du Beit Haverim, July–August 1995, BHA, 1 – 2.

324 For example, Beit Haverim participated in a panel discussion about homosexuality and Judaism at the Association of Secular Jewish Students in early 1995 (cf. Ha Mihtav – La Lettre du Beit Haverim, May 1995, BHA, 1).

325 Cf. Ha Mihtav, February–March 1995, BHA, 2.

326 Cf. Attribution des fonctions des membres du bureau, June 19, 1995, BHA.

327 Cf. Gross, "Juif et homosexuel," 227.

328 Cf. Gross, "The History of Beit Haverim," 105.

329 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 17.

gether with Rabbis Pauline Bebe[330] and Delphine Horvilleur.[331] Other forums emerged here and there, but often ceased again after a short period of time. However, the forums became very important for the group since the responsibility for the group's activities was now split and no longer only rested with the board. The forums organized their own meetings and events and complemented the general activities of Beit Haverim.

The group's enthusiastic participation in the Europride[332] that took place in Paris in 1997 was a starting signal for increased visibility. As part of its 20th anniversary celebrations, the group held its first tea dance party, which then became a regular event of the group until quite recently. They were attended by between 250 to 500 people each time.[333]

Also in 1997, for the first time, the group successfully invited the director of the FSJU – a representative of the Jewish community – to the CGL to have a joint conversation. The group was, by then, increasingly appearing on the already mentioned Jewish radio stations. Beit Haverim was regularly invited to talk about homosexuality and HIV/AIDS. Another highlight for media representation was the participation of Sylvain Cypel in Jean-Luc Delarue's discussion program *Ça se discute* ("That is debatable") in 1998. Around 4.5 million viewers saw him talking about his double identity as gay and Jewish.[334]

Another important issue for the group was the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In 1996, a commission for HIV positive members and others who cared about the issue had already been set up. This commission was further integrated into the AIDS forum. The group was still shocked by members' deaths, for example of board member François Pleskoff, who was buried by Rabbi Bebe. The *forum SIDA* developed programs to help affected Jews, or to try to prevent transmission of the disease. From 1997 on, they published and distributed a leaflet of the "Ten Commandments" for safe sex and HIV/AIDS prevention. They stated:

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330 Cf. Beit Haverim – Ha Mihtav, no. 24, November 1999, personal archive of Sylvain Cypel (Paris), 3.

331 Cf. Martine Gross, "Judaïsme et homosexualité. Entretien avec Frank Jaoui, porte-parole du Beit Haverim," *Genre, sexualité & société* (online), no. 8 (Fall 2012), https://journals.openedition.org/gss/2537.

332 Europride is a pan-European event that has been hosted usually every year since 1992 by one city to celebrate queer culture, conduct athletic events, and advocate for political rights during panel discussions or protests. Europride concludes in a traditional pride parade and by remembering the victims of the AIDS epidemic.

333 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 17, 19.

334 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 17.

> 1. A condom, showing your joy, you shall use. 2. With lube on your condom, you shall be in great shape. 3. The sap of your neighbor, you shall not taste. 4. Your neighbor's needle, you shall not borrow. 5. You shall be screened regularly. 6. The prescriptions of your doctor, with care you shall follow. 7. By preserving your life, you shall preserve the life of others. 8. In front of your suffering brother, you shall be considerate. 9. To the imprudent one who comes to you, you shall dictate your own law. 10. Respect these laws and you shall live a long life.[335]

Additionally, the forum established a telephone line (*SIDA Écoute Juive*, "AIDS Jewish listening") that was open once a week. Volunteers were trained in listening and answering urgent questions related to the disease. At the end of the 1990s, the situation for HIV patients could no longer be ignored by the Jewish establishment. Besides general campaigns and the appearance of Beit Haverim members, Nicole Holzmann, the wife of the former Grand Rabbi René-Samuel Sirat, reached out to the group to discuss the possibility of *bikkur cholim* for HIV positive members. Every one of those affiliated with Beit Haverim declined her request since they did not want the pity of the French Jewish community that had always ignored homosexuals.[336]

By the end of the 1990s, and despite the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the group was able to once again achieve 100 paying memberships. Additionally, satellite groups both in Lyon[337] and later also in Montpellier (which was also responsible for Marseille)[338] were established. It can be concluded that Beit Haverim was active and visible at the end of the 1990s. In the 2000s, other, major, decisions changed the direction of the group again. This time, these changes led to Beit Haverim becoming an undeniable part of French Jewry.

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335 "1. La Capote, en manifestant ta joie, tu utiliseras. 2. Avec du gel sur le Condom, en pleine forme tu seras. 3. A la sève de ton prochain, tu ne gouteras. 4. La seringue de ton voisin, tu n'emprunteras. 5. Régulièrement un dépistage tu feras. 6. Les prescriptions de ton médecin, avec soin tu suivras. 7. En préservant ta vie, celle d'autrui tu préserveras. 8. Devant ton frère souffrant, prévenant tu seras. 9. A l'imprudent qui vient vers toi, ta loi tu dicteras. 10. Fais respecter ces lois et longtemps tu vivras." (Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 16. Author's translation.)

336 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 17.

337 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 17. The group did not exist for long. However, the group was just reestablished in 2021 (cf. Beit Haverim, e-mail titled "Lancement officiel du Beit Haverim Lyon – Shabbat 24–26 Septembre 2021," August 22, 2021).

338 Cf. Journal officiel de la République française, Publication no. 20050018, Announcement no. 754, April 30, 2005. This group also did not survive long. It is unclear when it was shut down. However, Beit Haverim in Paris today sees itself responsible for organizing events and providing assistance for queer Jews in the entire country.

6.4.2 Major Changes in the Early 2000s and Outlook

The major changes for Beit Haverim in the 2000s can be described by both internal advancements, but also by the increased outreach and alliance-building within the French Jewish and the queer community. In 2003, the group changed its name and objectives in order to reflect the diversity of the community: *Beit Haverim – Maison des Ami-e-s* should now "gather, welcome, and support Jewish homosexual, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual people, their relatives, and friends."[339] Earlier than JGG in London, Beit Haverim became aware of a broader spectrum of what the queer community looks like and saw its purpose as being in support of the community's allies. Also, Beit Haverim became – together with David & Jonathan with which they remained in close contact – a founding member of Inter-LGBT, a coalition of almost all queer associations of France, aiming to fight discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and to organize Gay Pride events around the country.

However, in terms of internal changes, the groundbreaking one was the effort to buy a forever home for the group. In 1999, a few members around Franck Giaoui decided to start a fundraising campaign to collect 100,000 Euros for *une maison pour le Beit* – "a house for the house". The campaign increased membership dues and general donations, but also held special fundraising events.[340] This endeavor took several years, so it was only in 2008 that Beit Haverim was able to open its community center in a former apartment in the 10th arrondissement. The inauguration was an important step for the group. For the first time since its foundation in 1977, the group now owned a place that could be used for events, meetings, and holiday celebrations. The "House of the Beit" had a threefold meaning for the members: a symbolic one, a social one (being a welcoming place for all), and a practical one (gathering in the same room as the group's offices).[341] Above all, the house made Beit Haverim the first, and still the only, European queer Jewish group to own a property.

The membership structure changed in the 2000s, so that there was a growing demand "for activities that are culturally, traditionally or religiously closer to Jewish identity."[342] This was connected to the more religious upbringing of Sephardi

339 "[...] rassembler, accueillir et soutenir les personnes juives homosexuelles, lesbiennes, bisexuelles et transexuelles, leurs proches et leurs amis." (Journal officiel de la République française, Publication no. 20030036, Announcement no. 2550, September 6, 2003. Author's translation.)
340 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 8.
341 Cf. Gross, "The History of Beit Haverim," 104.
342 Gross, "The History of Beit Haverim," 104.

members.[343] This did not imply getting closer to the model of the queer synagogues in the United States with a rabbi and a religious building. However, members wanted to have more religious services, celebrate *kiddush*, and share meals on Shabbat and holidays.[344]

Within the early 2000s, Beit Haverim was also entering the religious and (Jewish) political arena.[345] Increasingly, the group was able to speak with rabbis from the Reform, Conservative, and even Orthodox movements. Together with the MJLF, Beit Haverim was able to celebrate Shabbat services, and to arrange meals and study groups.[346]

Among others, Beit Haverim's president Lionel Choukroun (2002–2005) was able to establish connections with Jewish mainstream institutions through his former position as the president of the Union of Jewish Students in France.[347] One important step was to apply for membership in CRIF in 2002. Despite CRIF claiming to be a secular organization, they rejected the application because of their view that homosexuality contradicts the Torah. A later application in 2006 was also rejected on the same grounds. For a long time, the group no longer wanted to become associated with CRIF.[348] Finally, in 2019, Beit Haverim was unanimously admitted to CRIF as the first queer organization ever.[349] With this step, Beit Haverim became officially recognized as a French Jewish institution. Since then, meetings with rabbis or other Jewish officials have no longer been seen as an unofficial relationship, but as part of a mutual exchange within the French Jewish community.

Today, Beit Haverim regards its vocation explicitly in three areas: 1. Conviviality (*convivialité*): organizing activities for its members, creating a social purpose; 2. Identity (*identité*): asserting the double identity as Jewish and queer; 3. Citizenship (*citoyenneté*): championing for equal rights in the French republic, combatting ho-

343 Conversation with Franck Giaoui and Philippe Lachkeur via Google Meet on April 10, 2022.
344 Cf. Gross, "The History of Beit Haverim," 102–103, and Gross, "Judaïsme et homosexualité," 2012.
345 Cf. Gross, "The History of Beit Haverim," 105–106, and Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 24.
346 Cf. Gross, "Judaïsme et homosexualité," and Gross, "The History of Beit Haverim," 103.
347 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 20. One example is a round table for Beit Haverim's 25th anniversary in which Choukroun invited representatives from the FSJU, CRIF, and one of its successors from the Union of Jewish Students (cf. 2ème Table Ronde, 23 Juin 2002, Après-Midi: Le Beit Haverim fait son coming out, BHA).
348 Cf. Gross, "The History of Beit Haverim," 108.
349 Cf. Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France, "Crif – Association membre: le Beit Haverim rejoint le Crif," June 24, 2019, http://www.crif.org/fr/actualites/crif-association-membre-le-beit-haverim-rejoint-le-crif#, accessed September 13, 2022.

mophobia and antisemitism.[350] Beit Haverim is highly visible today, with a large presence during the Pride Parades in Paris and other cities, and with an impressive outreach into French Jewry and even politics. The community center remains the heart of the organization; events happen there at least once a month. The membership numbers are impressively high – Martine Gross spoke of 1,000 members and friends in 2017.[351] This was something the first generation had certainly not even been dreaming about when they founded Beit Haverim in a pornographic theater. Since then, a lot has changed within French Jewry, even though the group received some kind of recognition only at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. It is thanks to the perseverance of Beit Haverim's members that the seemingly impossible was achieved over more than 40 years of existence.

350 Cf. Beit and Racimor, *Judaïsme et Homosexualité*, 6.

351 Cf. Gross, "The History of Beit Haverim," 103.

7 Sjalhomo (Amsterdam)

Similarly to both the other groups in London and Paris, their Dutch equivalent also emerged within a broader queer organization, namely the Cultuur en Ontspannings Centrum (Center for Culture and Recreation, COC). Jews recognized each other during COC meetings and founded Sjalhomo (pronounce: Shalhomo), a neologism of the Hebrew *shalom* and *homo* for homosexual. The group's history can be divided into three stages: its foundational years (1979/80 – 1985), in which the group constituted itself and found its place within the queer and Jewish community; its heyday (1986 – 1995) with an impressive outreach, strengthened cooperation, and strong internal agency; and, finally, its period of dissolution (1995 – 2002) that was essentially characterized by a lack of involvement of its members and internal conflicts.

Short Recap: Queer and Jewish in the Netherlands

After the *Code Pénal* was introduced in what we call the Netherlands today, homosexual acts were again never penalized. The age of consent – Article 248bis – was raised from 16 to 21 years in 1911 after religious parties took over the government. Then, in 1971, this article was reviewed, and the age of consent lowered to 16 once more, making it equal to heterosexual acts again. This was due to the political engagement of the Nederlandse Vereniging voor Sexuele Hervorming and COC as the oldest LGBTQ+ organization in the world (founded in 1946). Both came to work closely with the Dutch government.

After this and other legal changes, the Netherlands became the frontrunner for sexual liberation, and Amsterdam the continent's sexual capital. The queer community was divided by the male dominance in COC. Lesbian activism was engaged within other political groups, such as the squatter's movement, or other organizations like Lesbian Nation. The latter organized the first queer street protest in the Netherlands which developed into the Roze Zaterdag. The Roze Front took over organizing this event from 1979 onwards. Despite this, separatism was not a powerful force in the Dutch queer community. That is why queers became organized in political parties, trade unions, and other areas of social life over time.

Despite the frontrunner status of the Netherlands, the HIV/AIDS epidemic hit the country hard and had catastrophic consequences. Only after the Dutch government reversed decisions like the ban on promoting condoms, did cooperations between officials and the queer community turn out to be beneficial for HIV/AIDS patients. The response towards the epidemic proved to be less frantic and more constructive here than elsewhere in Europe.

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A major breakthrough for the queer community happened in 1997 when the Labor-Liberal government introduced "registered partnerships." These were converted to marriages in 2001, making the Netherlands the first country in the world to marry two people of the same sex.

The Jewish community in the Netherlands was quite small after World War II. The Joods Coördinatie Commissie vor het Bevrijde Nederlandse Gebied (JCC) and the Nederlandse Zionistenbond (NZB) were the first organizations that were (re-)established after the country's liberation from Germany. Both agreed to rebuild the Nederlands-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap (NIK) as the Orthodox umbrella organization. This decision was made because the NIK should constitute a *zuille* (pillar) in Dutch society. The Portugees-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap (PIK), as well as the smaller Liberaal Joodse Gemeente (LJG), refused to join the NIK and remained independent.

The Dutch Jewish community was reestablished along prewar lines. But, after the 1960s, secularization and assimilation became major forces, mainly because of social conservatism in the NIK and the NZB. Chassidic influences on the NIK supported this trend. That is why LJG was able to gain members, although this increase was not proportional to the NIK's membership losses. LJG was still more conservative than other liberal branches of Judaism around the world.

Dutch Jews increasingly identified as a "cultural Dutch minority;" the country became a place for Jewish immigration and not emigration. Antisemitism was less prevalent and, most importantly, not as dangerous as in other countries in Europe. In general, the relationship with the Christian majority in the country was stable and Dutch Jewry had become a part of the Netherlands again.

7.1 Founding Years (1979/80–1985)

7.1.1 The Birth of Sjalhomo and Developing a Formal Structure

The history of Sjalhomo begins within COC and is connected with "Jonathan van Amersfoort," a pseudonym used for personal protection.[1] Van Amersfoort is often considered the founder and first spokesperson of the group. In 1979, Jews were almost invisible within COC, which was one of the few places for queers in Amsterdam and the Netherlands. Van Amersfoort mentioned during an evening

1 However, his mother Betty Nieweg appeared publicly under her real name and spoke out in favor of Jewish homosexuals, cf. Section 7.1.4.

meeting that he was Jewish and attracted attention.[2] Another Jewish COC member, Karel Velleman, recalled that he and Jonathan tried subsequently to gather together homosexual Jews within COC, mostly by word-of-mouth.[3] This took some time and, gradually, other homosexual Jews, both men and women, showed up.[4] In the beginning of 1980,[5] these gatherings evolved into a new little "club," called Sjalhomo, that met irregularly and counted less than ten members in its first few months.[6] A 1981 article about Sjalhomo[7] in the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*[8] gained wider (national) attention and the group "developed into an entity of 45 men and women."[9] The responses Sjalhomo received in wake of the article were mostly – and surprisingly – positive. Among these were responses from psychiatrist and sexologist Herman Musaph, the founder of the Dutch Society for Sexual Reform and a member of the Jewish community in Amsterdam,[10] who indicated his cooperation.[11]

In the 1981 article, Jonathan van Amersfoort explained the common experience that brought the group together: "In COC [Among homosexuals respectively], I have to hide my Jewish side, with Jews, I cannot be a homosexual."[12] This experience would become the motto of Sjalhomo. It symbolizes the difficult situation of Jews within Dutch society, and especially in the queer community in the 1980s. A coming out in both worlds could mean uncertain consequences. Van Amersfoort was inspired by an American queer Jewish group he visited once in which he

2 Cf. Sanders and Sjenitzer, "Sjalhomo brengt homoseksuelen en lesbiènnes tezamen," 7.

3 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen [Newsletter for Jewish homo- and bisexual women and men], December 1985, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 2.

4 Cf. Sanders and Sjenitzer, "Sjalhomo brengt homoseksuelen en lesbiènnes tezamen," 7.

5 Cf. Sjalhomo. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen [Sjalhomo. Paper of and for Jewish homosexuals], no. 4, 1984, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 2.

6 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, December 1985, UoA, 2.

7 Cf. Sanders and Sjenitzer, "Sjalhomo brengt homoseksuelen en lesbiènnes tezamen," 7.

8 The *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* is the oldest Jewish news magazine in the Netherlands (founded in 1865). It is run by a (religiously) independent foundation and deals with Jewish topics in the broadest meaning.

9 Booklet "10th International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews 2–5 July 1987, Amsterdam," courtesy of Daniël Bouw (Rotterdam), 5.

10 Musaph tried to educate the Jewish community about homosexuality already before the existence of Sjalhomo (cf. Herman Musaph, "Jodendom en homoseksualiteit [Judaism and homosexuality]," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 114, no. 44 [July 27, 1979]: 6).

11 Cf. Sjalhomo. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, 1981, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 4–6.

12 "Op het COC moet ik mijn joods deel wegstoppen, bij de joden kan ik geen homo zijn." (Sanders and Sjenitzer, "Sjalhomo brengt homoseksuelen en lesbiènnes tezamen," 7. Author's translation.)

felt a huge relief to be able to combine both identities – something he had never felt before.[13]

The group decided to be led by a core group (*kerngroep*) that comprised ten to twelve members. Every member of the group contributed to the best of their abilities, so they organized activities, and reached out to their contacts in the Jewish community or the international queer Jewish community.[14] Very early on, the group tried to work with the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations (WCGLJO)[15] and was invited to introduce the group at its conference in Philadelphia in 1981.[16] The official affiliation occurred only one year later. As part of their outreach, Sjalhomo also made contact with the queer Jewish groups in London and Paris in that first year.[17]

Also in 1981, Sjalhomo started publishing a *krantje*, a small booklet with texts about the group and covering queer, Jewish, and queer Jewish life. It was published irregularly between 1981 and 1985 in five issues, and was available at several bookstores in Amsterdam.[18] It was the precursor of the monthly newsletters for both members and other prospective readers.

The members were enthusiastic for action. Consequently, the group had to decide which institutional framework would best fit their needs. A single group of individuals was able to promote itself and its activities, but recognition by official bodies or organizations or any financial subsidies were not easy to achieve. Eventually, Sjalhomo decided to become a *stichting* (foundation) under Dutch law. A *stichting* is a legal entity that only consists of a board and has no official members. It can generate money from its own activities, through donations, or by inheritance. In particular, the possibility of acquiring money tipped the balance[19] for the official registration of *Stichting Sjalhomo* in November 1982. However, Sjalhomo was now barred from taking membership dues. It was dependent on annual donations from its followers without any power to enforce regular payments. Nevertheless, people involved in the group were still called members in internal documents, but there was no other mechanism of enrollment than just saying that one wanted to participate.

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13 Cf. Sanders and Sjenitzer, "Sjalhomo brengt homoseksuelen en lesbiènnes tezamen," 7.

14 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 10.

15 Cf. Sanders and Sjenitzer, "Sjalhomo brengt homoseksuelen en lesbiènnes tezamen," 7.

16 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 18.

17 Cf. announcement lecture Lionel Blue and advertisement Beit Haverim, Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 7. More on that instance in Section 8.

18 Unfortunately, the names and locations of these bookstores are not retrievable in retrospective.

19 Cf. Sjalhomo. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 3, 1982, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 1.

Sjalhomo was based in Amsterdam and its suburbs,[20] and in its first years, almost every activity took place there. However, active members were scattered throughout the regions of North and South Holland (Amsterdam, Den Haag, Rotterdam) and Utrecht,[21] which meant that at least in the first years the group appointed contact persons for different cities. Thus, members (and prospective members) had somebody to talk to in their area.[22]

Sjalhomo also extended its reach to Flanders in Belgium.[23] A separate group, *Sjalhomo België*, was formed as an offshoot sometime after Sjalhomo in the Netherlands (informally probably in 1981,[24] formally in December 1982[25]) with fewer than 20 members.[26] This group tried to connect Dutch and French-speaking homosexual Jews[27] in the country. Members mainly came from Brussels and Antwerp.[28] The Dutch Sjalhomo provided their Belgian friends with its publications.[29] However, the history of the Belgian group is difficult to reconstruct. It was reactivated and closed down multiple times over the years and only worked with the WCGLJO for a very short time.[30] In 1988, the group had already dissolved, despite (financial) support from their Dutch friends.[31] A few years later, it was restarted, but only one or

20 It has to be noted, though, that Sjalhomo never had an office or any kind of headquarters, despite attempts made to install one in 1984 (cf. Sjalhomo Nieuwsbrief, September 1984, folder "Oi/ Sjalhomo Amsterdam 1982–," IHLIA, 3). Correspondence was collected through a post box and phone lines were located in (board) member's own houses.

21 A relocation to Breda in North Brabant could mean that the personal connection to Sjalhomo ceased and the only way to stay in contact with the group was through the newsletters or occasional trips to Amsterdam (cf. Nieuwsbrief, December 1985, UoA, 2.).

22 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 4, UoA, 1.

23 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 3, UoA, 1, 19, and editorial note to Jessica Jacoby, "Doppelidentität: jüdische Lesbe, lesbische Jüdin?," *LesbenStich* 4, no. 1 (1983): 20.

24 Cf. Digest. The Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 3, no. 2, 1984, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

25 Cf. Digest. The Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 2, no. 1, 1983, LMA/4678/02/01/005, Gay Organisations and Activities, Organisations, folder 5 'Jewish Gay Group'/Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group, Gerald Kremenstein Collection, LMA, 3–4.

26 Cf. report of the development worker Eastern Hemisphere, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

27 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 4, UoA, 10.

28 Cf. Digest 3, no. 2, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

29 Cf. Stichting Sjalhomo Jaarverslag 1983 [Annual report 1983], 1213 Inventaris van het Archief van de Vereniging 'De Joodse Invalide,' 2.4.8 Stichting Sjalhomo, 756 Ingekomen nieuwsbrieven, brochures en verslagen, 1984–1985, Stadsarchief Amsterdam (StA Ams.), 2.

30 The group Sjalhomo België is quoted as a partner organization of the WCGLJO from mid- or late 1983 up until summer 1985 (cf. Digest. The Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 4, no. 2, 1985, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 2).

31 Cf. report of the development worker Eastern Hemisphere, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

two people were responsible.[32] In 1994, Sjalhomo België became a member of the Belgian Federatie Werkgroepen Homoseksualiteit (Union of Working Groups concerning Homosexuality), which was kind of a fresh start.[33] Over the following two years, it organized a weekend together with Beit Haverim[34] and another for other queer Jewish groups around the Pride Parade in Brussels.[35] Its activities were generally rare and were boycotted by the Belgian Jewish community.[36] There is no evidence about when the group ceased its activities again. In general, Sjalhomo in Amsterdam established itself as the representative of Dutch-speaking homosexual Jews and its newsletters were sent across Belgium. Thereby, Belgian Jews were invited to their activities and were included in (international) events that Sjalhomo organized.[37]

7.1.2 Sjalhomo's Agenda, Goals, and Self-Conception

As well as agreeing on the structure of the group, there was the question of what Sjalhomo should do and which goals it should strive to achieve. One of the first considerations was about the group's religious orientation: should Sjalhomo become a religious group, like the queer synagogues in the United States, or should it become a place for all Jews, regardless of their denomination or religious upbringing? Jonathan van Amersfoort sympathized with the idea of a synagogue, while others did not want to segregate themselves from the established Jewish community, and some did not want a religious connection at all.[38] The first booklets testify that the issue was contentious, especially after a member expressed their opinion that Jewishness is always connected with religious beliefs during a meeting in March 1981. This led to a well-received reaction from another member

32 Cf. The World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations – Quarterly Newsletter of the Eastern Hemisphere, no. 5, October 1991/Tisjri 5752, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 3, and Quarterly Newsletter of the Eastern Hemisphere, no. 7, LGBT CCNHA, 5.

33 Cf. Peter de Proost, "Sjalhomo kiest voor communicatie. Joodse holebi's opteren voor traditie [Sjalhomo opts for communication. Jewish LGBs opt for tradition]," *ZiZo*, no. 13 (1995): 16 – 17.

34 Cf. Ha Mihtav – La Lettre du Beit Haverim [Ha Mihtav – The Newsletter of Beit Haverim], November 1995, folder "Ha Mihtav / Lettre du Beit Haverim," IHLIA, 2.

35 Cf. Digest. The Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 15, no. 1, 1996, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

36 Cf. Sjalhomo Nieuwsbrief, April 1985, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros VV.1407), UoA, 2.

37 Cf. report of the development worker Eastern Hemisphere, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

38 Cf. Sanders and Sjenitzer, "Sjalhomo brengt homoseksuelen en lesbiènnes tezamen," 7.

with the initials R. P. They said that Sjalhomo should be a place for both religious and nonreligious, secular Jews: "[…] a group like Sjalhomo should be broadminded and accept different (and contradictory) conceptions of Jewishness and should avoid falling into positions like making the indentification [sic!] Jew = religious Jew."[39]

In practice, the group attracted Jews from different religious backgrounds: Orthodox, liberal, nonreligious, and Jews with just one Jewish parent. The fact that meetings were often planned on a Shabbat was disliked by the religious members.[40] R. P. summarized: "We should make sure that in Sjalhomo there is room both for people who feel strongly bound [to] the religion and for those who feel like me [secular]."[41] Another member, D. Linder, therefore demanded that arrangements should allow everyone to participate: "Otherwise you will get a super-fragmentation and this is a very bad thing. Disagreements are not terrible as long as unity [sic!] remains as the basis."[42] Sjalhomo followed Linder's estimate and developed into a social group with political impact, and eventually to a group with a mix of (political) action, learning, and sociability.[43] The political self-conception is striking in comparison with the Jewish Gay Group (JGG) or Beit Haverim.

As the other queer Jewish groups, Sjalhomo celebrated Jewish holidays (sometimes traditionally, sometimes with their own variations), purposely arranged events on weekdays or Sundays, and provided kosher food during its activities. If members wanted to become more involved in the Jewish religion, they were welcome to do so. Others put more value on the social aspect of the group: "[…] there is room for everyone, Orthodox or liberal, we are all Jews."[44]

This awareness of different religious backgrounds became tangible in the phrasing of the five main goals that had to be seen as Sjalhomo's *visitekartje* (business card): 1. Bringing together homosexual Jews, 2. Making the existence of homo-

39 Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 11. This letter was originally published in English and was translated into Dutch for the second booklet (cf. Sjalhomo. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 2, 1982, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana [Ros V.V.1407], UoA, 20).

40 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 2, UoA, 26.

41 Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 11.

42 "[…] anders krijg je een superversplintering en is dat een hele kwalijke zaak. Meningsverschillen zijn niet erg, zolang de eensgezindheid [sic!] als basis aanwezig blijft." (Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 11. Author's translation.)

43 The member "W." wrote in a letter to the editor that Sjalhomo would have to decide what kind of group it wants to be: religious, political, or social. Being too broad would mean diminishing the chance of great visibility to the outside (cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 12). This was an individual opinion, though.

44 "[…] – er is plaats vor iedereen, orthedox of liberaal, Joods zijn we allemaal." (Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 8. Author's translation.)

sexual Jews visible and achieving their recognition, 3. Denouncing and combating the discrimination of Jewish homosexuals by the Jewish community and non-Jewish homosexuals, 4. Providing the opportunity to meet other homosexual Jews through social activities, and 5. Standing together as Jewish homosexuals when problems occur.[45]

Sjalhomo's main purpose was not to offer spiritual guidance or religious training, but to unite homosexual Jews. This became even more explicit in the principles for cooperation within the group: the individuality of each member was recognized. Together, given the different backgrounds of its members, the group wanted to educate itself about Jewish homosexual life and to stand together in the struggle for acceptance.[46] Another consensus was reached regarding non-Jews, who were not allowed to become members.[47] This rule changed and became more flexible in later years after more and more Jewish members brought non-Jewish partners to the meetings.[48]

Not only did Sjalhomo have ideas around internal participation, but they also quickly developed an external agenda. Unsurprisingly, networking and collaboration with other Jewish homosexuals (worldwide) was one important element. Besides the representation of homosexual Jews and the fight against their discrimination, the group saw itself in the role of educator, in particular about Jewish homosexual life. In addition, the group set out to teach about Judaism and homosexuality as well as about Israel, with the aim of fighting anti-Zionism and hatred against Palestinians.[49]

Nevertheless, Sjalhomo did not only want to combat homophobia or antisemitism: all forms of discrimination, even if not experienced by its members, had to be faced and resisted. This attitude stemmed from the realization that the discrimination of one minority is related to the discrimination of all minorities.[50] That is why the members wanted to forge links with other groups representing other minorities.[51] Willem van Dorssen identified three fronts that he understood Sjalhomo

45 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 8. In this source, Sjalhomo wrote about Jewish homophiles. Later sources mentioning the *visitekartje* used the term homosexual Jews.
46 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 8.
47 Cf. Stichting Sjalhomo Jaarverslag 1983, StA Ams., 1.
48 In 1986, the requirements of joining were eased: (long-term) partners, parents, brothers and sisters, and allies were all welcome during meetings (which were published in different newspapers). Only so-called *nasjdagen* (Yiddish *nashn* "to nibble" and Dutch for "days") at private homes were for members only (cf. unnamed and undated information leaflet Sjalhomo, folder "Oi/Sjalhomo Amsterdam 1982–," IHLIA, 1–2).
49 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 9.
50 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 8.
51 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 9.

to be fighting on: 1. Providing mutual international solidarity and support, 2. Advocating for Jewish homosexuals in Dutch Jewry and working towards acceptance, and 3. Contributing to efforts against antisemitism, racism, and sexism deriving from and supported by the special experience of homosexual Jews.[52]

These ideas and goals did not change throughout Sjalhomo's history. The group has always remained a social one, with some religious elements (mostly while celebrating Jewish holidays). Sjalhomo always had aspirations to operate externally with different partners, both national and internationally.

7.1.3 "Gezelligheid is erg belangrijk!" Members' Meetings and Events

As stated in Sjalhomo's agenda, conviviality and the bringing together of its members was crucial.[53] The number of members was not easy to confirm. Because the group had the legal status of a *stichting*, no membership list existed. This meant that memberships were counted differently on various occasions. In mid-1982, there were approximately 110 people in the group, of which 20 to 50 participated in meetings.[54] Presumably, the 110 people were those on the mailing list for the group's booklets and newsletters. In the annual reports of 1983 and 1984, the group counted between 55 and 60 "paying" members[55] (meaning they had donated an annual amount between 15 and 25 guilders).[56] And in 1986, the number of members was shown as 157 with 20 to 65 people attending individual meetings.[57] After initially not being represented, bisexuals were gradually included in the membership figures,[58] especially once women joined the group who still were (or had previously been) in heterosexual relationships with children. However, Sjalhomo only addressed bisexuals in their program at a later stage.

Sjalhomo's members knew that the group would provide conviviality during Jewish holidays. The group considered their celebrations as one of the most important activities.[59] Already in 1980, the group had planned an event for Chanukah.[60]

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52 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 4, UoA, 5.

53 "Conviviality is very important!" (Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 4, UoA, 8. Author's translation.)

54 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 4, UoA, 2.

55 Cf. Jaarverslag 1984 Sjalhomo Mannengroep [Annual report of the Sjalhomo men's group 1984], 1213 Inventaris van het Archief van de Vereniging 'De Joodse Invalide,' 2.4.8 Stichting Sjalhomo, 756 Ingekomen nieuwsbrieven, brochures en verslagen, 1984–1985, StA Ams., 3.

56 Cf. Sjalhomo Nieuwsbrief, May 9, 1984, folder "Oi/Sjalhomo Amsterdam 1982–," IHLIA, 2.

57 Cf. unnamed and undated information leaflet Sjalhomo, IHLIA, 1.

58 Cf. Stichting Sjalhomo Jaarverslag 1983, StA Ams., 1.

59 Cf. unnamed and undated information leaflet Sjalhomo, IHLIA, 2.

The holidays were celebrated "according to Jewish tradition" and overseen and carried out by the members. They did not offer "religious meetings," i. e., Shabbat services, because Sjalhomo wanted to achieve integration into the Jewish community, not segregation from it. Accordingly, everyone could go to Shabbat services at a synagogue if they wished. Additionally, the group did not see itself responsible for giving religious advice.[61] With this decision, the group took appropriate action after the discussions in the founding period about the status that the religious part of Judaism should have. For many members, celebrating Jewish holidays was something completely new. Chanah told the NIW: "I celebrated Chanukah with them [Sjalhomo]. Otherwise, the festival would have passed unnoticed."[62]

Not everyone had previously celebrated the holidays at their parents' home. Instead, many were raised secularly and identified as ethnic Jews. Celebrations of Jewish holidays with Sjalhomo was a chance to learn about Jewish tradition and values – completely independent of Sjalhomo's approach not to become involved in religious matters. This is why the editors would later include explanations about Jewish holidays in the newsletters. These little articles appeared every year, so that all members could understand the background of how and why holidays were celebrated.[63]

An early first highlight for Sjalhomo[64] was the Passover Seder in 1981. The Seder was led by two experienced members and was arranged in a very traditional manner, but with the opportunity to ask questions whenever necessary.[65] The whole setting was prepared collectively, and 40 people were present in a large room of COC in Amsterdam. A member recalled a room full of solidarity, love, and a sense for what the story of Passover could mean for each and every one present.[66] The board also invited representatives from different organizations, among them LJG. Even though the invited rabbis could not attend, they responded in a friendly way to the invite, e. g., Edward van Voolen wrote: "Sjalhomo, shalom! I very much appreciate your invitation to the Seder. Since I have other appoint-

60 Cf. Sanders and Sjenitzer, "Sjalhomo brengt homoseksuelen en lesbiènnes tezamen," 7.
61 Cf. unnamed and undated information leaflet Sjalhomo, IHLIA, 2.
62 "Ik heb met hen Chanoeka gevierd. Anders was dat feest onopgemerkt voorbijgegaan." (Sanders and Sjenitzer, "Sjalhomo brengt homoseksuelen en lesbiènnes tezamen," 7. Author's translation.)
63 First background stories about Jewish holidays can already be found in 1984. However, from 1986 on, with the "new style" (cf. Section 7.2.1), the holidays became a permanent feature of the newsletter.
64 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 1.
65 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 16.
66 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 15.

ments, I cannot come[.] My thoughts and good wishes go out to you: may freedom and liberation come for all of us this year."[67]

This evening was the prelude to celebrations of the most joyous Jewish holidays – a tradition throughout the existence of Sjalhomo: Passover, Rosh HaShana (with a "New Year's reception"), Sukkot, Chanukah, Tu BiShvat, and Purim were celebrated every year, either on the premises of COC or in (queer-friendly) restaurants or bars. It was important that the members should be guaranteed "fun [...], the food (*nosh*), the Jewish sentiment (*neshome*), conviviality (*simche*), and family feeling (solidarity)"[68] during the festivities.

Apart from celebrating the holidays together, Sjalhomo also held occasional meetings on different topics in its early years (guest lectures, talks about political events, or just social gatherings, sometimes with the focus on planning future activities).[69] In 1982, the group organized a whole weekend of activities in a relatively remote conference center close to Hilversum.[70] It is known that international guests from other queer Jewish organizations attended and, therefore, this constituted the first formal meeting of European Jewish queers.[71]

Having a weekend event for Sjalhomo members became another annual tradition. The newsletter reported on the third such weekend in 1984, when around 20 people spent time in the small community of Leusden. The meeting started in a quite traditional manner: they celebrated Shabbat and read the Torah on Saturday morning. This was followed by a role play about the coming-out process and a discussion about having a non-Jewish partner. In between, there was enough time to get to know each other. The weekend then concluded with Jewish folk dances.[72] The following weekend in 1985 had a similar agenda with the slogan "What do I like about being Jewish and homosexual?"[73] The weekends became a place for members to gather, discuss topics in more depth, and talk about the future of Sjal-

67 "Sjalhomo, Shalom! Ik stel jullie uitnodiging voor de Seder zeer op prijs. Omdat ik andere afspraken had, kan ik niet komen. Mijn gedachten en goede wensen gaan naar jullie uit: Moge de Vrijheid en de Bevrijding dit jaar voor ons allen komen." (Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 17. Author's translation.)

68 "[...] de gein [...], het eten (de nasj), het joodse gevoel (nesjomme), de gezelligheid (de simche) en het misjpoge gevoel (verbondenheid) [...]" (unnamed and undated information leaflet Sjalhomo, IHLIA, 2. Author's translation.)

69 Cf. Stichting Sjalhomo Jaarverslag 1983, StA Ams., 3, and Jaarverslag 1984 Sjalhomo Mannengroep, StA Ams., 7–8.

70 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 3, UoA, 1.

71 Cf. Section 8.2.1.

72 Cf. Sjalhomo Nieuwsbrief, November 1984, folder "Oi/Sjalhomo Amsterdam 1982–," IHLIA, 2.

73 Cf. Sjalhomo Nieuwsbrief, November 1985, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 4.

homo. In the 1980s and until the beginning of the 1990s, these weekends were an important source of group building and communal spirit.

Besides meetings and events specifically aimed at its members, Sjalhomo as a group participated in both the general Jewish and queer life at that time and represented their members and their concerns. Thus, Sjalhomo started participating in the annual day of remembrance for the victims of the Shoah at the Hollandsche Schouwburg in the Amsterdam Jewish Cultural Quarter. After the first time they participated in 1982, one member stated: "During the ceremony we felt proud to belong to the new generation, which no longer allows itself to be dragged away, but thinks it will put up a strong resistance."[74] During the ceremony in 1982, the members went to the ceremony each wearing a pink triangle. They did not want to provoke, they wanted to make a statement for the fate of not only Jews, but the homosexual Jews that were killed by the Nazis: "In the Hollandsche Schouwburg, we wore our pink triangle for all to see. And there we were, proud! […] We did not provoke. We were not ashamed either. We were [sic!] there.[75] They used the interest which the pink triangle caused to introduce their group and their agenda.[76] Two years later, Sjalhomo started laying a wreath during the ceremony.[77] This became noticed: ribbons like "Beaten to death, silenced to death – Sjalhomo"[78] caught people's attention.

Another important event was the Roze Zaterdag in which the group proudly participated. Before first attending in 1982, a meeting was held to debate whether it was appropriate to demonstrate as queer Jews. When the members arrived in Amersfoort, the host city that year, the group received serious backlash because of the first Israeli-Lebanese war happening at that time. Sjalhomo's members were able to deal with this criticism of their participation mainly by engaging in conversations with other participants, but, unfortunately, the demonstration ended in a riot for another reason: young conservatives blockaded the venue where the final party was held. The members were trapped inside, and, luckily, nobody was hurt. Despite these incidents, the group's overall solidarity and the at-

74 "Tijdens de plechtigheid voelden wij ons trots tot de nieuwe generatie te behoren, die zich niet meer laar wegslepen, maar denkt krachtig verzet te zullen plegen." (Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 3, UoA, 21. Author's translation.)

75 "In de Hollandse Schouwburg droegen wij allen zichtbaar onze roze driehoek. En daar stonden we, trots! […] Wij provoceerden niet. Wij schaamden ons ook niet. Wij waren er." (Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 3, UoA, 21. Author's translation.)

76 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 3, UoA, 21.

77 Cf. Jaarverslag 1984 Sjalhomo Mannengroep, StA Ams., 7.

78 "Doodgeslagen, doodgezwegen/Sjalhomo" (Nieuwsbrief, April 1985, UoA, 1.)

mosphere there was highly praised in the end.[79] In the following years, the Roze Zaterdag became an important date in the group's calendar. Sjalhomo participated in the demonstration with a banner and an information booth. Even though antisemitic statements during the parade could not always be avoided,[80] participation in the event was largely seen as a success for queer Jewish visibility.[81]

This remarkable variation in events and activities – as well as the monthly newsletters – required a group of people that were willing to invest time and resources. The board was not able to do all of this on its own. That is why many calls for volunteers and support can be found throughout the newsletters over the years.[82] These were successful most of the time, but they make it clear that Sjalhomo was highly dependent on volunteers who were not included in the institutional framework of the *stichting* and were, therefore, neither always reliable, nor could they be held accountable.

7.1.4 Supporters and Opponents

As well as its members, Sjalhomo was able to mobilize a diverse range of supporters. The speed at which the group connected with its environment and sparked outside interest was unusually fast in comparison with the other two groups portrayed in this study. One very important figure was Harry (Harrie) Wishaupt. He was a non-Jewish, but gay social worker at the Joods Maatschappelijk Werk (JMW), Netherland's Jewish welfare organization. JMW was founded after World War II specifically to care for the survivors of the Shoah. However, from the 1980s onward, it broadened its focus to include the second generation and to foster a sense of common identity among them.[83] Wishaupt was responsible in JMW for people who did not find help elsewhere; those commonly cast as social misfits. In connection to that, he took on a supporting function in Sjalhomo, especially in its founding period. For example, he helped to organize the first Sjalhomo weekend in 1982. His own homosexuality may have been the incentive to champion for the group in JMW. The organization itself did not have any experience in dealing with homosexuals, and homosexuality as a subject had not been on their agenda

79 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 3, UoA, 35–36.

80 Cf. Sjalhomo. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 5, 1985, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 15.

81 Cf. Sjalhomo Nieuwsbrief, June 1985, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 5.

82 For example in Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 4, UoA, 20.

83 Cf. Joods.nl, "Joods Maatschappelijk Werk," no date, https://www.joods.nl/organisaties/joods-maatschappelijk-werk/, accessed January 12, 2023.

before.[84] In Wishaupt's obituary after his death in 2001, longtime member Erwin Brugmans called him an ambassador of the group who catalyzed Sjalhomo to achieve its goals, not only in the Jewish community, but also beyond: "As an ambassador, he worked permanently for the recognition and acceptance of Jewish homosexuals and lesbians within and outside of his beloved Jewish community. Harry's specific skill was to stand in the wings, to co-direct […], to let members and newcomers feel at home and to help to disperse different emerging conflicts."[85] Wishaupt and JMW became the first external contacts for Sjalhomo, and they could, in turn, rely on its support for as long as the group existed.

Other renowned early supporters were the mothers of its members. Of course, not all parents knew about their children's homosexuality, but a few of those who did took a stance. The most prominent example was Betty Nieweg. As the mother of Jonathan van Amersfoort, she was driven by her experience of the Shoah in which minorities in general faced violent persecution and worse.[86] The discrimination and intolerance of other minorities were incomprehensible to her. Being an ally was, for her, a logical consequence of experiencing the Nazi regime: "I know from my own oppression that you do not believe in people showing solidarity with you, setting themselves up as allies. But I also know that, as a minority, you will never make it without these allies. Let us join hands."[87] She spoke out on behalf of the rights and acceptance of Jewish homosexuals, for example in numerous articles in newspapers.[88] In Sjalhomo's founding period, she was an important contact – someone who listened and invested time in the group.[89] She and Sara Brugmans, whose experience at Auschwitz concentration camp inspired a

84 Cf. Jaarverslag 1984 Sjalhomo Mannengroep, StA Ams., 11.

85 "Op dit ambassadeurs niveau werkte hij voortdurend aan de erkenning en acceptatie van joodse homo's/lesbo's binnen en buiten de hem geliefde Joodse gemeenschap. Harry's specifieke kunst was in de coulissen te staan, e.e.a. mede te regisseren […] leden en nieuwkomers zich thuis laten voelen en diverse gerezen conflicten helpen oplossen." (Erwin Brugmans, "Harry Wishaupt. In Gedachte (11–9–1948/30–8–2001) [Harry Wishaupt. In Memoriam.]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 11, no. 2 [2001]: 7. Author's translation.)

86 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 1, UoA, 23.

87 "Ik weet vanuit mijn eigen onderdrukking, dat je er niet in gelooft, dat mensen solidair met je zijn, zich als bondgenoten opwerpen. Maar ik weet ook, dat je het als minderheid nooit redt zonder die bondgenoten. Laten we de handen ieen slaan." (Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 4, UoA, 3–4. Author's translation.)

88 Cf. Betty Nieweg, "Als minderheid red je het niet zonder bondgenoten [As a minority, you do not make it without allies]," *Trouw* 41, no. 11770 (February 3, 1983): 5, or Betty Nieweg, "Conferentie 3," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 119, no. 26 (February 24, 1984): 15.

89 Cf. Erwin Brugmans, "Betty Nieweg: Sjalhomo gedenkt haar [Betty Nieweg: Sjalhomo remembers her]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 1, no. 3 (1991): 7.

like-minded attitude regarding minority rights,[90] were fundamental in setting up the countrywide, informal solidarity group Ouders van homoseksuele kinderen (Parents of Homosexual Children) that was put in place by JMW and the Joods Geestelijk Gezondheidszorg (Jewish Mental Health Service).[91] Their engagement drew attention to the necessity for changes within Dutch Jewry, and demonstrated that (heterosexual) allies were fundamental in the group's success.

The NIW appeared to be another ally. In contrast to other Jewish newspapers at that time – the JC in the UK in particular – the NIW frequently reported on Sjalhomo and published its advertisements for bigger events. The NIW saw itself as the representative of all Jews in the Netherlands. Tamarah Benima (today rabbi of the synagogue Beit Ha'Chidush), in the 1980s a NIW reporter and, from 1992, its editor in chief, took a particular interest in the impact of social movements like Sjalhomo.[92]

The Dutch government also had an interest in social movements, and especially in Jewish life after World War II. To support Jewish political agency, Sjalhomo was able to receive subsidies from the Ministry for Welfare, Health, and Culture from 1984 on. Harrie Wishaupt and JMW helped in applying for the funding. The subsidies were fundamental for the group and comprised more than 40 % of the group's income in the first year it received them.[93]

Further, Sjalhomo connected with the denominations of Dutch Jewry very early on, which was very different to the experiences of both JGG and Beit Haverim. Among them were the Orthodox NIK and PIK, even though we do not know what kind of early contacts were made here. What is known is that bilateral talks took place.[94] Also LJG was an unlikely candidate that joined the ranks of Sjalhomo supporters, given the fact that Liberal Judaism in the Netherlands was quite traditional in comparison to its counterparts in other parts of the world.[95] Howev-

90 Cf. handwritten letter by Erwin Brugmans titled "Dear gay jewesses and jews," November 1981, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 2.
91 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 4, UoA, 20.
92 Cf. Tamarah Benimah, *Een schaap vangen. Over religie, liefde en creativiteit* [To catch a sheep. About religion, love and creativity] (Amsterdam: uitgeverij contact, 2002), 84–85.
93 Cf. Stichting Sjalhomo Mannen-groep, Financieel jaarverslag 1984, signature "cat. (jaarv/sjalhomo) 1984, dgb grijs," IHLIA, 1–3.
94 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 3, UoA, 1.
95 Generally speaking, LJG took much longer to recognize homosexuality than its American counterparts. In regard to homosexual rabbis, LJG's rabbis were mostly trained outside the Netherlands, so the movement did not have to decide on this topic up until 2002 with the foundation of the Levission Institut, the first liberal rabbinical seminary in the Netherlands after World War II. Homosexuality was not introduced as a criterion for admission. However, only in 2010 – 10 years later than the CCAR in the United States – did LJG open up for same-sex commitment cer-

er, not only did the core group report about positive prospects, LJG also gave Sjalhomo a subsidy for the second *krantje*.[96] Moreover, the liberal rabbis Awraham Soetendorp (Liberal Jewish community in Den Haag) and Edward van Voolen (Arnhem) became close contacts within LJG.[97] Soetendorp spoke out publicly for tolerance towards Jewish homosexuals and offered to mediate between them and heterosexuals. He got to know Jewish homosexuals especially in the United States, where they presented themselves openly at Jewish conferences.[98] Van Voolen and his wife attended Sjalhomo's second Chanukah celebrations in 1981. He gave rabbinical input for the holidays and encouraged the group's revolutionary character.[99] The support from LJG continued, even though the contacts were mostly limited to personal interactions.[100]

Then, during the Rosh HaShana reception in 1984, representatives from the denomination were present (as well as the Nederlandse Zionistenbond, B'nai B'rith,[101] and the youth organization Haboniem).[102] That same year, Rabbi David Lilienthal of LJG Amsterdam publicly spoke against the discrimination of homosexuals and in favor of the group.[103] Sjalhomo might have been the means through which LJG slowly got in contact with homo- and bisexuals, and became aware of these individuals' fate within their congregations. This is also surprising in light of the fact that homosexuality was not openly acknowledged by LJG at this moment in time.

One example of LJG's stance is a letter from the Christian churches and Jewish denominations (the NIK, the PIK, and LJG) to the government concerning an anti-discrimination bill aimed to combat discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, or civil status. The coalition of religious institutions opposed the bill because they felt constrained in their religious self-determination, as the NIK summarized:

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emonies. Nevertheless, each rabbi could decide on whether to perform such a ceremony or not. These union would not be called marriages, though, but *brit ahava* – covenant of love (cf. Menno ten Brink, "Briet Ahawa ook in Amsterdam [Brit Ahava also in Amsterdam]," *Kol Mokum*, no. 2010/4 [5771–2] [2010]: 7). This decision moved LJG closer to the decisions of the American Conservative Movement (cf. Section 3.2).

96 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 3, UoA, 1.

97 Cf. handwritten letter by Erwin Brugmans, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

98 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 2, UoA, 19.

99 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 2, UoA, 28.

100 Cf. Jaarverslag 1984 Sjalhomo Mannengroep, StA Ams., 11.

101 B'nai B'rith in Amsterdam was indeed interested in Jewishness and homosexuality. In 1984, Sjalhomo organized a lecture and discussion about the topic which were very well received (cf. Jaarverslag 1984 Sjalhomo Mannengroep, StA Ams., 12).

102 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, November 1984, IHLIA, 2.

103 Cf. Jaarverslag 1984 Sjalhomo Mannengroep, StA Ams., 11.

Judaism decides for itself what is right or wrong, so no Dutch law should prohibit the Jewish community to deny the employment of someone who promotes homosexuality.[104] Apparently not sufficiently included in the final revisions of the letter, LJG criticized its tone and its general rejection/condemnation of homosexuality.[105] Dutch Liberal Judaism wanted to point out that they do not discriminate against anyone, but the bill was not nuanced enough: neither homosexuals, nor those who felt uncomfortable with them, should restrain themselves. There should still be room for dissent.[106] However, Dutch Liberal Judaism was not unanimous in this matter: the previously mentioned Rabbis Lilienthal, Soetendorp, and van Voolen openly opposed LJG's public stance and endorsed the anti-discrimination bill.[107]

This example, however, points to Sjalhomo's difficult relationship with the traditional Orthodox denominations. The NIW records a debate among readers about homosexuality and Jewish traditions: opponents saw in Sjalhomo a violation against the teachings of the Torah and Jewish tradition, Sjalhomo's members and allies tried to argue against these accusations.[108] As stated above, Sjalhomo was able to make contact with individuals (and rabbis) in the NIK and the PIK. In spite of this, official meetings with its representatives were denied and were not regarded as opportune.[109] Any further collaboration was interrupted when the NIK decided not to include Sjalhomo's events in its *luach* (calendar): "By integrating you into the *luach*, we would help to publicize your organization of which one goal, namely the strengthening and integration of Jewish and homosexual identities, contravenes the *halakhah*, which is determinative for our denomina-

104 Cf. Helene Weijel, "Joodse gemeenten met kerken tegen anti-discriminatiewet [Jewish communities with churches against anti-discrimination law]," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 117, no. 30 (April 23, 1982): 13.

105 They did not receive the letter before it was sent to the government (cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 3, UoA, 7–8).

106 Cf. Weijel, "Joodse gemeenten met kerkek tegen anti-discriminatiewet," 13.

107 Cf. no author, "Over welke vrijheid hebben we het? [What freedom are we talking about?]," *Trouw* 40, no. 11462 (January 30, 1982): 36.

108 Cf. V. F. Schussheim, "Ingezonden – Homo," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 119, no. 30 (March 23, 1984): 17; Voorzitter Stichting Sjalhomo, "Ingezonden – Homo 2," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 119, no. 34 (April 13, 1984): 39; Jonathan van Amersfoort, "Ingezonden – Homo 3," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 119, no. 35 (April 20, 1984): 13; Herman Musaph, "Ingezonden – Homo 4," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 119, no. 35 (April 20, 1984): 13; Mej. G. F. Schussheim, "Ingezonden – Homo 5," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 119, no. 35 (April 20, 1984): 13.

109 Cf. Stichting Sjalhomo Jaarverslag 1983, StA Ams., 4, and Jaarverslag 1984 Sjalhomo Mannengroep, StA Ams., 11.

tion."[110] However, this decision did not mean that the NIK was in doubt about Sjalhomo's "constitutional guaranteed right to life in the way [they] want."[111] Neither did they deny Sjalhomo's right to form a group that works towards its goals.[112] Nevertheless, the NIK effectively isolated the group from the Orthodox religious realm, even though many members were raised in, and lived with, this religious background.

7.1.5 Outreach

This conflicted relationship with the vast majority of Dutch Jewry did not stop Sjalhomo's public activities – in fact, the group was referred to as "not publicity-shy."[113]

Not only was the Liberal Jewish community identified as a potential important ally, but the Dutch queer community as well. Early in its existence,[114] the core group decided to support the Stichting Homo-monument, the foundation that collected money and lobbied politically for the implementation of a memorial site for persecuted and murdered homosexuals during World War II. The core group sent the call for donations to other queer Jewish organizations around the world.[115] Later, Sjalhomo sent a delegate into the board of directors of the Stichting Homo-monument.[116] The memorial site was eventually opened in 1987. Sjalhomo also felt a responsibility also on an international scale for the queer community. As well as the WCGLJO, they became a member of the International Gay Association, an umbrella organization for all queer organizations worldwide.[117]

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110 "Door opname in de loeach zouden wij meehelpen bekendheid te geven aan uw organisatie, waarvan één van de doelstellingen, namelijk versterking en integratie van de joodse en homosexuele identiteit, in stijd is met de voor ons kerkgenootschap bepalende halacha." (Sjalhomo Nieuwsbrief, September 1985, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 2. Author's translation.)

111 "[…] aan uw grondwettelijke gegarandeerde recht uw leven in te richten op de wijze waarop u dat wenst […]." (Nieuwsbrief, September 1985, UoA, 2. Author's translation.)

112 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, September 1985, UoA, 2.

113 Digest 3, no. 2, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

114 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 2, UoA, 33.

115 Cf. letter/call for donation by Stichting Homo-monument, 1982, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 359, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, and Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 3, UoA, 1.

116 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, October 1986, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 6.

117 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, November 1984, IHLIA, 1.

One of the group's goals was to educate the people around them both about Judaism and homosexuality. The group organized lectures in the Jewish world about homosexuality, and in the queer community about Judaism.[118] The Roze Front became a partner for this educational approach. While the organization arranged the annual Roze Zaterdag, it also invited Sjalhomo members to speak about their experience, for example on a study day about racism and antisemitism in March 1985. The response they got from the audience confirmed their view that there was not, as yet, much understanding of queer Jewish identities in the queer community.[119] During a similar evening about the same issue in 1984, Sjalhomo connected with other minority groups within the queer community, among them Suho, the Surinamese LGBTQ+ organization.[120] The collaboration with these other, smaller, groups was fruitful as evidenced by the fact that both groups expanded their work into other public settings as well, e. g., during public discussion rounds.

The media coverage of the founding period is equally worth mentioning. As previously stated, the NIW regularly published announcements for Sjalhomo's events, and wrote more detailed pieces about the queer Jewish experience.[121] The group was also talked about in queer publications:[122] *SEK*, COC's magazine,[123] was just as interested as the *Homologie*, a more academic magazine about homosexual life in the Netherlands.[124] The topics in the reports were mostly about a general introduction of the group and about how traditional Judaism stands towards homosexuality. Additionally, papers or magazines without a direct link to Judaism and Queerness regularly wrote about the group. These included *Trouw*,[125] original-

118 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, June 1985, UoA, 2.

119 Cf. Sjalhomo Nieuwsbrief, March 1985, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 3, or – in another context – during a discussion panel of the Communist Party of the Netherlands (cf. Sjalhomo Nieuwsbrief, February 1985, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 3).

120 Cf. brochure "'Ik zal die term nooit gebruiken:' discussie avond 19 jan. '84 [over] Racisme, antisemietisme, discriminatie ook in de homo-lesb. wereld ['I shall never use that term:' discussion evening January 19, 1984 [about] racism, antisemitism, discrimination also in the gay lesbian world]," signature "cat. (ik/zal) brochures kluis nl," IHLIA.

121 For example, Marja Verbraak, "Homosexuelen willen geen tolerantie maar acceptatie [Homosexuals do not want tolerance but acceptance]," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 119, no. 44 (June 22, 1984): 7.

122 Cf. Jaarverslag 1984 Sjalhomo Mannengroep, IHLIA, 10.

123 For example, Paul Manni, "Van het thuisfront nog geen nieuws vernomen [No news from the home front yet]," *SEK* 12, no. 4 (1982): 25–27.

124 For example, Michiel van der Kaay and Hans Warmerdam, "Een Wereldcongres in Amsterdam [A World Congress in Amsterdam]," *Homologie* 9, no. 4 (1987): 22–24.

125 For example, Paul Puntmann, "'Een man mag niet naast een man liggen als naast een vrouw' [A man shall not lie with a man like with a woman]," *Trouw* 41, no. 12048 (December 31, 1983): 35.

ly an orthodox Protestant daily newspaper, and the daily *Het Parool*.[126] Sjalhomo also managed to secure a public appearance on radio to talk about their agenda: Homonos, a radio program for homosexuals, did reports on, or interviews with, the group, beginning in 1984[127] and frequently over the following years.

Sjalhomo's self-conception included a very distinctive notion on outreach. This met with an open and progressive climate in 1980s Netherlands. This was a very different situation to that in the UK and France, where public opinion towards homosexuality was still conservative and/or intolerant. For Sjalhomo, however, it was not enough to simply gather queer Jews together. They sought to drive societal change by making the majority aware of the minority. This epitomizes the group's political aspirations. Each member could choose whether to engage in the political activities of the group or to "just" use it as a social platform. However, Sjalhomo was founded as a social and transformative force, with the aim of bringing change to both Dutch Jewry and Dutch society as a whole.

7.1.6 Sjalhomo's Women's Group

Women had already been involved in the first months of Sjalhomo's formation. However, the number of female members was significantly smaller than that of men, and those who came to the meetings often felt isolated; issues relevant to women were rarely discussed.[128] Many women only visited once since they did not feel welcomed.[129] Sjalhomo shared this experience with JGG or Beit Haverim.

There was also resistance against women in leadership positions[130] and misogynic expectations about what women had to do, e.g., baking cakes for events or doing the dishes after a dinner. Arguments about these male perceptions were remembered as the "butter cake war."[131] As a consequence, women around Sauci Bosner and Emma Hamer organized a women's group within Sjalhomo in October 1983,[132] with the first official event in November.[133] The women wrote personal let-

126 For example, Bodewijn Büch, "Iedereen zijn eigen club [Everyone its own club]," *Het Parool* 42, no. 11431 (May 8, 1982): 24.

127 Cf. Jaarverslag 1984 Sjalhomo Mannengroep, StA Ams., 10.

128 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 5, UoA, 23.

129 Cf. Annette van't Sant and Aaf Tiems, "Sjalhomo-vrouwengroep. We zijn er, en we zijn sterk [Sjalhomo women's group. We are here and we are strong]," *SEK* 15, no. 2 (1985): 5.

130 Cf. Brakman, "Jewish Lesbians in Amsterdam," 18.

131 Cf. Corrie Rikkers, "Twee peilers van Sjalhomo. Joodse identiteit en homo-emancipatie [Two pillars of Sjalhomo. Jewish identity and homosexual emancipation]," *Vroom & Vrolijk* 5, no. 5 (1994): 11.

132 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 5, UoA, 23.

ters to other women they knew (e.g., through previous events). In doing so, the women's group grew to 31 members in 1984.[134] It was important for the group to represent different personal backgrounds: lesbians, bisexual women, women who were still married or recently divorced,[135] patrilinear and matrilinear Jewish women.[136] The group never had the intention to separate from the men's group or to found another organization.[137] Rather, the idea was to have two groups under the "federal tent" of the Stichting Sjalhomo.[138] The *stichting's* board still consisted of both men and women, and the subsidies from the government were split equally in two.[139] Despite this, the women's group had its own irregularly published newsletter,[140] but the publications of the men's group remained the perceived mouthpiece for the group as a whole.

The women's group had distinctive goals: they wanted to address sexism and antisemitism in society. The group took a stance for the emancipation of lesbian and bisexual women in the Jewish religion, and they opined that the status of women in Judaism needed changing. The women's group neither wanted to accept the hierarchical and patriarchic structure in Judaism, nor their role as breadwinners to which they were relegated since men were traditionally destined to study the Torah. Instead, traditions that empower women should be the focus.[141] On a more personal level, the group wanted to build up a Jewish women's network,[142] a space to talk, to exchange experiences, and to learn from each other.[143] Therefore, they organized a so-called *landdag*, a day in the countryside with workshops.[144] Additionally, the women's group introduced permanent working groups such as: 1.) A group devoted to the Jewish religion, rituals, and the position of the

133 Cf. Stichting Sjalhomo Jaarverslag 1983, StA Ams., 3.
134 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 4, UoA, 19.
135 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 5, UoA, 23.
136 Cf. van't Sant and Tiems, "Sjalhomo-vrouwengroep," 5.
137 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 5, UoA, 23.
138 Efforts to formally restructure the foundation so that both groups could work officially as Stichting Sjalhomo were initiated in the beginning of 1985 (cf. Nieuwsbrief, February 1985, UoA, 5). However, the women's group was shut down before formal changes could be communicated to the public authorities.
139 Cf. van't Sant and Tiems, "Sjalhomo-vrouwengroep," 6.
140 The newsletters of the women's group are – with a few exceptions – not retraceable. They were only sent to the women themselves, so there was no purpose to send them to partners outside of the group. It was solely an informational leaflet for activities of Sjalhomo's women.
141 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 5, UoA, 23.
142 Cf. van't Sant and Tiems, "Sjalhomo-vrouwengroep," 4.
143 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 5, UoA, 23.
144 Cf. no author, "'Sjalhomo landdag' [Sjalhomo day in the countryside]," *De Waarheid* 44, no. 169 (June 14, 1984): 6.

woman – exploring new approaches to tradition, 2.) A group to discuss the implications arising from the second generation after World War II, 3.) A group about self-perception as Jewish women, lesbianism and/or bisexuality, and on demand: 4.) A discussion group about radical lesbian politics. Others did not want to join a working group, so the celebration of Jewish holidays – often together with the men's group – became another aspect of the group's work.[145]

Yet another element of the group's work was the connection and collaboration with other feminist/lesbian organizations, especially those who represented a minority within the minority, like Black women.[146] Through the annual so-called "Day of the Lesbian," Sjalhomo's women's group connected with other women that felt the oppression of the patriarchic system. In 1985, they organized an international version of this day.[147] A membership of the International Lesbian Information Service was acquired in order to stay connected to the international lesbian community.[148]

The creative drive of the women's group did not always meet with the men's approval. The relationship between the two wings of Sjalhomo was once called "seriously disturbed."[149] The men felt attacked by the women's critique and the women were frustrated about the men not reflecting on and understanding their position and their privileges: "The last ten to fifteen years of women's emancipation passed them [the men] by."[150] The conflicts between men and women could lead to cancellation of collaborative projects,[151] or to the separation of festive meetings because men and women could not bear each other's presence.[152] Overall, the women's group had an influence on how the men addressed women within the *stichting:* their involvement and efforts came to be increasingly appreciated,[153] and they were invited to events that had previously been attended almost exclusively by male members like the Sjalhomo weekends.[154]

That notwithstanding, the women's group quickly came to an end. In March 1985, the women's group called out to their members: there was a worrisome lack of women interested and actively participating. Only three women replied.

145 Cf. van't Sant and Tiems, "Sjalhomo-vrouwengroep," 5.
146 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, November 1984, IHLIA, 3–4.
147 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, November 1984, IHLIA, 6.
148 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 5, UoA, 23.
149 Van't Sant and Tiems, "Sjalhomo-vrouwengroep," 6.
150 "De laatste tien tot vijftien jaar van de vrouwen-emancipatie is aan ze voorbijgegaan." (Van't Sant and Tiems, "Sjalhomo-vrouwengroep," 6. Author's translation.)
151 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, September 1984, IHLIA, 2.
152 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, February 1985, UoA, 4–5.
153 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, March 1985, UoA, 4.
154 Cf. Sjalhomo Nieuwsbrief, July/August 1985, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 1.

Moreover, personal issues of the leaders hampered the group's ability to organize events. Matters were further complicated by unspecified conflicts between the group and the board of the *stichting* which led to one founding member of the women's group withdrawing. As a consequence, it was decided that the women's group should cooperate more with the men's group.[155] However, in late 1985/early 1986, the women's group dissolved.[156]

Despite its short existence, the group had a long-term influence on Sjalhomo. The tone of the *stichting* changed, and lesbians were now just as explicitly addressed as men in the publications and events. There was a new awareness that women had different experiences to those of men, and that women needed their own safe space, including female-only meetings that addressed their particular experiences. Even though the number of women showing up at Sjalhomo's events was still small in the aftermath of the dissolution of the women's group,[157] female members gained a new space in Sjalhomo. Equal treatment of men and women within and outside the Jewish community became a declared objective of the whole *stichting*.[158]

The number of male and female members was never equal, but women's topics became an increasingly important issue, as in the program for the International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews in 1987 held by Sjalhomo.[159] From 1988 to 1998, Rinet van Meel was the first chairwoman of Sjalhomo and ensured female representation. Her successors have all been women, too.

7.2 Sjalhomo's Heyday (1986 – 1995)

After those first years of consolidating and establishing a narrative, Sjalhomo was on solid ground. The group nevertheless needed to innovate, and a new style of meetings should reflect the social character of the group. With strengthened cooperations, Sjalhomo was able to ensure its place in the Dutch Jewish community. In addition, an increased impact was also noticeable internationally. Sjalhomo had to face different challenges during its heyday, but was able to seize many opportuni-

155 Cf. Sjalhomo Nieuwsbrief (vrouwengroep), June 1985, folder "Oi/Sjalhomo Amsterdam 1982–," IHLIA, 1 – 2.

156 Nieuwsbrief voor homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, January 1987, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 2.

157 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, January 1987, UoA, 2.

158 Cf. unnamed and undated information leaflet Sjalhomo, IHLIA, 1.

159 Cf. Booklet "10th International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews 2 – 5 July 1987, Amsterdam," 12 – 15.

ties to develop into a strong representative of queer Judaism in the Netherlands and beyond.

7.2.1 "Nieuwe Stijl:" Continuation and New Ideas

In the turn from 1985 to 1986, Sjalhomo decided to reinforce its direction as a social group (*gezelligheidsclubje*). This meant that the number of activities increased and that they were not supposed to be organized by the board alone, but by all members, and according to their interests.[160] Consequently, Sjalhomo introduced monthly meetings in a restaurant or bar to socialize, meet new people, and exchange ideas. Until Sjalhomo came to an end, these meetings with drinks and dinner were an essential element of the group.

This refocusing on the social character was called *Sjalhomo Nieuwe Stijl* (Sjalhomo new style). Apart from the general urge to be an even more social group, the dissolution of the women's group provided the impetus for Sjalhomo to rethink the structure of its meetings. Social meetings without political aims, including more personal contact between men and women, were seen as the most practical.[161] Nevertheless, events solely for women were still organized, especially for networking.[162] The former women's group's influence was felt in the official inclusion of bisexuals with the start of the new style; for example, the newsletter started addressing both homosexual and bisexual men and women from December 1985 on.[163]

The Sjalhomo weekend in 1986 took place under the banner of this new style. In comparison to previous weekends, political or religious questions were no longer part of the agenda. The weekend was almost entirely for making friends or intensifying relations.[164] Additionally, the idea of *nasjdagen* (from Yiddish *nashn*, "to nibble", and Dutch for "days") was established. With a distinct focus on sociability, these were days in which the members came together, ate, and gossiped.[165] Chanu-

160 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, December 1985, UoA, 2.
161 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, September 1986, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 2.
162 One example is a weekend only for women in 1990, cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, July/August 1990, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 2.
163 Nieuwsbrief, December 1985, UoA, 1.
164 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, May 1986, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 4–5.
165 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, October 1986, UoA, 1, and Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, May 1987, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 1.

kah, Purim, Passover (with the Seder as the annual "topper"[166]) and Rosh HaShana became the "big events," with many people from all over the country attending.[167] In the 1990s, an annual "mini-cruise" on the canals of or around Amsterdam was one of the social events offered by the group.[168]

In general, it seems that the newsletters increasingly included personal stories and reports on social gatherings, and fewer political issues or discussions. This was particularly the case after the introduction of the renewed newsletter *Oi!*, now a fully rounded magazine, in 1991.

These changes led to an increase in membership numbers, although these can only be accepted with caution, given the previously mentioned inconsistencies in recordkeeping. In September 1987, the group recorded 169 members of whom 107 were men and 62 women.[169] A few months later, in January 1988, the number rose – especially after the Tenth International Conference for Gay and Lesbian Jews – to 205 (135 men, 70 women).[170] This increasing interest enabled the board to have more people organizing Sjalhomo's work. The goal was to divide the workload between more people. During a "squad weekend" in December 1987, four working groups were formed with the following foci: newsletter, public relations, contacts with Jewish and homosexual organizations, and program strategy.[171] However, these working groups were not successful, and as consequence, the board tried to reach out to its membership through a survey. The board wanted to know what the members expected from Sjalhomo.[172] As explained later in this study, this survey barely yielded any meaningful insights due to a lack of responses. This was not the only time the members did not respond. The board tried to adjust the activities provided and reached out to the members, but often did not receive the same feedback as it had in the founding period.

166 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, June 1989, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros VV.1407), UoA., 4.

167 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, October 1986, UoA, 2.

168 Cf. Peter Spijkers, "Mini-Cruise naar Ouderkerk [Mini-cruise to Ouderkerk]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 1, no. 4 (1991): 6.

169 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, September 1987, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros VV.1407), UoA, 2.

170 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, January 1988, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros VV.1407), UoA, 1.

171 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, December 1987, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros VV.1407), UoA , 1.

172 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, May 1988, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros VV.1407), UoA, 2.

7.2.2 The Tenth Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews

One of the most important decisions made by Sjalhomo was to host the Tenth Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews in Amsterdam. During the Ninth Washington conference in 1985, five Sjalhomo members promoted the idea of hosting the conference two years later which would make it the first conference on the European continent. They were able to persuade the participants through a mixture of workshops and religious events. Eventually, a great majority voted for the Dutch group (the queer synagogue Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco and JGG in London applied as well).[173]

Organization and planning started shortly after the Washington conference.[174] Sjalhomo was able to gather several members to run different working groups that worked autonomously, with the aim of achieving the goal of hosting Sjalhomo's first big event.[175]

Financing was problematic, though. The Ministry for Welfare, Health and Culture granted another subsidy, but this was not enough to cover the costs of the prestigious Krasnapolsky Hotel at Amsterdam's central square "de Dam" where the group chose to host the event. For a short time, another, cheaper venue was under discussion.[176] Nevertheless, the board of the WCGLJO was already very content with the progress and especially with the subsidy from (and, therefore, recognition by) the Dutch government.[177] The financial working group intensified their efforts and were successful in acquiring more funding from COC Amsterdam, the Dutch Society for Sexual Reform, the Province of North Holland, the municipality of Amsterdam, JMW, and many private contributors.[178]

The conference finally took place July 2–5, 1987, in Hotel Krasnapolsky, attended by more than 240 people from all over the Netherlands, Western Europe, the United States, Canada, and Israel.[179] The conference was opened by Amsterdam's

173 Cf. Vinco David, "Internationaal homo-congres over twee jaar in Amsterdam [International homo-congress within two years in Amsterdam]," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 120, no. 45 (July 19, 1985): 7.

174 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, September 1985, UoA, 3.

175 Cf. Conferentie Bulletin no. 1, March 1986, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 2.

176 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, November 1986, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 2.

177 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, November 1986, 3.

178 Cf. Booklet "10th International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews 2–5 July 1987, Amsterdam," front matter.

179 Cf. List of participants, 10th International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews 2–5 July 1987, Amsterdam, courtesy of Daniël Bouw (Rotterdam).

(Jewish) mayor Ed van Thijn[180] and Fred Ensel, chair of JMW. It had an intensive program with Friday night and Shabbat morning services which were held by the openly gay US-American Rabbi Yoel Kahn, the queer synagogue Bet Mishpachah from Washington, D.C., and the Chazzan from the Liberal Jewish community of Arnhem. In addition, it provided leisure activities, such as a canal cruise by candlelight. Additionally, Sjalhomo was eager to present the multifaceted history of Dutch Jewry and Jewish Amsterdam with tours through the Jewish Museum and Jewish Quarter, including a small ceremony with a wreath laying at the Hollandsche Schouwburg. The majority of the time was spent in workshops. The topics covered were diverse, ranging from topics that were often discussed during similar conferences, such as the influence of AIDS, new LGBTQ+ friendly liturgy, dealing with lesbian identities,[181] having a non-Jewish partner, gay and lesbian allies, or being observant and gay. They were complemented by topics that were very important for European Jews: the influence of the Shoah on European Jewry, the inclusion of Shoah survivors into the queer community, and questions around the second generation.[182]

While I was talking with several former Sjalhomo members, it was clear that this conference was *the* event in the group's existence. It is remembered as a joyous celebration until this day. It was "the best conference that was ever organized"[183] as the WCGLJO's president Lorry Sorgman stated before leaving Amsterdam, and a "great success" according to Sjalhomo.[184] The conference also had a profound impact on an individual level:

> I was there, and it changed my life. At the 10th Congress, I saw for the first time in my life women wearing kippot. In gaze[,] I saw women with the most beautiful tallitot on their shoulders. [...] I never experienced in the sincere Jewish services in Holland. The congregants embraced each other when [R]abbi Yoel Kahn welcomed the shabbat bride. An openly gay

180 Cf. Andy Zimmerman, "Gay Jews Meet in Amsterdam. Problems of Dual Discrimination Addressed at International Gathering," *The Advocate*, no. 482 (September 29, 1987): 31.

181 The initial idea was to dedicate one whole day only for women. This was not realizable in the end, though (cf. Conferentie Bulletin no. 1, UoA, 1).

182 Booklet "10th International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews 2 – 5 July 1987, Amsterdam," 10 – 15.

183 Daphne Meijer, "Internationale Conferentie joodse homoseksuelen. Solidariteit overbrugde verschillen in cultuur [International conference Jewish homosexuals. Solidarity bypassed cultural differences]," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 122, no. 40 (July 10, 1987): 9.

184 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, February 1988, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 1.

> rabbi, wow, I never imagined this was a possibility. […] I witnessed the impossible happening right there in the middle of my town.[185]

Additionally, participant Arthur Leonard recalled: "Perhaps the greatest impact of the conference was not […] the workshops, but rather the experience of the conferees participating as part of a larger community transcending national boundaries and interests, experiencing firsthand the differences in culture and thinking, and developing international contacts for the future."[186]

The women from Sjalhomo were particularly content with the outcome. The WCGLJO encouraged the participation of women at every level of the conference. Men and women worked closely together, while there were still women-only workshops that created safe spaces and room for female involvement.[187] Another success was through the already established connections with LJG, and especially JMW, which had become strengthened since representatives of both organizations participated. The NIK refused to be present in any way.[188] However, both the national and international press[189] covered the conference, thus making the conference, its concept, and Sjalhomo known to a wider audience.

It was the first time a WCGLJO conference was organized in Europe, making it "truly international."[190] Previously, the conferences had been held in the United States, and once in Israel. Thus, the European groups were present at these with only a small number of representatives, due to the distance and costs. The American members of the WCGLJO comprised the majority within the congress and did not know about the needs and culture of their European counterparts. The Amsterdam conference contributed to the Americans' solidarity with Europe. The Amer-

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185 Wanya F. Kruyer Bloemgarten, "The Netherlands: Bringing Jewishness into The Gay Capital," in The World Congress, *Kol Koleinu*, 59.

186 Reprint of Arthur S. Leonard's Article "A Meeting of Hearts of Minds. A Report on the Tenth International Gay Jewish Conference in Amsterdam" in New York Native of July 27, 1987, Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, August 1987, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 4.

187 Cf. Zimmerman, "Gay Jews Meet in Amsterdam," 124.

188 Cf. Meijer, "Internationale Conferentie," 9.

189 Besides the NIW, articles about the conference can be found in Dutch newspapers like *Het Parool* (cf. no author, "Conferentie van joodse homo's [Conference of Jewish homosexuals]," *Het Parool* 47, no. 12990 [July 3, 1987]: 5) or *De Waarheid* (cf. Marja Vuijsje, "'Joods zijn is meer.' Joodse homo's confereerden in Amsterdam ['Being Jewish is more.' Jewish homosexuals confered in Amsterdam]," *De Waarheid* 47, no. 176 [July 6, 1987]: 6) or in US-American newspapers like *The Advocate* (cf. Zimmerman, "Gay Jews Meet in Amsterdam," 31, 124) or *New York Native* (cf. UoA, Reprint "A Meeting of Hearts of Minds," 3–5).

190 Reprint "A Meeting of Hearts of Minds," UoA, 3.

icans were unaware of the second generation's trauma, and how much this had contributed to the European Jewish identity.[191] The conference was fundamental for the European groups. It was a starting point for more exchange between them, and greater awareness of each other (e. g., for the situation of Beit Haverim in Paris), and for a more structured collaboration which will be covered in more detail in the next chapter.[192]

It is worth noting how a relatively small group that only existed for a few years was able to organize such a massive event which had a national and international impact. It was only possible through the dedication of the organizing committee (which always had fewer than 15 members), and the board that did not back away from the obstacles that challenged them, like financial problems or disagreement about the program.[193] Against all this, the conference was enough of a success to be fondly remembered by former Sjalhomo members to this day.

7.2.3 Strengthening Cooperations

The conference had shown the increased and strengthened cooperation Sjalhomo was able to build with others. Successfully acquiring financial support showed that the group had established itself in Amsterdam. LJG and JMW appeared to be two reliable supporters of Sjalhomo – despite the backlash coming from the Orthodox Jewish community which still comprised the majority within Dutch Jewry.

Sjalhomo continued to organize its own events with outreach as a factor: the annual Rosh HaShana reception developed into the most important event for this outreach. It was publicized in several newspapers, and key figures from the political world, liberal Jewish institutions, and the queer community were regularly invited.[194] The group continued to participate in national demonstrations (e. g., Roze Zaterdag) or memorial ceremonies (e. g., Yom HaShoah in the Hollandsche Schouwburg).

New allies were found in other Jewish organizations or groups that developed out of the same spirit of renewal: one was Sjoeche, the youth organization within Dutch Jewry which organized social and cultural events for young people,[195] another was Blanes, a group for those who wanted to come closer to Jewish tradition,

191 Cf. Meijer, "Internationale Conferentie," 9.
192 Cf. report of the development worker Eastern Hemisphere, LGBT CCNHA, 1.
193 Cf. reprint "A Meeting of Hearts of Minds," UoA, 3.
194 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, November 1990, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 7.
195 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, February 1988, UoA, 1 – 2.

but did not want to do that in a religious or political setting.[196] Both were open for homosexuals to join, and demonstrated the need for social change in Judaism.[197]

Sjalhomo also gained new partners from within the queer community. Apart from the involvement in the Stichting Homo-monument, the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard was an important resource for the queer community and was supported by Sjalhomo members. Operating as a 24/7 telephone line, the volunteers from the Switchboard were available for queer people to talk about their coming out, mental challenges, or any other problem.[198] Sjalhomo even helped the Switchboard when it faced financial problems.[199] Overall, the group became more aware of the queer community, promoted events more often, and stood firmly with members of the community. Whenever it fit, Sjalhomo tried to participate and to provide a unique input from the Jewish perspective. For example, the *stichting* organized a whole week of activities during the 1994 Europride which was hosted by the city of Amsterdam. Besides a "Jewish-style" party with Klezmer music, they organized a huge Shabbat meal for the international guests.[200] For Europride, Sjalhomo convinced the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam to present a photo exhibition about the group. Most notably, Jenny Wesly, an active Sjalhomo member and photographer, recorded different social gatherings and festivities in her photographs. This was seen as a success, because, for the first time, a Jewish museum addressed queer Jewish lives.[201]

In line with the raising of sensibility for the queer community as a whole, the magazine *Oi!* published an agenda every month listing not only Sjalhomo's activities, but events from the queer community in general. Additionally, it featured a directory with important addresses and telephone numbers for those who wanted to get in touch with the community. The same applied to Jewish contacts and

196 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, January 1987, UoA, 2.

197 For example, cf. Nieuwsbrief, July/August 1990, UoA, 3–5.

198 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, January 1988, UoA, 2.

199 Cf. Redactie, "Gay and Lesbian Switchboard in de problemen [Gay and Lesbian Switchboard with problems]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 1, no. 3 (1991): 7.

200 Cf. Redactie: "Agenda," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 4, no. 1 (1994): 8.

201 Cf. Rinet van Meel, "Sjalhomo: 15 jr! Openingsrede [Sjalhomo: 15 years! Opening address]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 3, no. 6 (1994): 3. The pieces of the exhibition can still be accessed online on the website of the Joods Cultureel Kwartier (https://data.jck.nl/search/?qf%5B%5D=nave_collectionPart%3AMuseumcollectie&q=sjalhomo&page=1, accessed May 5, 2023). There was also a TV documentary about Sjalhomo, initiated by the exhibition (cf. *Lopende Zaken*, "De wet en de liefde [The law and the love]," created by Marlon van Berge, aired on VPRO, 1995).

events – although the editors were careful to collect and present only those in which queer Jews were welcomed (e. g., Sjoeche, Blanes, JMW or LJG in Amsterdam).

In 1992, the Ministry for Welfare, Health and Culture decided that, due to budget cutbacks, smaller groups receiving a subsidy had to affiliate with a parent organization in order to receive money in the future. Initially, it was decided that Sjalhomo should join a cluster of homosexual groups in the Netherlands. However, despite the increasing outreach to the Dutch queer community, the group wanted to maintain its Jewish character and did not want to merge into a conglomerate of homosexual organizations.[202] Therefore, Sjalhomo asked JMW to join them for the purpose of ensuring stable funding. After years of nonfinancial assistance from JMW, this was the most logical step. Sjalhomo stressed that they did not intend to receive any other financial support from JMW, but for the subsidies awarded by the government for the emancipation of Jewish homosexuals.[203]

The board of JMW consisted of representatives from various Jewish organizations in the Netherlands. Thus, the proceedings to admit Sjalhomo into JMW were heated and reflected the already established lines of supporters and opponents. The NIK representatives requested a *responsum* on this issue from the rabbinate of the Amsterdam Jewish community. It concluded:

> The objectives of the Stichting Sjalhomo are in conflict with the basic principles of the Jewish religious service. It is, therefore, also against these principles to provide direct or indirect support to the aforementioned *stichting.* For the avoidance of misconceptions, it should be noted that the above guidance has nothing to do with the principle of spiritual, pastoral, or social assistance which every Jew, whatever his nature may be, may claim when he approaches the rabbinate for it.[204]

On basis of this ruling, the NIK board advised their representatives in JMW to vote against the admission of Sjalhomo. Some of them did not acknowledge the tone of this "advice" which could have been understood as a demand to vote a certain way.

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202 Cf. Mark Turksma, "Bestuurlijk [Administratives]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 2, no. 4 (1992): 9.

203 Cf. Loeki Abram, "JMW laat Sjalhomo met roze stembriefjes toe tot stichting [JMW allows Sjalhomo to the foundation with pink ballots]," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 128, no. 10 (November 27, 1992): 3.

204 "De doelstellingen van de Stichting Sjalhomo zijn in strijd met de basisprincipes van de joodse G'dsdienst. Het is dan ook strijdig met deze principes eerdergenoemde Stichting op welke wijze direkt of indirekt steun te verlenen. Ter voorkoming van misverstanden zij nog opgemerkt dat bovenstaande richtlijn niets te maken heeft met het principe van geestelijke, pastorale of sociale bijstand waar iedere jood, hoe zijn geaardheid ook moge zijn, aanspraak op kan maken wanneer hij zich daartoe tot het rabbinaat wendt." (Abram, "JMW laat Sjalhomo," 3. Author's translation.)

Contrary to the views of the NIK, JMW executives claimed that every Jewish organization seeking support for social care would be able to join their institution. The NIK representatives rejected the application of these objectives to Sjalhomo, and did not consider that they were seeking assistance to do social good. This was strongly opposed by others on the JMW board. E. Y. Spier put on record: "I respect the moral dilemma of the NIK members, but I do not respect the people who would vote against [the admission] because Sjalhomo would not provide social care."[205] And H. H. Themans said: "If Sjalhomo were to say, 'We propagate homophilia,' but they do not. They want recognition."[206]

Another concern of the NIK was that *halakhic* non-Jews that were members of Sjalhomo could gain influence on the JMW board. This concern was invalidated through the fact that Sjalhomo would only become a JMW member and would, therefore, not be represented on the board. Indeed, the NIK expressed its concerns quite loudly,[207] but a majority of JMW eventually supported Sjalhomo as they had done for such a long time on an informal level. In the end, 24 board members voted in favor of the admission, seven against, and two abstained.[208] Consequently, Sjalhomo was able to receive money from the government from January 1, 1993 onwards. However, their subsidy was cut by 25 % and the group successfully applied for additional funding from the municipality of Amsterdam.[209]

This shows how well-established Sjalhomo was among its partners. The debate about Sjalhomo joining JMW with the arguments for and against may be reminiscent of the application process of Beth Chayim Chadashim (BCC) as the world's first gay and lesbian synagogue into Reform Judaism twenty years earlier.[210] However, Sjalhomo knew that it could not convince the Orthodoxy and change its position; as

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205 "Ik eerbiedig de gewetensnood van de leden van het NIK, maar ik eerbiedig niet de mensen die tegen zouden stemmen omdat Sjalhomo geen sociale zorg zou bieden." (Abram, "JMW laat Sjalhomo," 3. Author's translation.)

206 "Als Sjalhomo nu zou zeggen 'wij propageren homofilie', maar dat doen ze niet. Ze willen erkenning." (Abram, "JMW laat Sjalhomo," 3. Author's translation.)

207 Some time after Sjalhomo's admission to JMW, another debate developed in the NIW. It concentrated on the idea of a "homo-gene" which could result in somewhat of a "cure" for homosexuality. Dutch Orthodox rabbis did not distance themselves enough from the statements of UK Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits who proposed to manipulate the "homo-gene" if it existed or, at least, to conduct therapy for homosexuals. This caused a debate among NIW readers in which Sjalhomo and its members also interfered (cf. *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 3, no. 2, 1993, 6–9).

208 Cf. Abram, "JMW laat Sjalhomo," 3.

209 Cf. Rinet van Meel, "Van het bestuur. Rosj HaSjanah 5754. Droosje. [From the board. Rosh HaShana 5754. Drasha.]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 3, no. 3 (1993): 4.

210 Cf. Wilkens, *"Jewish, Gay and Proud,"* 55–85.

Xandi Buys put it: "We can rant quite powerfully against this group [i. e., Orthodoxy], but it hardly makes any sense."[211] Even though Sjalhomo members knew about the pain members had to experience in Orthodox congregations, they also knew about the progress they had made: they had created a safe space for queer Jews outside of the traditional institutions and gotten support from the government, the Liberal branch of Judaism (even if they were still reluctant to openly embrace homosexuality), JMW, and the local queer community.

7.2.4 Israel

As well as the focus on the internal structure and finding (potential) allies, the State of Israel became another concern for Sjalhomo very early on, and was a crucial part of Sjalhomo's understanding as a Jewish organization in the Netherlands.

At first, individual members travelled to Israel and reported about their experiences, particularly with the local queer community.[212] During Sjalhomo's heyday, interest in Israel increased significantly. Sjalhomo started attending the annual festivities in the Netherlands for the Israeli Independence Day with their own information booth,[213] and the members requested more information about what was going on in the Middle East.[214] The political situation and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were matters that the group was concerned about. Developments in the region were carefully observed and mostly commented on in favor of a peaceful solution, representing all sides equally,[215] but always with a clear stance supporting Israel's existence.[216] As for many others worldwide, the developments in the early 1990s raised hope for a two-state solution.

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211 Harald Roelofs, "Xandi Buys, pennigmeester Sjalhomo: 'Ik ben eerst joods en dan pas homo' [Xandi Buys, treasurer of Sjalhomo: 'I am Jewish first and then homosexual']," *Gay Krant*, no. 190 (November 2, 1991): 13.

212 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 4, UoA, 17–18.

213 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, March 1986, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 3.

214 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, July/August 1985, UoA, 5.

215 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, February 1988, UoA, 2–3. In regard to the 1991 Gulf War, cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, March/April 1991, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 4–7. During the First Intifada, cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, October 1988, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 2–3.

216 For example, Sjalhomo asked for donations for the New Israel Fund since it funded projects with similar objectives: emancipation of women, strengthening of individual and civil rights, Jewish-Arab collaboration, and anti-racism (cf. Nieuwsbrief, December 1987, UoA, 2).

More significantly, Sjalhomo was interested in the situation of queer people in Israel. The Society for the Protection of Personal Rights (SPPR), founded in 1975, worked closely with Sjalhomo and developed a close relationship with its Dutch counterpart. The SPPR regularly reported about its situation to Sjalhomo's members.[217] One important aspect of SPPR's work and Sjalhomo's interest was the stance of the Israeli rabbinate: not only did they denounce homosexual activities, they had a vision of Jewish women that conflicted with the feminist agenda of both groups.[218] Sjalhomo, therefore, supported Israelis who "fled" from the country due to legal restrictions until 1988.[219] These people were invited to share their experiences with Sjalhomo.[220] The SPPR, which also worked with the WCJGLO, remained the point of reference for both Sjalhomo's board and members in their connection to (queer) life in Israel.[221]

In April 1988, the board got in touch with the Israeli AIDS Task Force (IATF), which supported HIV positive people both socially and financially, and conducted educational work. The situation for AIDS patients in Israel was significantly different than in the Netherlands: the atmosphere was much more anti-queer, and the Israeli public regarded AIDS as an illness that exclusively affected homosexuals. Almost no money was invested in preventative campaigns or HIV/AIDS education, not by the government nor by media outlets. The IATF, therefore, was dependent on private donations.[222] That is why Sjalhomo felt responsible for taking care of their Israeli friends. They started a year-long donation campaign among its members for a lecture series which the IATF wanted to start in 1989. The members were able to donate 1,045 guilders.[223]

As a distinctively Jewish organization, Sjalhomo was concerned about what happened in Israel, in a similar manner to Beit Haverim's concerns at the begin-

217 Especially from September 1986 on, there are notably more pieces about the SPPR and their work in Sjalhomo's newsletter.

218 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, October 1986, UoA, 2–3; Nieuwsbrief, January 1987, UoA, 3; Nieuwsbrief, December 1987, UoA, 4; Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, January 1989, "Oi/Sjalhomo Amsterdam 1982–," IHLIA, 1.

219 The Knesset revoked Article 351 that penalized sexual relations between two men in April 1988.

220 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, August 1987, UoA, 1.

221 Cf. Erwin Brugmans, "De homo/lesbische beweging in Israël [The homosexual/lesbian movement in Israel]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 2, no. 3 (1992): 9–10.

222 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, May 1988, UoA, 1–2.

223 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, May 1989, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 3.

ning of the 1980s.[224] Probably unsurprisingly, the situation of queer Jews was the major point of interest in dealing with Israel, whether by providing advice for members (e. g., where to go out while visiting the country) or politically. With the SPPR and the IATF, Sjalhomo found long-lasting partners with whom links strengthened while working in the international framework of the WCGLJO.

7.2.5 The HIV/AIDS Epidemic I

The first cases of HIV/AIDS were identified in the Netherlands, as in the United States and other regions in the world, in 1981. Even though death tolls rose rapidly, the epidemic was less severe in the Netherlands than in other countries.[225] This did not change the fact that the queer community was highly concerned about the virus and its impact.

As part of the queer community, Sjalhomo and its members were affected by the epidemic. That said, during their heyday, the group did not develop its own action program. It mostly relied on what the Dutch queer community had to offer, and directed members to their activities and offers of help. The first time that Sjalhomo officially raised awareness for the topic was in 1985, when the board called out for Chanukah donations on behalf of the Schorerstichting, an organization promoting the mental and physical health of homosexuals.[226] After that, the board decided to call for donations to the IATF. With the number of cases rising in Amsterdam, an HIV alliance was founded in the city, offering medical advice to both infected and interested people. Sjalhomo publicized the alliance and recommended that their members take part in events to become educated about new developments in research or take part in medical trials.[227] Another feature was the regular advertisement of a sketch (a bee entering a flower blossom) with the slogan "Fuck safe, stop AIDS" (*vrij veilig, stop AIDS*)[228] in the newsletters – as an ongoing reminder to stay safe during sexual encounters.

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224 Cf. Section 6.1.4.

225 Cf. Parry and Schalkwijk, "Lost Objects and Missing Histories," 114.

226 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, December 1985, UoA, 3.

227 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, March 1989, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 3, and Nieuwsbrief, June 1989, UoA, 5.

228 This sketch was originally published by the Dutch Foundation for the Fight Against STD's (Nederlandse Stichting tot Bestrijding der Geslachtsziekten) within the framework of national campaigns against sexually transmitted diseases. It was used in various newsletters of different organizations at that time to raise awareness of safe-sex practices.

The first time the group organized a gathering about the subject was in mid-1989. Member Xandi Buys and Harry Wishaupt observed rising confusion among Sjalhomo members about what HIV/AIDS means, about the risk of infection, and how to protect yourself: "Through the overwhelming number of articles [about HIV/AIDS], you sometimes miss the forest for the trees."[229] Consequently, they invited an expert from the Schorerstichting into Harry's private home to create a safe space for questions, concerns, and exchange of experiences.[230]

Meanwhile, during the 1980s, the vast majority of Dutch Jewish institutions were not aware of the problems arising through the epidemic. They thought that HIV/AIDS did not concern them since there were "almost no Jews" among the infected patients, and homosexuals were not a concern for them anyway. Many did not see that Jewish institutions were obliged to give out information about safe sex or sexuality at all. Patients were better off seeking help from other institutions, outside the Jewish community.[231] With the words of Wishaupt: "For the rabbinate, the AIDS problem does not exist."[232]

LJG showed itself to be more open to the possibility of caring for AIDS patients who should be treated like any other people who were ill.[233] LJG in Amsterdam even organized lectures on the subject.[234] However, JMW seemed to be the only place that prepared for increasing infection rates among the Jewish community. Harry Wishaupt was the coordinator on these matters and used the expertise of the Schorerstichting to educate all social workers at JMW about the disease and the needs of affected patients. JMW used the infrastructure of the Joods Geestelijk Gezondheidszorg (Jewish Mental Health Service) when AIDS patients needed psychological council.[235]

With regard to these developments, Sjalhomo member Erwin Brugmans wrote an indignant piece for the newsletter. In his view, it was a shame that JMW was the only place where Jewish AIDS patients could find help within the Jewish community: "But in my opinion the Jewish community does not only consist of JMW but of

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229 "Door het overstelpend aantal artikelen zie je soms door de boomen het bos niet meer." (Nieuwsbrief, May 1989, UoA, 3. Author's translation.)

230 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, May 1989, UoA, 3.

231 Cf. Daphne Meijer, "Joodse instellingen zwijgen over opvang aidspatiënten [Jewish institutions are silent about the reception of AIDS patients]," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 122, no. 39 (July 3, 1987): 9.

232 Carine Cassuto, "Sjalhomo neemt voortouw bij emancipatie in Europa [Sjalhomo takes the lead in emancipation in Europe]," *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* 125, no. 33 (May 4, 1990): 3.

233 Cf. Meijer, "Joodse instellingen zwijgen," 9.

234 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, March 1988, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 3.

235 Cf. Meijer, "Joodse instellingen zwijgen," 9.

30,000 Jews living in the Netherlands [...]. The rabbinates (Orthodox and Liberal) also have to deal with it like *levaye* (funeral) or religious assistance to the concerned parties and the family."[236] Brugmans also criticized Sjalhomo for not doing enough, arguing that a lack of knowledge about HIV/AIDS did not justify passivity.[237] This statement was probably triggered by the death of Jehuda Sofer, the first active Sjalhomo member to contract HIV and to lose his life.[238] Brugmans demanded that four actions should be taken for all Jewish organizations: 1.) A lecture series/education for Jews of all ages, 2.) The preparation for caretakership of HIV positive Jews and AIDS patients, 3.) The development of religious and social support, 4.) Collaboration with non-Jewish relief agencies to increase knowledge about the disease.[239]

The only one who publicly replied to Brugmans was Harry Wishaupt. He could only speculate about the reasons why HIV/AIDS was not a bigger issue for Sjalhomo members: ignorance, insecurities, and/or fear. According to his experience, those social groups in which homosexuality was a taboo had a higher chance of getting infected with the disease. That is why Wishaupt considered Sjalhomo an important agent in educating the Jewish community, even though the official numbers of Jewish AIDS patients were still low in comparison to the general population. Wishaupt suggested that by installing a buddy project, Sjalhomo would be make headway with the queer Jewish community.[240]

Despite this debate having begun, Wishaupt's impulses seemed to fade away over time. The impression is that Sjalhomo was frustrated about the ignorance of the Jewish community.[241] As a social group, they did not have the resources to provide religious guidance for HIV/AIDS patients. In spite of this, the number of Jews infected with the disease was still relatively low, and uncertainty about what to do held back concrete efforts to tackle the spread of the disease. Thus, the group decided to refer members to experienced organizations within the

236 "Doch de Joodse gemeenschap bestaat m.i. niet alleen uit JMW maar uit 30,000 in Nederland [...] woonachtige Joden. Ook de Rabbinaten (orthodox en liberaal) hebben er mee te maken zoals lawaje (begrafenis) en religieuze bijstand aan de betrokkenen en de familie." (Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, December 1990, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana [Ros V.V.1407], UoA, 7. Author's translation.)

237 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, December 1990, 7.

238 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, December 1990, 3.

239 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, December 1990, 7.

240 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, March/April 1991, UoA, 5 – 6.

241 Cf. Erwin Brugmans, "AIDS ziekte roept vragen op bij halachische experts. N.a.v. een artikel uit NIW van 14 juni van Rabbijn mr. drs. R. Evers [AIDS disease raises questions among halachic experts. Relating to an article in NIW of 14 June by Rabbi Mr. Dr. R. Evers]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 1, no. 4 (1991/2): 5.

queer community. They added a section about contact information and events about HIV/AIDS to the agenda in the newsletter.[242] This included the number of the *HIV-plus lijn*, a hotline for HIV positive people or their relatives and friends seeking support.[243] Individual members decided to work closer with HIV/AIDS patients and told other members about it, for example, as a buddy for ill (non-Jewish) people, matched by the Schorerstichting.[244] However, Sjalhomo's interaction with the disease would change only a few years later – influenced by the death of a former board member.

7.2.6 Problems within: Lack of Commitment among Members

After the founding period and the first excitement about Sjalhomo's existence, the board noticed that it was hard to get members for the long term since fluctuation in membership was high. That was linked to the structure of the *stichting:* the only official and responsible body was the board. Becoming a member did not bring any obligations with it. You were counted as a member when attending some events or expressing an interest in becoming one. Instead of membership dues, the board asked the members to pay for the postage for the newsletter, although they were unable to enforce this. This frequently meant that the board asked for these "dues," but members simply did not to pay them.[245]

Occasionally, there were fewer members attending events than anticipated.[246] The two biggest debacles were the Purim celebrations of 1987 and 1988. Both times, only a few people showed up despite the group renting large venues at central locations in Amsterdam.[247] The board invested time and money in these events and concluded that Dutch Jews may be too "stiff" to put on costumes or saw Purim as just a party for children.[248] As a result, they cancelled Purim celebrations in subsequent years. Only in 1993, after thorough consideration, did the group host an-

242 Cf. Redactie, "Agenda," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 3, no. 5 (1994): 3.

243 Cf. Redactie, "Agenda en Adressen," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 4, no. 2 (1994): 3.

244 Cf. Vic Jacobs, "Buddy life," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 3, no. 4 (1994): 8.

245 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, November 1986, UoA, 2, and Nieuwsbrief, March 1988, UoA, 1.

246 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, September 1986, UoA, 4.

247 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, March 1987, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 1, and Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, April 1988, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros V.V.1407), UoA, 2.

248 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, March 1989, UoA, 3.

other Purim party which had an international character, this time with guests attending from various European countries.[249]

Other events and activities were much better attended. Still, the board and the editorial team of the newsletter sometimes received criticism or saw indifference from members – it was unclear what the members expected from Sjalhomo.[250] Consequently, the board initiated a survey via phone to newsletter recipients in May 1988.[251] The results showed that the group's activities were overall well-received, although new members did not feel welcome when they participated for the first time since they knew nobody. Additionally, the image of Sjalhomo as a male-dominated and, surprisingly, religious group persisted.[252] In contrast, the newsletter was evaluated as a very important voice that broadened the readers' horizons about the queer Jewish community. Some respondents, however, wished the newsletter would be more critical and feature fewer international pieces. This was incorporated when updating the newsletter into *Oi!.* Another, more sobering, outcome was the recognition that the majority of the respondents did not wish to organize or to help during events.[253]

The survey also highlighted that the members liked celebrating Jewish holidays in a "homosexual style." Those gatherings that offered more than just a convivial evening (like lectures, film screenings, etc.) were regarded positively. The monthly gatherings in a restaurant/bar, however, were not much appreciated.[254] This was reflected in the years to come when those gatherings were poorly attended, particularly by women.[255] Other events were still well-attended, even though Sjalhomo felt that they were in competition with other groups that organized sim-

249 Cf. Erwin Brugmans, "Purim 5753/1993," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 3, no. 1 (1993): 8.

250 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, February 1988, UoA, 2.

251 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, May 1988, UoA, 2.

252 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, October 1988, UoA, 2.

253 Cf. Nieuwsbrief voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen, October 1989, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Ros VV.1407), UoA, 4.

254 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, October 1989, UoA, 4.

255 Cf. Peter Spijkers, "Sjalhomo en andere activiteiten [Sjalhomo and other activities]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 1, no. 6 (1992): 7; Erwin Brugmans, "La Strada. Elke 4e zondag [La Strada. Every 4th Sunday]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 2, no. 6 (1993): 9, and Bestuur Sjalhomo, "Sjalhomo – Nieuws. Over gemeiste kansen en andere joodse sores [Sjalhomo News. About missed opportunities and other Jewish sorrows]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 4, no. 3 (1995): 3.

ilar events (like during Passover when many Jewish groups were now organizing Seders for their members).[256]

All these problems were manageable and were to be expected when working with volunteers. Only within the last years of Sjalhomo's existence did the indifference of its members become an existential threat. In its heyday, however, these hiccups did not stop Sjalhomo from establishing itself as *the* representative of queer Dutch Jewry.

7.3 Sjalhomo Comes to an End (1995 – 2002)

From the mid-1990s on, a noticeable change occurred: First, with Beit Ha'Chidush (House of Renewal), a new place for queer Jews was established, but this time structured as a religious congregation. Its existence alone did not challenge Sjalhomo, even though they were, to some extent, competitors. In addition, the HIV/AIDS epidemic hit the group with the death of one of the most important board members. The lack of interest and involvement of group members in leading the group and organizing activities created frustration within the board(s), and growing conflicts eventually led to the dissolution of Sjalhomo.

7.3.1 A New Player in Town: Beit Ha'Chidush

Queer Jewish life in Amsterdam underwent a major change in 1995 when a new congregation with the name Beit Ha'Chidush (BHC) was founded. Sjalhomo served as its birthplace. During the Rosh HaShana reception of the same year, three attendees started a conversation about Jewish life in the Netherlands: Wanya F. Kruyer,[257] who visited Sjalhomo many times after the international conference in 1987, François Spirot, originally from France and raised in a traditional family, and Ken Gould who moved to Amsterdam for his music career and was a former member of BCC in Los Angeles. They spoke about their experience that, as queer Jews, they could not find a proper place for Jewish spirituality in the Netherlands.[258] Sjalhomo may have created a space for Jewish queers, but they found that nothing much

256 Cf. Peter Spijkers, "Seideravond 5752. Ma nisjtana? [Seder evening 5752. Ma nishtana?]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 2, no. 1 (1992): 10.

257 Kruyer changed their name and is now known as Wanda F. Bloemgarten.

258 Cf. Wanya F. Kruyer, "BCC's Little Sibling in Europe," *G'vanim (Beth Chayim Chadashim Newsletter)* 15, no. 5 (November 1991): 1.

had changed within the mainstream congregations.[259] They sought a place of worship in which equality and queer identities were embraced. Gould reported about his involvement in BCC, and Kruyer about her encounters with American queer synagogues during the WCJGLO conferences and a short stay at Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco.[260] They decided to create such a space, similar to the ones in the United States, and on December 1, 1995, the first service of the "pink *shul*" took place in Spirot's living room.[261] The service was led by Sauci Bosner, longtime member of Sjalhomo and, being born in the United States, experienced in the "American style" of worship. A day later, Kruyer told their other companions that a solely "pink *shul*" would not fit into Dutch Jewry and would not be successful in the long term.[262] The general idea was to include Jews who did not feel welcomed in the Dutch Jewish mainstream. This included not only queer Jews but also women or patrilineal Jews. An egalitarian structure, services, and liturgy should be fundamental prerequisites.[263] Neither gender, sexual orientation, nor the position of one's journey in Judaism should be an issue joining the congregation.[264]

However, the congregation became a "queer-friendly synagogue." Thereby, the new congregation had strong similarities with Beit Klal Yisrael (BKY) in the UK. Inspired by the Jewish Renewal movement, the three founders chose an appropriate name – "House of Renewal" – for this new project.[265] Because of this orientation towards the United States, non-Dutch Jews in particular who were living in the Netherlands, were attracted to the services which were held in Dutch, English, and Hebrew.

The services, initially only held once a month, were informal.[266] There was a mix of traditional elements, like the waiver of using electricity (at least during the

259 Cf. Kwantes, "Natuurlijk, ik ben joods," 149.

260 Cf. Kruyer, "BCC's Little Sibling," 1.

261 Since 1997, BHC has been using the Uilenburger Synagogue that was built in 1766 for Ashkenazi Jews in the former Jewish quarter of Amsterdam.

262 Cf. Wanda F. Bloemgarten, "Zoektocht naar De Naam [Quest for The Name]," De Vrijdagavond, April 15, 2021, https://devrijdagavond.com/2021/04/15/nieuws/25-jaar-joodse-vernieuwing/zoektocht-naar-de-naam/, accessed July 26, 2021.

263 Cf. Kerkredactie, "Virtuele rabbijn voor Amsterdams sjoeltje [Virtual rabbi for Amsterdam's small shul]," Trouw, March 1, 1996, https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/virtuele-rabbijn-voor-amsterdams-sjoeltje~bb367cb5/, accessed January 6, 2022.

264 Renée Citroen, "Beit Ha'Chidush: een gemeente voor joden met tenminste één joodse ouder [Beit Ha'Chidush: a community for Jews with at least one Jewish parent]," April 9, 2006, https://www.levisson.nl/images/stories/VaderJoden/Citroen_Beit_Ha%27Chidush.pdf, accessed January 6, 2022.

265 Cf. Bloemgarten, "Zoektocht naar De Naam."

266 Cf. Citroen, "Beit Ha'Chidush."

services), and more progressive ones, like keeping food kosher style and a less traditional *oneg* celebration.[267] BHC was a "do-*shul*," the services were mostly self-led and there was no difference between the members who led the service and those attending.[268] It was important to provide space for experimentation.[269] Lisa Edwards, rabbi of BCC at that time, became the "virtual rabbi" of the congregation. She helped her siblings in Amsterdam by faxing the *drasha* which she had worked out for her Friday night services in Los Angeles.[270] Later, since the Dutch Jewish community was not willing to contribute, BHC regularly invited interested and supportive rabbis from abroad to host services. This became known as the "flying rabbi's program."[271] Only in 2005 did the congregation decide to hire its first rabbi with Elisa Klapheck, the Netherland's first female rabbi.

In its first years, BHC received severe backlash from the Jewish establishment. Rejection from the Orthodox environment was not surprising as BHC's values were contrary to those of the NIK's and PIK's traditionalist approaches. Orthodox Jews even made comparisons with evangelical churches in order to discredit BHC.[272] Not even LJG welcomed the new congregation immediately. Being more traditionalist compared to their US-American counterpart, they were critical of the fact that attendees did not have to learn Hebrew for the services[273] and that BHC rejected the "Dutch-Jewish *minhag*" that had been used for centuries.[274] BHC remained outside of the Dutch Orthodox-Liberal dichotomy as the first congregation to do so

267 Cf. Wanda F. Bloemgarten, "Frum of Vrij of Allebei, navigeren door de religieuze tijdgeest [Frum or free or both, navigating through the religious zeitgeist]," De Vrijdagavond, April 29, 2021, https://devrijdagavond.com/2021/04/29/nieuws/25-jaar-joodse-vernieuwing/frum-of-vrij-of-allebei-navigeren-door-de-religieuze-tijdgeest/, accessed July 26, 2021.

268 Cf. Kerkredactie, "Virtuele rabbijn voor Amsterdams sjoeltje."

269 Cf. Wanda F. Bloemgarten, "Taal, theologie, en de 'roaring nineties' [Language, theology, and the 'roaring nineties']," De Vrijdagavond, June 3, 2021, https://devrijdagavond.com/2021/06/03/nieuws/25-jaar-joodse-vernieuwing/taal-theologie-en-de-roaring-ninties/, accessed July 26, 2021.

270 Cf. Kerkredactie, "Virtuele rabbijn voor Amsterdams sjoeltje."

271 Cf. Wanda F. Bloemgarten, "Flying Rabbi's, vleugels voor een jonge club [Flying rabbis, wings for a young club]," De Vrijdagavond, October 20, 2021, https://devrijdagavond.com/2021/10/20/nieuws/25-jaar-joodse-vernieuwing/flying-rabbis-van-vught-tot-los-angelos-hoe-een-jonge-club-haar-vleugels-uitslaat/, accessed January 6, 2022.

272 Cf. Wanda F. Bloemgarten, "Frum of Vrij of Allebei."

273 Cf. Wanda F. Bloemgarten, "Sidoer vervlecht traditie met het moderne Westen [Sidoer interweaves tradition with the modern West]," De Vrijdagavond, March 11, 2021. https://devrijdagavond.com/2021/03/11/nieuws/25-jaar-joodse-vernieuwing/sidoer-die-traditie-vervlecht-met-het-moderne-westen/, accessed July 26, 2021.

274 Cf. Wanda F. Bloemgarten, "Frum of Vrij of Allebei."

after World War II.[275] Henceforth, the congregation located itself between American Reconstructionism, Jewish Renewal, Liberal Judaism in the United Kingdom, and it took time to develop stronger connections with Dutch Liberal Judaism.[276]

For Sjalhomo, the newly founded BHC had different, sometimes divergent implications. Clearly, BHC established itself on the foundations Sjalhomo had built. There were members who joined the congregation as an addition to their religious life.[277] Among them was Sauci Bosner, a central figure in the group, especially for its women. She became BHC's "rabbi"[278] for the first meetings.[279] Sjalhomo's approach was to be social and not religious, therefore, one could conclude that BHC served another niche.

However, other Sjalhomo members publicly expressed their concerns about this new place.[280] Gertrude Mandelbaum expressed her discomfort about the new congregation in the group's newsletter. She had not received a Jewish education and felt lost in the services; she felt that BHC required too much knowledge about Judaism. As a Holocaust survivor, she had profound reservations towards God and religious institutions (e. g., questions of theodicy). With her concerns in mind, she addressed BHC's founders directly, but no one could reply since nobody could relate to her concerns. For Mandelbaum, the congregation was too pretentious to make potential members feel welcomed.[281] Dror Cohen Rapoport went so far as to say that the congregation was not about community. He opined that the *neshome*, the Jewish spirit, was missing. Fluctuation in attendance was already high during the initial meetings. He complained that BHC did not serve a warm, familiar feeling, and addressed too broad of a group. Above and beyond these concerns, the style of worship bothered Cohen Rapoport: too much English, English

275 Cf. Wanda F. Bloemgarten, "Virtuele Rabbijn of Poeriemgrap? [Virtual rabbi or Purim joke?]," De Vrijdagavond, February 25, 2021, https://devrijdagavond.com/2021/02/25/nieuws/25-jaar-joodse-vernieuwing/virtuele-rabbijn-of-poeriemgrap/, accessed July 26, 2021.

276 Cf. Citroen, "Beit Ha'Chidush."

277 Cf. Bestuur Sjalhomo, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 6, no. 2 (1996): 4.

278 I took this term from Bosner themself as they explained their involvement in BHC during a conversation on July 19, 2021, in their private home in Amsterdam.

279 Cf. Wanda F. Bloemgarten, "Is een rabbijn nodig voor 'de preek van de week'? [Is a rabbi needed for the "sermon of the week?"]," De Vrijdagavond, March 18, 2021, https://devrijdagavond.com/2021/03/18/nieuws/25-jaar-joodse-vernieuwing/is-een-rabbijn-nodig-voor-de-preek-van-de-week/, accessed July 26, 2021.

280 During a conversation with Wanda F. Bloemgarten on July 17, 2021, at "Kat in de Wijngaert" (Amsterdam), Bloemgarten reported about the backlash she received from Sjalhomo members. These were expressed sometimes during and mostly after BHC services.

281 Cf. Gertrude Mandelbaum, "Beith Ha Chidush. Een reactie. [Beit Ha'Chidush. A reaction.]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 5, no. 4 (1996): 5.

pronunciation of Hebrew parts, and too much influence from the New Age Movement.[282] He compared the style with an American Baptist congregation and concluded: "No, I would rather have a real Jewish church!"[283]

The board of Sjalhomo was more diplomatic. First, they generally welcomed initiatives to improve the situation of queer Jews. The organization would not intervene with a statement since this was not a project organized by Sjalhomo. They acknowledged that most of its members decided consciously to join a decisively secular group. Sjalhomo stayed neutral in dealing with religious questions and did not start debates about Orthodoxy or Jewish liberalism. The board was convinced that Sjalhomo had the advantage of being situated in the "Jewish cluster" through JMW, but was still very closely associated with the "homosexual cluster." A religious congregation would neither be able nor successful in situating itself in both worlds, especially not in the queer sphere that had profound reservations about religious institutions.[284] The board was aware that both Sjalhomo and BHC were "two very different groups."[285]

Nevertheless, both groups approached each other in the first two years. Sjalhomo did not see the point in offering the same or similar event twice.[286] So, BHC's events were published in Sjalhomo's *Oi!*,[287] and the two groups occasionally organized events together. One example was the joint Seder celebration at the Weesp Synagogue which is well-remembered as having a good atmosphere.[288] After that, cooperation was very limited – the members of the two groups mostly met at events or meetings of other institutions. We can only speculate on the reasons for this being the case, but it is likely that Sjalhomo had its own internal problems and/or the climate between both parties deteriorated.

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282 Cf. Dror Cohen Rapoport, "Nogmaals Beth Ha Chidush [Once again Beit Ha'Chidush]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 5, no. 5 (1996): 10.

283 "Nee, gee mij maar een echte jodenkerk!" (Cohen Rapoport, "Nogmaals Beth Ha Chidush," 10. Author's translation.)

284 Cf. Bestuur Sjalhomo, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 5, no. 4 (1996): 4.

285 Lo Woudstra, "The City of Brotherly Love. Wat deden Sjalhomo en Beth Ha Chidush samen in Philadelphia [The City of Brotherly Love. What did Sjalhomo and Beth Ha Chidush do together in Philadelphia]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 6, no. 1 (1996): 5.

286 Cf. Bestuur Sjalhomo, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi!* 6, no. 2, 4.

287 Cf. Redactie, "Agenda," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 6, no. 1 (1996): 3, and Redactie, "Korte mededelingen [Short notices]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 6, no. 2 (1996): 11.

288 Cf. Wanda F. Bloemgarten, "Weespersjoel heroverd en opnieuw ingewijd [Weesper Synagogue recaptured and rededicated]," De Vrijdagavond, June 06, 2021, https://devrijdagavond.com/2021/05/06/nieuws/25-jaar-joodse-vernieuwing/weespersjoel-heroverd-en-opnieuw-ingewijd/, accessed July 26, 2021.

Even though the relationship between Sjalhomo and BHC was constructive at first, BHC could be seen as an alternative to Sjalhomo, especially for Jews coming from abroad and searching for a place along the lines of the queer synagogues in the United States. With the growing success and establishment of BHC in the religious landscape of the Netherlands, one of Sjalhomo's goals became more or less obsolete: there was now a space for queer Jews within the Dutch religious world. Even if not within traditional institutions, Jews could now openly and proudly say within a congregation, within a traditional Jewish institution, that they were queer; they could also bring their partner, or, in time, celebrate a commitment ceremony.

7.3.2 The HIV/AIDS Epidemic II

As already mentioned, the more reserved approach in developing their own approach to the HIV/AIDS epidemic changed in 1995 when the longtime board member of Sjalhomo, Xandi Buys, died of the disease at the age of 36. Shortly before his death, he gave a lecture about HIV/AIDS in a Jewish school, something Harry Wishaupt had worked towards for several years.[289] Buys had never kept his condition a secret, but, his death came as a shock for Sjalhomo.[290] Until his death, Buys was active in the group and committed to its well-being, both financially and as a "peacemaker" when conflicts arose.[291] For him, the social, family-like aspect of the group became much more relevant after his infection with the virus.[292] Buys' last wish was to build up a fund which would support groups of queer Jews and individual Jewish AIDS patients in Europe (preferably in the Netherlands) and Israel. He knew from his work as Sjalhomo's treasurer how difficult financial stability for those ventures could be. Consequently, the Xandi Buys Fund was established immediately after his death. People were able to donate money

289 Cf. Marjon de Klijn and Hans Warmerdam, "Aidsvoorlichting op Maimonides. Interview met Xandi Buys [AIDS lecture at Maimonides lyceum. Interview with Xandi Buys]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 5, no. 1 (1995): 4.

290 Cf. Rinet van Meel, "Rede van Rinet van Meel bij de begrafenis van Xandi Buys [Speech of Rinet van Meel during Xandi Buys' funeral]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 5, no. 2 (1995): 11.

291 That is what Lo Woudstra called him during a conversation on July 22, 2021, in their private home (Amsterdam).

292 Cf. Hans Warmerdam, "Jom HaSjana Xandi Buys (1959 – 1995). Vrijheid vormgeven heeft in mijn leven een concrete betekenis [Yahrzeit Xandi Buys (1959 – 1995). Designing freedom has a concrete meaning in my life]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 6, no. 1 (1996): 6 – 7.

to the fund which would be passed on to applicants. Buys personally selected the board and caregivers for his fund, among them Sjalhomo's president Rinet van Meel.[293] Sjalhomo was not connected to the fund directly, but it successfully applied for funding.[294]

Xandi Buys also initiated another project that was only established after his death: the Platform Jews and AIDS (Platform Joden en Aids, PJA). The platform was established to form a new support system for Jewish AIDS patients. They should receive moral and practical support to navigate their disease within a Jewish environment. Harry Wishaupt offered the organizational structure for the PJA. The members of the PJA worked voluntarily and were not exclusively Sjalhomo members. Some of them had their own experiences of HIV/AIDS.[295] However, the success of the PJA was initially limited due to its tentative nature and because it was formed by individuals, without any involvement from Jewish institutions, which weakened its impact.[296] In a second attempt, JMW and Sjalhomo were successful in bringing together representatives from the NIK, LJG, the Dutch Jewish women's organization Deborah, and the IJAR – The Dutch Union of Jewish Students. The PJA was reinvigorated. Lectures were delivered and brochures published.[297] The platform worked on giving Jewish answers to questions about how to deal with HIV/AIDS, and they sought to provide assurance that the Jewish community stood behind its HIV patients. Over time, other Jewish institutions joined the PJA.[298] The highlight during the PJA's existence was a three-day long symposium with the title "Judaism and AIDS: You have to dare to talk about it" (*Jodendom en AIDS: Je moet erover durven praten*). The symposium was attended by Jewish social workers, teachers, rabbis, volunteers, patients, and other interested people with the aim of educating and showing them a broad range of courses of action.[299] It made the topic of the HIV/AIDS visible within Jewish mainstream.

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293 Cf. Warmerdam, "Jom HaSjana Xandi Buys," 7.

294 Cf. Marjon de Klijn, "Presentatie Xandi Buysfonds [Presentation Xandi Buys-Fund]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 8, no. 2, 1998, 4.

295 Cf. Redactie, "Persberichten [Press releases]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 5, no. 3 (1996): 11.

296 Cf. Lo Woudstra, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 6, no. 6 (1997): 4.

297 Cf. Lo Woudstra, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 7, no. 2 (1997): 4.

298 Cf. Marjon de Klijn, "Platform Jodendom HIV/AIDS en presentatie Xandi Buysfonds [Platform Judaism HIV/AIDS and presentation Xandi Buys-Fund]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 8, no. 1 (1998): 11.

299 Cf. Marjon de Klijn, "Platform Jodendom en AIDS [Platform Judaism and AIDS]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 8, no. 6 (1999): 10.

Sjalhomo used the shock of Xandi Buys' death to become more involved in the Jewish responses to the epidemic. Nevertheless, the group was still conscious that it needed to work with other partners since it was not able to plan and organize its own response due to a lack of volunteers. A broad Jewish collaboration was regarded as more successful, not least because of the relatively small numbers of Jewish people in the Netherlands who were infected.

7.3.3 Reiterating Attempts to (Re-)Activate Members

At the beginning of 1995, Sjalhomo had another crisis due to a lack of interest among its members. Another survey was started, this time about the newsletter *Oi!*. The number of responses was very low and the newsletter appeared to be nearing its end.[300] The board saw the need for action and set up an "informal working group" led by members outside the board that proposed different opportunities for social encounters: 1.) Cultural events like visiting a museum, 2.) A reading group, 3.) Lectures about Israel and Judaism, 4.) City walks, 5.) A choir, 6.) Visiting a *shul*.[301] Some of these ideas were discussed in smaller subgroups, others were not pursued at all.[302] Sjalhomo's members reacted in two very different ways: on the one hand, more members came to previously less well-attended events like the monthly gatherings,[303] but, on the other hand, the efforts put into holiday celebrations like Sukkot or Purim were not justified by the outcome.[304] The board became particularly interested in the needs of younger members[305] – the number of young Sjalhomo members was low[306] – and what new members were interested in.[307]

300 Cf. Redactie, "Laatste Oi?!? [Last Oi?!?]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 4, no. 5 (1995): 2.

301 Cf. Bestuur Sjalhomo, "Sjalhomo. Nieuwe Activiteiten. Informele werkgroep doet voorstelling [Sjalhomo. New activities. Informal working group presents]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 4, no. 6 (1995): 12.

302 Cf. Marjon de Klijn, "Cultuurgroep [Culture group]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 5, no. 4 (1996): 6 – 7.

303 Cf. Dror Cohen Rapoport, "Sjalhomo en andere bijeenkomsten [Sjalhomo and other meetings]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 5, no. 2 (1995): 8.

304 Cf. Gertrude Mandelbaum, "Poeriem bijeenkomst [Purim meeting]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 5, no. 5 (1996): 10, and Bestuur Sjalhomo, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi!* 6, no. 2, 4.

305 Cf. Redactie, "Korte mededelingen [Short notices]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 6, no. 1 (1996): 11.

306 Cf. Bestuur Sjalhomo, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi!* 6, no. 2, 4.

307 Cf. Bestuur Sjalhomo, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 5, no. 6 (1996): 12.

The lack of commitment frequently disappointed those who took an active role. This was irrespective of whether the commitment issues were caused by a reluctance to apply to join the board[308] or members not turning up for an event.[309]

Nevertheless, the board still tried to develop new opportunities for members to participate. In recognizing that members did not want to join the board, the board established a "parliament" which would convene twice a year. This was intended to provide an opportunity to raise new ideas, criticism, or other issues related to the group.[310] How much impact the "parliament" had at the end of the 1990s cannot be traced. What can be said is that the first meeting was attended by only eight members (of around 180 registered[311]).[312] At the same time, members successfully opened a subgroup in Rotterdam that met for social meetings, walking tours, and celebrating holidays.[313] Interestingly enough, this group was able to foster the loyalty of the few members in Rotterdam and stayed active until the end of Sjalhomo. Similar attempts in Den Haag did not succeed.

In 1998, Amsterdam hosted the Gay Games, a worldwide sports and cultural event for the LGBTQ+ community, similar to the Olympic Games. It was the last occasion on which Sjalhomo presented itself to a wider public following the international conference in 1987 and Europride in 1994. The idea was to offer the Jewish participants of the games a cultural program. Since the ecumenical service that was a regular part of the games' schedule did not cooperate and Sjalhomo did not want to celebrate under a Christian cross,[314] the group organized an *erev shabbat* meal and their own Shabbat service with LJG Amsterdam. These two events were solely open to Jewish participants, whereas the walking tour through Jewish Amsterdam, a big party, and a "Jewish Goodbye Farewell" welcomed everyone.[315]

308 Cf. Lo Woudstra, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 6, no. 4 (1997): 4.

309 Cf. Lo Woudstra, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 7, no. 2 (1997): 4–5.

310 Cf. Lo Woudstra, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 7, no. 3 (1998): 4.

311 Cf. Bestuur Sjalhomo, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi!* 6, no. 2, 4.

312 Cf. Lo Woudstra, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 7, no. 5 (1998): 4.

313 Cf. Lo Woudstra, "Eerste bijeenkomst Sjalhomo Rotterdam [First meeting of Sjalhomo Rotterdam]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 7, no. 5 (1998): 11, and Salomon Slier, "Sjalhomo Rotterdam," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 8, no. 2 (1998): 10.

314 Cf. Woudstra, "Van het bestuur," *Oi!* 6, no. 6, 4.

315 Cf. Lo Woudstra, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 7, no. 6 (1998): 4.

An exhibition at the Jewish Museum Amsterdam brought positive publicity for Sjalhomo during the Gay Games. As with 1994 during the Europride, Sjalhomo tried to broaden the range of opportunities to come into contact with queer Jewishness. The exhibition "Friendship through Jacob Israël de Haan" featured photographs by Arnout van Krimpen and Jelle Odé. They visited the three Jewish queer organizations in Europe which are subject of this study and the festivities of the 1998 Gay Pride in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, together with the IATF.[316] This endeavor, supervised by Sjalhomo, was an expression of the groups' friendship and their aim to collaborate for the sake of queer Jewish visibility.

Sjalhomo's participation in the Gay Games was quite successful, members showed up to volunteer and organize the events.[317] However, the monthly meetings in a restaurant or café were slowly abandoned and replaced by occasional gatherings to chat, to learn about Sjalhomo, and to meet new friends.[318] Also, only a very small number of people attended the more structured events, like holidays or picnics.[319] The consequence was that the board organized fewer events, and the agenda in the newsletter became noticeably shorter. The board that took over in 1999 saw itself only as an interim until a board was found that really wanted to contribute time and effort to the position. The intention was that the interim board should be complemented by working groups, which would organize events and meetings, and "co-workers on demand" (*oproepkrachten*).[320] Problems arose when very few people came forward to become the head of a working group or a co-worker. Thus, this idea quickly evaporated. The question "Did we become a sleeping organization?",[321] raised by the board, was by all means justified. The newsletter became another problem. There were not enough members on the editorial team, so *Oi!* had to take a break for one year at the turn of the millennium.[322] These were

316 Cf. flyer/invitation photo presentation "Friendship through Jacob Israël de Haan," courtesy of Daniël Bouw (Rotterdam).

317 For example, cf. Sjalhomo Erev Shabbatmeal: Gay Games, August 7, 1998, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Br. ROG 349), UoA.

318 Cf. Ida de Leeuw, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 8, no. 5 (1999): 4.

319 Cf. de Leeuw, " Van het bestuur," *Oi!* 8, no. 5, 4, and Ida de Leeuw, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 8, no. 6 (1999): 4.

320 Cf. Ida de Leeuw, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 8, no. 3 (1999): 4.

321 Cf. Ida de Leeuw, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 9, no. 1 (1999): 4.

322 Cf. Redactie, "Reactie van de redactie [Reaction from the editorial team]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 10, no. 1 (2000): 2.

all symptoms of the progress toward the dissolution of the group, combined with increasing conflicts within the board.

7.3.4 Tense Conflicts, Lack of Volunteers, and the Dissolution of the Group

Referring to Sjalhomo in 1997, board member Lo Woudstra commented: "We are not the easiest group in the country to govern. Criticism comes quickly, you never do it right, and we are not used to give each other compliments."[323]

A year later, shortly after the Gay Games, he experienced this sometimes-hostile environment first hand. He was removed from of the board after he stated that the expenses which he incurred during the games had not yet been reimbursed. The board accused him of being disloyal, untrustworthy, and incapable of representing Sjalhomo externally. A heated debate followed in which the board forced Woudstra to not discuss the conflict with other Sjalhomo members. Eventually, the disagreement resulted in mediation led by Rinet van Meel, the group's former longtime president. The situation could not be resolved to the satisfaction of both sides, and, in response, the board resigned (although there were other reasons for this step as well). The new structure in 1999 with the interim board, working groups and "co-workers on demand" was established.[324] This left its mark in what was originally intended as a fresh start and showed that personal disagreements could jeopardize the existence of the whole group.

The reorganization of the board became an "obstacle course"[325] in 2000, after which the last president Mieke Zinn stated:

> My experience is that organizations always go through up and downs. Sjalhomo is, as you know, no exception. In the last couple of years, we had it difficult as a group. We had lost people through illness, death, relocations, and, unfortunately, also disagreements. Boards

323 "We zijn niet de makkelijkste club van het land om te besturen. Kritiek is er snel, je doet het nooit goed en we zijn niet gewend om elkaar complimenten te geven." (Lo Woudstra, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 6, no. 5 [1997]: 4. Author's translation.)

324 Cf. Lo Woudstra, "Terug van weggeweest op naar het warme bad vol schuim [Back from being away to the warm bath full of foam]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 8, no. 3 (1999): 10–11.

325 Mieke Zinn, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 10, no. 1 (2000): 4.

> came and did the best they could. […] Contributors […] were consulted and encouraged… and they made clear that their (time-wise) priorities were set somewhere else.[326]

This was an adequate assessment of the situation Sjalhomo was in. The final board was not able to resolve the group's urgent problems: the lack of involvement by members, poorly attended meetings, the consequential disappointment of the motivated board, disagreements, and unpaid donations/"membership dues."[327] The serious lack of volunteers led to a call for volunteers with an impressive list of vacancies in 2002, including editors for *Oi!*, volunteers for setting and tidying up events, board members, and volunteers for the 20 year anniversary of the Stichting Sjalhomo.[328] No one replied. This shocked the board and left them wondering about the group's purpose.[329] Despite continuously being affected by the lack of volunteers, attendees respectively, a solid (even small)[330] core of Sjalhomo members including the board[331] organized an anniversary weekend for October 2002.[332]

However, this celebration did not take place – Sjalhomo was dissolved before it could. Neither the newsletter, whose last issue did not predict the dissolution, nor an official (recorded) document tell us what happened.[333] The circumstances for the dissolution can only be reconstructed through testimonies of former members: there was a board meeting in which one of the board members was accused of embezzling money from Sjalhomo's bank account. One part of the board stood behind this member, while the other part continued to accuse them. It was a "terrible

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326 "Organisaties maken altijd ups en downs mee, is mijn ervaring. Sjalhomo is daarin kennelijk geen uitzondering. De laatste paar jaar hebben we het moeilijk gehad als club. We hebben mensen verloren aan ziekte, dood, verhuizingen en helaas ook aan verschil van inzicht. Besturen kwamen en gaven het beste wat ze konden. […] Contribuanten […] werden geraadpleegd en geprikkeld… en gaven te kennen hun prioriteit (tijdelijk) bij andere zaken te leggen." (Zinn, "Van het bestuur," *Oi!* 10, no. 1, 4. Author's translation.)

327 Cf. Mieke Zinn, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 10, no. 2 (2000): 4.

328 Cf. Mieke Zinn, "Gezocht. Vrijwilligers [Wanted. Volunteers]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 10, no. 3 (2001): 10.

329 Cf. Mieke Zinn, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 11, no. 1 (2001): 4.

330 Cf. Zinn, "Van het bestuur," *Oi!* 11, no. 1, 4.

331 Cf. Mieke Zinn, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 11, no. 2 (2001): 4.

332 Cf. Lo Woudstra, "Van het bestuur [From the board]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 11, no. 3 (2002): 4.

333 I collected the following information about the end of Sjalhomo from conversations with Sauci Bosner (July 19, 2021, in their private home), Lo Woudstra (July 22, 2021, in their private home), Vic Jacobs (July 30, 2021, via zoom), and Lodewijk de Zwart (November 19, 2019, via e-mail).

mess."[334] In course of this argument, the board decided to dissolve the group and hand the remaining funds over to JMW.[335] It was clear that this conflict was only the final incentive to bring Sjalhomo to an end. This was a culmination of events: the constant efforts of the board, and a few members, to organize events, the lack of interest and involvement from the members, the ongoing conflicts that led to a frequent turnover of board members, and, as a consequence of the conflicts, the not always welcoming atmosphere. Another aspect might have been the opinion that the main goal of Sjalhomo, the integration of queer Jews into Dutch Jewry, had already been achieved as seen with the supportive attitude of JMW and other Jewish social institutions for queers, the success of BHC, and the growing recognition of queer individuals in the Liberal Jewish communities. The reasons were many, but they meant the end of this once so successful group, a group that was both active and visible nationally and internationally. Some former members decided not to join any other Jewish organization, while others stayed active in their home synagogues, or affiliated with BHC.[336]

What remained of Sjalhomo? The heated dissolution left a couple of former members grieving and emotional. Nevertheless, the success of Sjalhomo is undeniable, especially at its height. Events like the Tenth International Conference in 1987 are remembered even to this day. The impact of Sjalhomo benefited their European partners, as shown in the next chapter. Overall, the group made queer Jews highly visible within the relatively small Jewish community of the Netherlands. During its existence, Sjalhomo succeeded in becoming a very well-known and appreciated part of Jewish Amsterdam.

334 Conversation with Lo Woudstra.

335 The money was then used to fund BHC's activities concerning their queer outreach like its participation with a boat at Canal Pride or its Pride Shabbat.

336 Cf. Snijders, "Sjalhomo."

8 Sharing Experiences, Sharing Ideas: A European Network of Queer Jewish Groups

This chapter discusses the interconnectedness of the three queer Jewish groups in Europe portrayed in this study. These groups in the London-Paris-Amsterdam triangle shared similar backgrounds that were distinctly European and, for example, differed from the experiences of US-American Jewish queers. The Europeans started to forge links based on their distinctions from their counterparts overseas, and established regional conferences and informal meetings on weekends. During the peak period of this European network, Jewish queers engaged in exchanging knowledge, ideas, and people. By using the before mentioned theoretical model of globalized networks by Szulc with its nodes, connections, and flows,[1] this chapter assesses the extent of this collaboration and the influence it had on the groups and individuals involved. The network's period of greatest success came to an end in the mid/end-1990s when the volunteers who maintained the network and its groups resigned due to the immense workload the network required.

8.1 Distinctively European: Social Groups Emphasizing Sociability

The most evident feature of the European groups portrayed in this study is their distinct focus on sociability: the Jewish Gay (and Lesbian) Group (JGG/JGLG), Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo were *social* groups. They brought their members together on the basis of conviviality, to exchange experiences, and other forms of social encounters. This was different from what queer Jews in the United States did: they founded synagogues by and for Jewish queers, they offered services, dealt with queer-inclusive liturgy, and created a religious space that embraced its members' sexualities and gender identities. Erwin Brugmans, longtime member of Sjalhomo, once stated:

> In Europe, one finds organizations from Jewish homosexuals based on Jewish identity/culture and homosexuality. Meetings are often organized around Jewish holidays or a homosexual event. In America, people are convening around the topic of religion/Jewish identity and the homosexual lifestyle. This expresses itself through the formation of complete gay/lesbian

1 Cf. Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland,* 220–224.

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> synagogues where family and friends are also welcome. A lot of money and energy goes into maintaining the *shul.*[2]

Brugmans further explained that US-American queer Jews saw a continuation of religion and tradition in the creation of their own synagogues. They wanted to defend their goals within the traditional Jewish framework. Breaking ties with Judaism (and simultaneously still identifying as a Jewish organization) was not an option for them. Therefore, Brugmans concluded, having their own synagogues was the most logical step to take. US-American Jews wanted immediate change, an immediate place for worship to combine religion/spirituality and Queerness. Accordingly, there was no aspiration to wait for the mainstream Jewish community to change their attitude towards a non-heteronormative lifestyle.[3] This resulted in more inwardly directed congregations with a special, but not exclusive, focus on religion.[4]

European groups aimed to influence the Jewish communities in their respective countries from within, to educate them about homosexuality, and, eventually, to gain their approval.[5] The group members attended services in mainstream synagogues[6] or dropped out from organized religious life (temporarily). Still in 1991, Erwin Brugmans put on record: "To me, integration seems more the way to feel at home in the Jewish community rather than secluding yourself in an own synagogue. However, no European Jewish gay/lesbian organization wants to install such a synagogue."[7]

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2 "In Europa treft men organisaties van joodse homosexuelen [sic!] met als uitgangspunten de joodse identiteit/cultuur en de homosexualiteit [sic!]. Bijeenkomsten worden veelal georganiseerd rond de joodse feestdagen of een homosexueel [sic!] evenement. In Amerika initieert men zich rond het thema religie/joodse identiteit en de homosexuele leefstijl. Dit uit zich door middel van het vormen van complete gay/lesbian synagogen waar ook familie en vrienden welkom zijn. Veel geld en energie gaat gepaard met het in stand houden van de sjoel." (Erwin Brugmans, "Homo-Synagogen in de Verenigde Staten van Amerika [Homo-Synagogues in the United States of America]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 3, no. 2 (1993): 4. Author's translation.)

3 Cf. Brugmans, "Homo-Synagogen," 4.

4 Cf. David, "Internationaal homo-congress," 7.

5 Cf. David, "Internationaal homo-congress," 7.

6 Cf. Shelley Anderson, "Letter from Amsterdam: Dutch Jews Organize," *Equal Time* (September 14, 1988): 2.

7 "Integratie lijkt mij eerder de manier je thuis te voelen in de joodse gemeenschap, dan je af te zonderen in een eigen synagoge. Geen enkele Europese joodse homo/lesbische organisatie wil een dergelijke synagoge echter installeren." (Erwin Brugmans, "Internationaal weekend Amsterdam [International Weekend Amsterdam]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 1, no. 5 (1992*):* 4. Author's translation.)

Sometimes, the engagement for change within the organized Jewish mainstream took time as evidenced in the chapter on JGG which started as a clandestine, inwardly-directed group, or Beit Haverim's difficult stance with French Jewry until recently. Sjalhomo, on the other hand, reached out to the Jewish community quickly and became quite successful in educating the community. However, all three groups made a conscious decision to be a social group. There was never a serious debate about establishing a queer synagogue. Additionally, it has to be noted that the process of establishing a synagogue in Europe is far more complex than in the United States. Even though this process works differently in each country, building up a new congregation is very expensive. Traditionally, the willingness to donate money is highly developed in the United States.[8] Queer congregations there received large donations, e. g., for their meeting spaces or own buildings,[9] whereas the European groups usually struggled to survive with their limited resources. If European Jewish queers had decided to form their own congregations, it would have been incredibly important, especially for financial reasons, to obtain the approval of a Jewish denomination or a national Jewish umbrella organization. In all three countries, Orthodoxy formed the majority within organized Judaism. Whereas Reform Judaism in the United States was open to accept queer synagogues from 1974 on,[10] the situation in Europe was quite different: the Reform or Liberal branches of Judaism were significantly more conservative in this regard than their US-American counterparts. Supportive decisions for homosexuals took longer here, up until the late 1990s or early 2000s. Additionally, in France or the Netherlands, these denominations were only very small and only had a few congregations to begin with.[11]

With their emphasis on sociability, the three queer Jewish groups in Europe contributed to the emergence of gay identity organizations that started to form in the 1970s. They raised awareness of their fate[12] and, as one key objective,

8 Cf. Kathrin Werner, "Milliarden für gute Zwecke. Spenden ist in den USA zu einem irren Geschäft geworden," Süddeutsche, December 23, 2017, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/panorama/milliarden-fuer-gute-zwecke-spenden-ist-in-den-usa-zu-einem-irren-geschaeft-geworden-1.3796742, accessed September 22, 2022.

9 For Beth Chayim Chadashim, cf. Wilkens, *"Jewish, Gay and Proud,"* 93, and for Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, cf. Cohen, *Changing Lives, Making History*, 296 et seqq.

10 Beth Chayim Chadashim was accepted as the first queer synagogue to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1974 (cf. Wilkens, *"Jewish, Gay and Proud,"* 55 – 85).

11 Cf. Section 3.2.

12 John d'Emilio stated that the raising awareness – "of how gay men and women interpreted their experience" – was already regarded as crucial for the pre-Stonewall organizations for homosexuals like the Mattachine Society, originally founded in Los Angeles in 1950, but spread quickly throughout the United States (John d'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities. The Making of a*

they focused on their members' mental health as group excluded by general society.[13] Furthermore, JGG/JGLG, Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo were part of the "gay plus one" organizations as described by Elizabeth Armstrong in 2002.[14] As well as their gay identity, they added another function or identity to their group's cause, in this case the Jewish identity. "Gay" was a signal for a positive gay visibility and the possibility of building a gay identity in different areas of life: "[…] gay identity was, like a traditional ethnic identity, not just about sex, but also about work, family, worship, hobbies, and service."[15] For these groups, visibility became as important as formally striving for legal equality.[16] In the end, it became paramount to fight the threefold discrimination queer Jews had to face: as queers, as Jews, and as queer Jews in Jewish spaces. To achieve this, a high degree of visibility was essential. It has to be noted, though, that this prototype of social groups was also picked up from queer Jews in other countries like Yachad in South Africa (initially founded in 1984).[17]

Apart from the organizational differences between the European groups and the US-American synagogues, approaches to queer Jewishness were also regarded differently. It is unsurprising that national and cultural differences were pivotal.[18] Moreover, Erwin Brugmans noted that queer synagogues' attention was more directed inwards towards the congregation itself. (Homosexual) Politics and social issues, as well as the international cooperation of queer Jews, were, in his view, not so much an issue for the Americans. European groups, according to Brugmans, had a more political and international viewpoint.[19] This assumption was particularly at the personal level: Brugmans was a passionate advocate for Sjalhomo's political involvement. When we take a closer look at the queer synagogues and, in particular, their involvement in the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations (WCGLJO), there are several examples of political engagement.[20] Nevertheless, Brugmans made the valid point that the European groups could naturally invest more effort into politics and did not have to deal with liturgy, services, and other congregational issues. Supporting this assumption, the European groups

Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970 [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983], 242).

13 Cf. Elizabeth Ann Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities. Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950–1994* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 22.

14 Cf. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 22.

15 Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 22.

16 Kwantes, "Natuurlijk, ik ben joods," 149.

17 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, April 1985, UoA, 2.

18 Cf. Meijer, "Internationale Conferentie," 9.

19 Cf. Brugmans, "Homo-Synagogen," 4.

20 Cf. Section 3.3 and Section 3.4.

also claimed to raise consciousness in the 1990s for other forms of sexual orientation or gender identity (e. g., bisexuals) within the WCGLJO. Sjalhomo, for example, argued for inclusion of the term "bisexual" in the official name of the World Congress. Additionally, the Europeans recognized the special situation for HIV/AIDS patients: European groups reminded their American counterparts to permit HIV/AIDS patients access to international conferences, whether by considering legal challenges like travel restrictions, or by providing individual assistance.[21]

Another key difference between the European and the US-American groups were their experiences of the Shoah. While most of the queer European Jews were second generation, a few of the group's members were Shoah survivors themselves. Therefore, the Shoah, its aftermath, and the associated trauma were always present. As Andy Zimmerman summarized in an article for the US-American magazine *The Advocate*: "American Jews continue to feel the anger and the pain; European Jews still experience the paranoia and horror."[22] Or, as Wanya F. Kruyer put it: "In those days [1970s/80s], being Jewish was not normal [in Amsterdam]. […] many Jews tried to avoid any reference to being Jewish."[23] Furthermore, she pointed to another line of thought with which queer European Jews were raised: "The religious minority felt a strong survival incentive. Going on without procreation was unheard of, too painful even to think about. Being gay was felt as a threat to post-Holocaust survival."[24]

Queer Jews from the United States were largely not aware of the second generational trauma,[25] the meaning of commemoration ceremonies, and the European fight against antisemitism until the Tenth International Conference in Amsterdam

21 Cf. Woudstra, "The City of Brotherly Love," 4.

22 Zimmerman, "Gay Jews Meet in Amsterdam," 31.

23 Kruyer Bloemgarten, "The Netherlands: Bringing Jewishness into the Gay Capital," 58.

24 Kruyer Bloemgarten, "The Netherlands: Bringing Jewishness into the Gay Capital," 58.

25 For an overview over the research on the second generational trauma, cf. Marina Chernivsky, "Zwischen den Generationen," *Jalta. Positionen zur jüdischen Gegenwart*, no. 4 (2018): 106 – 111. The perspective of the second generation is a well-established field in different academic disciplines, e. g., in psychology (cf. Judith Harris, "An Inheritance of Terror: Postmemory and Transgenerational Transmission of Trauma in Second Generation Jews after the Holocaust," *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 80, Issue 1 [2020]: 69 – 84; Samuel Juni, "Identity Disorders of Second-Generation Holocaust Survivors," *Journal of Loss & Trauma* 21, Issue 3 [2016]: 203 – 212; Samuel Juni, "Second-Generation Holocaust Survivors: Psychological, Theological, and Moral Challenges," *Journal of Loss & Trauma* 17, Issue 1 [2016]: 97 – 111), literature studies (cf. Erin Heather McGlothlin, ed., *Second-Generation Holocaust Literature: Legacies of Survival and Perpetration* [Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006]), or the science of art (cf. Shahar Marnin-Distelfeld, "'In the liveliest place, my mother's bosom, there was death' – Mother-Daughter Relationships in the Work of Rachel Nemesh, Second-Generation Holocaust Survivor," *Holocaust Studies* 28, Issue 1 [2022]: 20 – 47).

(1987). Following that conference, the American congregations recognized the special situation for European Jews and felt more of a connection to their counterparts.[26]

In the 1990s, the divide between European and American concepts for queer Jewish organizing dissolved. On the one hand, the number of social groups increased sharply in Europe (and, partly, the United States), but, on the other hand, an "Americanization" reached queer Jewish Europe. Beit Klal Yisrael (BKY) in the UK and Beit Ha'Chidush (BHC) in Amsterdam were congregations founded by either Americans like Rabbi Sheila Shulman and/or by people that were influenced by the US-American synagogues and their practices like Wanya F. Kruyer and Ken Gould. Both congregations were designed based on the example of Reform and Reconstructionist synagogues in the United States. In the 1990s, the "American way" of queer organizing was presented in two European countries as an alternative to social groups. They were successful in that both congregations still exist today (with adaptations, though) and have attracted more younger members than the social groups did.

8.2 Building Up a Network

In the following, I argue that the three queer Jewish groups presented in this study established a European network of Jewish Queerness from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. The model of globalized networks as portrayed by Lukasz Szulc[27] refers to nodes (geographical locations/geopolitical entities), their connections, and the flows between them. In this case, JGG/JGLG, Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo symbolize the nodes which are generally characterized as being of different scales, internally diverse, and non-static.[28] The model suggests that connections between the nodes are multiple and diverse.[29] Through these connections, flows of ideas and people occur. As Szulc points out, we should consider these flows as travels with departure and arrival places rather than flows with a "true origin" from which an idea or concept arose. Acknowledging that flows are multiple and, at times, overlapping, one node – or one group in this study – is influenced by flows that came from a multiple of other nodes. Between two nodes, there are multiple flows through different channels (e.g., in written form like newsletters or in person

26 Cf. Meijer, "Internationale Conferentie," 9.
27 Cf. Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland*, 220–224.
28 Cf. Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland*, 221.
29 Cf. Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland*, 220.

through meetings or conferences). Thereby, flows are also multidirectional, they could flow only between two or more nodes or through all of them.[30]

A network is not fixed, but dynamic. This implies that connections can become less strong over time, can be broken and fixed, or new ones can be established.[31] This will become apparent when looking at the 1990s, when the European network of Jewish Queerness lost its significance. The three groups were inarguably engaged in another network with the US-American synagogues (and later, worldwide groups) that constituted other nodes. This was an international network, particularly exemplified by the WCGLJO, and, at times, the connections to the United States were closer than to their respective European counterparts. However, the European exchange was overall more crucial for JGG/JGLG, Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo in the 1980/90s. This is, on the one hand, because of their geographical proximity, the chance to meet in person more regularly, and, on the other hand, because of the similarities in their organizational structures and their standing within their national Jewish communities: "The European Jews think differently and have other influences on their culture than the Anglo-American. So, there must also be a European voice."[32]

8.2.1 First Connections, First Concurrences

As the first queer Jewish group in Europe, JGG first reached out to the US-American synagogues to make connections and to exchange knowledge.[33] Early on, members of the synagogues visited JGG when they visited the UK,[34] and probably vice versa. JGG had good relations with the United States synagogues, so that the group was among the first organizations that became engaged in what was then known as International Conference of Gay Jewish Organizations. Subsequently, the group also became a founding member of the WCGLJO.[35] In addition, Beit Haverim was connected in its early days with the queer synagogues through Joseph Doucé,[36] even

30 Cf. Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland*, 222–223.

31 Cf. Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland*, 220.

32 "Die europäischen Juden denken anders und haben andere Einflüsse auf ihre Kultur als die anglo-amerikanischen. Also muss es auch eine europäische Stimme geben." (Frits Enk, "'Jeder jüdische Schwule denkt: Ich bin der einzige'," *Magnus. Das schwule Magazin* 2, no. 3 [March 1990]: 23. Author's translation.)

33 Cf. Wilkens, *"Jewish, Gay and Proud,"* 88; JGG Newsletter September 9, 1975, LGBT CCNHA; JGG Newsletter January 26, 1977, LGBT CCNHA, 3–4.

34 Cf. JGG Newsletter July 8, 1976, LGBT CCNHA.

35 Cf. Section 3.4.

36 Cf. Section 6.1.2.

though these connections were primarily made so that Beit Haverim could participate in the international conferences.

The first recorded approach from JGG to Beit Haverim happened in early 1979, even though Beit Haverim had already known about the British group at a much earlier date.[37] JGG wrote a letter that was translated and printed in Beit Haverim's newsletter. The letter introduced the group, explained their current activities, but also their problems, and concluded with: "Shalom to all our friends of Beit Haverim and each of us sends you our best wishes. We hope that one day, we will be able to meet – this would be amazing."[38]

It was not long before one member of each group met and spoke about ideas for future cooperation.[39] As a result of this meeting, JGG and Beit Haverim held a joint weekend in early 1980.[40] It is unclear what happened during that weekend. However, taking the program of later weekends into account, it is possible to assume that members of both groups had discussions about their experiences, and that there were social elements like a party or dinner.

After Sjalhomo was founded, JGG immediately reached out and established contact with the Dutch group.[41] Sjalhomo members had already visited Beit Haverim in mid-1981[42] and invited their French friends to a weekend to celebrate Chanukah in December 1981. Ten members from Beit Haverim went to Amsterdam and were surprised by the ambitious political attitude Sjalhomo had. The two groups welcomed the Shabbat and lit the Chanukah candles together. According to a report by Beit Haverim, the ceremony was officiated by "a very liberal young female rabbi."[43] It is not possible to validate this, or even clarify who this might have been. What we do know is that, as well as the religious celebrations, there was a "gay tour" through Amsterdam by day and night.[44]

Sjalhomo seized the opportunity presented by this first encounter and wanted to bring more European Jews together for a special event. This made sense given Sjalhomo's distinct political aspirations,[45] especially in comparison with the other

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37 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 2, BNF, 5.

38 "Chalom à tous nos amis du Beit Havérim [sic!] et chacun de nous vous envoie ses meilleurs voeux. Nous espérons qu'un jour nous pourrons nous rencontrer, ce serait chouette…" (Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 14 (Annexe I.L.I.A. no. 25), Mai 1979, 4–JO–35315, BNF, 9. Author's translation.)

39 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 15, BNF, 3.

40 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 21, BHA, 29.

41 Cf. JGG Newsletter February 1981, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

42 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 35, ANF, 10.

43 Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 38, BHA, 1.

44 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 38, BHA, 1.

45 Cf. Section 7.1.2 and Section 7.1.5.

two groups.[46] Only about two and a half years after its inception, the group organized the first conference for queer European Jews. This was explicitly to get to know "what is happening elsewhere in our Jewish gay world."[47] JGG, Beit Haverim, Sjalhomo, and queer Jewish individuals from Belgium and Israel came together for the first time in a small conference center in Hilversum in late October 1982. This conference with the headline "Homosexuality and Judaism"[48] is barely referenced and remembered anywhere. The conference did not happen under the WCGLJO's umbrella and was solely initiated and organized by Sjalhomo. It is, therefore, not considered when speaking about the European/Israeli Regional Conferences of the WCGLJO that started in 1988.

Around 40 people attended the conference in Hilversum. It has to be noted that almost no women were present; the conference was a predominately male gay event.[49] Among the participants was Rabbi Lionel Blue, the first openly gay rabbi in the UK, who talked about how queers could contribute to Judaism and vice versa.[50] However, the program began with a reciprocal presentation from the three queer Jewish groups. This was followed by a role-play in which a queer Jewish group tried to rent premises close to a traditional synagogue. The participants put themselves into the shoes of different protagonists in this situation. These included, for instance, the imaginary group members, the board of the synagogue, or the press.[51]

In a roundtable discussion, Rabbi Sonny Herman, a graduate of Leo Baeck College in London and a psychotherapist, participated as the rabbinic representative and addressed the audience: "The *halakhah* does not help to be homosexual, homosexuality is considered forbidden and harmful. Therefore, it is necessary to find a direct contact with God, without any intermediary, without referring to the text. One must live as He wanted us to be, as He conceived us."[52] During the same debate, Harry Wishaupt, Sjalhomo's ally in the Joods Maatschappelijk

46 For example, JGG described itself distinctively as non-political at this time (cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, no. 14, BNF, 9).

47 Letter from Erwin Brugmans to "Dear unknown friend," May 23, 1982, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 359, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA.

48 Cf. Beit Haverim Bulletin, No. 40, August–November 1982, BHA, 4.

49 Cf. Journal, no. 2, BHA, 17.

50 Cf. Michael Brown, "European Jewish Gay Meeting," *Our Paper* (December 8, 1982): 6.

51 Cf. Journal, no. 2, BHA, 18.

52 "La HALAKHA [sic!] n'aide pas a s'assumer [sic!] en tant qu'homo, l'homosexualité est considérer comme interdite et néfaste. Il faut donc trouver un contact direct avec DIEU [sic!], sans aucun intermédiaire, sans se référer au texte. Il faut vivre tel qu'IL [sic!] a voulu que nous soyons, tel qu'IL [sic!] nous a conçu." (Journal, no. 2, BHA, 19. Author's translation.)

Werk addressed his solidarity with queer Jews.[53] Another Dutch psychiatrist, Dr. Barneveld, used the platform to reject the idea of treating homosexuality as a sickness and underlined the necessity of integration for the sake of the queer's mental health.[54]

There was a very emotional moment when an Israeli attending the conference spoke up and described the difficult situation for homosexuals in Israel. Around that time, the police had dropped their laissez-faire attitude towards homosexuals and started harassing them.[55] The Society for the Protection of Personal Rights (SPPR) was having difficulty trying to get in contact with the police in Tel Aviv to persuade them to change their methods. These efforts were unsuccessful.[56]

Additionally, Israeli television refused to broadcast an interview with the person voicing their concerns at the conference. The station justified this decision by arguing that young and "hyper-sensitive people" watched the channel. After all, "Jerusalem is not San Francisco."[57] The conference started a petition to Israeli executives, the Knesset, and the Israeli ambassadors in the European countries that were represented,[58] protesting against the discrimination. Nothing about whether the petition made any impact is known, however. In addition to the petition, the conference collected donations for the SPPR.[59]

The conference ended with an evaluation at another roundtable discussion. Finally, the participants sang *"Ya'aseh Shalom"* together and embraced each other. The conference's atmosphere was described as "fraternal" and "warm,"[60] and the participants "left greatly heartened,"[61] eager to improve the situation of Jewish queers all over the world.

It is difficult to assess the influence the conference had on a practical level. The groups continued meeting each other from time to time on select weekends. For example, Beit Haverim invited Sjalhomo to celebrate Passover with them in 1984.[62] However, these weekend meetings were organized only between two groups at a time and were mainly based on personal relations (in this example between André Urwand and Erwin Brugmans). In fact, the greatest success arising from the

53 Cf. Journal, no. 2, BHA, 19.
54 Cf. Brown, "European Jewish Gay Meeting," 6.
55 Cf. Brown, "European Jewish Gay Meeting," 6.
56 Cf. Journal, no. 2, BHA, 20.
57 Journal, no. 2, BHA, 20.
58 Cf. Journal, no. 2, BHA, 21.
59 Cf. Brown, "European Jewish Gay Meeting," 6.
60 Cf. Journal, no. 2, BHA, 21.
61 Cf. Brown, "European Jewish Gay Meeting," 6.
62 Cf. Blad van en voor joodse homosexuelen, no. 4, UoA, 9–10.

conference in Hilversum was that the groups got to know each other, and that lasting friendships across national borders were formed. It was the real beginning of the queer Jewish, London-Paris-Amsterdam triangle that would become so important in the following years.

These friendships, and the general sense of cooperation, also spread onto the international stage during the WCGLJO's international conferences. During a weekend meeting between JGG and Sjalhomo in early 1985, they prepared their stance prior to the conference in Washington later that year.[63] It appears that the groups also exchanged ideas about how to organize internally, especially at the beginning of the 1980s. For example, Beit Haverim was impressed by Sjalhomo's *krantje* and introduced its own journal (if only for four issues). Moreover, JGG adopted the idea of annual weekends for their members in the countryside, albeit with limited success. From their cross-organizational exchange, it was understood that a regularly published newsletter was the key way to reach out to new members and to make their own approach visible.[64]

In the years after Hilversum, this European exchange centered on personal relationships and joyful celebrations. Further joint political aspirations on a European level were low: JGG and Sjalhomo continued their engagement by increasing outreach and focused on internal growth, while Beit Haverim fell into a less active period. In contrast, in 1985, Sjalhomo won the bid to host the Tenth International Conference and started with the organizational procedure that same year. The differences between the European groups and the US-American synagogues were considered while planning the program.[65] This conference provided the starting point for a more structured and institutionalized approach to European cooperation.

8.2.2 The European (and Israeli) Regional Conferences and Beyond

As already explained earlier,[66] the tenth edition of the WCGLJO's international conference was held in Europe for the first time in 1987. Sjalhomo brought queer Jewish groups and synagogues in Amsterdam together. Not only was this conference a huge success overall for the Dutch group itself; it also advanced European cooperation among queer Jewish groups.

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63 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, February 1985, UoA, 3.

64 Cf. letter of Erwin Brugmans, BHA.

65 Cf. Meijer, "Internationale Conferentie," 9.

66 Cf. Section 7.2.2.

Sjalhomo's idea was to "gather as many European participants as possible."[67] They should not only meet and get to know each other, but also exchange their ideas.[68] One important outcome of the conference was providing support for Beit Haverim and taking the group under their wing in order to regain stability and visibility.[69] For women from the UK, the conference gave the final push for engaging in a debate for more female inclusion in JGG, and lobbying for changing the name into JGLG.

Another outcome was that the three European groups decided to cooperate more closely, and not just exchange ideas on a bilateral basis.[70] They decided to appoint Sjalhomo's Erwin Brugmans as the "WCGLJO's development worker of the Eastern Hemisphere." He became responsible for coordinating the European network, the connections to the South African group Yachad, and individuals (later also groups) in Australia to the WCGLJO. Since he was the public relations organizer for the Tenth International Conference, he had already made many contacts and had their addresses. That notwithstanding, he continued making further contacts and met with individuals from many different European countries. Brugmans furthermore appointed contact persons for those countries that did not yet have their own queer Jewish group, like Sweden, Italy, or Germany.[71] Later, Brugmans and other Sjalhomo members co-authored a newsletter for the Eastern Hemisphere with news from all groups and get-togethers in their respective countries.

The idea of a regional conference for Europeans already had been raised during the Tenth International Conference. Such conferences would not only enable greater European networking, but also oppose a recent tendency: due to the overrepresentation from the United States, predominantly American topics had been debated during the international conferences. Consequently, Europeans quite often felt excluded from the conferences' agendas.[72] With regional and, therefore, smaller-scale conferences, it was assumed that the European groups would develop a distinct European position – without preconfiguring what this would look like in detail – and a joint presence towards the rest of the WCGLJO, and the queer synagogues in the United States in particular.[73]

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67 Report of the development worker Eastern Hemisphere, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

68 Cf. report of the development worker Eastern Hemisphere, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

69 Cf. Section 6.3.2.1.

70 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, February 1988, UoA, 2.

71 Cf. report of the development worker Eastern Hemisphere, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

72 Cf. notulen/minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, April 27–May 1, 1990, Amsterdam, signature "cat. (europea/con/gay), dgb grijs," IHLIA, 2.

73 Cf. Cassuto, "Sjalhomo neemt voortouw," 3.

It was not disputed that only a group from the London-Paris-Amsterdam triangle was able to host a European conference, rather than relying on individuals without any institutional support to deal with the administration. Since Beit Haverim was not ready yet to do this, and Sjalhomo had just hosted the international conference, Brugmans and British representative James Baaden agreed that London and JGG/JGLG should be entrusted with organizing the first WCGLJO European conference.[74] At this time, Israel and the SPPR were not directly included in these conferences. All queer Jews were invited to join as illustrated by the fact that Europeans always extended their invitations to Jews in the United States. However, it was only at the third conference in 1992 that the name of the conference was changed to "European and Israeli Regional Conference." This change was made to reflect geographical proximity to Israel, the high number of Israelis participating in these events, and because the European groups cared so much about the subject of the State of Israel.

First European Regional Conference, London, 1988

The first European Regional Conference in London took place from August 26–28, 1988, in rooms that JGLG rented from the Quakers. Fifty participants from eight countries attended, and both men and women were equally represented. The spirit of the conference in Amsterdam one year earlier, i. e., the enthusiastic mood, was "clearly noticeable."[75] The conference started with JGLG's *chavurah* leading services both on Friday evening and Shabbat morning. They used liturgy from two queer synagogues in the United States (Congregation Beit Simchat Torah in New York and Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco). The former included prayers in commemoration of the victims of the Shoah and the HIV/AIDS epidemic; the latter was a Torah service lead by Rabbi Elizabeth T. Sarah.[76] This was very unusual for participants from Sjalhomo. Erwin Brugmans noted: "For the non-English participants, the religious aspect was somewhat difficult because they are more political-social and somewhat traditionally minded. The American and, to a lesser extent, the English Jewish groups are more organized around the religious experience."[77] Brugmans' assumption should not diminish the social orientation

74 Cf. Cassuto, "Sjalhomo neemt voortouw," 3.

75 Nieuwsbrief, October 1988, UoA, 1.

76 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, October 1988, UoA, 1.

77 "Voor de niet engelse deelnemers was het religieuze aspekt [sic!] wat moeilijk omdat zij meer politiek sociaal en wat traditioneel ingesteld zijn. De amerikaanse [sic!] en in mindere mate, de engelse joodse groepen zijn meer rondom het religieuze beleven georganiseerd." (Nieuwsbrief, October 1988, UoA, 1. Author's translation.)

of JGLG beyond the *chavurah* and the social nature the *chavurah* had for the group.[78]

Despite the religious elements, the conference was not designed in any way to accommodate Orthodox Jews, as one Sjalhomo member noted prior to the event. The event took place over the weekend, from Friday to Sunday, with workshops during Shabbat. In this member's view, the conference only served the religious needs of Reform, Liberal, or secular Jews. Additional concerns about kosher catering were expressed.[79] Unfortunately, we do not know how (Orthodox) members from other groups reacted. What we do know is that, however, is that future conferences continued to have to deal with this issue.

As with the international conference, this conference also had workshops/discussion groups. The topics covered were similar throughout the history of these conferences and represented the flows between the nodes within the European network. These flows are described at a later point in this study. During the London conference, however, the organizers from the newly renamed Jewish Gay *and Lesbian* Group tried to implement their newly gained sense for female inclusion. Consequently, the conference created exclusive spaces for men and women to discuss topics amongst themselves.

One other focus of the event was to educate Europeans about the situation of Jewish queers in the UK and the different groups that existed in the country at that time. Together with the representatives from other European countries and their experiences, British queer Jews worked out how they could cooperate better within their own country.[80] Besides the confrontation with organizational issues, with Queerness and Jewishness, JGLG also organized a folk dance workshop, walking tours through London, and a boat trip on the River Thames to introduce the guests to the city.[81]

The conference was a huge success, especially in terms of joint cooperation and members getting to know each other better. At the board meeting of the WCGLJO directly following the European conference, it was decided that the Europeans wanted to institutionalize these gatherings and to hold regular regional conferences.[82] The initial plans foresaw an annual schedule. However, to avoid con-

78 Cf. Section 5.3.1.1 and Section 5.4.1.

79 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, May 1988, UoA, 2.

80 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, October 1988, UoA, 2. The consequences of this exchange during the conference is explained in Section 5.4.2.

81 Cf. flyer named "The first European Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Jews," BHA.

82 It has to be noted that the concept of regional conferences was not new to the WCGLJO. It already established these kinds of conferences in North America from the mid-1980s on. It started with a Midwest, a Northwest, and a Western Regional Conference (cf. Digest. The Newsletter of

flicting with the international conferences, it was subsequently decided to arrange them biennially, alternating with the international versions.[83]

Second European Regional Conference, Amsterdam, 1990

Sjalhomo agreed to host the 1990 edition of the European conference in Amsterdam. Three years after the successful international conference, the group drew on the experiences they had gained when organizing it. As before, the group obtained funding from the government and other Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. While the first conference in London – and following conferences – were organized without outside funding,[84] Sjalhomo was able to host a large event with more than 120 people participating.[85] This time, it was easier for Orthodox or observant Jews to attend since the conference went from Friday, April 27 to Tuesday, May 1 and kosher food was provided throughout the event.[86]

Prior to the conference itself, Sjalhomo organized a meeting for everyone who was interested to decide on and plan further events in Europe. The meeting particularly served the purpose of connecting those Jewish queers from countries that did not have a group yet (such as those in Germany, Austria, or Switzerland).[87]

Because of the fall of the Iron Curtain, this was the first conference which Eastern European Jews from countries like Hungary, Czechoslovakia, or Russia were able to attend.[88] Sjalhomo, and especially Erwin Brugmans, reached out to queer Jews from the former Soviet Union prior to the event.[89] During the conference, these Jews put particular emphasis on their well-being and on the integration of their experiences.[90] Their situation was very challenging: one issue was that homosexuality was not widely accepted in the former Soviet countries, and could be punished with prison sentences. Another was that antisemitism was on the rise after the huge transformations in these countries. One conference participant

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the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 5, no. 3, 1986, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 2). Over time, the regions were updated according to the needs of those synagogues and groups involved.

83 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, October 1988, UoA, 3.

84 Cf. Enk, "Jeder jüdische Schwule," 23.

85 Cf. Iwand, "Zweite europäische Konferenz," 34.

86 Cf. Enk, "Jeder jüdische Schwule," 23.

87 Cf. Enk, "Jeder jüdische Schwule," 23.

88 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 3.

89 Cf. Erwin Brugmans, "World Congress. Bericht van development manager oostelijk halfrond [World Congress. Report of the development manager of the Eastern Hemisphere]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 1, no. 1 (1991): 8.

90 Cf. Brugmans, "World Congress," 2–3, and Iwand, "Zweite europäische Konferenz," 35.

from Hungary explained in an interview: "The government is not really interested [in us]. […] You cannot say in Hungary that you are Jewish and homosexual. Because of the economic problems and the political unrest, antisemitism has increased. On top of that, homosexuality is not accepted by the people. Homosexuals are beaten up by gangs, even in broad daylight."[91]

One of the conference's goals was to bring the Eastern European participants closer together, so they could form their own groups for mutual support.[92] In fact, the conference had an important impetus to strengthen the collaboration between people who came as individuals to the conference. Private conversations contributed to that, but workshops also made practical assistance a subject of discussion: how was it possible to form a group and to get in contact with the local Jewish or queer community? The workshop "The Formation of a European Lesbian-Homosexual Community" felt that the existing European groups could benefit from the experiences of potential new groups in other countries, and that such an exchange would be vital for changing the attitude within the Jewish communities and society in general.[93] Indeed, thanks to the networking in Amsterdam, the group Kesergé was founded in Hungary sometime in 1992/3. For queer Jews in Germany, the conference catalyzed the founding of the first queer Jewish group, L'Chaim, in Berlin shortly after the June 1990 conference.[94]

The conference itself started with a Shabbat service. During Shabbat, the first workshops (which were, again, the centerpiece of the conference) took place, and the day concluded with a commemoration ceremony at the Homo-monument. Here, the participants spoke the *kaddish* for homosexuals and Jews persecuted under the Nazi regime and the victims of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The director of the Cultuur en Ontspannings Centrum (COC) addressed the participants and spoke about the acceptance of homosexuality in the Netherlands.[95] A representative of the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment gave a speech against fascism and discrimination.[96] The next day, more than 15 workshops took place, complemented by a ceremony for the Israeli *Yom HaZikaron* commemorating

91 "De overheid is niet echt geïnteresseerd. […] Je kunt in Hongarije niet zeggen dat je jood en homosexueel [sic!] bent. Door de economische problemen en de politieke onrust is het antisemitisme toegenomen. Daar komt nog bij dat homosexualiteit [sic!] door de bevolking niet wordt geaccepteerd. Homosexuelen [sic!] worden door bendes in elkaar geslagen, ook op klaarlichte dag." (Cassuto, "Sjalhomo neemt voortouw," 3. Author's translation.)

92 Cf. Cassuto, "Sjalhomo neemt voortouw," 3.

93 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 12–14.

94 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 18, and Iwand, "Zweite europäische Konferenz," 35.

95 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 10–11.

96 Cf. Iwand, "Zweite europäische Konferenz," 35.

the country's fallen soldiers. For that, Sjalhomo rented COC rooms and invited the conference participants and other guests, so that around 250 people attended the ceremony. Israeli participants shared their own experiences and those of their family and friends in the army. In the evening, Yom HaZikaron turns into the Israeli Independence Day. Consequently, the commemorations were superseded by a party that included dancing and a Klezmer band. On the next day, the Dutch *Koninginnedag* (Queen's Day) provided an opportunity for another party.[97] At the end of the conference, the organizers described the atmosphere as follows:

> After a weekend of joy, work, friendships, pride, and solidarity, all gathered for the last session. […] It seemed difficult to put an end to the conference, because it was obvious that many had a fantastic time. As we sang 'HaTikvah' [the national anthem of Israel] once again, we held hands and our feelings were those of solidarity and pride […].[98]

Or, as another participant summarized: "A conference like this enriches your well-being."[99] The conference put the aspirations to form new groups in Europe on record (in Germany, Hungary, and Belgium[100] in particular). Two resolutions were passed:

1.) The conference was renamed the *European and Israeli Regional Conference.* The European groups cared strongly about the State of Israel, so the formal inclusion of Israel(is) was a result. Beit Haverim was chosen to host the next conference.

2.) The participants declared themselves ready to contribute to a strong and dynamic network, since homophobia and antisemitism were a particular issue in those countries which did not yet have any groups. Nevertheless, the number of queer Jewish groups and visible queer Jewish individuals would grow in the foreseeable future, and might join this network eventually.

Apart from these two resolutions, the conference acknowledged how important it was for the European groups to host the WCGLJO's international conferences, generating greater internal visibility within the WCGLJO, as well as on a na-

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97 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 19.

98 "Na een weekend van vreugde, werk, vriendschap, trots and [sic!] solidariteit, kwamen allen bijeen voor de slotzitting. […] Het leek moeilijk een eind aan de conferentie te maken, omdat het duidelijk was dat velen een fantastische tijd hadden gehad. Toen wij nog eend de 'Ha Tikvah' zongen, hielden wij elkaar bij de hand en onze gevoelens waren die van solidariteit en trots […]." (Minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 23. Author's translation.)

99 "Een conferentie als deze verrijkt het welzijn." (Minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 14. Author's translation.)

100 As already described in Section 7.1.1, the history of Sjalhomo België is very difficult to reconstruct and is characterized by stagnation, dissolutions, and revival. It is not clear what impetus the conference had on the reestablishment of the group within the early and mid-1990s.

tional level. Therefore, the conference supported the bids of the British and Israeli groups to host the next international conference.[101] This turned out to be successful given that JGLG, the Jewish Gay and Lesbian Helpline (JGLH), and Hineinu were announced as the organizers of the 1993 conference shortly after.

With the Second European Regional Conference, Sjalhomo emphasized its aspirations to function as a trailblazer of the European network. The headline of Carine Cassuto's article about the conference in the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* stated: "Sjalhomo takes lead in European emancipation."[102] Indeed, Sjalhomo was the group that was the most invested in the connections between European groups and individuals. Especially Erwin Brugmans as the WCGLJO's development worker for the Eastern Hemisphere took the lead, and included Sjalhomo in his attempt to strengthen the network. From Amsterdam came the initial impetus to institutionalize the European network, and to provide opportunities to connect, meet, and exchange ideas. This engagement led to the creation of new European groups. Additionally, Sjalhomo was well-established in the Netherlands, so it was not difficult for them to host two big conferences with more than 100 participants each within three years. This was supported by government funding, something none of the other European groups was able to achieve. The European network was a very important aspect of the group's work – and became part of its self-conception in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Thus, it is not surprising that Sjalhomo supported Beit Haverim when it was time to organize the next European conference.[103]

Third European and Israeli Regional Conference, Paris, 1992

After Beit Haverim was chosen to host the Third European and Israeli Regional Conference, the group expressed their delight and high motivation: "This [hosting the conference] reflects the vitality of Beit Haverim, which has just acquired a dynamic, rejuvenated team, aware of the difficulty of its task, and determined to be recognized both in the gay and the Jewish community."[104] An earlier chapter in this study expanded on the difficulties Beit Haverim had in organizing the confer-

101 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 24.

102 "Sjalhomo neemt voortouw bij emancipatie in Europe." (Cassuto, "Sjalhomo neemt voortouw," 3.)

103 Cf. letter of Erwin Brugmans (development management east of WCGLJO), probably July 18, 1991, BHA, and Erwin Brugmans, "De 3e Europese/Israeli Conferentie [The 3rd European/Israeli Conference]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 1, no. 4 (1991/2): 7.

104 "Cela traduit la vitalité du Beit Haverim qui vient de se doter d'une équipe dynamique, rajeunie, consciente à la difficulté de sa tâche, et résolue à être reconnue tant dans le milieu homo que dans la communauté juive." (Ha Mikhtav, probably June 1990, BHA, 3. Author's translation.)

ence, the program, and the impact it had on the group itself.[105] It was the first big event Beit Haverim had organized since its foundation in 1977. However, it was smaller than the last conference in Amsterdam, with fewer workshops and discussion rounds, which reflected Beit Haverim's complicated position within the French Jewish community. Since the group's budget was very limited, family members of the organizers helped with the catering or organizational tasks.[106] It is noteworthy that the impetus from the Amsterdam conference two years earlier, the idea of connecting queer Jews from Central and Eastern Europe and educating them in forming (support) groups, was taken up in Paris. This time, the conference brought together Jews from 14 countries, among them Jews from Poland, Russia, and Czechia who had only a peripheral connection to a Jewish and/or queer community. Following one workshop that tackled this issue, the European network established a fund for Jews from Eastern Europe to participate in the conferences, stated the intention to relocate meetings from the West to the East as well as saying that contact/address lists would be distributed, along with informational material about Jewishness and Queerness.[107]

Even though the conference did not have the high profile of the one in Amsterdam, it is warmly remembered:

> It was probably the most memorable, warm, and friendly weekend event, and there were some serious discussions about the legal aspects because we had a lawyer among us who knew all about different countries' legal systems, being gay and the issues, and the repression some people suffered. So that was very pivotal, [...].[108]

The conference was fundamental for Beit Haverim as a group, for its self-perception, but also for developing the exchange within the European network. When the Europeans came together two years later, the network had grown noticeably. It had also improved on an administrative level, because queer Jews outside of the UK, France, and the Netherlands organized themselves and new groups emerged. The conference finally heralded the start of diversification of the queer Jewish landscape in Europe.

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105 Cf. Section 6.3.2.3.

106 Cf. Erwin Brugmans, "Parijs. Derde Eur/Isr. Conferentie [Paris. Third Eur(opean)/Isr(aeli) Conference]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 2, no. 2 (1992): 4.

107 Cf. Erwin Brugmans, "Conferentie Parijs. Workshop Centraal- en Oost-Europa [Paris Conference. Workshop Central and Eastern Europe]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 2, no. 3 (1992): 7.

108 Van Dyk, Interview Rainbow Jews Project, 6.

Forth European/Israeli Regional Conference, Givat Haviva, 1994

The SPPR from Israel was selected to host the 1994 conference. It took place in Givat Haviva, an education and dialogue center. The conference was shorter than its predecessors (only from Friday evening to Sunday noon), but the SPPR presented 30 workshops[109] that had a special focus on Israeli topics and questions.[110] Besides different leisure activities, a highlight of the conference was an address and a Q&A by the Member of Knesset Yael Dayan (Labor Party).[111]

The audience was much more diverse than at previous conferences with participants coming from all over the world (e. g., from Jamaica or Mexico). Israel served as a magnet for Jews to combine the conference with a visit to family, friends, and the country itself.[112] However, the organization was not always smooth, and workshops got confused. Lodewijk de Zwart from the Netherlands stated: "The last session of the conference, intended as plenary session, was poorly attended and uninteresting. A small group of attendees clearly felt more like lying in the pool than continuing to talk."[113] The WCGLJO also noted that the plenary session did not meet expectations.[114] That notwithstanding, de Zwart got to know new people and he enjoyed his time there.[115] Based on his experience, and the fact that the conference is hardly mentioned in any documents from the three European groups portrayed in this study, it is possible to assume that, apart from being an opportunity for enjoyment, the conference had a marginal impact on the European and Israeli network. The diversification of the European network – de Zwart spoke about well more than 300 participants in Givat Haviva[116] – might have been another reason why the conference did not have an intimate atmosphere as in the past.

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109 Cf. Digest. The Newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations 13, no. 1, 1994, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 3.

110 Cf. no author, "Euro-Israeli Conference 1994 Tel Aviv, Israel," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 3, no. 3 (1993): 2.

111 Cf. Digest 13, no. 1, LGBT CCNHA, 3.

112 Cf. Digest 13, no. 1, LGBT CCNHA, 3.

113 "De slotzitting van de conferentie, bedoeld als plenaire bijeenkomst, was slecht bezocht en oninteressant. Een klein groepje aanwezigen had duidelijk meer zin om in het zwembad te liggen dan nog verder te praten." (Lodewijk de Zwart, "Vierde Regionale Conferentie van de WGGLJO [Fourth Regional Conference of the WGGLJO]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 4, no. 1 (1994): 4. Author's translation.)

114 Cf. Digest 13, no. 1, LGBT CCNHA, 3.

115 Cf. Digest 13, no. 1, LGBT CCNHA, 3.

116 Cf. Digest 13, no. 1, LGBT CCNHA, 3.

The next conference was planned to be held in either Budapest, Berlin, Stockholm,[117] or Brussels.[118] However, this did not happen. It took until 1998 for the fifth conference to take place, again in Paris.[119] Three years later, Munich hosted the Sixth European/Israeli Conference which proved to be the final one of this kind of event.[120] The WCGLJO rarely organized such regional conferences after 2001. This was a manifestation of the fact that the European network was gradually losing its significance.[121]

Network Beyond the Conferences

The conferences were not the only manifestation of the European network between the end of the 1980s and the start of the 1990s. The network held formal meetings and informal encounters in various settings. We cannot provide a full picture of this: people visited each other at times when the three queer Jewish groups did not announce a formal meeting. They met outside of the groups' framework as friends at their homes, or in public spaces. Here, they talked about their experiences and how to work for their common causes. While speaking with (former) members, it became apparent that friendships were made that lasted even longer than the membership of a specific group. The following institutionally organized encounters can, therefore, only provide examples what the network looked like on an institutional level apart from the conferences.

The first of these meetings brought to mind the bilateral meetings of the early 1980s. After the 1990 Second European Conference in Amsterdam, JGLG and Beit Haverim invited each other to reciprocal weekends. First, members of Beit Haverim traveled to London to celebrate Gay Pride with their British peers. The weekend was opened by JGLG's *chavurah* and a social evening. On the next day, both groups took to the streets for the Pride Parade and JGLG's traditional bagel stall.[122] A few days later, Beit Haverim invited the British group to the "Bastille weekend." For the French national holiday, Beit Haverim organized different social activities, such as

117 Cf. Brugmans, "Parijs," 4.

118 Cf. de Zwart, "Vierde Regionale Conferentie," 4.

119 Cf. Lo Woudstra, "Hemels Parijs in de lente [Heavenly Paris in spring]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 7, no. 6 (1998): 11.

120 Cf. Mieke Zinn, "World Congress Europese Conferentie Munchen: 14–17 Juni 2001 [World Congress European Conference Munich: June 14–17, 2001]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 10, no. 3 (2001): 7.

121 Cf. Section 8.3.

122 Cf. JGLG Newsletter June 1990, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 348, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 1.

a party, a picnic, a tour through the Marais quarter, and meals at members' homes.[123]

The informal character of these meetings is apparent. None of them were business meetings; there were no workshops, and no debates about political projects. Such social encounters were very successful in the view of the European groups, so JGLG and Beit Haverim decided to repeat this experience the following year. The premises were the same – Gay Pride in London and Bastille weekend in Paris.[124] This time, Sjalhomo was officially invited to the Paris part of the "second annual Franco-British exchange."[125] Due to the short notice, it is not likely that many Sjalhomo members participated. In any event, the London group had already met Sjalhomo a few months earlier at a joint weekend.[126]

When Erwin Brugmans learnt about the bilateral meetings between JGLG and Beit Haverim, he wanted to bring these informal, social encounters together. Hence, he and Sjalhomo organized an "international weekend" in Amsterdam in November 1991. As Brugmans described: "Its purpose was to get to know each other in a Jewish atmosphere."[127] The scale of the weekend was much larger than that of the bilateral meetings: almost thirty people from six countries joined another thirty Sjalhomo members. The latter did their best to host the guests at their homes and organized an extensive program.[128] The weekend started with a Shabbat meal: "Especially the people from Prague and Vienna were very impressed because this was the first time in their lives to experience together what it is like to celebrate a Shabbat with so many Jewish gays and lesbians."[129]

The next day, those who wished went to the Shabbat service in the Portuguese Synagogue (Esnoga) that was followed by a tour through Amsterdam's Jewish Quarter. After spending free time in the city, the participants came together for a party. This was held in a theater, open to the general public as part of Amsterdam's weekly nightlife. However, Sjalhomo gave it a special Jewish touch:

> I had baked three butter cakes with poppy seeds, two of them in the shape of a Magen David. As soon as there was intermission, Sjalhomo put on a klezmer band and yes, the audience

123 Cf. JGLG Newsletter July 1990, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

124 Cf. letter from Russell Vandyk to David Silverstone, May 1, 1991, BHA.

125 Letter from David Freedman to Erwin Brugmans, June 24, 1991, BHA.

126 Cf. Nieuwsbrief, March/April 1991, UoA, 2.

127 "Het doel hiervan was elkaar te leren kennen in een joodse sfeer." (Brugmans, "Internationaal weekend," 4. Author's translation.)

128 Cf. Brugmans, "Internationaal weekend," 4.

129 "Vooral de mensen uit Praag en Wenen waren erg onder de indruk, omdat dit überhaupt de eerste keer in hun leven was samen te ervaren wat het is een sjabbat met zoveel joodse homo's en lesbiennes te vieren." (Brugmans, "Internationaal weekend," 4. Author's translation.)

> immediately took to the dance floor. The tallit raised high above the heads, we danced one round after another, while picking people out of the audience.[130]

On Sunday, the participants went to the Jewish Museum for a guided tour and concluded the weekend with a lunch. The participants summarized the weekend as reassuring them how powerful and important a queer Jewish group can be for individuals that feel alone. Those individuals from countries without such a group wanted to increase their efforts to found one.[131]

Another international weekend was organized in Vienna a year later. Those individuals who came to Amsterdam from Vienna were able to found their own group (Jüdische Lesben- und Schwulengruppe, later Re'uth) and were supported by queer Jews from Hungary in organizing this weekend.[132] Unfortunately, due to a lack of historical records, it is not possible to reconstruct what happened during that meeting. Given the information about previous meetings, it is possible to assume that other social activities and networking opportunities were at its center. However, this weekend in Vienna is the last recorded international weekend. It seems that these social, non-conference-related encounters passed their peak after 1992. A weekend between Sjalhomo members and JGLG members from Manchester[133] did not happen because of a lack of interest from the Dutch side. Scattered attempts to organize other bilateral meetings are recorded,[134] but they were not always organized successfully.[135]

130 "Ik had drie boterkoeken met maanzaad gebakken, twee daarvan in de vorm van een mogen david. Zodra er pauze was, zette Sjalhomo een bandje klezmer op en ja hoor, het publiek ging meteen de dansvloer op. De talliet hoog boven de hoofden geheven dansten we de ene ronde na de andere, ondertussen mensen uit het publiek plukkend." (Brugmans, "Internationaal weekend," 4. Author's translation.)

131 Cf. Brugmans, "Internationaal weekend," 4.

132 Cf. Brugmans, "Conferentie Parijs," 7.

133 Cf. Brugmans, "Conferentie Parijs," 7.

134 Cf. Erwin Brugmans, "Bezoek aan Berlijn I. Impressies [Visiting Berlin I. Impressions]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 3, no. 4 (1994): 4; Gertrud Mandelbaum, "Bezoek aan Berlijn II. Impressies [Visiting Berlin II. Impressions]," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 3, no. 4 (1994): 4–5; Sylvain Cypel's Private Archives (Paris), Beit Haverim – Ha Mihtav, No. 22, September 1999, 3.

135 Cf. Woudstra, "Van het bestuur," *Oi!* 7, no. 6, 5.

8.2.3 Flows – Shared Topics, Issues, and Concerns

Recalling the network theory by Lukas Szulc from 2017, a network does not only consist of its nodes and their connections, but also of the flows that occur during these connections. These multiple flows of ideas and people between the nodes can happen through different channels and are multidirectional. Similarly, they can flow through the whole network or only between two nodes. Since the flows are so diverse and, in the case of the European network of Jewish queers (as with others) often not recorded (e. g., a personal conversation at a bar), we cannot know what all the flows are. However, the conferences and the meetings reflect the topics and issues that were important to the queer Jewish groups at the time. An exchange of knowledge and sharing experiences became a crucial part of the whole network. It became an important emotional and political support structure for these European groups.

Organizational Questions

As already considered in this study, the three groups exchanged organizational structures and approaches very early on, exemplified in how Beit Haverim took up the idea of publishing a journal like Sjalhomo's *krantje.* Each group had experiences of what worked quite well with their membership or partners and what did not. The most evident example for the flow of ideas regarding the internal and outward organization were the efforts to help Beit Haverim to become reinvigorated at the end of the 1980s. The expertise, especially of Sjalhomo, and the (re-)integration of the group into the European network was vital for Beit Haverim's reorganization.[136] Because an exchange of knowledge proved successful in this case, and the struggles around building up a queer Jewish community were similar (e. g., how to find or reach out to queer Jews), the First European Conference had already dedicated a whole workshop to this topic.[137] This focused effort was extended with the next conference that held a session prior to the conference itself to connect those Jews who did not have a group in their country yet. This meeting was complemented by a similarly oriented workshop. The purpose was to support queer Jews to form their own groups. Experienced participants underlined the importance of collaborating with existing queer organizations and using community magazines to reach out to other queer Jews in their country.[138] An organizational structure, and not solely meetings based on private connections, was considered to

136 Cf. Section 6.3.2.1.

137 Cf. flyer "The First European Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Jews," BHA.

138 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, 1990, BHA, 13.

be the most valuable approach for the common fight for integration,[139] even though national differences had to be considered.[140] On this subject, it was concluded during the Second European Conference that: a) Every country had a different legal situation for homosexuals that influenced the ability to meet and/or found groups; b) Antisemitism played a different role in different countries. Those Jews who did not experience much hatred had to raise awareness for their peers who experienced a lot of it (especially in Eastern Europe).[141]

These efforts around organizational support came to fruition when recognizing that groups in Germany or Hungary were established shortly after the conference. Apparently, the Jewish Gay and Lesbian Helpline (JGLH) from the UK also hosted a workshop in 1990 on how to establish a telephone-based counceling service for queer Jews.[142] It was only at the end of the decade that Beit Haverim picked up this concept for their helpline *Sida Ecouté Juive*, so this workshop did not have any impact at this point. It is not retraceable to what extent, if any, organizational issues played a role at later conferences. However, data provides a good basis to suggest that they always were part of the conversations between different group members.

Gender Issues

The Tenth International Conference in Amsterdam again functioned as a catalyst for a stronger focus on female inclusion, especially for what was then known as JGG. Through the exchange during that conference, the group decided to change their name in order to attract more women.[143] The awareness for the situation of women within the European groups generally increased in the late 1980s and was therefore expressed at the conferences. Starting with the first conference, there were sessions/workshops exclusively either for men or women. Introducing separate workshops for men and women was intended to provide spaces in which male and female participants were able to express their needs freely, and to address, in case of the women's meetings, their discomfort with male dominance. Additionally, JGLG took care of including women's voices and history to the leisure activities, e. g., through a presentation titled "Jewish Women in London."[144]

139 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, 1990, BHA, 2–3.
140 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, 1990, BHA, 6.
141 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, 1990, BHA, 13.
142 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, 1990, BHA, 20–21.
143 Cf. Section 5.3.4.
144 Cf. flyer "The First European Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Jews," BHA.

One of these women-only workshops at the Second European Conference addressed the experience of coming out as a lesbian. The minute-takers summarized: "In Jewish culture, men are the stars of the family: coming out as homosexual usually destroys this idea/fantasy – it seems easier to come out as a lesbian. The mainstream Jewish community says things like: 'You are so pretty, why are you not married?' and 'At least you should have children.'"[145] This last assumption, about having children, attests to the inner conflict for many Jewish lesbians: in light of the Shoah, women should have (many) children so the Jewish people could persevere. Jewish lesbians wanted to contribute to their people's well-being, but this expectation was often at odds with the difficulties for lesbians in having children, or the simple refusal to have children.[146]

During the workshop about how to build a queer Jewish community at the second conference, the position of lesbians also came up. One participant asked why there were so few women present. The ensuing discussion dealt with the question of how Jewish lesbians were able to incite their friends' interest to participate in their group meetings, and what men did that prevented women from participating. The workshop concluded by agreeing upon the following steps to recognize women and their needs:

- Arrange it so that the liturgy is non-sexist [in case of using liturgical elements during meetings], advertise in women's newspapers and media.
- Set up a women's study group with Jewish education as the main topic.
- Arrange special events for women. […]
- It is important that male members automatically include women when organizing something. Women and men should encourage women to work with men and not scare them away. If they want or wish, women can organize separate activities.[147]

145 "In de joodse cultuur zijn mannen de sterren van de familie: uit de kast komen als homosexueel [sic!] vernietigt meestal dit idee / fantasie – het lijkt gemakkelijker om als lesbienne uit de kast te komen. De gewone joodse gemeenschap zegt dingen als: 'Je bent zo knap, waarom ben je niet getrouwd?' en 'Temeinste [sic!] zou je kinderen moeten hebben.'" (Minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 12. Author's translation.)

146 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 12.

147 "– Regel het zo dat de liturgie non-sexistisch is, adverteer in vrouwenkranten en -media. – Zet een vrouwen-studiegroep op met als belangrijkste onderwerp joodse opvoeding. – Regel speciale gebeurtenissen voor vrouwen. […] – Het is belangrijk dat mannelijke leden automatisch vrouwen erbij halen als zij iets organiseren. Vrouwen en mannen zouden vrouwen moeten aanmoedigen om met mannen te werken en ze niet weg te jagen. Als ze dit willen of wensen, kunnen vrouwen aparte activiteiten organiseren." (Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 13–14. Author's translation.)

Since the inclusion of women was a crucial element of all groups, this exchange of knowledge was probably very fruitful, not only for the newly emerging groups, but also for the established ones to question their own approaches. That is the case even though it was the members of JGLG and Sjalhomo that initially spoke about their experiences with women's inclusion, and tried to educate others during the workshop.

Two years later, during the third conference in Paris, the exchange of knowledge of and for women/lesbians became an important topic again. This time this issue was also physical because the organizers established designated spaces at the venue which were women only. In particular, the workshop about female rabbis exposed women to a lesser known practice in Europe and served to inspire other women.[148] Unfortunately, it is not recorded how the Fourth European/Israeli Conference in Givat Haviva took up the gender issue. Early drafts of the program did not reflect any women's-only events or any panels divided according to the (male) gay and lesbian experience. The drafts regarded "gay and lesbian" as one entity.[149] Also, nothing is recorded about the experiences of trans* or nonbinary Jews at any conference whatsoever. It is not possible to assume that they were just not present but had no opportunity to express their needs or to identify their respective identities.

Jewish European Experiences

Another focus for the conferences and the meetings were the specific experiences of European Jews. There was an urgent need to speak about these experiences, and to find others that were affected by European history and culture. This was, after all, the reason why the European Regional Conferences were established in the first place. Topics may have varied but can be grouped in three main areas:

1.) The Shoah: as explained earlier in this chapter, the Shoah played a pivotal role in the European Jewish identity. It is therefore not surprising that the commemoration of the Shoah was an important element of the meetings. This happened directly through visits to memorial sites (e.g., the Homo-monument, the Hollandsche Schouwburg in Amsterdam, or the Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation in Paris), where the participants commemorated Jews and homosexuals persecuted and murdered by the Nazi regime. The Shoah was also reflected

148 Cf. Section 6.3.2.3.

149 Cf. no author, "Euro-Israeli Conference 1994," 2.

during workshops that addressed the second (or even the third)[150] generation. In the spirit of "exploring our past,"[151] the conferences dealt with participants' family histories.

All Jewish families experienced losses because of the Shoah. This became obvious during a workshop at the second conference: only a few participants knew anything about their grandparents, while there was only slightly more knowledge on the subject of people's parents and their history. "Your family and your roots are very important"[152] – despite the workshop's motto, it is hard to find the reality behind this expressed sentiment. As it was apparent to European Jews, their parents were the starting point of any debate about this issue: "Most children want to know what happened from their parents. Many take a long time to figure out where their [parents'] boundaries are."[153] Parents' silence after the Shoah, not telling their children what had happened to them or their family, influenced their children's lives significantly. That is why all three conferences in London, Amsterdam, and Paris dealt with this special parent/child-relationship. One participant described how powerful the conversation with parents can be if they decided to talk about the Shoah: "[He spoke about] how fortunate he was when he was able to reconstruct his past through his mother (an Auschwitz survivor) and, thus, to put together the puzzle and to get over his grief and to begin his positive approach to being Jewish."[154]

As one result of the conference's workshops, the participants realized that they had to continue approaching their parents and asking (uncomfortable) questions. Only in this way would a dialogue start eventually. The reason why this was needed was clear: "We also need to live a positive Jewish life! […] We all have something to give and to be proud of!"[155]

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150 Cf. The World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations – Quarterly Newsletter of the Eastern Hemisphere, no. 6, February 1992/Sjewat–Adar 5752, Collection no. 65, box 6, folder 361, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Records, LGBT CCNHA, 2.

151 Flyer "The First European Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Jews," BHA.

152 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 22.

153 "De meeste kinderen willen van hun ouders weten wat er gebeurd is. Velen hebben lange tijd nodig om uit te vinden waar hun grenzen liggen." (Minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 12. Author's translation.)

154 "[…] hoe gelukkig hij was toen hij in staat was om via zijn moeder (een overlevende van Auschwitz) zijn verleden te reconstrueren en zo de puzzle [sic!] kon samenstellen en over zijn verdriet heen te komen en zijn positieve benadering van zijn joods zijn te beginnen." (Minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 12. Author's translation.)

155 "Wij moeten ook een positief (joods) leven leiden. […] Wij allen hebben iets te geven en trots of te zijn!" (Minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 12. Author's translation.)

These conversations among Jews of the second generation were important for European queers. Even though it was not a specifically queer Jewish topic, the opportunities to speak about family histories were generally rare during the 1980/90s – especially when one was not connected to a Jewish community like many of the Jewish queers.

2.) Antisemitism: besides the commemoration of the Shoah and its consequences for families, antisemitism on the continent was another issue for the European network. As explained earlier, it was sometimes forgotten by Jews who did not experience much antisemitic hatred (in this case, especially those in the Netherlands and the UK) that antisemitism was a huge issue for others, most notably for those from France,[156] Germany, Austria,[157] and Eastern Europe.[158] It has to be noted that the workshops during conferences usually did not touch on antisemitism as such.[159] However, this topic came up regularly in discussion rounds[160] and probably in personal conversations.

3.) Questions about Jewish life: other Jewish European experiences involved general questions about Jewish life. The core question that occupied many queer Jews was how to – and if at all – live a Jewish lifestyle. Being disconnected from God and disenfranchised from traditional Judaism was an experience almost everyone shared. It seemed that secular and religious Jewishness were opposite poles to choose between.[161] However, reconnecting to Jewish traditions, fulfilling the *mitzvot* even as a homosexual;[162] in short, returning to a conscious Jewish lifestyle became important not for all, but for many Jewish queers. The absence of Jewish communities in Europe that acknowledged, welcomed, and included Jewish queers made this even more difficult. Thus, the openly queer rabbis Sheila Shulman and Elizabeth T. Sarah were able to serve as role models of how to find a new approach to Judaism while being queer, and what a reconnection could look like.[163]

The reality was that many Jewish queers had non-Jewish partners, and this opened up debates for another core issue about how to live a Jewish life. The sig-

156 Cf. Section 4.2.2.
157 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 2.
158 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 2, 7, 13, and Cassuto, "Sjalhomo neemt voortouw," 3.
159 Cf. flyer "The First European Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Jews," BHA, and Quarterly Newsletter of the Eastern Hemisphere, no. 6, LGBT CCNHA, 2.
160 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 2, 13.
161 Cf. flyer "The First European Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Jews," BHA.
162 Cf. Ha Mikhtav, probably June 1990, BHA, 2.
163 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 14.

nificance of this subject was underlined by the fact that the European groups changed their membership requirements to welcome members' non-Jewish partners (Sjalhomo in 1986, Beit Haverim in 1991). During a workshop, again at the second conference, both men and women expressed their experiences on the topic. These were manifold: most of them reported about positive relationships with non-Jews; some individuals even exclusively looked for non-Jewish partners. Even though the different religious backgrounds were apparent in these relationships, they generally did not suffer under the circumstance, but this required an intensive dialogue between the partners.

The workshop participants agreed that differences in religious practices were neither important nor merely minimal. That is why they did not urge their partners to convert to Judaism. More important were the traditional, emotional, and political aspects of being a Jew. This aligned with the general orientation of queer Jews in Europe to understand Judaism as an ethnic/traditional and not a religious belonging (like in the United States – also expressed in the organizational decisions to form social groups and not synagogues). In the view of the workshop participants, mutual respect and curiosity for the respective other's background, traditions, and opinions were essential to balance these differences between the partners. They also thought that the non-Jewish side would gain valuable insights from the Jewish side of the relationship and would be exposed to a different perspective that they could then discuss with other non-Jews, e.g., views on Israel. However, one aspect in particular was regarded as a potential source of conflict: the Shoah. Non-Jewish partners were generally not as invested in the topic and its consequences as their Jewish partners. Dealing with the grief of the other was considered an important quality for a non-Jewish partner.[164]

Homosexual Life and Politics

Other flows revolved around the life of a homo- or bisexual person in a heteronormative society. Participants were Jewish, but they were also part of the wider queer community and shared similar struggles to those experienced by non-Jewish queers (e.g., heterosexism[165]). Sharing these experiences was another important element of the European network. The conferences' organizers were eager to educate the participants about the legal and societal situation for queers in their respective countries – JGLG dedicated a session to the implications of Clause 28,[166]

164 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 7–8.
165 Cf. flyer "The First European Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Jews," BHA.
166 Cf. flyer "The First European Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Jews," BHA.

Sjalhomo invited representatives from Dutch queer organizations,[167] and Beit Haverim focused on the French response to HIV/AIDS.[168] Additionally, all conferences offered opportunities to address developments, struggles, and also positive news from different countries and communities.[169] The exchange of information on the legal situation for queers in various European countries was interesting on an educational level since the legal status of homosexual relations differed massively (from threats of punishment as in Russia until 1993 or in Germany until 1994, differing ages of consent, to a liberal legal situation in the Netherlands).[170] This also had implications for the aspiration to establish new groups around Europe: the legal situation could further complicate these endeavors.

Another issue that was always addressed at the conferences was the coming out process. This was something almost everyone had to go through. The reactions were as diverse as there were people at the conference. Consequently, the participants quickly concluded that there is neither a certain nor a best way to come out. The main message from the conference was: "First, we should try to accept ourselves and learn to be strong. We could help each other. It will not be easy. [...] We are/were all in the same situation, the struggle goes on."[171]

Coming out could have massive consequences on an individual's life. It was, therefore, essential to provide a support network to enable people to come out, if they chose or had to do so. The Jewish/religious background of parents, siblings, and friends was another factor that could influence the reaction to someone coming out.[172] This network was able to provide resources to help fight against those prejudices grounded in the Jewish tradition. This could be the provision of alternative interpretations to the excluding parts in Torah and Talmud which appeared to exclude homosexuality, or providing contact with a queer rabbi or one who strived towards inclusivity.[173]

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167 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 6, 10–11, 16–18.

168 Cf. no author, "The Third European/Israeli Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews – Workshop Form," *Oi! Nieuwsblad voor joodse homo- en bisexuele vrouwen en mannen* 1, no. 5 (1992): appendix (without page number).

169 For example, cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 2–3, 6, 12–13, 15.

170 Cf. Van Dyk, Interview Rainbow Jews Project, 6.

171 "Eerst moeten wij pogen onszelf te accepteren en leren sterk te zijn. Wij zouden elkaar kunnen helpen. Het zal niet gemakkelijk zijn. [...] Wih zijn/waren allen in dezelfde situatie, de strijd gaat verder." (Minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 6. Author's translation.)

172 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 6.

173 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 8–9.

Some Jewish queers were in a heterosexual relationship before coming out or were simply bisexual. In these circumstances, it was not unusual that queers were also parents. Additionally, the increasing access to reproductive medicine was an opportunity for queer couples to have children of their own. This led to an exchange of opinions amongst queer Jewish parents at the European conferences.[174] The number of these parents was relatively small. Thus, it was even more important to create a space to exchange knowledge, or to include those queers who wanted to become parents and did not exactly know how. Moreover, another question for these parents was how to raise them as Jewish.[175] It was not unusual for a parent to not have been raised in a Jewish way and/or not to have had any Jewish education,[176] so any attempt at raising children needed careful thought.

Another area relevant for all queers, and which found coverage at the conferences, was the process of growing older, in most cases without children and/or without any family,[177] or staying single and feeling alone. The latter emphasized the necessity for groups like the ones portrayed in this study. "We must stand by each other!"[178] – This was a conclusion of a respective workshop on this issue.

Yet another urgent topic during the time of the European Regional Conferences was the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the associated feeling of helplessness, and the inappropriate reaction from the European Jewish community.

HIV/AIDS

In his article, Gregg Drinkwater described the Jewish US-American response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and early 1990s.[179] He explained how queer synagogues in the United States developed a distinct Jewish response. For example, the congregation Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco and its Rabbi Yoel Kahn became very vocal in addressing the issue of HIV/AIDS. They also advocated for the needs of HIV/AIDS patients nationally within Reform Judaism.[180] In the 1980s, Jewish AIDS programs were continuously developing, lobbying for a shift in the debate: away from morality arguments about the disease's causes to compassion and caring for the ill.

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174 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 14.

175 Cf. no author, "The Third European / Israeli Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews," 6.

176 The comprehensive introductions to Jewish heritage, traditions, holidays in the newsletters of JGG/JGLG, Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo serve as evidence to this estimate.

177 Cf. no author, "The Third European / Israeli Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews," 6.

178 "[W]ij moeten elkaar bijstaan!" (Minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 16. Author's translation.)

179 Cf. Drinkwater, "AIDS Was Our Earthquake," 122–142.

180 Cf. Drinkwater, "AIDS Was Our Earthquake," 127–131.

They were successful, at least with the leaders of Reform Judaism, but also reached out to American Orthodoxy.[181] Drinkwater concluded:

> By the 1990s, liberal American Jews nationwide were speaking of AIDS, homophobia, and LGBTQ inclusion as Jewish problems that required the mobilization of the broader Jewish community. [...] AIDS became, in the words of Avi Rose [director of Nechama AIDS program in Los Angeles], a sort of litmus test on how the Jewish community, and religious communities more generally, would confront myths, silences, taboos, and stigma.[182]

The situation in Europe was very different. For the European groups, the HIV/AIDS epidemic became more urgent over time, especially in the 1990s. There was no unified Jewish response to the crisis at the beginning of the decade, except from the Jewish AIDS Trust (JAT) in the UK. Sjalhomo's and Beit Haverim's responses only followed later. There were many reasons for this. One was the (relatively) low number of infected members at the turn of the decade, despite the virulence of the disease in personal spaces, in friendships, and in sexual encounters. The programs of the European/Israeli Conferences do not document workshops about specific Jewish responses to the disease, e.g., the development of Jewish liturgy for patients and their relatives or *bikkur cholim* programs. The situations in the respective countries were very different – yet the response from the governments ranged from silence to intensive care for HIV/AIDS patients.[183] However, the experience of queer Jews in Europe was still quite similar:

> In most countries, it seems difficult for a rabbi to respond appropriately to the questions of an AIDS patient. This problem was resolved in New York [the United States respectively] because of the social attitude of the Reform community there. This seems to be one way to break the ice. The Jewish homosexual groups should look out for a socially awake person within the Jewish community/Jewish social work.[184]

At least from the beginning of the 1990s, receiving Jewish support depended on the individual and their place within the Jewish community.

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181 Cf. Drinkwater, "AIDS Was Our Earthquake," 133–134.

182 Drinkwater, "AIDS Was Our Earthquake," 135.

183 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 17.

184 "In de meeste langen lijkt het voor een Rabbijn moeilijk om op de juiste wijze te reageren op de vragen van een AIDS-patient. Dit probleem loste zich in New York vanzelf op door de sociale houding van de Reform-gemeenschap aldaar. Dit schijnt een manier te zijn om het ijs te breken. De joodse homogroepen moeten uitkijken naar een sociaal-voelend persoon binnen de joodse gemeenschap/joods maatschappelijk werk." (Minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 18.)

European Jewish responses to the crisis were not significant at that time. Debates circulated around the disease itself, the protection of one's own immune system,[185] providing a general support structure, and, to a lesser extent, to direct consequences for the Jewish community. Nevertheless, the European network enabled debates to take place about what a Jewish engagement with the topic could look like. These were further enriched through the WCGLJO's international conferences where the Jewish AIDS programs from the United States reported on their work. When the time came and the European groups became more affected by the epidemic in the mid-1990s, this exchange of knowledge proved worthwhile – e. g., when Beit Haverim installed a phone line for Jewish HIV/AIDS patients, similar to JGLH and the hotline of JAT in the UK.

8.3 Diversification of the Network and End of Its Peak Period

In this chapter I have described the connections and flows within the European network of Jewish European queers. From the late 1980s on, this network became valuable for the three groups portrayed in this study. While attempting to reconstruct and evaluate the flows, it became obvious that there had been a significant exchange of knowledge and experiences, as well as the establishment of an important support network. However, this network began losing its significance for all three groups from the mid-1990s on. The first indication of how the network was changing became apparent during the Fourth European/Israeli Conference in Givat Haviva, when the spirit of the conference shifted, and sociability and fun were more important than the political and theoretical exchange. What happened in the mid-1990s that led to the end of the network's peak?

The desire to found new groups around the continent was a double-edged sword. It was considered fundamental that queer Jews could organize, create safe spaces, and work against discrimination in Jewish communities everywhere. However, this diversification led to fewer intimate meetings, more people attending events, and difficulties coordinating the network. At the end of 1990, the WCGLJO counted five groups in Europe: JGLG, JGLH, Hineinu, Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo. Four years later, seven more groups/synagogues were registered, among them Beit Klal Yisrael, L'Chaim, or Kesergé.[186] Additionally, individuals from other countries, especially from Eastern Europe, without connections to

185 Cf. minutes 2nd European Conference Gay and Lesbian Jews, IHLIA, 20.
186 Cf. Digest 13, no. 1, LGBT CCNHA, 4.

any group, were regarded as contact persons.[187] Finally, as can be seen from the records of the Fourth European/Israeli Conference, more and more participants from outside Europe attended the meetings as well.

Another factor in the shrinking relevance of the European network was the resignation of important people. During the 1990s, the European groups experienced broadly similar developments that changed their internal structure. In the UK, the diversification of the queer Jewish scene was already a reality: people used different groups for different purposes.[188] A new generation of queer Jews took over Beit Haverim, reinvented the group, and made it more visible to the French public.[189] Sjalhomo increasingly had difficulties in motivating its members and Beit Ha'Chidush became a new space for queer Jews.[190] In particular, the resignation of Erwin Brugmans as coordinator for the Eastern Hemisphere had severe implications for the network. At the end of 1992, Brugmans concluded his engagement for the World Congress,[191] even though he still participated in international meetings and the conferences. During the peak of the European network, Brugmans was the one who pursued greater networking and new forms of meetings. He was one of the great minds behind the European Conferences. After he left his position, there were noticeably fewer bilateral and informal meetings. Additionally, Sjalhomo backed Brugmans' efforts, so that the group as a whole became very active in promoting the European network and an ongoing exchange. For example, Sjalhomo always sent the largest delegations to European meetings. However, the group had its own organizational and internal problems that started the mid-1990s.[192] Addressing these, and trying to attract more members with commitment to the group, was regarded as more important than European collaboration.

It seems that the international, global events of the WCGLJO regained importance from the mid-1990s onwards.[193] Initial encounters between new and old European groups started happening here, and not necessarily through the European network and/or word-of-mouth recommendation anymore.[194] During the 25th anniversary of Beit Haverim in 2002, Sylvain Cypel responded when asked why the connections with other European groups had seemingly ceased:

187 Cf. Quarterly Newsletter of the Eastern Hemisphere, no. 7, LGBT CCNHA, 5.
188 Cf. Section 5.4.
189 Cf. Section 7.3.
190 Cf. Section 6.4.
191 Cf. Brugmans, "World Congress," 8.
192 Cf. Section 7.3.
193 Cf. Woudstra, "Van het bestuur," *Oi!* 7, no. 6, 4–5.
194 Cf. Woudstra, "The City of Brotherly Love," 4.

> The contacts never stop; we have personal contacts with people who have responsibilities in Jewish homosexual communities. The fact that we are all volunteers is very important because we cannot take care of everything. Organizing the European conference was a huge task to bring people to our country; that is to say, it is necessary to mobilize energies from hundreds or thousands of kilometers away. […] It is true that international [European] meetings are difficult to organize. [But] of course, we can [still] agree on international meetings [International Conferences of the World Congress] […].[195]

Cypel described something familiar to other queer Jewish groups: exhaustion from organizing large-scale events, from continuously acquiring new volunteers and funding, and from keeping members in line. At the end of the 20th century, Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Spain, and Sweden had one queer Jewish group each, whilst one group and one synagogue existed in the Netherlands, and two groups and one synagogue in the UK.[196] Some groups that had existed in 1994 had already closed down (e. g., Hineinu or L'Chaim), while others were very small, barely intact, and were not able to host large events. In fact, the strongest groups at that time, JGLG, Beit Haverim, Sjalhomo, and Yachad (in Cologne, founded in 1995),[197] wanted to support the smaller European groups in a way similar to what had been done to get these new groups founded in the first place.[198] However, this support was only intentional, and we do not know whether this translated into action.

This points to a general trend that the whole World Congress, and also the European groups, faced: Jonathan Falk, longtime secretary of the WCGLJO, explained that around the year 2000, it became more and more difficult to organize regional and international conferences due to the fact that it was always the same volunteers who arranged the events. They felt increasingly burned out.[199] Around this time, Jewish queers became more integrated into mainstream Jewish communities,

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195 "Les contacts ne s'arrêtent jamais nous avons des contacts personnels avec des personnes qui ont des responsabilités dans des communautés juives homosexuelles. Le fait est que nous sommes tous des bénévoles, c'est très important parce qu'on ne peut pas tout prendre en charge. Organiser la conférence européennes [sic!] a été un travail colossal pour faire venir des gens dans notre pays; C'est a dire mobiliser des énergies, à les recevoir comme ils le méritent. […] C'est vrai que les rencontres internationales sont difficiles à organiser. Bien sûr on peut conventionner à propos de rencontres internationales […]." (25ème anniversaire du Beit Haverim – 1ère Table Ronde, 23 June 2002 Matin: Juifs et Homosexuels, 25 ans d'histoires, BHA. Author's translation.)

196 Cf. Digest 18, no. 2, LGBT CCNHA, 8.

197 Yachad developed into a Germany-wide organization with different regional branches (*Regionalgruppen*). For example, the Berlin branch was established in 1997. Jungmann was able to interview one of the Berlin founders and integrated their testimony into an analysis about Yachad and the Jewish community in Berlin (cf. Jungmann, *Jüdisches Leben in Berlin*, 509–522).

198 Cf. Woudstra, "Van het bestuur," *Oi!* 7, no. 6, 4–5.

199 Cf. Falk, "Recollections of a Long-Serving Secretary," 28.

especially in, but not entirely limited to, the United States. With increasing acceptance in mainstream society, queers gained more opportunities to found other organizations or to become involved in areas that had previously rejected them. One of the many reasons for Sjalhomo's dissolution in 2002 was the argument that the initial goal of the group – the integration of Jewish homosexuals into mainstream Judaism – had already been achieved and there was no longer any need for the group. While this assertion has to be scrutinized carefully even from today's perspective, Bill Wahler from the World Congress asked if they had done their job "too well."[200] At the turn of the new millennium, no new groups emerged and the total number gradually declined.[201] This development also led to financial problems: fewer member organizations meant less membership dues for the World Congress which resulted in a drastic reduction in activities.[202]

In summary, the European network of Jewish queers was an important feature of the late 1980s and the early 1990s. While Jewish communities in Europe did not widely accept homo- or bisexuals, this network enabled the queer Jewish groups to exchange their ideas, set up a support system, and change the image of European Jewry. The network faded away until the 2000s. However, personal relationships were maintained, some even until this day. Recently, in the 2020s, there were attempts to restart this European network and the European conferences, but they were stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic.[203] Whether any attempt can match the network's successes with well-attended and wide-ranging conferences and informal weekends is yet to be seen.

200 Wahler, "Did We Do Our Job Too Well?," 35.

201 Cf. Wahler, "Did We Do Our Job Too Well?," 35.

202 Cf. Falk, "Recollections of a Long-Serving Secretary," 28.

203 By the time of writing, the most recent attempt of bringing queer Jews in Europe together was a "European Jewish Queer Pride Shabbaton" in Rome from June 9–11, 2023. It was organized around the Roman Pride Parade and its structure was similar to the European-Israeli conferences of the 1990s. The conference aimed not only at connecting queer Jews from the continent but also pairing them with other, welcoming queer and Jewish institutions/communities. The intersectional experiences of queer Jews and peer-to-peer activities were a particular focus of the Shabbaton (cf. e-mail titled "European Jewish Queer Pride à Rome!" by Beit Haverim, April 25, 2023).

9 Conclusion

Feeling excluded from the queer community as Jews and feeling excluded from the Jewish community as queers: many Jews in Europe shared this experience in the 1970s. The Jewish Gay (and Lesbian) Group (JGG/JGLG), Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo created safe spaces outside the Jewish mainstream institutions for those who did not fulfill heteronormative expectations. For the first time in Europe, Jewish queers were able to meet each other on the basis of their double – "twice blessed"[1] – identity. This study has considered the three groups' history, their internal struggles and debates, the focus on their members' needs, the groups' impact on their queer and Jewish environment, and, lastly, their entanglements and how they created a European network of Jewish queers.

Therefore, this study contributes to the *Queer Jewish Archive* and responds to the need for rediscovering the history of queer Jews. It focuses on the experiences and discrimination Jewish queers faced as Jews, as queers in a heteronormative society, and as queers in the Jewish domain. As this study shows, Jewish traditional literature was interpreted very narrowly before the 1970s: in short, homosexuality and trans* identities – and, thereby, all other deviations from the heterosexual norm – were considered abnormal and against Jewish law. Influenced by the sexual revolution and the broader queer liberation, perceptions in organized Judaism started changing: in the United States, queer synagogues were founded as safe spaces that for the most part later entered Jewish mainstream organizations. In Europe, social groups emerged that tried to change organized Judaism from the inside as their adherents remained members in their original congregations. Queer synagogues and queer Jewish groups came together in the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations (WCGLJO) which became the main hub for knowledge exchange and for joining forces to challenge mainstream Judaism by organizing its international and regional conferences.

The European groups were founded in a triangle of three cities that were predestined to host queer Jewish groups for various reasons: London, Paris, and Amsterdam had the reputation of being queer metropolises whose lineage persisted throughout World War II. Despite their regional peculiarities, the importance of the cities for the queer community radiated across the continent. Additionally, the cities had a considerable number of Jewish people that saw their future in the respective country even after the Shoah. The Jewish communities were, however, quantitatively dominated by Orthodoxy. The Reform and Liberal branches were quite small and more conservative than their US-American counterparts.

1 Cf. Balka and Rose, *Twice Blessed.*

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This had relevance for the three queer Jewish groups since it became more difficult for them to gain support from the European Jewish mainstream.

The first recorded group of Jewish queers in the world was JGG, or more precisely, its direct predecessors. Originally formed in the Gay Liberation Front London (GLF) in late 1971/early 1972, it took the group several years to become properly organized. Up until the end of the 1970s, the group was a predominantly private group. Its members feared what might happen should they become known publicly. It was only in the 1980s that the group came out of its shell and started reaching out to its environment, e. g., through coverage in Jewish newspapers. The group established a *chavurah*, a place to celebrate the beginning of the Shabbat and Jewish holidays. Serving more of a social than religious purpose, the *chavurah* became a very important feature of the group alongside the many social activities. A mainstream synagogue even permitted JGG to host their *chavurah* on its premises. Another influence during the 1980s was the growing number of women arriving at JGG after several attempts had failed to convene Jewish lesbians in separate groups. That led to another name change at the end of the 1980s to the Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group (JGLG). However, JGLG lost its significance around the same time with an increasing diversification of the queer Jewish landscape in the UK. The group had received a reputation as a place for older gays and lesbians who did not engage with politics and public debates. Urgent topics like the appropriate Jewish reactions to HIV/AIDS were outsourced to other institutions. JGLG remained a place to socialize, to meet new people, and to have a good time. Its slowness in recognizing political and social change is also expressed in the (thus far) final name change to the Jewish LGBT+ Group, which happened as late as in 2018.

In 1977, a group of queer Jews in the Parisian Centre du Christ Liberateur (CCL) founded Beit Haverim. This group controversially received assistance from the CCL's leader Joseph Doucé in its early years. Only after the attack on the synagogue in rue Copernic in 1980 did Beit Haverim strike out on its own, renting their own premises, and establishing itself as a physical space to meet and to celebrate Jewish holidays. At that time, the group was still predominately a space for gay men. However, the first president was a woman and the group described itself as "groupe mixte." Beit Haverim made itself visible to the queer community of France and cooperated with it on several occasions. In contrast, the relationship with the French Jewish community was troublesome. There was no public acknowledgment of queer Jewish lives whatsoever. Due to a lack of members and an unstable financial situation, the group was close to its dissolution in 1985 and was dormant until 1988. Through the Tenth International Conference of the WCGLJO in Amsterdam and the input and support of other queer Jewish groups and synagogues, new life was breathed into Beit Haverim and it introduced another newsletter, created more designated spaces for women, and reconnected with

the queer community (e. g., as a founding member of the Centre Gai en Lesbien). Also, Rabbi Pauline Bebe made the first contacts with the Liberal Jewish community. From the mid-1990s onwards, a new and committed generation of mostly Sephardic Jews took over and changed Beit Haverim's image, internally and externally. Consequently, Beit Haverim became the first queer Jewish group in Europe to own a community center and, in 2019, it became the first queer organization to be recognized by the Conseil représentatif des juifs de France (CRIF).

In Amsterdam, Sjalhomo was founded in 1980 within the Cultuur en Ontspannings Centrum. Shortly thereafter, the group started outreach to the Dutch queer and Jewish community. The Joods Maatschappelijk Werk (JMW) in particular became an important ally, and personal contacts with the Liberal community were established quite early. Sjalhomo also received government subsidies, the only queer Jewish group in Europe to do so. Emphasizing its social and political purpose, Sjalhomo understood itself as a place for bringing queer Jews together, helping and representing them and their needs to the outside world. After the "butter cake war" in 1983 and the subsequent, but short-lived separation of women into a female subgroup, Sjalhomo tried to improve its representation of women and, additionally, started addressing to concerns of bisexuals (especially those of bisexual women). The most significant event in Sjalhomo's history was the hosting of the Tenth International Conference of the WCGLJO in 1987, which impacted the group itself and their members, other groups (like Beit Haverim), and the European network of Jewish queers. However, Sjalhomo's peak ended in the mid-1990s, despite increasing awareness of the challenges that the HIV/AIDS epidemic posed to the group and its community. The decline of Sjalhomo was driven by the fact that its members chose to no longer engage in the group's activities. With Beit Ha'Chidush, there was another place for queer Jews, attracting those who wanted to combine a religious and a queer identity. Finally, in 2002, irreconcilable differences among the board led to Sjalhomo's dissolution.

When we compare the groups in the 1980s and 1990s, Sjalhomo had the most supportive environment. The very welcoming atmosphere for queers in the Netherlands and the willingness of the Dutch government to support second generation Jewish life contributed to its success. With Harri Wishaupt, the group had an important ally in JMW, and eventually received formal recognition from a national Jewish institution. Even though the Jewish denominations in the Netherlands did not officially acknowledge queer Jews during Sjalhomo's existence, JMW was successful in considering the needs of queer individuals without engaging in ideological debates. However, JGG/JGLG and Beit Haverim were faced with a more hostile climate. In the UK, the 1980s were dominated by the conservative Thatcher government, its negative attitude towards queers, and its scant regard for the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Until the 1990s, the overwhelming majority of congregations in

the Jewish community did not welcome queers, even though Reform and Liberal Judaism made significant adjustments over time. Beit Haverim was involved in political outreach to the French public in its early years, and, like all other queer organizations, benefited from the politics of the Mitterrand era. The HIV/AIDS epidemic was a unifying factor for the previously fragmented French queer movement, which Beit Haverim was proudly part of. More daunting was the relationship with the Jewish community. Only through its relationship with Rabbi Pauline Bebe was the group able to connect with Liberal Jewish communities. Resistance from the Jewish mainstream was solid up until the late 2010s, and only started to ease after Beit Haverim's admission to CRIF.

Despite their problems, the three groups were able to provide a support structure and a safe space to discuss the experience of being both Jewish and queer. They contributed to a sense of queer belonging[2] in opposition to the loneliness of Jewish queers. Traditionally, Judaism is heavily structured around the family and the community. Queer Jews were often rejected from both and, therefore, denied access to fundamental parts of Jewish life. Thus, the groups created new, *Jewish* communities, embracing queers and offering them an alternative to the Jewish mainstream, especially at times when members found it difficult to be alone, e. g., during Jewish holidays. These Jews connected to Judaism from a new angle; some of them even returned to a heritage that they had previously rejected due to the discrimination they had experienced.

Therefore, the three groups distinctively presented themselves as social. They brought their members together based on their Jewish heritage and traditions, and not based on religious beliefs. Their members had different religious backgrounds. Consequently, it was not predetermined how to celebrate a Jewish holiday or how to observe Shabbat. It was important to follow Jewish traditions *without* neglecting one's queer identity, *with* one's (same-sex) partner, and *with* a chosen community or family. Additionally, from their inception the groups welcomed patrilinear Jews; strict Orthodox interpretations of who is Jewish were not enforced. Moreover, non-Jewish partners were also included during festivities and other events, and, later, they could even become formal members. The idea of community was broader than in other Jewish communities. This particularly stemmed from the experiences of the second generation, being raised after the horrors of the Shoah, a declining importance of observance, and increasing involvement with the non-Jewish world.

Given these similar conditions, the European groups established a strong network of Jewish queers. The groups were the nodes of this network that had many

2 Cf. Judith Butler, "Kinship beyond the Bloodline," in *Queer Kinship. Race, Sex, Belonging, Form*, ed. Tyler Bradway and Elizabeth Freeman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022), 40 – 41.

and various connections: bilateral meetings, joint weekends with a focus on fun and friendships, and, in academia and collective memory almost completely forgotten, the European (and Israeli) Regional Conferences of the WCGLJO. There was not only an exchange between people, but also of ideas. The flows between the nodes were as manifold as the connections themselves. The groups swapped ideas about organizational questions, gender issues, the involvement of women, their European experiences as second generation Jews, and with antisemitism on the continent. Other topics concerned conditions queers in general had to face: the coming out process, queer parenthood, or the HIV/AIDS epidemic. With their network, the three groups contributed to the London-Paris-Amsterdam triangle of Jewish and queer relevance. Through their support structure, they also influenced other queer Jewish groups which had emerged on the continent. Around the mid-1990s, this European network became more diverse and gradually lost its significance. The diversification of queer Jewish life in Europe resulted in it becoming more difficult to bring the members of the network together. Those who had been invested in the network retired because of the immense workload that the network required. Many of the new groups were short-lived and, with the decline of Sjalhomo, which had held the network together, faded away. Nevertheless, this network had important and relevant for the queer Jewish scene in Europe of the 1980s and through most of the 1990s.

Note on Absences

Conducting queer research always needs a careful evaluation of the blind spots or other biases of the researchers themselves. I deliberately chose to mainly use the word queer in this study.[3] However, the representation of bisexual Jews within the three queer Jewish groups was limited until the 1990s. Sjalhomo started including and addressing them much earlier (around 1985) than the other two groups, especially through the involvement of bisexual women. Moreover, trans* or nonbinary Jews are almost not represented in this study. I tried to find evidence of their presence in analyzing the material, e. g., the note from the participant named Rachel during the symposium "The Jewish Homosexual in Society" in London (1972)[4] or the possible contacts of the early Beit Haverim with the group for trans* individuals in the CCL.[5] It would be wrong to assume that trans* or nonbinary Jews were not present during the twenty to thirty years portrayed. It may be they did not have the words to describe their situation, or they did not want to come out yet.

3 Cf. Section 1.5.
4 Cf. Section 5.1.1.
5 Cf. Section 6.1.3.

Whatever the reasons were, trans* representation really only started later than the time period this study covers. Sjalhomo never had a recorded debate about including trans* Jews on their agenda, Beit Haverim started debating different gender identities in the 2000s, and JGLG was only renamed in 2018 through the pressure of trans* Jews demanding visibility.

Another note of absence regards the specific experiences of Sephardic, Mizrahi, and other non-Ashkenazi Jews as well as Jews of Color. This study mainly takes the experience of Ashkenazi Jews into account. The three groups started as Ashkenazi projects. This needs to be recognized, particularly in respect of Beit Haverim and the substantial Sephardic community in modern France. Sephardic Jews were not involved in the years covered in this study. Only in the 1990s and, to a great extent, in the early 2000s, was Beit Haverim reshaped by the second generation of those Sephardic Jews who had migrated to France after the end of the colonization of North Africa. Members of the (smaller) Sephardic community in the UK or the Netherlands were not visible in JGG/JGLG or Sjalhomo, at least not in the material I was analyzing. Any formal contacts with these communities (e. g., the Portugees-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap in the Netherlands) are not recorded.

Another category that needs further attention is the one of class. The analysis implies that the groups were administered by those who were able to invest time and resources in their *voluntary* involvement. Even though there were attempts to include people with lower incomes (e. g., by offering lower membership dues), it was not uncommon for the groups to meet in restaurants or bars, or to offer trips which the members had to pay for. Participation in the European/Israeli and international conferences was a particularly cost-intensive endeavor. Further research could determine more clearly whether or not class differences played a role in someone becoming involved in a group or not.

Closing an Academic Void and Encouraging Further Research

Even though there are several academic reflections on the comparisons between "the Jews" and "the queers" in general terms, Jewish queers, their experiences, and their achievements are underrepresented in Jewish historiography. If we consider Sjalhomo, for example, its history has been forgotten (with a few exceptions),[6] despite the group's presence in Amsterdam for more than two decades. The Jewish LGBT+ Group and Beit Haverim still exist today. However, only parts of their history or stories passed on by word of mouth are present in the collective memory of its members. This study has analyzed material that has either not been

6 Cf. Stadsarchief Amsterdam, "Sjalhomo, Shalom," Snijders, "Sjalhomo," and Kwantes, "Natuurlijk, ik ben joods," 2012.

regarded at all or been replicated under the premise of organized queer Jewishness. The material is dispersed through several archival collections and was brought together in this study for the first time. This fact alone shows that essential academic work is still very much required in the field of Queer Jewish History.

The majority of analyzed documents represent personal testimonies, e. g., those published in newsletter articles. By taking these testimonies into account, the study gives a voice to those people who had not been heard before. It recognizes the lifetime achievements of queer Jews who long were excluded and were denied the chance to combine their Jewishness and Queerness. They put everything on the line and fought against invisibility, for their rights, and for a place in both the Jewish and the queer community. This study points to more research that might enrich the Queer Jewish Archive further: structured interviews with (former) members of the groups or with the queer Jewish community in the respective countries may not only reveal additional perspectives, but would also conserve their testimonies for future generations. This would ultimately result in new research questions and knowledge. The Rainbow Jews Project in the UK has already worked extensively on collecting both oral history and written material on queer Jewish lives in the country. This project is unique in Europe, but unfortunately it has ceased its activities. The idea, however, should be extended to other countries (and not just France and the Netherlands), especially in light of the advancing age of the early protagonists. The work of the US-American LGBTQ Religious Archives Network with its biography collection of queer religious leaders might be a point of reference. Collecting oral histories would be also a chance to include trans* or nonbinary Jews who are mostly absent in the written sources.

Other areas worthy of further exploration are the more theoretical and methodological deliberations on queer Judaism. As explained in the second chapter, previous scholarship mainly focused on similarities between queers and Jews, or on how gender stereotypes influenced antisemitic tensions. This study not only portrays the history of queer Jews, elaborating on how they tried to reconcile their Jewish *and* queer experiences at the end of the 20th century, but contributes previously (unconsciously) neglected European perspectives to the Queer Jewish Archive. The latter is, until now, mostly filled with US-American voices, which is not surprising given the tendency in general research to focus more on US-American Jewry when speaking about Diasporic experiences after World War II.[7] When

7 One should not get the impression that the Queer Jewish Archive does not need more US-American perspectives. Every contribution is highly valuable for this field. This study alone points to more research opportunities regarding the WCGLJO which was very invested in the developments in the United States. Such research might be facilitated through more attention on queer Jewish

research focuses on European Jewry, it only rarely covers alternative, nondenominational ways of Jewish organizing. The findings of this study, however, show that European Jewish history after 1945 should not only be regarded alongside Jewish denominational lines and traditional religious or political institutions. Since queer Jews were excluded from the Jewish establishment for many years, their history and achievements outside the traditional frameworks were neglected as well. By *queering* Jewish Studies, alternative forms of organizing and diverse understandings of what it means to be a Jew or being Jewish becomes visible and examinable. Jewishness does not only express itself through the affiliation with a denomination or recognized institution. Social groups like the ones presented in this study opened up alternative spaces to express one's Jewishness and, at the same time, to tackle common experiences among Jews (e. g., antisemitism or having parents who survived the Shoah). In recognizing this, research can diversify the understanding of post-Shoah European Jewry that has been far more self-determined and viable than often suggested and apparently indicated by the lower number of Jews in European countries after the Shoah.

This study also shows that the history of European Jews in the second half of the 20th century should not only be revisited along country lines. The network of queer Jewish groups is an example of the interconnectedness of European Jewry. The groups active in this network viewed themselves as Europeans, and certainly distinct from similar organizations in the United States and Israel. Research should address an empowering *and* international history of *European* Jews after 1945.

Other histories are just waiting to be discovered. More research can contribute to the deconstructing and analyzing of identities, gender, and sexuality, and their understanding in Jewish communities in all time periods. For example, drag and performing gender are not new to heteronormative Judaism: Purim celebrations have always bent gender norms and "confused" traditional perceptions of what is male and female.[8] Rabbinic Judaism already recognized more than just two gen-

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institutions in the United States; only three of which have been subject to academic research (Beth Chayim Chadashim, Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, and Sha'ar Zahav).

8 In a more recent article by Caryn Tamber-Rosenau, they analyzed the figure of the Biblical Esther using queer-theoretical vocabularies of drag and passing to allow for a different reading of Esther that acknowledges her intentional saving of the Jewish people (cf. Caryn Tamber-Rosenau, "Esther, Drag, and Agency: Gender, Ethnicity, Power, and Queer Time in the Book of Esther and its Jewish Interpretations," *Hebrew Studies* 63 [2022]: 99–118). Also consider Tamber-Rosenau's work on gender and performance in the Hebrew Bible and early Jewish literature (cf. Caryn Tamber-Rosenau, *Women in Drag. Gender and Performance in the Hebrew Bible and Early Jewish Literature* [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2018]).

ders, which could open up room for discussion about the position of trans* and nonbinary Jews in the past, as well as in the present and future. Another area of interest that needs more attention is the definition and acceptance of same-sex activity in Sephardic communities in the Middle Ages, influenced by Muslim culture in North Africa and Spain.[9] This also applies to the general experiences of queer non-Ashkenazi Jews, especially regarding their minority position in the queer Jewish scene in Europe and the United States.[10] Having said that, these are only examples for the potential of *queering* research questions. This study may lead to further, more detailed research on the three queer Jewish groups. This is precisely the power of queer research as Schlotter stated: Queer History raises more questions than it answers.[11]

The study's intersectional approach – taking experiences of discrimination as Jewish *and* queer as a starting point for academic inquiries – highlights the potential of self-organizing and, subsequently, portrays the potential to inspire further social change. Undoubtedly, there is a need to further theorize and implement the intersectional experiences of being Jewish *and* queer.[12] By acknowledging intersectional experiences, there is the opportunity to change the perception of Judaism as monolithic, strictly heteronormative, and resistant to change: Judaism is diverse and represents all colors of the rainbow.

Beyond that, Jews have often been excluded from intersectional discourses, and this study is a response to that. As Alfandari and Shohat pointed out, a more privileged status in comparison with other minorities was previously often attributed to Jews.[13] Intersectionality, however, can serve as an empowering tool for the analysis of multiple discrimination since "Jews have manifold social characteristics"[14] like gender or sexuality, but also things like class or disability. Excluding Jews from intersectional discourses only leads to a division within minority societies.[15] Therefore, this study shows that religion and/or spirituality can have a

9 Noam Sienna has already collected literary examples written by Jews and with queer potential from medieval Spain, Northern Africa, and the Middle East (cf. Sienna, *Rainbow Thread*, 39 et seqq.).

10 For a start of this conversation, cf. Somekh, "A Space for LGBTQ Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews."

11 Cf. Schlotter, "Unordnung der Geschichte," 14.

12 For a first reflection on the new field of Queer Jewish Studies, cf. Wilkens, "Ein Fach neu denken," 1–13.

13 Alfandari and Shohat, "Welche Rolle spielen Juden*Jüdinnen in intersektionalen Ansätzen," 139–140.

14 "Jüdinnen*Juden verfügen über mannigfaltige gesellschaftliche Merkmale […]." (Alfandari and Shohat, "Welche Rolle spielen Juden*Jüdinnen in intersektionalen Ansätzen," 142.)

15 Cf. Alfandari and Shohat, "Welche Rolle spielen Juden*Jüdinnen in intersektionalen Ansätzen," 141.

significant, identity-establishing influence on queer individuals. Researchers active in the field of Queer History and Theory need to overcome their (still prevalent) hesitation to include religion in their analysis. Religion/spirituality needs to be recognized as a valid and important category in intersectional research. Above all, queer research fails to include the experiences of Jews as a minority that faces antisemitism, not only in the wider world, but certainly within the queer community as well. This study points to a blind spot here: Jews are not a group separate from the queer community or "just like queers" as early research suggests,[16] but queer Jews are and want to be *part of* the queer community.

By applying an intersectional analysis, this study helps to understand and deconstruct larger forms of power relations like misogyny, sexism, or heteronormativity under which people suffer(ed). Traditional interpretations of religious texts, outlined by heterosexual men, and the institutional framework of Jewish religion, itself dominated by heterosexual men, led to a condemnation and subsequent exclusion of queer Jews. By *queering* Jewish history and Jewish experiences in the past, this study helps to "disrupt [...] founding narratives and assumptions"[17] of Jewish historiography and demonstrates that an intersectional consideration of Jewish history has the power to reveal empowering stories and narratives which had been forgotten or overlooked in the past. Academia, like other areas of life, is affected by the power dynamics described above. Intersectional and queer research can contribute to a diversification of academia and challenge well-established norms and research patterns. Therefore, studies like this can shift the focus from an academic canon that is dominated by heterosexual men to a broader understanding of Judaism and highlight its very diversity. It is the nature of *queering* a discipline to highlight power hierarchies within the discipline itself. This is also necessary for Jewish Studies. *Queering* a discipline means, above all, to fruitfully complicate our view as researchers and to broaden and enrich the understanding of Jewish lives in the past, present, and future. This can and must be uncomfortable at times.

Outlook

JGG/JGLG, Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo bravely envisioned a future in which queer Jews could be accepted as a valid part of Judaism. They did not shy away from the challenges their existence invoked. They all developed their own strategies to survive and, eventually, changed not only their own lives, but European Judaism as a whole. They are striking examples of what international collaboration can achieve.

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16 E. g., Boyarin, Itzkovitz, Pellegrini, *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*.

17 Kunzel, "The Power of Queer History," 1579.

Despite, and in recognition of, all the successes the groups had, it is necessary to add that the course of events does not follow a linear path from discrimination to the complete recognition of queers. As the study shows, the road is serpentine and, still in the 2020s, many challenges lie ahead. Debates on whether queer Jewish groups as well as synagogues are still relevant or not[18] should not fail to acknowledge that not every queer Jew is accepted and appreciated, either in the Jewish or in the queer community. To name just one of many examples, discriminatory reactions by (ultra-)Orthodox Judaism after the election of Amir Ohana, an openly gay man with husband and children, as the speaker of the Israeli Knesset in late 2022 testify to the fact that much work still has to be done.[19] Furthermore, the more recent founding of new queer Jewish groups in Italy (Magen David Keshet Italia, 2015) and Germany (Keshet Deutschland, 2018) demonstrates that there is as much a need for safe spaces today as there was in the the 1970s or 1990s. Their activism is often organized around the fact that the mere existence of queer Jews is still denied by many Orthodox-dominated communities. Moreover, if mainstream communities accept them, they often do not have the awareness of the special spiritual and social needs of Jewish queers. In my belief, studies like this can contribute to today's queer Jewish activism. May the histories of JGG/JGLG, Beit Haverim, and Sjalhomo be an example for all those who are excluded and who search for historical role models.

18 Cf. Rosenfeld, "LGBT synagogues confront a changing landscape;" Martin Lemberger, "Gay Synagogue's Uncertain Future," Tablet Magazine, March 11, 2013, https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/belief/articles/gay-synagogues-uncertain-future, accessed January 23, 2023; "Wahler, "Did We Do Our Job Too Well?," 35.

19 Cf. Judah Ari Gross, "'God Have Mercy': J'lem Chief Rabbi Pans Orthodox MKs Who Backed Gay Knesset Speaker," Times of Israel, January 1, 2023, https://www.timesofisrael.com/jerusalem-chief-rabbi-pans-religious-mks-who-backed-ohana-as-1st-gay-knesset-speaker/, accessed February 10, 2023.

10 German Summary – Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Queere[1] Juden*Jüdinnen in Europa teilten in den 1970er-Jahren eine Erfahrung: Sie konnten weder offen jüdisch in der queeren Community noch offen queer in der jüdischen Gemeinschaft leben. Anknüpfend an diese Erfahrung, gründeten sich innerhalb weniger Jahre drei queer-jüdische Gruppen: die Jewish Gay (and Lesbian) Group (JGG/JGLG) in London, Beit Haverim in Paris und Sjalhomo in Amsterdam. Sie brachten ihre Mitglieder, die queer und jüdisch sein wollten, zusammen – ganz unabhängig davon, ob sie orthodox oder liberal waren oder sich als säkular bezeichneten. Die Gruppen boten queeren Juden*Jüdinnen einen sozialen Raum, in dem sie sich über ihre Erfahrungen austauschen und sich gemeinsam für eine Verbesserung ihrer Situation einsetzen konnten. Dabei blieben die Mitglieder entweder in ihren ursprünglichen Gemeinden aktiv und versuchten, diese von innen zu verändern, oder sie verließen traditionelle jüdische Institutionen und besuchten die queer-jüdischen Gruppen als einzige Verbindung zum Judentum. Neben ihrer Arbeit vor Ort nahmen die drei Gruppen bereits kurz nach ihrer Gründung Kontakt untereinander auf. Sie etablierten ein Netzwerk queerer Juden*Jüdinnen auf dem europäischen Kontinent, über das sie sich gegenseitig unterstützen konnten.

Die vorliegende Studie adressiert die institutionelle Geschichte der drei queer-jüdischen Gruppen, nimmt deren Ziele und Aktivitäten in den Blick und untersucht, wie sich diese über die Jahre veränderten. Im Zentrum der Studie steht die Frage, wie die Gruppen eine zusammengeführte, queer-jüdische Identität auffassten. Darüber hinaus untersucht sie, in welcher Verbindung die Gruppen zu ihrer jüdischen und queeren Umwelt standen und welche Verbündeten sie für ihre Ziele im Kampf um Anerkennung gewinnen konnten. Einen besonderen Schwerpunkt legt die Arbeit auf die Inklusion der Perspektiven von Frauen*, da diese in der Vergangenheit in Studien zu queer-religiösen Einrichtungen nur selten Berücksichtigung fanden.[2] Über die Geschichte(n) der einzelnen Gruppen hinaus, nimmt diese

1 Ich verwende das Wort *queer* für alle nicht-heterosexuelle und nicht cis-geschlechtliche Identitäten. Sollte eine (historische) Eigenbezeichnung für die Gruppen selbst oder ihre Mitglieder vorhanden sein, so verwende ich diese. In diesem Zusammenhang muss die ahistorische Verwendung des Wortes *queer* erwähnt werden, wird doch dieses Wort erst ab den 1990er-Jahren als emanzipatorischer Begriff verwendet. Dennoch hat sich dieser Begriff zu einem Oberbegriff entwickelt, der die heterosexuelle Matrix aufbricht und Sexualität(en) und Geschlecht(er) als soziale Konstrukte darstellt.

2 Vgl. Wilcox, „A Religion of One's Own," 203–220 und Brettschneider, „Jewish lesbians: New Work in the Field," 2–20.

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Arbeit das dezidiert europäische Netzwerk zwischen JGG/JGLG, Beit Haverim und Sjalhomo in den Blick, insbesondere ihre zahlreichen, in der Geschichtsschreibung bisher nicht betrachteten Kontaktpunkte (so z. B. die europäischen Konferenzen queer-jüdischer Organisationen). Die Studie untersucht den Zeitraum zwischen 1972 und Mitte der 1990er Jahre. 1972 gilt als Gründungsjahr der JGG/JGLG und damit als Beginn der Organisation queerer Juden*Jüdinnen. Mitte der 1990er Jahre erfolgten bedeutsame Veränderungen für die Gruppen selbst und das Netzwerk: Eine neue Generation übernahm die Leitung, was zu einer sichtbaren Veränderung in den Gruppen führte. Auch das europäische Netzwerk verlor seinen Einfluss im Laufe der zweiten Hälfte der 1990er Jahre. Eine Besonderheit stellt Sjalhomo dar: Die Gruppe löste sich im Jahr 2002 als einzige der drei Gruppen auf, weshalb die Arbeit diese letzten Jahre zusätzlich betrachtet.

Mit ihrem Fokus auf queere jüdische Geschichte trägt die Arbeit zu dem noch neuen Feld der Queer Jewish History bei. Sie greift auf den Erfahrungsschatz der Queer History zurück. Mit dem Aufkommen der queeren Emanzipationsbewegung in den 1970ern stieg auch das Interesse an der Geschichte queerer Menschen. War dieses Feld zunächst wenig theoretisiert, nutzte sie ab den 1980ern Foucaults *Histoire de la sexualité* als Referenzrahmen, der argumentiert, dass Sexualität historisch betrachten werden müsse und damit die prävalente Vorstellung von Sexualität relativ neu sei. Auf dieser Analyse aufbauend, wurde mit Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (*Epistemology of the Closet*, 1990) und Judith Butler (*Gender Trouble*, 1990) die Queer Theory ins Leben gerufen. Diese nimmt an, dass Sexualität(en) und Geschlecht(er) sozial konstruiert sind und richtet ihre Kritik gegen Heteronormativität, „die Geschlecht […] und Begehren […] als Opposition konstruiert“[3] und damit die Komplexität von Sexualität und Geschlecht verneint. Queer History wurde durch die Queer Theory substanziell bereichert und fragt nach der historischen Spezifität geschlechtlicher und sexueller Differenzen. Weiteren Einfluss auf die Queer History hatte das Konzept der Intersektionalität, das zuerst von Kimberlé Crenshaw 1989 in den wissenschaftlichen Diskurs eingeführt wurde. Demnach können Diskriminierungsformen nicht separat voneinander betrachtet werden, sondern deren Überschneidungen und ihr Zusammenwirken müssen analysiert werden. Zusammenfassend verwendet Queer History „queer“ also als Linse, um (bereits geschriebene) Geschichte zu hinterfragen, zu dekonstruieren und zu re-evaluieren.

Queer Jewish History versucht diesen Anspruch in die jüdische Geschichtsschreibung hineinzutragen. Jedoch bedarf es hier zunächst einer ähnlichen Entwicklung wie in der Queer History, die sich in ihrer ersten Phase vor allem der Entdeckung und Hebung queerer Geschichten widmete. Vorhergehende theore-

3 Kraß, „Queer Studies in Deutschland,“ 8.

tische Überlegungen fokussierten sich auf die Ähnlichkeiten zwischen queeren Menschen und Juden*Jüdinnen sowie auf antisemitische Codes, die durch Vorstellungen von Geschlecht und Sexualität aufgeladen werden. Der Aufbau eines *Queer Jewish Archive* und weitere Grundlagenarbeiten tragen maßgeblich dazu bei, dass sich queere Juden*Jüdinnen in jüdischer Geschichte repräsentiert fühlen. Dabei, so Noam Sienna, sollte Queer Jewish History als „unendlicher Regenbogen, ohne Anfang oder Ende, und ohne klare Grenzen zwischen seinen unterschiedlichen Facetten“[4] verstanden und umgesetzt werden. Queer Jewish History muss mindestens die dreifache Perspektive queerer jüdischer Menschen berücksichtigen: Sie sind jüdisch in einer nicht-jüdischen Umwelt (jüdische Differenz), sie identifizieren sich als queer in einer nicht-queeren Umwelt (queere Differenz) und sie leben als queere Menschen in einem spezifischen jüdischen Umfeld mit seinen spezifischen Vorstellungen von Geschlecht und Sexualität (queere Differenz im jüdischen Raum). Berücksichtigten wir die intersektionalen Erfahrungen queerer jüdischer Menschen, auch über Jewishness und Queerness hinaus, so können wir das Potential, das queere Geschichtsschreibung bietet, auch in der jüdischen Historiographie erfassen.

In der Vergangenheit wurde der Position queerer Juden*Jüdinnen nur wenig Beachtung geschenkt und ihre Existenz negiert. Wie diese Studie aufzeigt, wurden Texte in der Hebräischen Bibel und in anderer jüdischer Traditionsliteratur, die scheinbar Homo-/Bisexualität (z. B. Levitikus 18,22 oder 20,13) oder trans* Individuen (z. B. Deuteronomium 22,5) thematisieren, verwendet, um jüdischen Queers zu diskriminieren und ihnen ihre Lebensweise abzusprechen. Erst in den 1970er Jahren, als sich in Bezug auf Geschlecht und Sexualität ein sozialer Wandel vollzog, wurden diese Positionen re-evaluiert. Während die Orthodoxie Abweichungen von der heterosexuellen Norm weiterhin nicht akzeptiert und sich nur in Einzelfällen diesem Diktum widersetzt wird, gab es signifikante Veränderungen im Reform- und konservativen Judentum. Zunächst ging es in diesen Denominationen um die Frage nach der Anerkennung queerer Menschen, ihrer Bedürfnisse sowie ihrer Räume. Bereits 1974 nahm das Reformjudentum eine queere Synagoge auf und kurz darauf, im Jahr 1977, forderte es mit einer Resolution gleiche Rechte für queere Menschen ein. Das konservative Judentum folgte mit einer ähnlichen Resolution erst im Jahr 1990. Im selben Jahr wurden im Reformjudentum offen schwule oder lesbische Rabbiner*innen zugelassen. 2006 wurde mit Elliot Kukla der erste trans* Rabbiner ordiniert. Das konservative Judentum entschied sich erst im selben Jahr zu dem Schritt, die sexuelle Orientierung nicht mehr als Einstellungsvoraussetzung anzusehen. Zur selben Zeit verabschiedete das konservative Judentum auch eine Reso-

4 Vgl. Sienna, „Reflections on Writing Queer Jewish History,“ 4.

lution, die die Union gleichgeschlechtlicher Juden*Jüdinnen erlaubte. Das Reformjudentum der USA war diesen Schritt bereits im Jahr 2000 gegangen. Seit 2014 ist die Ehe für alle Menschen in allen liberalen Gemeinden zulässig (sofern nicht die lokale staatliche Gesetzgebung dagegenspricht). Die Bedürfnisse von trans* und nicht-binären Juden*Jüdinnen werden mittlerweile in beiden Strömungen berücksichtigt und ihre Gleichstellung in allen Bereichen jüdischen Lebens ermöglicht.

In den USA standen queere Synagogen bei diesen Veränderungen an vorderster Front. Nach der ersten queeren Synagoge Beth Chayim Chadashim (BCC), gegründet 1972 in Los Angeles, entstand eine ganze Reihe weiterer queerer Synagogen im Land. Sie schufen Räume für queere Menschen und entwickelten neue, auf queere Menschen zugeschnittene Rituale sowie eine veränderte Liturgie. Die queeren Synagogen waren so erfolgreich, sodass sich aus ihnen langlebige Gemeinden entwickelten, die auch eigene Rabbiner*innen anstellten. Untereinander waren und sind die queeren Synagogen gut vernetzt. Sie waren die treibenden Kräfte für die Gründung des World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations (WCGLJO) und dessen internationalen Konferenzen. Mit dem World Congress bündelten queere Synagogen und Gruppen weltweit ihre Bemühungen zur Verbesserung der Situation queerer Juden*Jüdinnen. Die Konferenzen wirkten als Orte des Erfahrungsaustausches zwischen den Mitgliedern.

Um die Entstehungsgeschichte der drei queer-jüdischen Gruppen in Europa und ihrer Vernetzung zu verstehen, muss zunächst das gesellschaftlich-soziale sowie jüdische Umfeld betrachtet werden, in dem diese Gruppen entstanden sind. Zu diesem Zweck erörtert die vorliegende Arbeit, inwiefern die Städte London, Paris und Amsterdam ein Dreieck bildeten, das nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg nicht nur für die queere, sondern auch für die jüdische Geschichte wichtig war. These ist es, dass es nur innerhalb dieses europäischen Dreiecks möglich war, dass sich queere jüdische Gruppen gründeten. Alle drei Städte waren bereits weit vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg „sexuelle Metropolen“, die aufgrund der vielfältigen sexuellen Subkultur auch eine besondere Anziehungskraft für queere Menschen ausübten. Sie verfügten über eine Infrastruktur für queeres Leben (z. B. Bars oder Clubs), boten Anonymität und somit Kontakt- und Austauschmöglichkeiten für queere Menschen. Die rechtliche Situation war aber unterschiedlich: Während in Paris und Amsterdam seit des *Codé Penal* zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts sexuelle Handlungen zwischen Menschen gleichen Geschlechts im Privaten entkriminalisiert wurden, erfolgte diese Rechtsprechung in Großbritannien erst im Jahr 1957. Nichtsdestotrotz wurden sexuelle Handlungen im öffentlichen Raum in allen drei Ländern streng verfolgt, beispielsweise mittels häufiger Razzien. Nach den Protesten im Stonewall Inn in New York (1969), nahm die queere Emanzipationsbewegung auch in London, Paris und Amsterdam an Fahrt auf und veränderte diese nachhaltig. In allen drei Städten entstanden gemäßigtere wie radikalere Gruppen, die sich für eine Veränderung der

Situation von Queers einsetzten. Häufig suchten sich Frauen* jedoch aufgrund der Dominanz von Männern eigene Orte, um politisch aktiv zu werden. Dabei war die politische Reaktion auf die neuen queeren Gruppen unterschiedlich: In Amsterdam arbeiteten die queeren Gruppierungen schnell mit der lokalen wie nationalen Politik zusammen, in Paris war die Reaktion der allgemeinen Gesellschaft bis in die 1990er Jahre sehr viel verhaltener, da die Idee des *communautarisme*, der Verantwortung des Individuums für die gesamte Gesellschaft, vorherrschend war. Im Vereinigten Königreich prägte vor allem die konservative Thatcher-Regierung den Umgang mit der queeren Community und verbot beispielsweise 1988 mit der Clause 28 jegliche „Werbung" für Homosexualität, vor allem in Schulen. Insbesondere im Umgang mit der HIV/AIDS Epidemie kam es zu massiven Spannungen mit den lokalen Regierungen, da diese gar nicht oder zu langsam auf die Epidemie reagierten und die Forderungen der queeren Communities nicht berücksichtigten. Gleichzeitig führte die Epidemie aber zu einer Stärkung des Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühls innerhalb der queeren Gemeinschaft.

In Bezug auf jüdisches Leben in den drei Städten und Ländern ist festzuhalten, dass sich nach dem Zivilisationsbruch der Shoah die Bevölkerungszahlen jüdischer Menschen im Laufe der direkten Nachkriegsjahrzehnte stabilisierten und sogar wieder anstiegen. Die jüdische Gemeinschaft sah hierin ein positives Zeichen für die Zukunft. In allen drei Ländern ist die Dominanz der Orthodoxie auffällig: Die Mehrzahl der affiliierten Juden*Jüdinnen lassen sich der Orthodoxie zurechnen. In der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts erhielt die Orthodoxie immer größeren Einfluss durch die erstarkende Ultra-Orthodoxie. Dies führte zu noch stärkeren Positionierungen im Sinne der jüdischen Tradition. Das Vereinigte Königreich verfügt mit der Reform Movement und Liberal Judaism über eine differenzierte progressive Bewegung, die sich nach dem Krieg grundsätzlich steigender Mitgliederzahlen erfreuten. In Frankreich hingegen gab es in den 1970er bis 1990er Jahren nur sehr wenige progressive Gemeinden. Die liberale Gemeinde der Niederlande ist im Vergleich zu den orthodoxen Gemeinden zahlenmäßig ebenfalls sehr klein und war bis in die 2000er Jahre konservativer als die US-amerikanische Reformbewegung. Insgesamt ist festzustellen, dass sich die jüdische Gemeinschaft im Nachkriegseuropa in religiösen Fragen zunehmend individualisierte. Darüber hinaus gab es eine zunehmende Unzufriedenheit mit der sozialen Trägheit der jüdischen Denominationen. Deshalb schufen Juden*Jüdinnen zunehmend Räume außerhalb der klassischen jüdischen Institutionen. Hierzu zählen etwa *Minyanim* oder *Chauvrot* für Frauen* sowie die drei queer-jüdischen Gruppen, die in dieser Arbeit im Fokus stehen.

Die Londoner Jewish Gay (and Lesbian) Group

Die Jewish Gay Group (JGG) hat ihre Wurzeln in der Gay Liberation Front London. Ihr direkter Vorläufer wurde im Dezember 1971 gegründet und startete einen Monat später mit ihrer Arbeit. Die Ursprungsgruppe durchlief jedoch in den ersten Jahren diverse Trans-formationsprozesse und es herrschte lange Uneinigkeit über deren Verortung in der queeren und jüdischen Welt. Erst Mitte 1974 einigte man* sich auf den Namen JGG und beschloss, nur zu wenigen Anlässen in der Öffentlichkeit zu erscheinen und sich auf die Zusammenkunft der Mitglieder im privaten Raum zu konzentrieren. In den kommenden Jahren waren sowohl die „Kaffeeabende" als auch private Partys (z. B. zu jüdischen Feiertagen) der zentrale Bezugspunkt der Gruppe mit ungefähr 90, fast ausschließlich männlichen, Mitgliedern. Es gab keinen festen Treffpunkt, sondern einzelne Mitglieder stellten ihre Wohnzimmer zur Verfügung. Die JGG konnte nur auf wenige Verbündete aus der queeren Community wie *Gay News* zurückgreifen. Jüdische Gemeinden akzeptierten zum damaligen Zeitpunkt keine Abweichungen von der heterosexuellen Norm, weshalb es hier zu keinen Kooperationen kam.

Erste Veränderungen im Selbstverständnis der Gruppe traten 1979 auf. Ausschlaggebend dafür war die wachsende Kritik an dem zurückhaltenden Auftreten und vor allem an dem nur geringen politischen Engagement. Um dies zu ändern, führte die Gruppe eine *Chavurah* ein, die wöchentlich den Beginn des Sabbats feierte und später am Samstagmorgen einen Gottesdienst hielt. Jedoch blieb die religiöse Bedeutung dieser *Chavurah* eher gering und die Treffen dienten vor allem sozialen Zwecken. Insgesamt stieg die Zahl an Veranstaltungen jedoch deutlich, neben den „Kaffeeabenden" kamen regelmäßige Pub-Abende und weitere thematische Treffen hinzu. Außerdem stieg in der Zeit ab 1979 die Sichtbarkeit der Gruppe nach außen. Insbesondere mit dem Aufkommen der HIV/AIDS Epidemie agierte JGG als Wortführerin für die Belange von queeren Juden*Jüdinnen in der jüdischen Welt (z. B. im *Jewish Chronicle*). Allerdings war die JGG vor allem ein Raum für schwule Männer. Häufig besuchten Frauen* die Gruppe nur ein einziges Mal und kamen dann nicht wieder. Frauen* organisierten sich entweder in der allgemeinen, nicht-jüdischen feministischen Bewegung oder in Gruppen, die dezidiert von und für jüdische (und nicht nur lesbische) Feminist*innen gegründet wurden. Nachdem diese nach wenigen Jahren in Folge von internen Problemen zwischen den Mitgliedern wieder zerbrachen, wendeten sich lesbische Frauen* nachfolgend entweder dem jüdischen Mainstream und ihren Institutionen zu oder gingen in die JGG und hinterfragten deren männliche Ausrichtung. Dies führte 1987 zu einem Namenswechsel: Die JGG wurde in die Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group (JGLG) umbenannt. Seither versuchte die Gruppe mit Veranstaltungen nur für Frauen* und Debatten über Inklusion und Gleichberechtigung mehr Frauen* anzusprechen. Etwa zur gleichen Zeit diversifizierte sich die queer-jüdische Landschaft im Verei-

nigten Königreich zunehmend. Es entstanden die Jewish Gay and Lesbian Helpline, Hineinu für junge queere Juden*Jüdinnen, Beit Klal Yisrael als inklusive, alle Juden*Jüdinnen ansprechende Synagoge und der Jewish AIDS Trust. Ihre Existenz führte dazu, dass JGLG mit der Zeit an Bedeutung verlor. Zwar steigerten sich deren Aktivitäten in den 1990er Jahren, dennoch erhielt die Gruppe den Ruf, vor allem ein Ort für ältere, politisch nicht aktive Juden*Jüdinnen zu sein, die „lediglich" eine schöne Zeit miteinander erleben wollten. In den folgenden Jahren mischte sich JGLG immer weniger in soziale und politische Debatten ein. Auch die vorerst letzte Namensänderung in die Jewish LGBT+ Group erfolgte 2018 erst auf zunehmenden Druck von trans* Juden*Jüdinnen.

Die Pariser Gruppe Beit Haverim

1977 wurde im Pariser Centre du Christ Liberateur (CCL) mit Beit Haverim („Haus von Freunden") die erste französische Gruppe von und für queere Juden*Jüdinnen gegründet. Nach ersten Startschwierigkeiten veranstaltete die Gruppe innerhalb des CCL verschiedene soziale Aktivitäten, veröffentlichte einen eigenen Newsletter und wurde sogar im Comité d'Urgence Anti-Répression Homosexuel politisch aktiv. Die Affiliation mit einer christlichen Organisation und deren Leiter, Pastor Joseph Doucé, wurde bereits von Beginn an kritisch diskutiert. Mit dem Angriff auf die Synagoge in der Rue Copernic im Jahr 1980 und den teils antisemitischen Reaktionen der französischen Öffentlichkeit darauf, löste sich Beit Haverim vom CCL, wurde unabhängig und entwickelte sich zu einer vom Staat anerkannten Organisation. Obwohl die Spaltung vom CCL Kontroversen auslöste, wurde Beit Haverim im Zuge dessen sehr erfolgreich und nach außen sichtbar. Zunächst trafen sich die Mitglieder in ihren Wohnzimmern, aber bereits 1982 konnte Beit Haverim ein Ladenlokal mieten. Dieses wurde zum Zentrum der Gruppe für Veranstaltungen, Diskussionsrunden und Partys. Gleichzeitig trat Beit Haverim bei Demonstrationen und Kundgebungen, in Zeitschriften oder Radioprogrammen der queeren Community auf. Beit Haverim präsentierte sich seit der Unabhängigkeit als „gemischte Gruppe" (*groupe mixte*), die sich sowohl aus Männern als auch aus Frauen zusammensetzte. Frauen* fühlten sich von der Gruppe aber häufig nicht repräsentiert. Die Gruppe reagierte darauf mit einzelnen Veranstaltungen nur für Frauen* und der Vorstand setzte es sich zum Ziel, eine erhöhte Sensibilität für die Bedürfnisse von Frauen* zu schaffen. Letztlich reichten diese Maßnahmen nicht aus, lesbische Jüdinnen* an die Gruppe zu binden. Sie wendeten sich stattdessen oftmals anderen Organisationen zu.

Eine Stagnation der Mitgliederzahlen und eine parallel dazu auftretende Inaktivität zahlreicher Mitglieder markiert im Jahr 1985 das Ende der Hochphase. Das Ladenlokal musste aufgegeben werden und die Gruppe trat in eine Phase der In-

aktivität ein. Erst 1988, noch unter dem Einfluss der ein Jahr zuvor in Amsterdam abgehaltenen „Tenth International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews", reorganisierte sich Beit Haverim. Die Gruppentreffen fanden zunächst wieder in den Wohnzimmern der Mitglieder statt, bis Beit Haverim erneut Räumlichkeiten mieten konnte und schließlich in das neu gegründete Centre Gai en Lesbien zog. Die Gruppe gilt als eines der Gründungsmitglieder des Centre, das aus den Erfahrungen der HIV/AIDS Epidemie und dem Wunsch nach einem Zentrum für die queere Bewegung in Paris erwuchs. Unterstützung erhielt die Gruppe aus der jüdischen Gemeinschaft erstmals ab 1990 von Reformrabbinerin Paule Bebe. Gleichzeitig versuchte sich Beit Haverim verstärkt mit seinen weiblichen* Mitgliedern auseinanderzusetzen und sie vermehrt einzubeziehen. Deutlich wurde dies auf der „Third European/Israeli Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews" (1993): Nicht nur war die Konferenz die erste große Veranstaltung, die Beit Haverim organisierte, sondern es gab außerdem speziell auf Frauen* abgestimmte Räume und Veranstaltungen. In den 1990er Jahren übernahm eine neue Generation die Gruppe und modernisierte sie grundlegend. Vor allem sephardische Juden*Jüdinnen kamen hinzu und veränderten das Bild der Organisation nach außen. Der Kampf gegen HIV/AIDS wurde ein wichtiger Bestandteil ihrer Arbeit, während die Reaktion der jüdischen Gemeinschaft in Frankreich auf Beit Haverim weiterhin verhalten blieb. Trotz steigenden Austausches auch mit orthodoxen und konservativen Rabbiner*innen in den 2000er Jahren wurde Beit Haverim erst 2019 in den Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France aufgenommen und dadurch offizieller Teil der jüdischen Gemeinschaft in Frankreich. Seit 2008 besitzt Beit Haverim als einzige queer-jüdische Gruppe Europas ein eigenes Community Center in Paris.

Die Amsterdamer Gruppe Sjalhomo

Sjalhomo (ein Neologismus aus dem Hebräischen „shalom" und „homo" für homosexuell) wurde 1980 im Cultuur en Ontspannings Centrum in Amsterdam gegründet. Bereits zu Beginn zeichnet sich die Amsterdamer Gruppe durch hohe Ambitionen aus: Die Gruppe wollte ein Ort für queere Juden*Jüdinnen sein, der ein Zusammenkommen ermöglichte und sowohl die queere als auch die jüdische Identität wertschätzte. Dafür wurde Sjalhomo als Stiftung nach niederländischem Recht etabliert und erhielt nach wenigen Jahren offizielle Förderung vom Staat. Erste persönliche Kontakte zu Rabbinern aus der Liberalen Gemeinde wurden bereits zu Beginn geknüpft und Sjalhomo nahm an Kundgebungen der jüdischen Gemeinschaft in Amsterdam teil. Insbesondere das Joods Maatschappelijk Werk (JMW) und dessen Sozialarbeiter Harrie Wishaupt wurden wichtige Unterstützer*innen. Zugleich vernetzte sich die Gruppe mit der queeren Community und nahm am Rozen Zaterdag, dem Vorläufer der Pride Parade, teil. Die Gruppe wurde

bereits früh als „nicht öffentlichkeitsscheu“[5] bezeichnet. Bleibenden Eindruck hinterließ Sjalhomos Frauen*gruppe: Da Frauen* in ihrem Engagement häufig auf traditionelle Frauen*aufgaben reduziert wurden, kam es zu heftigen Debatten („Butterkuchen-Krieg“), in deren Folge sich 1983 eine separate Gruppe nur für Frauen* bildete. Die Frauen*gruppe blieb zwar ein Teil von Sjalhomo, veranstaltete aber eigene Zusammenkünfte und vernetzte sich mit anderen feministischen oder lesbischen Organisationen. Die Idee einer separaten Gruppe verfing sich jedoch nicht, sodass sich die Frauen*-Gruppe nach etwas mehr als zwei Jahren wieder auflöste. Jedoch hatte sich nach der Frauen*-Gruppe die Art und Weise verändert, wie Sjalhomo über und mit seinen weiblichen* Mitgliedern sprach. Gleichzeitig wurden die Interessen von Bisexuellen direkt angesprochen, auch deshalb, weil es viele bisexuelle Frauen* bei Sjalhomo gab.

Mitte der 1980er Jahre trat Sjalhomo in seine Hochphase ein. Die Gruppe organisierte viele Aktivitäten, die sich auf den Aspekt der Geselligkeit unter den Mitgliedern fokussierte. Auch politische Diskussionen waren Teil der Agenda und wurden insbesondere im Newsletter (später professionalisiert als Zeitschrift namens *Oi!*) vertrieben. Höhepunkt des Engagements der Gruppe war die „Tenth International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews“ 1987. Zum ersten Mal richtete Europa eine der Konferenzen des WCGLJO aus. Sjalhomo organisierte die Konferenz mit Workshops, Freizeitaktivitäten und prominenten Gastredner*innen wie dem jüdischen Bürgermeister von Amsterdam, Ed van Thijn. Die Veranstaltung belegte, wie gut Sjalhomo vernetzt war. Jüdische Organisationen außerhalb der jüdischen Denominationen kooperierten auf vielfältige Weise mit der Gruppe. Als es zu einer Umstellung der Förderungen durch den niederländischen Staat kam, wurde Sjalhomo nach intensiver Debatte und Widerstand von Seiten der Orthodoxie vom JMW aufgenommen und konnte so weiterhin Gelder beziehen.

Ab Mitte der 1990er Jahre verstärkten sich schließlich interne Probleme. Zwar stieg in dieser Zeit der Einsatz Sjalhomos für HIV/AIDS-Patient*innen signifikant (z. B. durch die Initiierung der Plattform „Judentum und AIDS“). Aber es wurde immer schwieriger, Mitglieder für die Mitarbeit zu motivieren. Da die Gruppe die Struktur einer niederländischen Stiftung wählte, war es nicht möglich, Mitgliedsbeiträge oder mehr Engagement der Mitglieder einzufordern. Einer trägen Sjalhomo-Mitgliedschaft stand ein ausgebrannter und demotivierter Vorstand gegenüber. Es wurde schwieriger, Menschen für die Arbeit im Vorstand zu gewinnen. Außerdem etablierte sich mit der Synagoge Beit Ha’Chidush, ähnlich wie Beit Klal Yisrael in London, ein religiöser Ort in Amsterdam, der ausdrücklich alle jüdische Menschen ansprach. Letztlich führten Streitigkeiten über angeblich veruntreute Gelder

5 Vgl. Sjalhomo Nieuwsbrief, September 1985, 2.

zu einer Auflösung der Gruppe im Jahr 2002. Seitdem ist die Geschichte der Gruppe in der modernen Geschichtsschreibung der jüdischen Niederlande nicht mehr präsent.

Das europäische Netzwerk

Ebenso vergessen ist das Netzwerk, das die europäischen Gruppen auf dem Kontinent etablierten. Sie alle teilen ähnliche Erfahrungen: Sie waren dezidiert soziale Gruppen und sahen sich nicht verantwortlich dafür, religiöse Orientierung zu geben. Dies lag einerseits daran, dass die europäischen Gruppen die jüdischen Gemeinschaften von innen heraus verändern wollten. Andererseits lag es auch an den organisatorischen Hürden in Europa, eine funktionsfähige Synagoge wie in den USA aufzubauen, vor allem ohne institutionelle Unterstützung einer Denomination. Die Gruppen repräsentierten die „gay plus one" Organisationen,[6] die sich auf ihre schwul/lesbische Identität bezogen, aber dieser noch eine weitere Identität hinzufügte (in diesem Falle die jüdische). Es ging diesen Gruppen insbesondere um Sichtbarkeit für ihre Belange. Im Gegensatz zu den queeren Synagogen in den USA waren die Gruppen in Europa politischer und von den Erfahrungen der zweiten Generation von Shoah-Überlebenden geprägt. Sie bauten ein Netzwerk in Europa auf, das sich unterstützte und sich über diverse (europäische) Themen austauschte. Aufbauend auf der Netzwerk-Theorie von Lukasz Szulc,[7] bildeten die Gruppen die Knoten (*nodes*) des Netzwerkes. Diese Knotenpunkte verfügten über diverse Verbindungen (*connections*) auf organisatorischer wie individueller Ebene. Zwischen den Knoten fand durch die Verbindungen Ströme (*flows*) von Ideen, Erfahrungen und Wissen statt.

Bereits kurz nachdem eine neue Gruppe entstand, wurden Verbindungen zu anderen Gruppen aufgenommen. Erstmals kamen die Gruppen auf einer Konferenz 1982 in Hilversum zusammen. Rund 40, vorrangig schwule Menschen tauschten sich über die Gruppen und ihre Ziele aus. In den nachfolgenden Jahren kam es zu gelegentlichen bilateralen Treffen, die ab 1987 intensiviert werden sollten. Als Sjalhomo die „Tenth International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews" ausrichtete, kam es nicht nur zu einem verstärkten Austausch zwischen den europäischen Gruppen (z. B. über die Inklusion von Frauen in der JGG oder die Wiederbelebung von Beit Haverim), sondern man* entschied sich auch, die Zusammenarbeit zu intensivieren. Insbesondere Sjalhomo wurde zur treibenden Kraft dieses Netzwerkes und sah es als zentrale Aufgabe an, Individuen in Europa in ihren Belangen zu unterstützen und auf die Gründung weiterer Gruppen hinzuwirken. Es fanden nun zweijährliche euro-

6 Vgl. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 21–22.

7 Vgl. Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland,* 220–224.

päische Konferenzen queerer Juden*Jüdinnen statt (zuerst 1988 in London, 1990 in Amsterdam und 1992 in Paris). Sie wurden zu einem wichtigen Ort der Zusammenkunft und des Austausches für europäische und ab 1992 auch für israelische Juden*Jüdinnen. Es kam zu einem Wissens- und Erfahrungsaustausch (*flows*) zu organisatorischen Fragen der Gruppen, geschlechts-spezifischen Themen (insbesondere der Stellung von Lesben*), spezifisch europäisch-jüdischer Erfahrungen (vor allem die Shoah und erstarkender Antisemitismus) sowie zu Themen, die die queere Gemeinschaft allgemein betraf wie etwa die HIV/AIDS Epidemie. Bei der vierten europäisch-israelischen Konferenz 1994 in Givat Haviva (Israel) kam es bereits zu Ermüdungserscheinungen: Zu viele Juden*Jüdinnen aus der gesamten Welt kamen zusammen, um vor allem eine gute Zeit miteinander zu verbringen. Das Netzwerk verlor langsam an politischer Bedeutung. Mittlerweile existierten viele Gruppen in Europa und Israel, die sich nur noch mit Schwierigkeiten koordinieren ließen. Oft lösten sie sich bereits nach kurzer Zeit wieder auf. Vor allem aber der Rückzug engagierter Mitglieder (oder auch der Zerfall von Sjalhomo als treibende Kraft) führte zu einem schrittweisen Bedeutungsverlust des Netzwerkes. Die letzte europäisch-israelische Konferenz fand 2001 in München statt. Dennoch ist die Bedeutung des Netzwerks nicht zu gering einzuschätzen, hatte es doch einen wesentlichen Einfluss auf die Bildung queer-jüdischer Gruppen und deren Selbstverständnis in den 1980er und einem großen Teil der 1990er Jahre.

Resümee

Die vorliegende Studie fügt die Geschichte der drei ersten queer-jüdischen Gruppen Europas sowie ihres Netzwerkes dem Queer Jewish Archive hinzu. Grundlagenarbeit wurde in der Vergangenheit zu lange vernachlässigt, was auch an der Zerstreuung der Quellen in verschiedenen Archiven abzulesen ist. Die Hebung und Zusammenführung queer-jüdischer Geschichte sind nicht nur für das Selbstverständnis einer queer-jüdischen Gemeinschaft von Bedeutung, sondern auch für die Jüdischen Studien als Ganzes. Sie diversifizieren das Fach und weiten dessen Blick auf „das Judentum“. Die Arbeit, die diese Studie betreibt, kann im Folgenden weitere, theoretische Überlegungen zum Zusammendenken von Jüdisch- und Queersein anregen. Diese fehlen derzeit noch gänzlich im akademischen Diskurs. Außerdem vertritt die Arbeit die These, europäisch-jüdische Geschichte nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg nicht mehr entlang der Denominationen und der großen politischen jüdischen Institutionen zu schreiben, sondern Gruppen, Vereine und andere Zusammenschlüsse außerhalb des jüdischen Mainstreams in den Blick zu nehmen, in dem Jüdischsein neu und anders gedacht wird. Weiterhin ist es in diesem Zusammenhang sinnvoll, diese Geschichtsschreibung nicht nur innerhalb der Län-

dergrenzen zu betreiben, sondern internationale Netzwerke und ihr transformatives Potential zu berücksichtigen.

Diese neuen Perspektiven auf das Judentum sowie die Integration von intersektionalen Perspektiven und das *Queering* der Jüdischen Studien haben das Potential, „grundlegende Narrative und Annahmen“[8] im Fach durcheinander zubringen. Sie brechen Machtdynamiken auf und zeigen auf, welche jüdische Lebensformen bisher keine oder kaum Berücksichtigung im akademischen Diskurs gefunden haben.

Darüber hinaus schätzt diese Studie die Lebensleistung jüdischer Queers wert, die gegen alle Widerstände sichere Räume schufen und sich zugleich für die Rechte von queeren jüdischen Menschen einsetzten. Ihr persönlicher Einsatz und die Gruppen, die sie gründeten, versteht die Arbeit als Vorbilder für den heutigen Kampf gegen Heteronormativität, für Gleichberechtigung, queer-jüdische Repräsentanz und ein buntes wie diverses Judentum.

8 Kunzel, „The Power of Queer History,“ 1579.

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Index

ACT UP 90
Aides 90
Am Tikva, synagogue 67
Amias, Saul 119
Amersfoort 232
Amsterdam 2 f., 6, 12, 14 – 16, 75 f., 91 – 97, 113 f., 154, 171, 207, 212 f., 221 – 226, 230, 232, 236, 245 – 252, 255 f., 258, 260 – 262, 268 f., 272 f., 277 f., 280, 283, 285, 287 f., 290 f., 293 – 295, 297, 299 f., 310 – 312, 314 f., 321, 324 f., 328 f., 331
Antwerp 225
Arcadie 87 f., 169, 172, 185 f.
Arnhem 236, 247
Article 248bis 92, 94, 221
Assembly of Masorti Synagogues 101
Assembly of Reform Rabbis 156, 165
Association pour la Gestion d'un Centre d'Animation sociale et culturelle 208

Baaden, James 285
Barneveld, Dr. 282
Barre, Raymond 107, 190
Barré-Sinoussi, Françoise 90
Barrett, Brian 119
Baudry, André 87
Bayfield, Tony 145, 162
Bebe, Pauline 211, 214, 216, 312 f., 328
Beit Ha'Chidush (BHC) 12, 235, 260 – 265, 272, 278, 307, 329
Beit Haverim 2, 5, 11, 14, 16, 19, 48, 76, 108, 113, 169 f., 173, 175 – 200, 202 – 220, 226 f., 235, 240, 249, 254, 273, 275 f., 278 – 285, 289 – 291, 293 f., 296 f., 302 f., 305 – 308, 310 – 315, 319 – 322, 327 f., 330
Beit Klal Yisrael (BKY) 158 – 161, 261, 278, 306, 327, 329
Benima, Tamarah 235
Bennett, Allen 68, 141
Benson, Simon 119 – 122, 124 – 126
Berlin 6, 9, 37, 47, 75 f., 79, 91, 288, 293, 308
Bet Ahavah, synagogue 66, 68
Bet Haverim, synagogue 67
Bet Mishpachah, synagogue 67, 70, 247
Beth Chayim Chadashim (BCC) 10, 55, 59, 64 – 66, 68, 70 – 72, 122, 252, 260 – 262, 275, 317, 324
Birmingham 166
Blanes 249, 251
Blue, Lionel 137 f., 140, 158, 162, 165, 211, 281
B'nai B'rith 236
B'nai Haskalah 67, 71
Borts, Barbara 141, 162
Bosner, Sauci 240, 261, 263
British National Party 99
British Sexological Society 79
Brodie, Israel 101
Brown, Laurence 131, 134 f., 141
Brown, Michael 117
Brugmans, Erwin 234, 256 f., 259, 273 f., 276, 282, 284 f., 287, 290, 294, 307
Brugmans, Sara 234
Brussels 225 f., 293
Budapest 293
Butler, Michael 119
Buys, Xandi 253, 256, 265 – 267

Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) 81 f., 115, 123, 135 f.
Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) 59 – 61, 63, 235
Centre de Christ Libérateur (CCL) 2, 14, 169 – 174, 177, 183, 185, 187 – 189, 191 – 193, 196, 199, 206, 210, 311, 314, 327
Centre Gai et Lesbien (CGL) 90, 170, 209, 214 – 216, 312, 328
Chabad 205
Chavurah Movement 68 f.
Chez Jo Goldenberg 107, 170, 198, 205
Choukroun, Lionel 219
Church of the Holy Apostles 66, 70
Clause 28 83 f., 115, 161 f., 302, 325
Comité d'Urgence Anti-Répression Homosexuel (CUARH) 185 f., 190, 201, 203, 209, 327
Comité Homosexuel de l'Education Nationale 185

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Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) 60, 62 – 64
Communauté Juive Libérale d'Île-de-France 108, 170
Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (CBST) 10, 13 f., 57, 59, 65 – 68, 70 – 72, 174 f., 275, 285, 317
Conseil représentatif des juifs de France (CRIF) 104, 106, 170, 203, 219, 312 f., 328
Consistoire central israélite de France 104, 170
Cultuur en Ontspannings Centrum (COC) 2, 93 – 96, 113, 221 – 223, 230 f., 239, 246, 288 f., 312, 328
Cypel, Sylvain 213 – 216, 307 f.

David & Jonathan 185 f., 190, 210, 218
Davis, Bernard D. 129, 154
Davis, Moshe 137
Dayan, Yael 292
de Gaulle, Charles 107
de Zwart, Lodewijk 292
Delarue, Jean-Luc 216
Den Haag 225, 236, 268
Dialoog, newsletter 93
Dorff, Elliot 62
Doucé, Joseph 2, 171 – 175, 183, 185, 187 – 189, 191 – 194, 199, 279, 311, 327
Dreyfus, Alfred 85
DuBowski, Sandi Simcha 56
Dutch Society for Sexual Reform 94, 223, 246

Edwards, Lisa 262
Eimer, Colin 162
Ellis, Havelock 79, 85
Ensel, Fred 247
Etz Chaim, synagogue 66, 71
Europride 216, 250, 268 f.

Federatie Werkgroepen Homoseksualiteit 226
Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot 67
Felman, Jyl Lyn 165
Fern, Bill 175
Fishman, Melvyn 125
Fonds social juif unifié (FSJU) 104, 170, 203 f., 216, 219
Freedman, David 214
Frequence Gaie 197, 204
Friedlander, Albert H. 120, 162
Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire (FHAR) 88, 91, 169, 186
Future, magazine 87

Gai Pied Hebdo 89, 169, 203, 207
Ganon, Belinda 154
Gay and Lesbian Interfaith Alliance 135
Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, The Netherlands 250
Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, United Kingdom 84
Gay Christian Movement 135, 138
Gay Games 268 – 270
Gay Krant 96
Gay Liberation Front (GLF) 1, 81 f., 84, 113, 115 – 118, 120 – 122, 126, 128, 168, 311, 326
Gay Liberation Movement 1, 18, 126, 185
Gay News 82, 121, 123 – 127, 134 f., 326
Gazolines 88
Gelrubin, Elisabeth 194, 200
Giaoui, Franck 218
Gilbert, Jack 157, 164
Goldard, Timothy 125, 137
Goldman, Raymond 162
Goldner, Norman 129, 132 f., 139
Golds, Peter 122, 126, 132 f., 139 – 141
Goodman, Paulette 213
Gould, Ken 260 f., 278
Greenberg, Steven 57
Greengross, Wendy 122 – 124, 145 f.
Grey, Anthony 121 f., 124, 130
Gross, Martine 11 f., 194, 196, 200, 220
Groupes de Libération Homosexuelle (GLH) 88
Groupe de Libération Homosexuelle-Politique et Quotidien (GLH-PQ) 88

Ha Mishpacha, group 71
Haboniem 236
Hardman, Leslie H. 120
Harvey, Ian 122 f.
Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) 60, 65
Herman, Agnes 66
Herman, Erwin 66

Herman, Sonny 281
Het Parool 240, 248
Hilversum 231, 281, 283, 330
Hineinu 157 f., 160 f., 163 – 165, 290, 306, 308, 327
HIV/AIDS epidemic 3, 11, 16, 27, 82 f., 90, 96, 115, 147 – 149, 160, 170, 180, 209, 213, 216 f., 221, 255 f., 260, 265, 267, 285, 288, 304 – 306, 312 – 314, 325 f., 328, 331
Hollandsche Schouwburg 232, 247, 249, 299
Homologie 239
Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS) 80 f., 115, 121
Horvilleur, Delphine 216

Il libère, Il aime (I.L.I.A.) 14, 172, 177
Israel 5 f., 16, 30, 38, 51, 57, 72 f., 98 – 100, 103 – 107, 110, 112, 152, 165, 170, 178, 181 f., 189, 191, 198, 210, 228, 246, 248, 253 – 255, 265, 267, 281 f., 285, 289, 292, 302, 307, 317, 331
Israeli AIDS Task Force (IATF) 254 f., 269

Jackson, Glenda 165
Jacobs, Louis 101
Jacobs Affair 101
Jakobovits, Immanuel 137, 146, 148, 160, 252
Jerusalem 269, 282
Jewish Aids Trust (JAT) 149, 160 f., 305 f., 327
Jewish Blind Society 138
Jewish Chronicle 119, 123 f., 126 f., 136 f., 141, 144 – 146, 148, 150, 163 – 165, 235, 326
Jewish Feminist Group (JFG) 151 – 154, 159
Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group (JGLG) 1 f., 5, 11, 14, 16, 76, 113, 115, 149, 154 – 158, 160 – 168, 273, 276, 278 f., 284 – 286, 290, 293 – 295, 297, 299, 302, 304, 306, 308, 310 – 312, 315, 319 – 322, 326 f.
Jewish Gay and Lesbian Helpline (JGLH) 156 f., 160 – 166, 290, 297, 306, 327
Jewish Gay Group (JGG) 1, 5, 11, 13, 16, 19, 48, 55, 71, 76, 82, 113 – 116, 120, 122, 125, 127 – 150, 154 – 156, 159, 168, 181, 218, 227, 235, 240, 246, 273, 275 f., 278 – 281, 283 – 285, 297, 304, 310 – 312, 315, 319 – 322, 326, 330
Jewish Homophile Liaison Group (JHpLG) 125 f., 150
Jewish Homosexual Liaison Group (JHsLG) 121 – 125
Jewish Lesbian Feminist Group 151 f.
Jewish LGBT+ Group 2, 122, 141, 168, 311, 315, 327
Jewish National Aids Co-ordinating Council 149, 160
Jewish Research Group (JRG) 1, 13, 116, 118 – 120, 122
Jewish Women's Group 151
Joods Coördinatie Commissie vor het Bevrijde Nederlandse Gebied (JCC) 109 f., 222
Joods Geestelijk Gezondheidszorg 235, 256
Joods Maatschappelijk Werk (JMW) 233 – 235, 246 – 249, 251 – 253, 256, 264, 266, 272, 281 f., 312, 328 f.
Judaïques FM 205

Kahn, Yoel 247, 304
Kaplan, Jacob 203
Kesergé, group 288, 306
Keshet Deutschland 320
Kings Arms 142, 155
Klapheck, Elisa 262
Kobler, Freddie 130 f.
Kruyer, Wanya F. 260 f., 277 f.

Labour Party 83 f., 100, 116
Lamm, Norman 56, 137
L'Chaim, group 6, 288, 306, 308
Le Marais 89, 91, 294
Lee, Michael A. 148 f.
Leeds 166
Lennard, Ian 126
Leo Baeck College 103, 116, 141, 150, 153, 211, 281
Leo Baeck Temple 65
Leonard, Arthur 248
Lesbia, magazine 89, 169, 199, 201 – 203, 208, 212, 214
Lesbian Nation 95, 221
Liberaal Joodse Gemeente (LJG) 110 – 112, 222, 230, 235 – 237, 248 f., 251, 256, 262, 266, 268
Liberal Judaism 13, 60 f., 101 f., 111, 116, 158, 163 f., 167, 235, 237, 263, 313, 325
Libération, newspaper 174, 203

Lilienthal, David 236 f.
Liverpool 166
London 1, 3, 5 f., 11, 13, 16, 55, 71, 75 – 81, 83 f., 91, 97, 101, 113 – 116, 118 – 120, 130, 135, 139, 141, 143, 150, 152, 162, 164, 166, 181, 211, 213, 218, 221, 224, 246, 273, 281, 283, 285 – 287, 293 f., 297, 300, 310 f., 314, 321, 324, 326, 329, 331
London Lesbian and Gay Centre 158
Lyon 217

Magen David Keshet Italia 320
Manchester 122, 166, 295
Mandelbaum, Gertrude 263
Margonet, Jonathan 162
Marks, Sally 136 f., 144
Martner, Rodney 144
Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) 65 f., 70, 135
Metropolitan Community Temple Mishpocheh 67, 70 f.
Michmar, group 205
Milk, Harvey 163
Mitterrand, François 86, 107, 186, 313
Montagnier, Luc 90
Montagu Centre 167
Montpellier 217
Morris, Richard 167 f.
Moskowitz, Mike 57
Mouvement de Libération des Femmes 88, 169
Mouvement d'Information et d'Expression des Lesbiennes 201
Mouvement juif libéral de France (MJLF) 108, 170, 211, 214, 219
Musaph, Herman 223

Naches, group 71
National Front 99
Nederlands-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap (NIK) 109 – 112, 222, 235 – 238, 248, 251 f., 262, 266
Nederlandsch Wetenschappelijk Humanitair Komitee (NWHK) 92 f.
Nederlandse Zionistenbond (NZB) 109 f., 112, 222, 236
Neuberger, Julia 141, 162
Nevins, Daniel 62
Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad 223, 230, 235, 237, 239, 248, 252, 290
Nieweg, Betty 222, 234
Nodel, Isaac 136 f.
North West Reform Synagogue 141, 167
Nottingham 166
Nouvel Homo, magazine 174

Odé, Jelle 269
Ofman, Marc 194
Oi! 245, 250, 259, 264, 267, 269, 271, 329
Open Church Group 135
Or Chadash, synagogue 66, 71
Ouders van homoseksuele kinderen 235
Outrage! 84

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) 100, 116, 198
Paris 2 f., 6, 14, 16, 75 f., 85 – 91, 97, 105, 107, 113 f., 169 – 172, 174, 177 f., 185, 194, 198, 203, 209 f., 213, 216 f., 220 f., 224, 249, 273, 283, 285, 290 f., 293 f., 299 f., 310, 314, 321, 324 f., 328, 331
Perry, Troy 65 f.
Platform Joden en Aids (PJA) 266
Portugees-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap (PIK) 110 f., 222, 235 – 237, 262, 315

Quakers 166, 285

Radio Shalom 205
Raphael, Lev 165
Rapoport, Dror Cohen 263
Rausky, Franklin 204
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) 59, 67 f.
Reform Synagogues of Great Britain (RSGB) 102, 116, 144 – 146, 158, 167
Reisner, Avram 62
Roth, Colin 136
Rotterdam 93, 225, 246, 268
Roze Front 95, 221, 239
Roze Zaterdag 95, 221, 232 f., 239, 249
rue Copernic, synagogue 107 f., 170, 190, 311, 327

Sacks, Jonathan 163 f.
Sarah, Elizabeth T. 60, 150 f., 153 f., 165, 167, 285, 301
Schulman, Sarah 165
SEK, magazine 239
Sha'ar Zahav, synagogue 11, 66, 68, 141, 184, 246, 261, 285, 304, 317
Shaw, Paul 119
Sheffield 166
Shulman, Sheila 60, 151, 153 f., 158 f., 278, 301
Sjalhomo 2, 5, 12, 14 – 16, 19, 48, 76, 111 – 113, 143, 198, 207, 213, 221 – 261, 263 – 273, 275 – 287, 289 f., 294 – 296, 299, 302 – 310, 312, 314 f., 319 – 322, 328 – 331
Sjalhomo België 225 f., 289
Sjoeche, group 249, 251
Smith, Chris 158, 165
Society for the Protection of Personal Rights (SPPR) 5 f., 71, 181 f., 254 f., 282, 285, 292
Soetendorp, Awraham 236 f.
Sorgman, Lorry 247
SOS Homo Téléphone 172
Spare Rib, magazine 152 f.
Spier, E. Y. 252
Spirot, François 260
Sternberg Centre 167
Stichting Homo-monument 238, 250
Stockholm 293
Stonewall, youth organization 84
Stonewall Riots 1, 9, 18, 23, 55, 81, 115, 324

Tatchell, Peter 147
Tel Aviv 5, 57, 71, 181 f., 269, 282
Temple of David and Jonathan 64
Terrence Higgins Trust 147 f., 160
Thatcher, Margaret 82 f., 100, 115, 147, 161, 312, 325
The Advocate 248, 277
Themans, H. H. 252
Tikvah Chadashah, synagogue 67
Treuherz, Francis 119, 122
Trouw, newspaper 239

Union libérale israélite de France (ULIF) 108, 170
Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) 59, 64, 66
Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations 101
United Nations 69 f.
United Synagogue 101, 116, 120, 164
Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches 70
Urwand, André 182, 200, 207, 214, 282
Utrecht 225

van Amersfoort, Jonathan 222 f., 226, 234
van Krimpen, Arnout 269
van Thijn, Ed 247, 329
van Voolen, Edward 230, 236 f.
Velleman, Karel 223
Vide, Dan 174, 187 f.
Vriendschap, newsletter 93

Wesly, Jenny 250
Wilde, Oscar 78, 80
Wishaupt, Harry 233 – 235, 256 f., 265 f., 281, 312, 328
Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (WhK) 79, 92
Wolf, Charlotte 133
Women's Liberation Movement 82, 88, 115, 150 – 153
World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations (WCGLJO) 4, 6, 13 f., 16 f., 49, 70, 72 – 74, 154, 156, 161 f., 164, 206, 208, 212 f., 224 f., 238, 246 – 248, 255, 276 f., 279, 281, 283 – 286, 289 f., 292 f., 306 – 312, 314, 316, 324, 329
World Union of Progressive Judaism 61
Woudstra, Lo 270

Yachad, Germany 308
Yachad, South Africa 276, 284