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Rememoration, 'sticky associations,' and social media performativity in the pegida movement

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Rememoration, 'Sticky Associations,'

and Social Media Performativity in the Pegida Movement

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Abstract:

In this thesis, I investigate the process of rememoration and Sara Ahmed's notion of 'sticky associations' on Lutz Bachmann's Instagram—founder of the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident (Pegida)—from October 2015 to March 2021. I argue that Instagram becomes a stage in a performance of 'the people' vis-à-vis the migrant Other. Through the repetition of posts, hashtags, and comments that dehumanize migrants and disparage the German government, Bachmann and his following circulate emotions that carry political 'stickiness' that attaches to some bodies and objects, but not to others. Stickiness creates boundaries around the 'we' and the 'them,' and I draw attention to how stickiness accumulates through Bachmann's Instagram posts from the start of the European refugee crisis to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although Pegida is a small right-wing fringe group in Germany, this analysis aims to disrupt the illusionary and performative nature of social media spaces at a greater scale and to demonstrate how these platforms facilitate the growth of polarizing, tribal mentalities.

Keywords:

Table of Contents

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Introduction:

At its peak in late 2014 to early 2015, Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident) grew exponentially.[1] While Europe began to see a significant influx of refugees from war-torn countries, Pegida began demonstrating on the streets of Dresden. Its first protest on October 24, 2014 drew together around 350 participants. However, by January 12, 2015, just days after the Charlie Hebdo shootings in Paris, its demonstration saw a jump to around 17,000 to 25,000 disgruntled supporters.[2] Within the span of only a few months the 'populist right-wing movement of indignation,' as Vorländer labels them, demonstrated that its fears of Islamization clearly resonated with a number of Germans.[3] Although its in-person demonstrations and performative rituals have helped the group maintain its prominence, this thesis focuses on Pegida's online and social media presence as well as the meaning-making processes that take place there.

Why Social Media?

Social media has become a successful, global tool for grassroots groups to air their beliefs, messaging, programming, hashtags, emotions, and other forms of communication. As the use of the internet and the use of social media platforms has grown exponentially in recent years, these online media platforms have also significantly altered political processes and the ease of access for 'ordinary' people to participate in 'direct democracy.' With access to a smartphone, one can connect with others, socialize, learn a language, keep up with the news, send a picture of you wearing a dog filter, share and create your own videos, and much more. However, as social

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[1] German: Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes
[2] Druxes, Helga. "'Montag Ist Wieder Pegida-Tag! ': Pegida's Community Building and Discursive Strategies." 19.
[3] Vorländer, Hans. PEGIDA: Entwicklung, Zusammensetzung, und Deutung einer Empörungsbewegung.

media has become a more dominant and normalized means of receiving and sharing information, it has also fostered a place where "militant groups who wish to recruit new members and organize anti-democratic activities" can with ease.[4] The sheer amount of information and content uploaded to social media platforms makes it difficult to police violent, hateful, racist, false, and pernicious content. I argue that this type of content serves as a critical site of analysis, especially considering the ease of joining social media and internet communities.

Social media has no borders; users can connect with like-minded people all over the world. This carries both positive and negative effects; some can come together over their love of cycling or cooking, but users can also coalesce over their hate, anger, or disgust for particular groups of people, things, or ideas. With this, social media provides a research treasure trove for looking at the information, images, videos, and news that these groups think matter to their following and to their social media community. As Quan-Haase and Sloan argue, social media is ubiquitous in our daily lives and it "…provides new platforms for socialization, public debate, and information exchange."[5] There are several social media platforms to analyze, but I am using Instagram as my archive for this project. Instagram's focus on photos and videos allows audiences to interpret posters' meanings, and also how commenters interpret their meanings. Especially under the circumstances of COVID-19 in this contemporary moment, it is imperative to look online as much of the global population are unable to socialize in their 'normal' manner.

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[4] Simpson, Patricia Anne, and Druxes, Helga, eds. *Digital Media Strategies of the Far Right in Europe and the United States*. 123.
[5] Quan-Haase, Anabel, and Luke Sloan. "Introduction to the Handbook of Social Media Research Methods: Goals, Challenges and Innovations."1-9.

Methodology on Instagram

Boasting over 1 billion users total, with 500 million active users daily, Instagram has grown greatly in recent years.[6] As an image and video-sharing application, Instagram remains distinct from other social media platforms. It offers its users direct messaging, the sharing of photos and videos as posts, the sharing of photos and videos through stories, searchable hashtags, location tagging through geotags. As of 2019, Instagram Checkout allows users to tap a product from a post to purchase within the Instagram platform. As an image-based platform, Instagram provides users with a 'highly visual culture' that conveys its meaning through photos, with captions and hashtags to provide further context.[7] In order to post on Instagram, one must include an image or video to publish their post, which differentiates it from other platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Instagram posts "are tied to 'rich and messy' information about social history and personal context."[8] This rich and messy information makes it particularly suitable for interpretative or qualitative research. Not only does one have to view the images for content, but also the comments and hashtags. Instagram is a robust data resource as it captures the everyday visual content that people post and share with their followings.

In 2015, the creators of Instagram described their app as a "fun and quirky way to share your life with friends through a series of pictures."[9] However, in 2021, their new mission statement reads, "We bring you closer to the people and things you love."[10] Ironically, they do bring us closer to the things we love, but they may also bring us closer to things we may hate,

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[6] Dean, Brian, Instagram Demographic Statistics: How Many People Use Instagram in 2021. https://backlinko.com/instagram-users
[7] Laestadius, Linnea. "Instagram." In *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*, 573-92.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Instagram (2015) FAQs, https://instagram.com/about/faq/#
[10] Instagram (2021) About Us, https://about.instagram.com/about-us#

disgust, or fear. This thesis investigates these emotions within the context of Lutz Bachmann's Instagram. Bachmann is the only remaining Pegida founder[11]; he is a forty-eight-year-old from Dresden, Germany. My analysis considers Bachmann's Instagram posts on his account 'lutziges'[12] from October 2015 to March 1, 2021. Within this almost seven-year period, I break my data into three timeframes: 2015-2016 (the migrant crisis in Europe), 2017-2019 (assimilation and acculturation), and 2020-2021 (the COVID-19 pandemic). I chose Lutz Bachmann's personal Instagram as my archive, as he has the largest following of any of the Pegida social media platforms. His Instagram has 25.2k followers, where the official Pegida Twitter has 6.3k followers, Pegida's Telegram has 3.65k followers, and Bachmann's personal YouTube channel has 21.2k followers. His posts on Instagram highlight similar content as other social media platforms and he often directs his followers to other Pegida networks or shares posts directly from other Pegida platforms.

Pegida, Rememoration, 'Sticky Associations,' and Instagram

This thesis explores the content and activity produced during the beginning of the refugee crisis in Europe to March 2021. I analyze the ways in which difference is signified through Bachmann's posts and how these posts function to fix these differences through his claims on social media, as well as how emotions work on the platform to perpetuate what Sara Ahmed calls 'sticky associations.' My focus is on fear, hate, and disgust on these platforms and how these emotions circulate and accumulate value. Additionally, I analyze the performative space Instagram provides in Bachmann's performance of 'the people.'

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[11] Lutz Bachmann and Kathrin Oertel founded Pegida together. Oertel exited the movement in early 2015, after Bachmann's Hitler mustache selfie scandal.
[12] Bachmann's username is a play on his last name and the German word for 'funny'—*lustig*.

In Chapter I, I introduce the Pegida movement, give a brief history of their rise and the narrative that they create through their claims as a collective, as well as the pernicious effects of this tribal 'we.' In Chapter II, I identify the ways in which Pegida and its members come to recognize themselves as 'the people' through 'pastness' and fictive ethnicity, and how this creates problems for anyone outside of the perceived 'we.' Additionally, I identify how emotions secure these collectives and shape people through repetitive actions. In doing this, I provide a framework that locates how Pegida mobilizes its collective through the performance of an imagined peoplehood, and how they establish ontological boundaries around what *they are not* via Instagram.

In Chapter III, I investigate the familiar dichotomy of Self and Other at play in their online rhetoric. With this, I aim to address the following questions: What does Bachmann do on Instagram to clearly draw boundaries around the 'we,' 'the people,' and national character? How do fear, hate, and disgust circulate through these posts? How does Bachmann signify the Other? In Pegida's case, the group has multiple 'Others' it is fighting against—i.e., refugees, the *Altparteien*, and the Mainstream Media. I focus mainly on the narrative between Pegida and migrants/refugees, where Pegida and its followers perform the role of the ideal German and European subjects at odds with the 'bodies out of place' who threaten to take away their identity and culture. However, as COVID became a focal point throughout the world, I identify a shift in affective responses toward the German government. In the Pegida narrative, the German state and government are paradoxically their greatest adversary, and its only hope.[13] Where, on the other hand, migrants and refugees have no capacity to act in Pegida's narrative—they

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[13] Paukstat, Adrian, and Cedric Ellwanger. "Wir Sind Das Volk"104-5.

simultaneously represent a looming threat to the Pegida collective, German culture and nationhood, and life itself.[14]

Semiotics are an important part of the narrative that helps Pegida create its identity and its Others. Therefore, I must lay out what I mean when I use the word 'sign,' 'signifier,' and 'signified.' I am concerned with how signs come to bear the meaning they do in their cultural context. Signs can be broken down into a 'signifier'—the sound associated with the image of something—and a 'signified'—the concept of a thing. For example, a signifier could be a dog, whereas the signified would be the idea or concept of the dog. The signifier and the signified together are the sign, which becomes an object and a meaningful linguistic unit. With this, I emphasize the way in which signs become 'sticky' and how emotions stick to objects and bodies. I also demonstrate the role of social media in the production and reproduction of these sticky signs in the context of Lutz Bachmann's content on Instagram. Through emotions and the transference of emotions, Pegida can construct the subjectivity of the ordinary German vis-à-vis the Muslim Other.

With the free flow of information, echo chambers, and filter bubbles online, liberal democracies seem in a feeble state. Pegida has seen its movement grow throughout Europe, and abroad ostensibly due to its social media presence and performativity. In the next chapter, I give a brief history of the movement, right-wing terrorism with ties to social media in Germany, as well as the construction of signifier *das Volk*[15] in the context of the Pegida movement. Additionally, I want to note all translations are my own. The original German texts are included in the footnotes or in the appendix.

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[14] *Ibid.,* 104-5.

[15] 'The people' in German. This word is a loaded signifier that has many signified meanings. I demonstrate the nuance this term carries in the following chapter.

Chapter I: Who are the Patriotic Europeans?

In Europe and North America long-established regimes are facing revolt. From Brexit, to the 2016 U.S. presidential election, a crisis is occurring, and its symptoms are apparent. Right-wing populist movements are on the rise in Europe. Germany is now demonstrating a similar spike in this ideology as other nations such as the UK, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Austria. Pegida's main fear is *Überfremdung*—that foreign influence and effects of globalization maim the 'native' culture. It views the Islamization of the West as the catchall for all of Germany's and Europe's socioeconomic woes. Pegida followers believe that Islam is in direct contention with Judeo-Christian and Enlightenment values of a collective European or 'Western' society, yet areas and cities that exhibit the most right-wing activity usually have hardly any migrants. In fact, in the German state of Saxony—where Pegida originated—less than one percent of people identify as Muslim.[16]

From late 2014 to present, Pegida has maintained its presence on the German political scene. Initially, scholars expected the group to exhibit the same 'thin ideology' as other populist groups in Europe, where groups demonstrate a strong presence for a short period of time, and then fade away leaving no real societal impact. However, Pegida appears to have bucked the trend. Scholarship on Pegida's success argues that their use of the intersectionality of popular discontent coupled with their use of hybrid media mechanisms has fostered and maintained their following across the German and the European right-wing political spectrum.

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[16] Chwalisz, Claudia, 'Pegida In a European Landscape,' 17.

1.1: Pegida's Rise

Pegida began organizing on Facebook in the fall of 2014 as many migrants from war-torn countries flooded European nations' borders. In 2015 and 2016 Germany took in approximately 1.2 million migrants. With its controversial leader, Lutz Bachmann, at the helm, Pegida began organizing its rallies mainly in Dresden, and also in other Germany cities.[17] It struck a chord with Germans across the conservative political spectrum to demonstrate its concern over the rise in refugees and to mobilize Germans about the looming consequences of migration. Political Scientist Jörg Michael Dostal states, "They fear large-scale migration might further decrease their prospects and social status."[18] Paired with their socioeconomic fears, Pegida is also well-known for its anti-Islam rhetoric, which under the surface can be analyzed as a latent symbolic expression of a larger crisis in German politics.[19] Migrants are scapegoated for low growth, aging populations, and rising levels of inequality that have many Germans and Europeans feeling uncertain and disgruntled about their job security, their futures, and their children's futures.[20]

With their anti-migration, anti-globalization, anti-elitism, anti-establishment views, the Pegida movement resonates with the frustrations of many Germans who no longer feel represented by political elites in their national government or in the European Union. Pegida even helped garner support for the far-right political party, Alternative for Germany (Alternativ für Deutschland or AfD), which began winning seats in the German parliament in 2015. The Pegida and AfD pair is significant; it represents a direct channel for expressing right-wing

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[17] I use the word controversial here due to his offences for 'inciting hate speech,' and because of a selfie he took dressed as Hitler that surfaced in January 2015. He stepped down as Pegida's founder in January 2015, but returned approximately a month later.

[18] Dostal, Jörg Michael. "The Pegida Movement and German Political Culture: Is Right-Wing Populism Here to Stay?" 524.

[19] *Ibid.,* 524.

[20] Chwalisz, 17.

discontent within the German parliament. In fact, its steady rise makes the AfD the biggest

opposition party in German parliament with 94 seats.[21]

As Pegida gained traction, counterdemonstrations appeared across Germany. In many

instances, counterdemonstrators outnumbered Pegida members at rallies. Many Germans

gathered in the name of *Willkommenskultur* (welcome culture) to counter anti-Islam rhetoric and

to demonstrate that Germany is inclusive of all people regardless of their migration background.

At counterdemonstrations, welcoming Germans bellowed, "Say it loud, say it clear, refugees are

welcome here!" In addition to opposing Pegida demonstrations, many Germans worked at

refugee camps, gathered clothing and food, volunteered to drive refugees to their appointments,

taught German lessons, translated asylum documents, and much more. Akrap notes that the

2014-2015 migration wave was the first spike in asylum seekers since the 90s and German

reunification[22], where refugees were left to their own devices. With this new migration wave

refugees are no longer on their own, a fact that appears controversial for Pegida members, who

claim that their government has abandoned them in favor of foreigners.[23]

Pegida's quick growth obscured their demands, but leaders demonstrated them in a

position paper (*Dresdener Thesen*). Dostal explains that the list of nineteen demands worked to

appeal to mainstream conservatives and acted to distance the Pegida movement from receiving

extremist criticism.[24] Some of their demands included: the defense and promotion of 'Christian-

Jewish culture of the Occident;' a push for more controlled migration policy based on the South

African, Canadian, Australian, and Swiss models; the expulsion of all rejected asylum seekers

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[21] "Germany's AfD: How right-wing is nationalist Alternative for Germany?" February 11, 2020.
https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37274201
[22] Akrap, Doris. 'Germany's response to the refugee crisis is admirable. But I fear it cannot last.'
[23] Önnerfors, "Retrotopia" as a Retrogressive Force in the German PEGIDA-Movement, 135.
[24] Dostal, 525.

from Germany; increased spending on police resources.[25] The nineteen demands—on paper—

allowed Pegida to distance themselves from far-right extremist groups, and simultaneously

created an umbrella effect under which right-leaning Germans could coalesce.

Despite the seemingly diluted demands in their position paper, Pegida rallies brought a

more accurate and colorful depiction of their fears. The tone of their ritualistic Monday

demonstrations was much crasser than their position paper led on. Invoking a sense of nostalgia,

Pegida demonstrators hailed a number of slogans seen and heard back during the Monday

marches of 1989 where protesters were fighting for a unified Germany. Namely, the phrase "*Wir*

sind das Volk!" (We are the people!) commonly floats around Pegida Monday protests. In the

former socialist GDR, '*Volk*' was commonly used with other common words like *Volkspolizei*

(people's police*)* or *Volksarmee* (people's army)*,* to denote a relation between a society and its

people*.* However, in 1989 '*Wir sind das Volk'* was a way to demonstrate that the state was no

longer serving the interests of its people. Now, Pegida has appropriated the phrase to show that

their interests are no longer served by German parliament.

Additionally, in order to make their demonstrations more informal they advertise their

marches as an '*Abendspaziergang*' (an evening stroll). As German scholar Helga Druxes notes,

marketing these marches as aimless strolls functions to disassemble their provocative goals.[26]

However, in late 2014, Pegida founder, Lutz Bachmann, began advertising them as

Kundegebung (rally). The shift of terminology, as Druxes argues, "…evokes a deliberate archaic

flavor and diffuses vagueness," which works effectively to appeal to a broad spectrum of

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[25] *Ibid*., 525.

[26] Druxes, Helga. "'Montag Ist Wieder Pegida-Tag!': Pegida's Community Building and Discursive Strategies." 20.

German right-wing groups.[27] Pegida rallies successfully hailed demonstrators from several political backgrounds including: the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD); the Alternative for Germany (AfD); the Identitarians; large groups of blue-collar and middle-class white men, as well as older couples still disgruntled over German unification.[28]

Druxes notes that signs and protestors at Pegida exhibited phrases like: "For our children's future," "No religious wars on German soil," and "Stop multiculturalism: my homeland will stay German."[29] These sentiments suggest that fear about migration are greater than the Pegida leaders' position paper suggests. Specifically, the call to stop multiculturalism hails the idea of '*biodeutsch*' or being pure German, which is especially conspicuous in terms of Germany's fascist past. It also demonstrates the attachment to *Heimat* and the myth of a homogenous German society. In Pegida's narrative, the overflow of migrants and inaction of political elites allows Pegida members to constitute themselves as the ordinary 'heroes' of the story.[30]

In addition to its in-person efforts to protect children and preserve the German homeland, Pegida's usage of social media and the internet gives members a wide-ranging platform to air their grievances and hate. The consequential nature of these activities is highlighted below. With little regulation, Pegida members can incite hate, share misleading information and conspiracy theories, and organize rallies through their social media chatter. Druxes notes a Facebook post from Pegida follower Jürgen Rosemann, where he posted "a

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[27] *Ibid*., 20.
[28] *Ibid*., 21.
[29] *Ibid*., 21.
Original German: "Für die Zukunft unser Kinder;" "Keine Glaubenskriege auf deutschem Boden;" "Multikulti stoppen: Meine Heimat bleibt Deutsch."
[30] Paukstat, Adrian, and Cedric Ellwanger. ""Wir Sind Das Volk", 96.

vehement diatribe against career politicians."[31] Rosemann's post received thirty-six likes in the span of twenty hours.[32] This 'like' count seems relatively low, but Druxes argues, "most of us do not even talk to thirty-six friends in the span of twenty hours, let alone get boosted by all of them."[33] In short, something as arbitrary as a 'like' can be consequential beyond the online interaction, especially in echo chambers and filter bubbles, which yield a sense of common fellow-feeling.

1.2: Right-wing Terror and *Justification*

Since 2014, Germany has seen a rise in right-wing extremist terrorism, attacks on minority groups, and on refugee centers.[34] While it is difficult to claim direct causal links between this violence and online echo chambers, these acts point to a pernicious combination of far-right ideology and social media. According to the Deutsche Welle, since reunification in 1990, German security agencies and authorities have collected data concerning far-right violence in the country.[35] Their official death toll is 94, however, journalists and the Amadeu Antonio Foundation—a foundation engaging against far-right groups—estimate that the real total is closer to 200.[36] Most recently, on February 19, 2020, a lone gun man shot a total of nine people at two different shisha bars in Hanau. The perpetrator was found dead with his mother in an apparent murder-suicide; with his body, police found a confession and video detailing his beliefs in far-right ideology. Additionally, in October 2019, a German man planned on committing a

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[31] Druxes, Helga. "'Montag Ist Wieder Pegida-Tag!" Pegida's Community Building and Discursive Strategies" 26.
[32] *Ibid.*, 26.
[33] *Ibid.*, 26.
[34] Hille. Peter. "Right-wing terror in Germany: A timeline." Deutsche Welle, February 2, 2020, https://www.dw.com/en/right-wing-terror-in-germany-a-timeline/a-52451976
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Ibid.*

massacre at a synagogue in Halle on Yom Kippur and streaming the attack on Twitch[37] in tribute

to the Christchurch massacre from early 2019.[38] However, he was unable to enter the synagogue

to carry out the attack. In his frustration over his foiled plan, he kept his livestream going and

drove to a kebab shop where he killed a passerby and a customer.[39] His reasoning for the attack

was to "increase the morale of other suppressed Whites by spreading the combat footage."[40]

There are too many far-right attacks in recent years for the scope of this project to cover,

but I want to note that refugees and politicians are both victims of this extremism. In June 2019,

Christian Democratic Union (CDU) politician Walter Lübcke was assassinated ostensibly

because of his support for Angela Merkel's welcoming refugee policy.[41] After Lübcke's murder,

Kontraste—a German TV program from the broadcasting network ARD—posted a video to its

Twitter interviewing Pegida protestors at a rally in Dresden about their thoughts on the murder.

In the video, the demonstrators downplay the severity of the attack. The first interviewee notes,

"In comparison to the dangers of left extremism, a murder every two to three years for hateful

reasons is relatively normal."[42] Another interviewee states, "I see Mr. Lübcke as a traitor of the

people. Someone who suggests that their own people leave the country when refugee policy does

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[37] A global live streaming platform, primarily for video gamers, but the platform offers other broadcasts and content.
[38] Morgenpost, October 18, 2019, 6:48 PM.
https://www.morgenpost.de/politik/inland/article227317699/Halle-Anschlag-Wohnung-durchsucht-Manifest-Stephan-B-versendet.html
[39] Hille. "Right-wing Terror"
[40] Önnerfors, Andreas., "The Germany Synagogue Terrorist's Manifesto Highlights Threat Of Neo-Nazism." October 24, 2019.
[41] Hille. "Right-wing Terror"
[42] Kontraste, Twitter Post. July 4, 2019, 4:10 PM.
https://twitter.com/ARDKontraste/status/1146822227557531649?s=20, translation, my own.
"Im Vergleich zur linksextremism Gefahr, ist ein Mord, was weiß ich, alle zwei oder drei Jahre, aus irgendwelchen Hass-Gründen relativ normal."

not suit them is a traitor to me."[43] Another demonstrator calls the murder "a human reaction,"

and uses the German idiom equivalent to "what goes around, comes around" to describe his

thoughts on the murder.[44]

As noted earlier, the Pegida narrative is effectively established by connecting the influx

of migrants in Germany to with policies of German political elites, specifically with the elites

from the parties die Grünen, CDU, and SPD.[45] Through this logical connection, a story is told,

which Paukstat succinctly puts as, "Germany is being overwhelmed with migration because of

the conscious inaction of political elites."[46] And, as seen in the responses from Pegida members

regarding the murder of Walter Lübcke, it is this logic that makes him to blame for his own death

through said narrative. Pegida takes disintegrated parts of a discourse and constructs them into a

cohesive plot.[47] Thus, narrative development allows Pegida members to conceptualize and

establish their identities through the Pegida plot and connections of the events stated above.

Additionally, it is through this narrative where Pegida members can recognize themselves

in the Pegida story, while at the same time, "…enabling Pegida to approach not yet mobilized

subjects with an offer of collective identity."[48] Paukstat follows Louis Althusser's notion of

interpellation to explain how Pegida as a movement with the subjects it hails effectively

produces and reproduces "…the narrative of a particular subject which functions both to

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[43] Kontraste, https://twitter.com/ARDKontraste/status/1146822227557531649?s=20, translation, my own. "Ich sehe den Herrn Lübcke als Volksverräter. Wer seinem eigen Volk empfiehlt, auszureisen, wenn ihm die Flüchtlingspolitik nicht passt, das ist für mich Volksverräter"
[44] Kontraste, https://twitter.com/ARDKontraste/status/1146822227557531649?s=20, translation, my own.
[45] Paukstat, Adrian, and Cedric Ellwanger. ""Wir Sind Das Volk" 96.
[46] *Ibid.,* 96.
[47] *Ibid.,* 96.
[48] *Ibid.,* 96.

establish a collective identity and to mobilize the subject of that collective."[49] In assigning subject positions, Pegida provides its subjects both a way in which to make sense of their experiences in the world as well as an identity from that same construction. But, as Paukstat notes, it is the Pegida subjects themselves that simultaneously construct their identity through the relational logic and positioning of the Self (German, *das Volk*, etc.) to the interrelated categories of Other (refugees or political elites).[50]

Pegida hails its subjects in a manner that makes them look less revolutionary and more ordinary. Paukstat notes, "The Pegida subject appears as a petit-bourgeois solicitant vis-à-vis the state rather than a self-conscious revolutionary. Pegida does not demand, it pleads."[51] With its ability to garner support from an amalgam of right-wing parties and actors and to utilize social media technologies, Pegida has proven its beliefs and ideology are not easily wiped away. The movement's fears and anger clearly resonate with many Germans, so it is paramount to understand the epistemological and ontological narratives that shape its subjects' social world.

1.3: *Das Volk*

In German, there are three forms of the English word 'people.' *Leute*, *Mensch*, and *Volk* all meaning the people or people in their own nuanced way. However, *Volk* signifies a particularly specialized meaning; it refers to people as a collective nation or community. As simple as this sounds, this word is anything but straightforward. *Volk* has different meanings it has carried overtime; from the National Socialist Regime to the German unification protests of 1989, the word recycles from decade to decade, but nonetheless holds the overarching meaning of a collective group of people who share a common language, culture, and ethnicity. With these

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[49] *Ibid.,* 96.
[50] *Ibid.,* 97.
[51] *Ibid.*, 101.

changes overtime, *Volk* became 'a mythical element of permeance,' which defined German identity.[52] Nuance arises in these varying definitions, since Volk can mean one thing to Pegida leaders and quite the opposite to Chancellor, Angela Merkel, or Pegida counterdemonstrations. For example, Merkel once said, "The people is anyone who lives in Germany,"[53] to which Pegida would obviously disagree.

In the podcast, 'One simple word defines Germans, but Germans don't agree on what it means,' Patrick Cox investigates the meaning of this word in contemporary German society. In particular, the podcast includes interviewees from a Pegida rally in Dresden and the interviewer asks Pegida supporters to define *Volk*. Charlotte Raufuss, a Pegida interviewee in her mid-twenties sporting a *Wehrmacht*[54] T-shirt and neo-Nazi tattoos, defines *Volk* as, "…a community of the same ethnicity, with the same values. If two Muslims live in Germany and have a child, that does not make the child German. It is like saying a dog born in a horse stable is a horse. Germany needs to reestablish its purity."[55] Although Charlotte's response is extreme, most interviewees came to the general conclusion that their definition of *Volk* is people with the same culture, who speak the same language, and who live in a defined territory. Moreover, understanding the notion of *Volk* in Germany and its origins as a signifier shed light on how notions of cultural, national, and ethnic homogeneity are signified and imagined to build mental walls in a growingly global society. In the next chapter, I investigate how collectives or the idea

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[52] Le Gloannec, Anne-Maire. 'On German Identity,' 129.
[53] Original German: Das Volk ist jeder, der in diesem Land lebt."
[54] Die Wehrmacht was the armed forces during the NS Regime from 1935-1945.
[55] Cox, Patrick. "One simple word defines Germans, but Germans don't agree on what it means," The World, September 17, 2017 at 3:15 PM EDT.

of 'the people' are galvanized and how these notions in the German context have helped Pegida

mobilize its following.

Chapter II: Making and Mobilizing 'the People' through Rememoration and Emotions

In this section, I will draw from Immanuel Wallerstein, Zygmunt Bauman, Andreas Önnerfors, Étienne Balibar, and Sara Ahmed to develop a theoretical framework for understanding how nationalism, ethnicity, and peoplehood are constructed and how they manifest in what Ahmed coins 'affective economies of hate.' In the case of Europe, current borders were developed at the start of the twentieth century, but they have been conceptualized as monolithic divisions among peoples. These lines inculcate a sense of communal identity specific to being inside a 'land' and define anything outside a land's borders as threatening to perceived national purity. This chapter demonstrates where these constructions are formed and their consequences in this contemporary historical moment. As Sara Ahmed argues, narratives like 'the people' and 'the other' are all too familiar, but it is these familiar narratives that demand the closest and most careful readings. This chapter has three parts. First, I identify how pastness and fictive ethnicity function to make 'the people.' Second, I observe what happens when a perceived collective feel that their peoplehood has been taken away—either by an Other or by the state. Third, I identify anger, fear, and disgust as emotions that circulate and accumulate 'stickiness' or attachments that have political consequences.

2.1: Making 'the People'

Through categories of race, nation, and ethnic groups, individuals from all over the world are fixed into ontological boxes. Based on these categories, people make claims in the present that are based on socially constructed categories of the past. Wallerstein states, race is linked to a supposed genetic category, which has a visible form. Nation is a socio-political category, which is linked to actual or potential boundaries of a state. Lastly, ethnic group is a cultural category that is linked to behaviors passed from generation to generation, not necessarily linked to nation-

state borders.[56] In sum, Wallerstein asserts that the whole point of these three categories are to

allow us to assert claims "based upon the past against the manipulable 'rational' processes of the

present."[57] These categories allow individuals to differentiate themselves from other groups in

the present based on these conceptions of race, nation, and ethnic group. Race, nation, and ethnic

group are reified and characterized as unchanging categories overtime. In a growingly global

society, these social classifications leave little room for mobility. By this, I mean that when one

roots themselves in a particular ontological group, they are left with little space to see beyond

this way of being in the world. Consequentially, thinking in this manner also fixes other groups

into ontological boxes and difference arises from these perceived categories of being.

With this, collectives arise and often identify themselves as 'the people' within a certain

national space. Peoplehood is the outcome of a collective imagination that is constructed through

processes of rememoration.[58] Wallerstein adds that the 'real' past is irreversible, but the social

past, in which we read the 'real' past is completely malleable. He coins the term 'pastness' to

describe this reading of the past. Pastness performs three operations in securing collectives. First,

it explains "why things are the way they are and why they should not be changed."[59] Second,

pastness explains "why things are the way they are and why they *cannot* be changed."[60] Lastly,

it presents why structures should indeed "be superseded in the name of deeper and more ancient,

ergo more legitimate social realities."[61] Pastness is a method that persuades people to act in

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[56] Balibar, Étienne, and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein. '*Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities.*' 78
[57] *Ibid.,* 78.
[58] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. " Nationalism and the Imagination,"42.
[59] Balibar, Étienne, and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein. '*Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities.*' 78.
[60] *Ibid*., 78.
[61] *Ibid*., 78.

present ways that they would not act otherwise.[62] This idea is paramount in socializing

individuals and helps maintain the myth of homogenous collectives. Additionally, it creates an

archetype for what a society should return to. Contemporarily, we see this on red baseball caps

with the slogan "Make America Great Again," or as Pegida co-founder Lutz Bachmann's hat in

an Instagram post (Figure 1) from November 8, 2016 read, "Make GERMANY GREAT again!"

There is a call to return back to something that has been 'lost,' but the details of a distinct time to

return are ambiguous. This idea leaves little room for new ways of thinking as it focuses on the

past without considering alternative, perhaps post-national ways of thinking for the future.

Although the term pastness may suggest that it is phenomenon rooted in the past, it is

also a moral phenomenon, which makes it both a political and contemporary phenomenon. In

other words, pastness is an inconsistent social function that actors use in narrating a past in a

manner that suits contemporary structures. It is especially useful for nationalists or the Patriotic

Europeans to push a return to a more legitimate, *safer* past, as their peoplehood or 'culture' is

under perceived threat by Islam, the European Union, left-wing political elites, etc. It allows

them to barricade themselves in an imagined history that binds them together. Wallerstein adds

that the real past is inscribed in stone, but the social past, i.e. the way that we read the real past,

"is at best inscribed in soft clay."[63]

Pastness is evidenced in Pegida's avoidance of fascism and Nazism in their comments

and claims. A quick Google image search will yield photos of Pegida demonstrators holding a

banner with a figure throwing a swastika and other related symbols in the trash. By dodging

these past ideologies, populist groups try to pose a completely new agenda.[64] Pelinka adds,

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[62] *Ibid.,* 78.
[63] *Ibid.,* 78.
[64] Pelinka, Anton. Right-Wing Populism: Concept and Typology. In *Right-Wing Populism in Europe*, 11.

"…right-wing populism tries to avoid a debate which could jeopardize its rise—a debate about Mussolini or Hitler, Franco or Petain."[65] Essentially, Pegida and other populist groups orient themselves in historical memories from centuries ago, not the historical moments that haunt European nations. They choose which historical symbolism best suits their narrative.

Balibar builds further on the ideas rememoration and the construction of the social past. He uses 'fictive ethnicity' to argue that no nation inherently has an ethnic foundation. Moreover, he posits, "…as social formations are nationalized, the populations included in them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicized."[66] Within the social formations, the populations and divisions among them appear to be a naturally occurring community, one with an identity, culture and collective goals 'which transcend individuals and social conditions.'[67] 'Myth of origin' stories maintain fictive ethnicity with physical and cultural characteristics. Pegida uses Judeo-Christian and Enlightenment values to portray a European origin story. Here, performativity of 'the people' arises, if ethnicity is not inherently fixed or naturally occurring. Through socially ascribed ways of being in a society, individuals come to see themselves as 'the people' through performativity or the repetition of values, traditions, and rituals as well as categorization of nationality, race, and ethnicity. Performativity over time leads to a sense of naturalization or the idea that social formations are natural.

Additionally, Balibar posits that the creation of a fictive ethnicity can lead to the creation of other 'pseudo-ethnicities' in the nation that threaten its national character. In the Pegida case, the idea of these 'pseudo-ethnicities' are signified by using the term 'refugee' or 'migrant.'

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[65] *Ibid*, 11.
[66] Balibar, Étienne, and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein. *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities.* 93-94.
[67] *Ibid.,* 94.

These terms signify those who do not meet the ideal of national character. Here, pastness emerges to identify a group of people who are perceived to have no affiliation with 'national character' and threaten this character by not shedding their own pastness. In other words, pastness and fictive ethnicity function to root collectives in past structures and categories, even though they are social constructions that can never fully be attained. In an interconnected global society, notions of a definition-based peoplehood do not suit heterogenous and multifaceted populations within nations, and we are seeing the problematic effects of this 'nationalism trend' as it moves and grows transnationally in India, Germany, England, the United States, Brazil, and more. Next, I turn to Germany and Pegida, as well as the emotions and notions of pastness that have arisen that bolster Pegida's ability to hail and mobilize its members.

2.2: 'Retrotopian longing' and Pastness

In this section, I identify how the Pegida movement uses pastness and fictive ethnicity. In addition, I give context for why the movement may turn to rememoration considering the complexity of German identity post-reunification in 1989. Growing portions of Western electorates and those who claim to represent 'the people' coalesce around a shared sense of "being left behind, abandoned, ignored, and made redundant," which Baumann coins 'retrotopian longing.'[68] The burden of this shared feeling of abandonment is placed on political elites, foreigners, and mainstream media platforms, which leads to right-wing groups adopting tribal mentalities. Bauman argues that instead of investing in hopes of improvement for the future, actors stray away from the uncertain future, and instead "re-invest them in the vaguely remembered past, valued for its assumed stability and trustworthiness."[69] In placing their hopes

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[68] *Ibid.,* 136.
[69] *Ibid.,* 136.

in pastness, Bauman posits that nostalgia and melancholy mix—turning into a 'cultural politics of emotion.'[70] Cultural memory politics, then, make the present seem alienated and pernicious, and the future a looming catastrophe. Moreover, this narrative holds that the only means to combat the future is to embed oneself in a remembered culture, heritage, and tradition.[71] Actors exploit these tropes of culture, heritage, tradition, which has helped feed the nationalism and neo-nationalism fire in recent years.

Pegida leaders and members seem to fix themselves in this socially constructed past of a German identity based the idea of a shared culture, heritage, *Heimat*, etc. This construction of the past, however, is convoluted considering Germany was divided for forty years before unifying in 1989. Reunification makes the notion of a shared German cultural memory a fuzzy subject. Cultural memory varies from citizen to citizen, and in the Pegida movement, statistics show a majority of members are from the former East, male (74.6%), with an average age of 47 years old, no religious affiliation, middle-class, with a significant portion of members having college degrees.[72] From these statistics, Pegida leader, Lutz Bachmann fits these attributes. Bachmann would have been 16 years old when the GDR fell, which points to a complex coming of age story where the established system he grew up in crumbled away. Bachmann and many others share this story where two ideologically different systems and their subjects come together into an open, liberal regime.

Unity in 1989 Germany was "supposed to provide the means to achieve a better world, both at the micro- and macrolevels,"[73] and to improve the lives of those in the former East.

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[70] *Ibid.,* 136.
[71] Bauman, Zygmunt. *Retrotopia*, 62.
[72] Vorländer, Hans. ‚PEGIDA: Entwicklung, Zusammensetzung, und Deutung einer Empörungsbewegung.'101.
[73] Le Gloannec, Anne-Marie. 'On German Identity,' 129.

German reunification became a panacea for all social, economic, and political plight; however, the reality of two nations coming together led to former East Germans feeling excluded—or overlooked in favor of perceived foreigners.[74] The idea of this 'natural' German identity created channels of hate. German identity became synonymous with national preference, and both former East and West Germans felt they should enjoy the same benefits as perceived foreigners (Turks and Gypsies), especially considering the citizenship principle of *jus sanguinis* at the time.[75] Here, fictive ethnicity arises in the form of the idea of a *völkisch* nation that trumps the principle of integration. Violence against foreigners emerged, not solely due to reunification, but rather because two asymmetrical social bodies arose under the 'German' umbrella.

After reunification, Germany had to consider its role in Europe and the rest of the world. Reunification marked a return to 'normal,' and Germany had obligations to fulfill in Europe and abroad—including those in the UN Charter.[76] Önnerfors adds that reunification and these new obligations yielded an irrational longing for an idyllic pre-1989 world order:

> where the capitalist and liberal "West" (while under the impending existential threat of nuclear Armageddon) not yet had to be confronted with the complex challenges of south-east and eastern Europe nation-building, the implications of EU eastern enlargement, the contemporary rise of neo-authoritarian and post-democratic rule in Hungary, Poland, and Russia and definitely not the contemporary shared burden of global conflict.[77]

It is a longing for a simplified world order and the promises of a unified Germany that Pegida members desire. The government's emphasis on European and global obligations yields

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[74] *Ibid.* 145.
[75] *Ibid.* 145.
[76] *Ibid.* 144.
[77] Önnerfors., 137.

the perception that they feel that their state longer functions to secure their welfare and serve

their needs first. Pastness arises here, as the pre-1989 world order is utilized in reading the past

as a simpler time where geopolitical challenges were not yet a 'German' problem. Arguably, it is

this double-sided expression of abandonment from the former East and West that allows Pegida

to exploit these emotions and ideas of nostalgia. This exploitation and performativity emerge in

their street demonstrations. For example, Pegida's ritualistic Monday marches call back to

Monday marches from 1989, where East Germans demanded freedom to travel, a democratic

government, etc. Dresden boasted a number of these Monday demonstrations in 1989. Önnerfors

argues that now Dresden is Pegida's stage. After Allied bombings completely destroyed Dresden

at the end of World War II, the city slowly began to recover and rebuild wartime damages.

Dresden became 'Florence of the North,' and a symbol of growth in former East Germany.

Through tying their rhetoric to symbolic historical moments and a 'cultural geography of

resistance,' Pegida demonstrators create a linkage that consciously ties the present with this

remembered past.[78]

     With this brief overview of the nuance and complexities of a collective German identity,

Pegida and the AfD have used sentiments of nostalgia, resentment, and fear to fuel their rhetoric

for their audience of primarily middle-aged Germans who seem to recall the pre-1989 'good ole

days.' In 2015, AfD's lead candidate, Tatjana Festerling's campaign slogan was 'All clear for the

turnaround.'[79] This slogan links her campaign promises to the 1989 mass protests and to the fall

of the Honecker government.[80] Additionally, AfD and Pegida draw on the stability of social

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[78] *Ibid.,* 141.
[79] *Klar zur Wende!*
[80] Druxes,'*Montag ist wieder Pegida-Tag!*' 19.

systems in the GDR to evoke nostalgic longing. The word '*Ostalgie*'[81] has surfaced in describing

this longing for the former communist bloc. Specifically, the term in recent scholarship has been

used to denote 'motivated amnesia' and selective nostalgia.[82] However, Önnerfors posits that it

would be misguided to believe that a similar longing is not also present in the former West. A

sizeable portion of AfD constituents reside in Western Germany.[83] *Ostaglie* may serve as a way

to understand the political psyche of post-communist countries, but there may also be a 'reversed

ostaglia,'[84] or a feeling that something is lost or lacking and waiting to be made great again is

not only a post-communism phenomenon. It can manifest regardless of what side of the *Mauer*

im Kopf (wall in people's heads) people situate themselves on.

Since the idea of 'a people' is fundamental to the idea and identity of European nations,

any loss or change to the perceived collective then incites an emotional, reactionary response,

whether it be in the form of nostalgia or melancholy.[85] The reactionary and violent actions

against migrants in the 1990s depict this perceived loss to the collective. The 2015 refugee crisis

seems to have yielded a similar sense of loss for some Germans. The Pegida movement

showcases both nostalgia or pastness tied to an idyllic pre-1989 world order, and a melancholy

which transforms to anger, fear, and disgust for those whom Pegida members express are taking

away what is *rightfully* theirs. Pegida leaders harness pastness and fictive ethnicity to

demonstrate that migrants and the state are to blame for the loss of welfare and German culture.

It is evident that emotions play a large part in Pegida's rhetoric and in the rise of 'retrotopian

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[81] *Ostalgie*- A complex term that signifies the emotional longing for the GDR, as well as the maintenance of memories, values, symbols, and experiences of a German society that no longer exists.
[82] Önnerfors, Andreas. 'Retrotopia' as a Retrogressive Force in the German PEGIDA-Movement," 137.
[83] *Ibid*., 137.
[84] *Ibid*., 137.
[85] *Ibid*., 139.

longing.' In the following section, I analyze what emotions do to secure collectives like Pegida, and what they do to shape the boundaries of what bodies belong, and which *do not*.

2.3: Emotions and 'Sticky Associations'

Ahmed emphasizes her work does not set out to answer the question 'What are emotions?' Rather, she asks the question, 'What do emotions do?' With this clarification, emotions, following her reading, are not intrinsic to the individual body, nor do they come from outside of it. Emotions shape people through the repetition of actions and the 'orientations toward and away from others.'[86] Or, in other words, as Ahmed explains, "…it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take shape of, contact with others."[87] It is the very repetition of actions and norms that appear as forms of life; the constant social media fodder and echo chambers we choose to (or have an algorithms choose for us) only intensify the emotions and the way 'we' feel. Drawing our attention toward emotions and the politics of these emotions lets us address the question of how it is that subjects 'become *invested* in particular structures such that their demise is felt as a kind of living death.'[88] Here, investment or love in the object of the nation emerge for the Pegida subjects who feel that the government has shirked its responsibility to fulfill their investment in the nation. The 'you' is created in this narrative; however, not everyone in the nation embodies this 'you.' The 'you' is established through longer historical articulations that pose "the white subject as sovereign in the nation, at the same time as

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[86] Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014: 4.

[87] *Ibid.,* 10.

[88] *Ibid.,* 12.

they generate effects in the alignment of 'you' with the national body."[89] This section identifies

what hate, fear, and disgust do to secure the 'you' within the 'we' of the nation and the

mechanisms of othering that function to fix differences between peoples.

2.3.1: Hate and Fear

The narrative works through othering; the 'illegal immigrants' and 'bogus asylum seekers' are those who
are 'not us,' and in not being us, endanger what is ours.

-Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*

Ahmed posits that hate and fear work to secure collectivities through the way in which

these collectives read the bodies of others. In other words, a narrative is created whereby the

subject is threatened by the imagined others' proximity, and as Ahmed posits, "proximity

threatens not only to take away something from the subject (jobs, security, wealth), but to take

the place of the subject."[90] Moreover, Ahmed asserts that this narrative works by rewriting

history, to the white subject claims the position of 'host' as well as the victims of the government

that no longer prioritizes their 'peoplehood.' This narrative is a delicate dance between love and

hate. Ahmed argues love for the nation creates the feelings of hate for white Aryans, who feel

that their nation is being taken away. Ahmed continues that in occupying the nation, the

imagined Others are thus taking away their collective history and their futures.[91] The negative

attachment to the Others works to bind the collective together. Ahmed explains that it is through

"the love of White, or those recognizable as White" that justifies the communal response of

hate.[92] She notes "*Because we love, we hate, and this hate is what brings us together*."[93]

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[89] *Ibid.,* 2.
[90] Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014:
43.
[91] *Ibid*., 43.
[92] *Ibid*., 43.
[93] *Ibid*., 43.

The Pegida movement exemplifies this passion and love for the nation and for the imagined community, especially in their understanding of self as the 'Patriotic Europeans,' and initially as the 'Peaceful Europeans.' Through Pegida members' collective love for Germany and Europe they read and justify Others as the source of their hate, while also having the privilege to label themselves as 'peaceful' and 'patriotic.' Reading Others through this hateful lens, "aligns the imagined subject with rights and the imagined nation with ground."[94] In this narrative, Ahmed notes that the production of the ordinary is revealed. By this, she means that the 'ordinary' white subject "is a fantasy that comes into being through the mobilization of hate as a passionate attachment closely tied to love."[95] The ordinary subject, through this narrative, is in crisis; the normative subject is the *victim* of the imagined others proximity. The invasion of the Other on German soil hurts Pegida members, which leads to the loss of love and to the rise of hate. Through the narrative above, Pegida presents itself not as a reactionary group that demands, but as a group of ordinary subjects that pleads due to the 'loss' of their beloved nation.

Here, we can locate how hate is distributed and how figures come to signify danger or an imminent threat to the 'ordinary subject.' Ahmed argues that hate is economic; by this, she explains that hate "circulates between signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement."[96] In the circulation of hate, Ahmed notes that hate operates at the unconscious level. Hailing Freud, she taps into psychoanalytic understandings of the subject to see how emotions like hate involve a 'rippling effect.'[97] She furthers this notion of a 'rippling effect,' to demonstrate how emotions circulate economically. Ahmed borrows from Marx and the logic of

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[94] *Ibid*., 43.
[95] *Ibid*., 43.
[96] *Ibid*., 43.
[97] *Ibid*., 44.

capital to develop how emotions ripple. In the Marxian logic, the formula M-C-M or money to commodity to money creates surplus value through this exchange.[98] In essence, the value at the start of this exchange remains while it circulates, but also 'adds to itself a surplus-value or is valorized.'[99] Ahmed acknowledges that her theory here does not respect the distinction Marx makes between use value and exchange value, and therefore should be used as a limited analogy. However limited, her theory demonstrates a value of accumulation over time. In other words, affect does not come from signs, figures, and objects. Rather, affect is a result of the circulation and relationality between objects and signs.[100] The more certain signs or representations circulate, the more affective they become.

Emotions move sideways, forwards, and backwards. Ahmed posits that they move sideways through 'sticky associations,' which build between signs, figures, and objects.[101] Stickiness, whether taken literally or metaphorically, "involves a form of relationality, or a 'withness,' in which the elements that are 'with' get bound together."[102] This relationality suggests both a holding together of things (like glue), but also blockages or the cessation of movement entirely. In other words, stickiness binds signs and objects together, but can also stop their movement. Within the Pegida movement, these 'sticky associations' arise in their online discourse and hashtags. Specifically, in the movement between actual videos and images depicting Islam and asylum seekers in a demeaning or dehumanizing light or using hashtags like #BurkaVerbot (Burqa Ban), #Asylbetrug (Asylum fraud), #AsylbetrügerRaus (Asylum frauds

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[98] *Ibid.*, 45.
[99] Marx, Karl. Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, vol. 1, 1976, 252.
[100] Ahmed, 45.
[101] *Ibid.*, 45.
[102] *Ibid.*, 91.

out), and #IslamGehörtNichtzuEuropa (Islam does not belong to Europe) that aim to (quite literally) abject that which is threatening or contaminating. The hashtags become sticky through their repetition on any post depicting someone who may be Muslim. When these words or phrases encapsulated by the hashtag are used in a demeaning or dehumanizing way over and over again, then, their use becomes a form of sticky signing.

In using a sticky sign, one evokes other words 'which have become intrinsic to the sign through past forms of association.'[103] For example, the words '*Flüchtling*' or '*Ayslbewerber*'[104] in this context demonstrate this association between words. The association of these words, however, is concealed, which allows these signs to accumulate value within a given social context. The German words above, then, stick to other words that are not spoken in Bachmann's posts like: terror, frauds, outsiders, rapists, etc. Additionally, Ahmed argues that hate slides backwards by "reopening past associations, which allows some bodies to be read as being the cause of 'our hate.'[105] In this context, it is important recall Edward Said's notion of Orientalism in the construction and representation of Islam and how it is functioning in this contemporary moment to read asylum seekers and refugees as the reason for 'our hate.'

As the so-called Wirtschaftswunder (economic miracle) boomed through West Germany in the early 1950s, industrial fields needed more labor. So, between 1955 to 1973, West Germany invited foreign guest workers from Turkey and several other countries to work, develop useful professional skills, and then eventually return home to implement their new skills. However, this plan did not account for the social factors of living and working in a new country, settling down, building families and enclaves, and wanting to remain in Germany. Turkish

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[103] *Ibid.*, 92.
[104] Translation: Refugee and asylum seeker
[105] *Ibid.*, 45.

migrants were the largest group of guest workers in Germany and many remained after the official 'end' of the guest worker period. As commonly expressed, many right-wing groups posit that Germany is not a land of immigration, although its history and its change to a *jus soli* citizenship principle in 2000 demonstrate a different picture.[106] What is important here is, not the specifics about migrants, but how there has been a slide in between the signifiers *Gastarbeiter* and Muslim from the 1970s to present. This shift allows for their identity to be interpreted and linked to the signifier 'Muslim' as whole. In using the term 'Muslim,' their religious identity is then linked to actions of Islam as a whole, whether they be in North Africa, Germany, Norway, or Syria. The more all-encompassing the signifier becomes, the easier it is for hate to expand to all Muslims and anyone perceived as Muslim. Returning to Ahmed, this instance exhibits both the 'sticky association' of figures and objects she notes, but also the slide backwards insofar that past associations are revisited as the site of hate.

2.3.2: Disgust

…it will be apparent that disgust is deeply ambivalent, involving desire for, or an attraction towards, the very objects that are felt to be repellant.
-Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*

Ahmed, who wrote her book in 2004, touches on the means in which after 9/11 internet message board communities connected over the event in disgust and anger, as well as how these platforms offered a space for the repetition of images of trauma and disgust. As I write in 2021, Ahmed's analysis of 9/11 and the disgust, anger, and fear associated with the imagery and text

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[106] On January 1st, 2000, Germany altered its Nationality Law to no longer solely follow the principle of *jus sanguinis* (citizenship by right of blood). The updated law promoted citizenship under a mixture of both *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli* (birthright citizenship). This made it easier for people who remained in Germany for long periods of time to gain citizenship, as well as making it easier for their children, especially if they were born in Germany.

shared on message boards resonates with what we see on social media today. Specifically, she

emphasizes that the reaction of disgust creates an object—a fetish object.[107] We 'pull away'

from the object, but paradoxically pull towards it in fascination. It is here that posting on

message boards or on social media that "it speaks to an audience who is assumed to share this

feeling of disgust and being disgusted."[108] She adds that sharing disgust or witnessing that which

is deemed as disgusting, then also becomes shared anger 'about the ingestion of the

disgusting.'[109] In other words, sharing the object of disgust and anger online saturates one's life

or their social media feed. This is evident on Instagram, as commenters feed off each other's

statements—which results in repetitive hateful, racist, and dehumanizing comments about

migrants.

   In the next section of this project, I will further develop the use of social media and the

way in which the cultural politics of emotion function in Pegida's online discourse. This chapter

develops an overview of the epistemological and ontological structures that frame the way in

which right-wing nationalist groups like Pegida come to understand and invest themselves in

historical imaginaries and in the idea of the nation, while at the same time drawing borders

around the Self and Other. In the next chapter, I demonstrate Lutz Bachmann's usage of

Instagram as a stage from October 2015 to March 2021. Additionally, I note the precarious

position social media plays in promulgating difference by pushing 'sticky associations' in

performing the idea of 'the people.' As shown in this chapter, social media has opened a

pandora's box that Ahmed was attuned to in her observation of early message boards. Hate, fear,

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[107] *Ibid.,* 96.
[108] *Ibid.,* 96.
[109] *Ibid.,* 96.

and disgust depend on the idea of the Other to galvanize the Self and German subjectivity, and it

is important to pick apart these emotions to identify the cultural representations they reveal.

Chapter III: Performativity and 'Sticky Associations' on Instagram

In this chapter, I analyze content from Lutz Bachmann's Instagram from October 2015 to March 2021. I break my empirics into three sections. My first section focuses on content from 2015-2016. This period marked the beginning of the refugee crisis in Europe. The 2017-2019 frame marks a period of assimilation and acculturation for asylum seekers and refugees in Germany. My final section 2020-2021 analyzes the effects of COVID-19 and the changes in Bachmann's posts based on the global pandemic. In sum, I utilize the theoretical framework from the previous chapter to observe how Bachmann and his following use Instagram as a stage in their performance of 'the people.' Additionally, I observe what emotions do in these posts to promulgate 'sticky associations' that stick to some bodies, but not to others.

3.1: 2015-2016

In August 2015, waves of refugees started to arrive in Europe from Syria and other war-torn spaces. Germany suspended the Dublin Procedure specifically for Syrians; they did not have to return and seek asylum in the country in which they arrived (often Greece or Italy). In the context of Pegida members report feeling that they are the ones dealing with the 'crisis' of migrants seeking asylum and reaping the benefits of *their* system. This is a familiar narrative and one emphasized throughout this project; one where the 'you' or the subject of a particular nation is under threat by an illegitimate Other, who is coming to take what is rightfully *yours* as a 'sovereign subject' of the nation. With this, I aim to address the following questions: What is done on Instagram to clearly draw boundaries around the 'we,' 'the people,' and national character? How does Bachmann signify the Other? How do fear, hate, and disgust circulate through these posts? What about 'sticky associations?' In what follows, I will highlight some specific posts from my research to answer these questions.

3.1.1: 'Bodies out of place'

Sara Ahmed uses the term 'bodies out of place' to describe how the British National Front pushes the narrative that the nation or the 'we' "is only available to white Aryans" and those who do not fit this 'familial kindred' are recognized as Others or 'bodies out of place.'[110] The notion of 'bodies out of place' is a reoccurring trend in Instagram posts from this timeframe, and in the entirety of Bachmann's Instagram archive. Whether the posts are memes, cartoons, photos of women wearing burqas, or the hashtag #IslamGehörtNichtzuEuropa (Islam does not belong to Europe), Bachmann reminds his followers often of the daily invasion occurring in Germany and other European countries. Invasion as a sign carries a negative connotation of being overwhelmed or swarmed. In conveying this 'on-going invasion,' invasion becomes sticky. In other words, when this word circulates through videos and imagery, as well as hashtags, its signified meaning (being swarmed or overwhelmed by an Other) begins to stick to the bodies of the perceived invaders.

For instance, one video he shared from December 9th, 2016 from euronews (Figure 2), shows illegal immigrants crossing the border wall to enter Ceuta—a Spanish enclave at the northern tip of Morocco.[111] Accompanying his post, Bachmann writes, "Illegal, African immigrants forcibly storm the border fence of the Spanish enclave #Ceuta! The Invasion continues…"[112] The comments air similar notions of feeling an imminent invasion, one user states, "Wild animals…"[113] Strikingly, many of the videos Bachmann shares do not take place in Germany, however, Bachmann evokes fear through this video of a breached border. Here,

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[110] Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 2.
[111] See Figure 2.
[112] Original text: Illegale, afrikanische Einwanderer stürmen gewaltsam Grenzzaun der spanischen Enklave #Ceuta! Die Invasion geht weiter..." (Figure 2)
[113] *Ibid.*

invasion is a word charged with the feeling of being taken over by an outside force. In this invasion narrative, it is the 'bodies out of place' that are invading Europe, and even though this video does not take place in Germany, it functions to demonstrate the proximity of the Other that forces its way into Europe.

In addition to these invasion videos, Bachmann shares cartoons, images, and memes that incite a sense that the Other has gotten too close. In Figure 3, Bachmann posted a picture of bus seats, and asks his following, "And, what were your first thoughts? Did you see what I saw?" Alluding to the fact that, to him, the bus seats at first glance resemble women wearing burqas. Commenters reply, "Unfortunately yes" and "Probably the same as you." Reminiscent of Ahmed's point of the relationship of proximity and fear, Bachmann and his followers' comments on the Other in everyday spaces can be understood to represent this relationship.

Bachmann shared a meme (Figure 4) on October 25, 2016 with the caption, "It took a moment until I realized that these are not birds." Commenters respond: "I had guessed it was penguins!" and "…please not on our beautiful, heavenly Baltic sea!" as well as "They are ghosts!" Ironically, the photo is actually a famous Shirin Neshat photograph titled *Rapture Series*. Neshat shot the work in Morocco, *not* in Germany. In both the bus seat post and the Neshat photo, it is difficult to posit whether or not these images are actually taken in Germany, but commenters assume that it is 'our' Baltic Sea! Importantly for analysis here, these images perpetuate the idea of 'bodies out of place.' Moreover, the sharing of these images over this time period (and the others in this project) demonstrate the 'sticky associations' they inculcate and promulgate in the minds of those consuming these images. The linkage between imagery and Bachmann and his followers' comments creates an effect that the Other has permeated national boundary lines. Ahmed describes the associations between using sticky words like 'invasion' and

'swarmed.' With sticky words like these, associations are created between asylum seekers,

Muslims, and anyone who can be characterized as non-white. The word invasion constructs the

idea of the loss of control, which works to mobilize fear and anxiety over the proximity of the

Other—like the comment about the loss of 'our' Baltic Sea suggests. When these words are used

repetitively and accompany any post depicting Islam or a person that identify as Muslim on

Bachmann's platform, this repetition creates consequences that mark the bodies of these

individuals.

In addition to themes of invasion, Bachmann's content demonstrated the perceived

violence migrants bring to Germany. As 2015 and 2016 were periods in which Germany and

Europe took in many asylum seekers, it is no surprise the threat of 'Islamic Terror' was a major

theme in many of Bachmann's posts. Most notably, Bachmann posted a lot about the New

Year's sexual assaults in Germany between 2015-2016. Hundreds of women reported being

sexually assaulted during the New Year's celebrations in Cologne. During the normal gatherings

in front of the city's main train station, a Deutsche Welle article notes that unlike other years, "a

throng of about a thousand young men was forming in the crowd. Most of them were from the

North African-Arabic region."[114] I do not want to dismiss the experiences and the consequences

of those experiences for those who were attacked. I do want to focus on the political narrative

that circulated as a result of these attacks. These events were exactly the fodder that Bachmann

needed to incite and demonstrate that there is, in fact, Islamic terror taking place in Germany.

Beyond Germany, Trump's Administration used these assaults as a cautionary lesson about

being too lenient of refugee policies in their election campaigns.[115] The narrative also reevoked

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[114] Bosen, Ralf. New Year's Eve in Cologne: 5 years after the assaults. Deutsche Welle. Accessed May 8, 2021. https://www.dw.com/en/new-years-eve-in-cologne-5-years-after-the-mass-assaults/a-56073007
[115] *Ibid*., https://www.dw.com/en/new-years-eve-in-cologne-5-years-after-the-mass-assaults/a-56073007

the long-running debate in Germany regarding refugee policies and the frame that Islam is a

'parallel society'[116] incompatible with the values the Judeo-Christian values of European

society. After the New Year's assaults, Bachmann continued to post about rapes and assaults. He

ensured that his following understand that these 'disgusting' acts as the work of foreigners and

refugees.

Bachmann highlighted other similar cases, as well as his problems with the 'lying press'

in their reporting of these events. For instance, he posted about how the Bild published an article

with conflicting information regarding a case where four young men raped two teenage females

in Weil am Rhein. His caption states that perhaps the conflicting information is due to an intern

mishap. In Figure 5, Bachmann's post highlights two sentences from the article. One claims that

the men were from Switzerland and the others were from the Netherlands. Later in the article,

Bachmann highlights that the author notes that all of the assailants were Syrian citizens. It

appears that here Bachmann makes two points to his following. First, he demonstrates the

media's inability to convey 'truths' about the perpetrators' citizenship. Second, he links these

acts of rape and assault to their citizenship. He draws his audience's attention to the acts of

disgust and ensures that these acts stick to their citizenship.

He shared more posts about violence and terror refugees visit upon Germany. In Figure 6,

Bachmann posted an image of two children practicing piano, and changed the text on the photo

to state "The children in the refugee home are practicing hard for their first attack." Bachmann

adds his own caption, which reads, "…Could be something…" Bachmann commonly uses

allusive language to incite anti-immigrant narrative positionings on the part of his audience. This

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[116] A society that is unable to fully acculturate and assimilate to the dominant 'society' within a nation-state.

post elicited amusement in the form of responses that contained laughing emojis. In this way, Bachmann contributes to the mapping violence on the bodies of even children. In sum, Bachmann's content during this timeframe appears to stick invasion, violence, and rape to migrants through the repetitiveness of these themes in his posts. Also, he spectaclizes these events to draw his viewership's' attention to the events to create a community of shared witnessing of the objects that should be hated, feared, and disgusted.

3.2: 2017-2019

This two-year span represents a period in which migrants and asylum seekers acclimated to life in Germany and started to assimilate through a number of language, housing, and professional programs. Bachmann continued to promote similar rhetoric claiming the incompatibility of Islam with European society (#IslamGehörtNichtzuEuropa), as well as the violence their presence brings to the continent (Ramadan Bombathon)[117]. In this timeframe, Bachmann ironically begins to use the words '*Fachkraft*' or '*Fachkräfte*'[118] to share photos and videos of what he assumes are migrants 'failing' to complete their everyday work. Interestingly, I found the emphasis on the government and its perceived inability to look out for the welfare of its *Volk* to become more of a focal point in his posting. Additionally, the World Cup and the German National Elections took place during this period, which led to not only defaming posts

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[117] Ramadan Bombathon – Bachmann shared a graphic on June 4, 2017 that notes statistics of 'Terror in the name of ISLAM' in comparison to 'ALL Other Religions Combined' as well as 'Muslims killed by 'Islamophobes.' The graphic lists 'Attacks' and 'Kills' with the 'Islam' category with 46 attacks and 510 kills. The other two categories 'All other religions combined' and 'Muslims killed by 'Islamophobes' both have zero in attacks and kills. The source of the graphic states, "Scorecard produced by TheReligionofPeace.com." See Figure 7.

[118] Translation: skilled workers, qualified employees, experts, professionals.

about the *bunt* (colorful) European national soccer teams, but also to posts about the state of political affairs in Europe as a whole.

3.2.1: 'Bodies out of place' continued…

In Figure 8, Bachmann posted images from the Neckarwiese Park in Heidelberg—a popular gathering place along the river. The caption reads: "Happening in Heidelberg… the Neckarwiesen is colorful…" Bachmann uses *bunt* or colorful in his posts, but also in media discourse to describe multicultural and diverse atmosphere in Germany. The term '*bunt*' marks a change in the discourse from 'multikulti.'[119] *Bunt* sounds both apolitical as well as pragmatic; the term evokes what Mohr calls 'an intellectual sedation program' that is the opposite of arguing.[120] Returning to Bachmann's images, I find that he sardonically derides the term *bunt.* Commenters seem to agree with Bachmann. For example, one remarks, "I see black, please rebuild the wall!" Fear of the invasion of these bodies and the statements demanding to rebuild the wall for protection demonstrate the relationship between fear and proximity. Other commenters state, "Bad… thanks old parties (*Altparteien*)" and "Colorful? Shit brown and wrapped in garbage bags. How I hate these rats." Following Ahmed, the relationship of fear and proximity functions to dehumanize non-white bodies. Dehumanization is a reoccurring theme in Bachmann's posts. Interestingly, it is the commenters who build on Bachmann's posts and further stick degrading names to the humans in the photos. Posts over the course of six years reiterating that these bodies do not belong in 'our' parks and preservation fear through the Other can function to alert the Pegida subjects to the very threat of life itself. Bachmann's audience need not be actually proximate to the location of this park to 'feel the fear.' Additionally, the

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[119] German slang for multicultural.
[120] Mohr, Reinhardt. Die neueste Form der Wirklichkeitsverweigerung. Cicero-Magazin für Politische Kultur. December 18, 2017.

location of posts on Instagram can also be a lie or unverified. With this, Bachmann's posts circulate this fear, and commenters circulate and build upon these sentiments through their interpretations of his posts.

In Figure 9, Bachmann shared a video with the caption, 'A short look into the future… naturally only if Pegida does not stay strong!'[121] The video details Dresden's iconic castle going up in flames. The video also depicts the rise of a mosque next to the castle and women in burqas appear in the lower left corner of the video. Bachmann also adds the hashtag '#PegidadieEchteAlternative' (Pegida the true alternative). There is no nuance or ambiguity in this video. Here, Bachmann illustrates the imminent fear and chaos of the Islamization of daily life to the extreme. His video presents destruction and those whom he associates with the inflicting these attacks on German life. He goes a step further by evoking the historical symbolism of Dresden. As noted earlier, Dresden was bombed and destroyed in World War II, but became a symbol of resilience and reconstruction in the GDR. Bachmann appears to play upon this history by linking potential destruction of Dresden to Islam, but *only if* Pegida does not stay strong. This video is poorly animated and not real—but it does highlight the continual linkage of violence to Islam in Bachmann's content.

In addition to this, Figure 10 shows statistics from the 'Crime in Context to Immigration' report by the German Federal Criminal Police Office. Bachmann's image exhibits a rise in murders/homicides, sexual assaults, and assaults from 2014 to 2018. Upon reviewing the actual report and not just Bachmann's reductionist post, I learned the numbers are taken out of context or they do not appear at all in the document. For instance, the post cites that sexual assaults increased from 848 (2014) to 6046 (2018), however the number 6046 does not appear in the

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[121] Original Caption: Kurzer Blick in die Zukunft... natürlich nur, wenn Pegida nicht stark bleibt!

report at all.[122] Secondly, the only semi-accurate part of Bachmann's post is the figures in the assaults column. However, in the actual report the comparison between the 18,512 cases in 2014 and the 73,177 in 2018 seem less shocking when viewing the report. In the report, these numbers are compared to total of disorderly conduct and offenses against personal freedoms—not assaults—in Germany for each year. The total in 2018 was 686,630. The 2018 total offenses of individuals from migrant backgrounds accounted for 10.7% of that 686,630.[123] This post indicates that Bachmann did not do his own careful reading of the report; but he used 'official' numbers about 'violent migrants' out of context.

3.2.2: *Fachkraft*

Fachkraft is a signifier Bachmann uses that is supposed to signify skilled workers or professionals. However, he uses it ironically to demonstrate that migrants are not the skilled workers the government portrays them to be. *Fachkraft* is a reoccurring theme and hashtag that Bachmann uses to demonstrate the aptitude of migrants coming to Germany and Europe. He adds no signs or details in the videos he shares to point the viewer to where they take place. Despite this, commenters in these posts all revel in the stupidity of people in the source-less and location-less videos. In my time viewing thousands of images and videos on Bachmann's Instagram, only two remained in my mind as overly gruesome, graphic, and NSFL.[124] One of these posts was a video of men cutting down trees (Figure 11). In the footage, as a man on the top of the tree cuts the top half of the tree down, he gives it a shove and it begins to fall toward

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[122] lutziges. July 18 2019, Bundeslagebild- Kriminalität im Kontext von Zuwanderung, Instagram. Accessed April 19, 2021.

[123] Bundeskriminalamt. *Kriminalität im Kontext von Zuwanderung: Bundeslagebild 2018.* April 2, 2019. Accessed June 2, 2021.

[124] Not safe for life – an internet abbreviation commonly used to denote images or videos that could have scarring or traumatizing effects on their viewership.

the ground. As it begins to fall, a crane moves into the frame—it is unclear if the crane was resting on the top half of the tree or not, but it falls down with the top half of the tree smashing the man and sending others down with him.

To accompany this disturbing video of the effects of *Fachkraft*, Bachmann adds, "The difference between 'skilled workers' who are allegedly brought in by the hundreds of thousands and a real 'skilled worker'… #Asylumfraud."[125] This video shows Bachmann's following the failures of so-called skilled workers. It depicts the dangerous, life-threatening consequences on innocent 'German' people might face as a result. This video is a spectacle insofar that Bachmann puts the death of a man on display to highlight his anger and disgust for his viewership. He also uses this gruesome video to indicate that there is an absolute difference between the individuals in the video and German skilled labor. Additionally, Bachmann adds '#Asylbetrug' at the end of his caption to remind his following that German jobs are being taken away and to stick the word 'fraud' to the perceived asylum seekers in the video. Again, Bachmann does not include a source or location of these videos. In a sense, his auidence is wrapped up in an illusionary performance where German jobs are being 'taken away' by migrants, even though these videos and claims are unverified.

The other videos demonstrating skilled workers also promulgate Bachmann's idea that migrants or refugees are incapable of completing their jobs. However, these videos are a lot less graphic and often have a laugh track accompanying the video, which indicates a communication to the audience about how to take the content. One video shows a man using an electric drill as a screwdriver to manually tighten screws on a door, where another details a man using a knife to open a can of beans, rather than using a can opener. Another video details a man using a scale to

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[125] Original caption: Das ist der Unterschied zwischen „Fachkräften," die mutmaßlich zu hunderttausenden eingeschleppt werden und einer echten ‚Fachkraft"... #Asylbetrug

weigh out grain, but while he is weighing the grain, he keeps the scoop on the scale. These familiar narrative frames represent the Other as the one lacking in faculties, unable to use 'modern' technologies, who is uncivilized, and a danger to others through their faulty work. In addition to further deepening stereotypes and fixing the meaning that these individuals are lacking skills for a 'German' society, Bachmann adds the point in his caption that workers like the ones depicted in the videos replace actual (German) skilled labor. Overall, the rise of *Fachkraft* in Bachmann's content serves to support his earlier content of these bodies being 'bodies out of place' and unable assimilate or function in European society, and in a moment when migrants are a few years into the assimilation process. The rise of content about the loss of jobs for Germans and migrant's 'theft' of jobs makes sense at this point. Nevertheless, the videos are ambiguous about context. Yet, Bachmann uses them to establish difference and draw boundaries around the 'we' and the 'them.'

3.2.3: The World Cup

In the previous section, the imagery and content of Bachmann's posts present racist and xenophobic sentiments; I am not interested in simple display of this rhetoric. Rather, I aim to show how these sentiments carry emotions and how these deepen the boundaries of collectives. In the summer of 2018, Bachmann began to share memes about the FIFA World Cup, although his posts had little to do with the actual soccer matches and more with the skin color of the players. In Figure 12, Bachmann shares a meme of German soccer fans expressing emotion about the outcome of a game, stating, "Something like this…comes from something like that!" The post insinuates his uncertainty about how Germans can feel the emotional about their German National Team when it does not resemble a team of *biodeutsch* or 'pure German'

players. In addition to the caption of the meme, the racist imagery harkens back to that in

German children books, which depict the non-white person with overexaggerated features.

Bachmann also shared images of the French National Team in 1986 and a comparison

photo from their 2018 team. In the photo from 1986, the team is primarily comprised of white

men with one person of color on the team. In the juxtaposed photo from 2018, the team is

primarily people of color with three white men. To add to the comparison, the image's text reads,

"The French National Team in the years 1986 and 2018. You cannot tell me that climate change

does not exist."[126] Despite the fact that this post features the French National Team and not the

German National Team, Bachmann's followers still express their worries and fear about their

country in the comments. One person states, "Sick world," and another remarks, "This is really

scary, I am scared for Germany."[127] Here, the beloved national sport and national teams across

Europe are being 'invaded' by the Other to a point that Bachmann suggests makes them

unrecognizable.

From 2017-2019, Bachmann posted content that more explicitly links the presence of

migrants to the destruction of German cultural life. Through posts, hashtags, and comments

about the violence migrants inflict, *Fachkraft*, and the rise of foreigners on European national

teams, Bachmann repeats themes that signify imminent threat and fear. He demonstrates an

incompatibility with 'German' life that threatens to destroy (literally, as Figure 9 shows) their

shared culture, traditions, the workforce, and even reconstructed historical buildings. Yet, the

sources and locations of these posts remain unverified, which demonstrates his ability to produce

fear for his audience and circulate these emotions through his content. The threat of the Other

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[126] lutziges, French National Team, Instagram, July 15 2018. Accessed April 16 2021.
[127] *Ibid*.

evokes fear, and it is this looming threat that Bachmann exploits. Fear needs to be maintained in order to defend the Self and Pegida's prominence, and it is evident that his content functions to defend the idea of Self.

3.3: 2020-2021: The Coronavirus Pandemic: From #staythefuckathome to #COVIDIdioten

This section will focus primarily on the COVID-19 pandemic and its prevalence in Bachmann's posts, as well as the effects the virus had on Bachmann's posting activity during this time. As most of the world shifted work, school, and other daily parts of life online, Pegida started conducting live, virtual demonstrations and *Abendspaziergänge* to abide by Germany's COVID-19 restrictions. At the start of the pandemic, like many people, Bachmann joked about the toilet paper shortages in supermarkets. He urged his fellow 'patriots' to #staythefuckathome by sharing a story called '*Zehn Kleine Ignoranten* (ten little ignoramuses),' a play on the children's story '*Zehn Kleine Negerlein* (ten little negroes).'[128] Despite his initial caution and jokes about being a responsible citizen by sitting on the couch, his posts quickly began emphasizing a starker stance on the government and their handling of the pandemic. Posts about Islamic Terror continued to circulate during this period, although more infrequently than the earlier timeframes. This could be due to the pandemic and the desire to share more content about those whom Bachmann refers to as #COVIDIdioten (COVID Idiots).

Pegida's first virtual *Abendspaziergang* took place in early April 2020. After gathering almost 3,000 participants in February 2020—their highest total after many years where the total remained around 1,500 demonstrators—Pegida shifted its demonstration gears.[129] Bachmann began to advertise virtual demonstrations on his Instagram feed to draw both new and old

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[128] Translation: my own.
[129] Volk, Sabine. Under lockdown, Germany's Pegida goes to YouTube. May 7 2020.

followers to the livestreams on YouTube. Following the same offline procedures in their new online format, Sabine Volk—a writer for the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right—notes that the streams still start with Pegida's anthem[130], then move to the featured speakers, and end with the German National Anthem.[131] Additionally, the speeches included the usual themes, but were now focused more on COVID and the restrictions on social life. Volk explains that technological changes made Pegida's livestream go less smoothly than its in-person marches. For instance, Bachmann's was muted a few times while addressing viewers. Additionally, in comparison to its in-person demonstrations where it is clear exactly who is watching—there are Pegida demonstrators, counterdemonstrators, police, reporters, etc.—Volk argues there is little certainty who is tuning into the livestreams. She details that many viewers seemed to be regulars from demonstrations, due to their use of the chat to greet others and comment on the speeches. However, a large portion of viewers did not use the chat.[132] Revisiting Volk's observation after a year of lockdown, moving their livestreams online could garner new support as their video from their first demonstration received 20,122 views.[133] The virtual platform makes the Monday marches more accessible to those all over Germany and the rest of the world.

Pegida's performative and ritualistic nature of have been key factor in their continued support. Volk writes that their Monday marches through Dresden "were able to create feelings of positive identification and power – notably the power to induce political change 'like in

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[130] The Pegida anthem is 'Gemeinsam sind wir stark' or 'Together We are Strong.' The hymn topped German charts in 2015 and briefly knocked Adele's 'Hello' out of the top spot.
[131] *Ibid*., Under lockdown, Germany's Pegida goes to YouTube.
[132] *Ibid*., https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/under-lockdown-germanys-pegida-goes-to-youtube/
[133] Lutizges, 06.04.2020 Erster virtueller Dresdner Abendspaziergang, Streamed live on April 6 2020. YouTube. Accessed May 9 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaTEnZDg_Ps

1989.'[134] The repetitive and symbolically heavy demonstrations, following Volk, demonstrate a change in one state of being to another; the shift 'from ordinary citizens to political activists, revolutionaries, true democrats.'[135] It seems that the change from ordinary citizen to 'true democrats' is an important part of their performance of the people. As of May 18, 2020, however, Pegida has returned back to their normal demonstration rituals on the streets of Dresden.

After the first few months of lockdown and returning to their Monday rituals, Bachmann began posting about the restrictions placed on daily life, specifically, the effect these rules have on German children. In Figure 13, Bachmann compares the COVID etiquette of social distancing and wearing a mask to slavery. In what seem to be song lyrics, the meme's text reads, "When a child no longer laughs like a child, then we are somewhere east of Eden,"[136] implying that in a world where children are no longer themselves, then we must now be living in some alternative and alienated reality.

Bachmann also shared a video from a concerned mother discussing the 'AHA Regeln' implemented at her child's school.[137] In the video, the mother moves through the AHA Regeln booklet and detailed that her child had to cut out photos and place them in a 'right' or 'wrong' column for what must be done to 'stay healthy!' Horrified, the mother notes that the 'wrong' column includes playing with friends, whispering, and singing. Reflecting on this list, she states, "This will make one sick. This is what I call childhood." On Instagram, Bachmann captioned the

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[134] Volk, Sabine. Under lockdown, Germany's Pegida goes to YouTube. May 7 2020.

[135] *Ibid.,* https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/under-lockdown-germanys-pegida-goes-to-youtube/

[136] Original text in Figure 13.

[137] AHA (Abstand – Hygiene – Alltagsmaske) Regeln or in English social distancing, hygiene, and everyday mask rules.

video with many hashtags including: #kindesmissbrauch (child abuse), #volksverrat (treason against the people), and #politverbrecher (political criminals). One commenter heatedly remarks, "This is what they do to our children. This is what I call psychological violence! Great educators (middle finger emoji)."[138] The activity and discussion about this making child 'psychologically sick' is worth noting, insofar that COVID restrictions are affecting the social livelihood of future generations.

Beyond virtual demonstrations and posts detailing the pernicious effects of new school rules, this timeframe was where I noticed that Instagram started to flag Bachmann's content for the spread of misinformation. After analyzing almost seven years of content where many articles, Bachmann's images, and videos had hardly any verifiable, accompanying sources. However, unsurprisingly, it seems that the reasoning for the crackdown on information during this time was mainly due to misinformation about the spread of COVID-19. In the first flagged post (Figure 14), it shows a ministry of health campaign using the crude acronym ANAL (Alltagsmaske – Nähe Vermeiden – App - Lüften) [139] to detail how to be a responsible citizen in the Fall and Winter seasons. Instagram highlights that independent fact-checkers say that the post has no basis in fact and that there is no campaign from the German Ministry of Health by this name. Even Bachmann in his caption states, "Please tell me this is fake!" Bachmann's caption was somewhat surprising here, due to the fact that he even he himself guessed it was false but shared it anyway.

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[138] Original comment: „Was die unseren Kindern antun. Psychische Gewalt nenn ich sowas! Tolle Pädagogen 👍"

[139] Everyday masks, avoid close proximity, app, and ventilate. Translation: my own.

As in many countries, the pandemic at first brought panic and caution into our social worlds. However, after almost a year in lockdown with the virus still halting a return to 'normal,' there has been a change in the language surrounding the pandemic and the government instituting restrictions. Bachmann criticizes the 'lockdown logic' in a number of posts by posting about poison in masks and mask mandates. He also makes disparaging comments about the leading virologist on novel viruses in Germany, Christian Drosten. Clearly, this 'COVID fatigue' with the restrictions it implements on daily life people have begun to feel that their welfare and freedoms under liberal democracy are no longer being honored. Although my research of Bachmann's platform ended in March 2021, the virus is still looming as vaccines are beginning to roll out. In the 2020-2021 period, it is evident that there was a shift in attitude and emotion regarding COVID-19 after seeing the effects of quarantine and social distancing on 'life as we know it.' This former life, unrecognizable to Bachmann, created many new opportunities to add to his laundry list of problems with the German political regime. Most notably, his posts detailing the psychological effects on the future generations help draw popular support from utilizing the most vulnerable to demonstrate and incite anger over the destructive implications of restricting individual freedoms. In one of the last images in my archive, Bachmann posted a picture of text that read (Figure 15), "The countdown for the downfall of our homeland…50…35…20…10...0" signifying that there is no saving Bachmann's definition of native country.[140]

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[140] Lutziges, Countdown, February 22, Instagram. Accessed April 21 2021.
Here, Bachmann uses the word, *Heimat*, which has connotations relating specifically to parts of German culture and society—there is no English equivalent.

__Conclusion__

In this thesis, I showcased the processes of rememoration, stickiness, and social media performativity Lutz Bachmann uses to mobilize his 'fellow patriots.' In Chapter I, I gave a brief overview of Pegida's rise and how the group creates a political narrative that constructs them as ordinary subjects of the nation who have been 'hurt' by a loss of welfare, inactive political elites, and the presence of culturally incompatible migrants. In Chapter II, I provided a theoretical framework of how the movement utilizes processes of pastness, fictive ethnicity, and emotions to justify and frame themselves as ordinary citizens through their love for the nation in a performance of 'the people.' In Chapter III, I demonstrated what emotions and 'sticky associations' do in Bachmann's rhetoric and imagery to establish how these the individuals in his posts are 'bodies are out of place.' In the 2020-2021 section, Bachmann began posting less about migrants, although he did still have content disparaging 'asylum frauds.' He started posting more about COVID-19 and his frustrations with how the German government handled the pandemic.

The overview of content of Bachmann's Instagram raises questions: Why does Social Media matter? Why does Instagram matter? Who cares what the founder of this right-wing fringe group in Germany says online? What do emotions on social media? Firstly, as the brief overview of my research in one archive of Pegida's several online platforms shows how members see themselves in relation to their world, as well as information demonstrating exactly what they are *not*—Muslims, foreigners, political elites, the lying press. Social media lets these actors communicate disseminate publicly, accessible powerful narratives through their posts and comments. One can ascertain the overall message of an Instagram post through its caption,

imagery, and engagement in the comments; all of which, reveal affect that circulates by sticking

emotions to words and images that aim to divide, but at the same time unify. The unification

effect occurs in the echo chambers and filter bubbles these actors find themselves in.

Commenters on Bachmann's posts who leave outlandishly racist sentiments receive 'likes' on

their comments—vindicating their beliefs through affirmation that others feel the same.

Obviously, Bachmann's posts and the comments on them depict hateful and racist sentiments,

but that is not what I am trying to highlight here. Rather, I want to highlight the processes that

make these sentiments 'stick' and social media's role in facilitating the polarization of the 'us'

and the 'them' in a way that I argue is different from earlier periods. The difference arises in the

fact that social media is an essential infrastructure charged with emotion that large portions of

societies use ubiquitously. As shown in the previous sections, it is difficult to discern

misinformation from accurate information not only in Bachmann's posts, but much more of the

information we consume through social media.

Additionally, as Pegida's name exhibits, its central focus is to fight against the

Islamization of the West. This is clearly evidenced in the posts above, as imagery of the

imaginary Other circulates in multifaceted ways throughout Bachmann's content depicting the

'invasion' of the Muslim other on European and German soil. However, over the 2015-2021

periods, there is an overall ambiguity within Bachmann's social media practices. Specifically, his

posts often allude to what an image may mean, but usually it is the commenters who interpret the

posts' meaning within their comments. Bachmann is careful with his words, perhaps due to 2016

conviction for inciting hate speech, when he faced a charge for calling asylum seekers 'cattle,'

'scum,' and 'trash.'[141] Despite this, as shown in the previous section, his sentiments still remain quite malicious and inflammatory. In a similar vein, Bachmann utilizes popular discontent with climate change, coronavirus, political elites, the United States/Trump, and pop culture to diversify and expand the scope of Pegida's beliefs. The shift from content mainly centered around refugees to content about COVID and personal freedoms demonstrate the group's ability to get angry, incite fear and disgust about almost anything. Adrian Paukstat argues, "Ambiguity is a strategic discursive practice which enables the movement to expand and become stronger."[142] As the ambiguity and scope of Pegida members' discontent broaden, "a seemingly endless social and political space for newcomers and potential allies" arises.[143] This social and political space is evident as Pegida garners more supporters in Germany and outside of it (Canada, the United States, the UK, Brazil).

With the rise of the social media times, it is no longer time to sit idly, but rather it is time for what Geert Lovink calls 'linking techne with psyche."[144] Social media is not an alternative reality—it has direct, real consequences on social, economic, and political realms of life. Using Louis Althusser's theory of interpellation, Lovink demonstrates how social media hails its subjects through the 'process of becoming-user.' It takes only a few minutes to profile users by filling out their profiles with a username, password, and personal information. Lovink asserts, "The platforms present themselves as self-evident. They just are—facilitating our feature-rich

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[141] Brady, Kate. 'Pegida founder Lutz Bachmann found guilty of inciting hatred,' May 3 2016, Deutsche Welle.
[142] Paukstat, Adrian, and Cedric Ellwanger. "Wir Sind Das Volk.", 105.
[143] *Ibid.,* 104.
[144] Lovink, Geert. On the Social Media Ideology. https://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67166/on-the-social-media-ideology/

lives."[145] It is through the creation of the profile that we become social media's subjects. Lovink argues that, even though the use of ideology as a term has fallen to the wayside, it is not a shock that is ruling again, however, now the main issue is that 'we are less and less aware of *how* it rules.'[146] Lovink suggests that with social media we have an 'enlightened false consciousness,' which means we know that we are engrossed in these platforms, but we still use them anyway.[147] It is with this point of an 'enlightened false consciousness' that I find the need to more carefully identify and disrupt the emotional politics on Instagram and social media at large, as social media and emotions grow in tandem. In other words, it is imperative to locate how emotions stick to bodies and objects through text, imagery, and 'likes' as our world becomes more and more polarized, and collectives or the 'we' become even more rooted in notions of pastness and fictive ethnicity. Social media spaces offer a glimpse into how emotions and rememoration construct the 'we' for Pegida members. A broader analysis and comparison of all of Pegida's social media platforms would provide a more robust analysis of the group's performativity online. Additionally, a larger analysis may reveal more about the consequences of hateful content on social media and the future success of the fringe groups that utilize these platforms.

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[145]*Ibid*./
[146]*Ibid*.
[147]*Ibid.*

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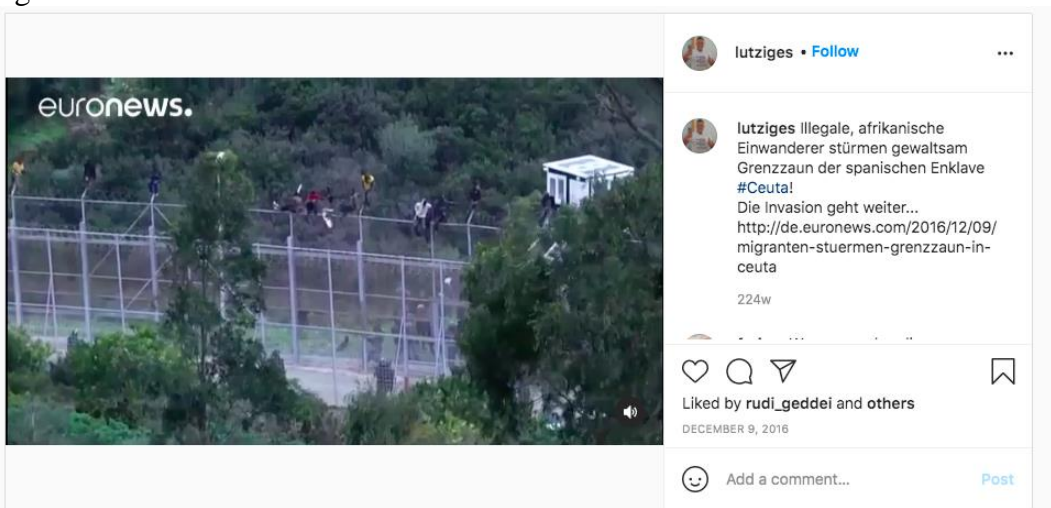
Appendix:

Figure 1:

Source: lutziges. Make Germany GREAT again!, Instagram, November 8, 2016. Accessed March 30, 2021.

Figure 2:

Source: lutziges. The invasion continues, Instagram, December 9, 2016. Accessed April 20, 2021.

Figure 3:

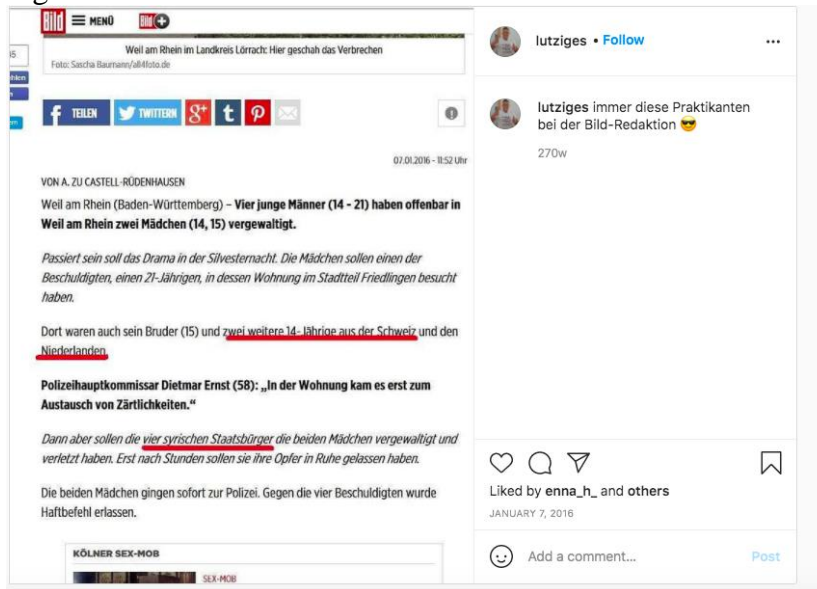Source: lutziges, Bus seats, Instagram, October 8, 2016. Accessed March 30, 2021.

Figure 4:

Source: lutziges, Shirin Neshat photo, Instagram, October 25 2016, Accessed March 30, 2021.

Figure 5:

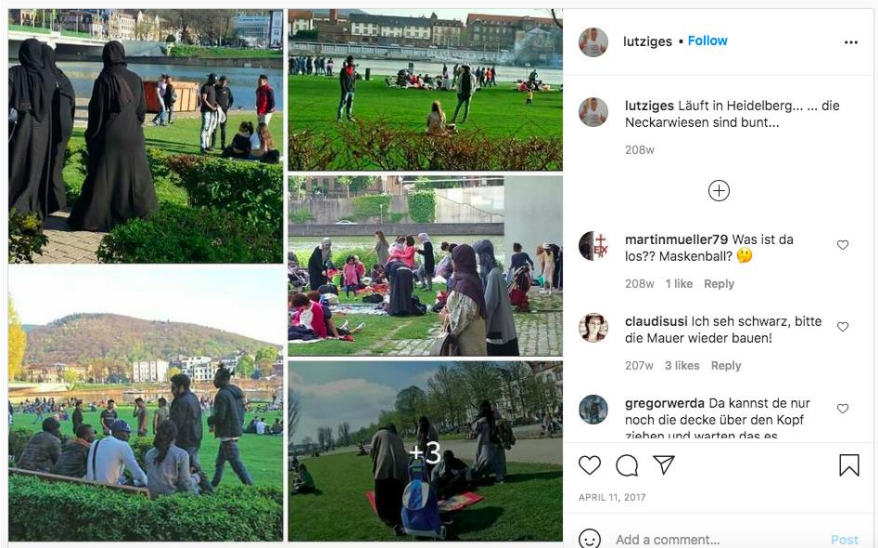Source: lutziges, Bild Article, January 7, 2016. Instagram. Accessed March 30, 2021.

Figure 6:

Source: lutziges, Die Kinder im Flüchtlingsheim, September 3, 2016. Instagram. Accessed March 30, 2021.
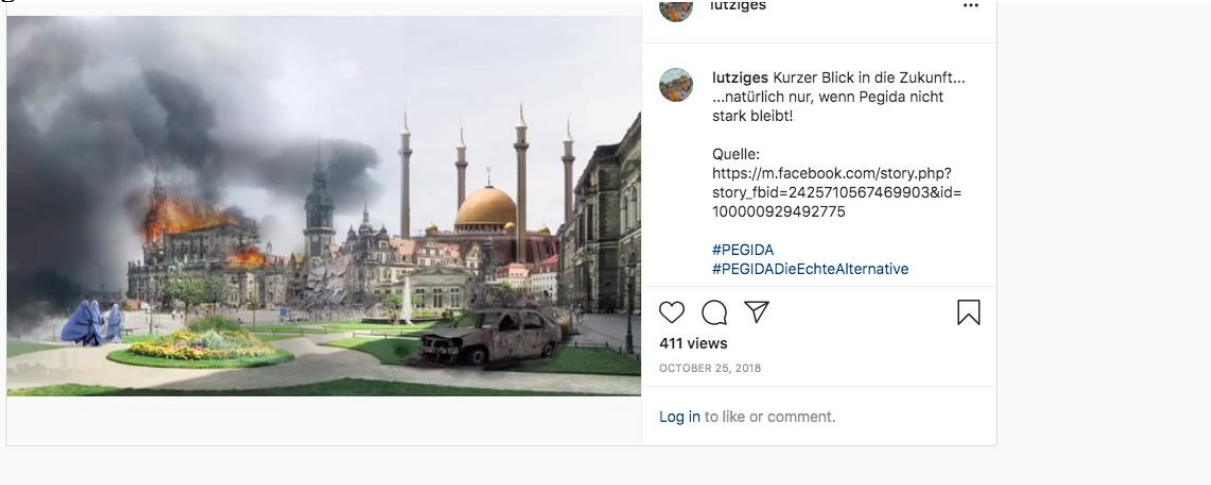
Figure 7:

Source: lutziges, Ramadan Bombathon. Instagram. June 4 2017. Accessed April 6, 2021.
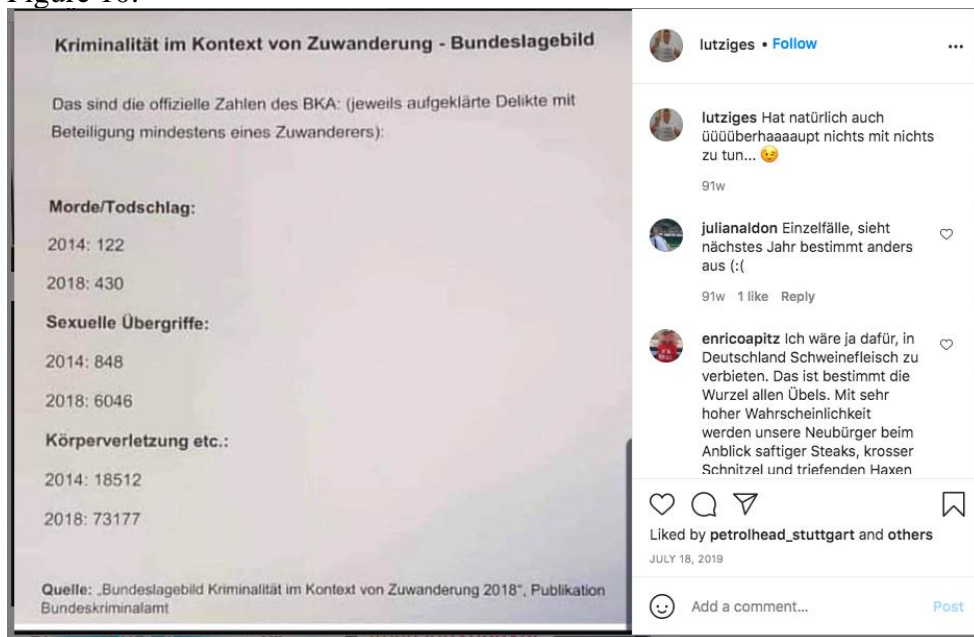
Figure 8:

Source: lutziges, Neckarwiesen Heidelberg. April 11 2017. Instagram. Accessed April 6, 2021.

Figure 9:

Source: lutziges, Dresden's 'future,' October 25, 2018. Instagram. Accessed June 14, 2021.

Figure 10:

Source: lutziges, *Kriminalität im Kontext von Zuwanderung*, July 18, 2019. Instagram. Accessed April 19 2021.

Figure 11:

Source: lutziges, *Fachkraft* with crane, July 11, 2019. Instagram. Accessed May 8 2021.

Figure 12:

Source: lutziges, French National Team, Instagram, July 15, 2018. Accessed April 16 2021.
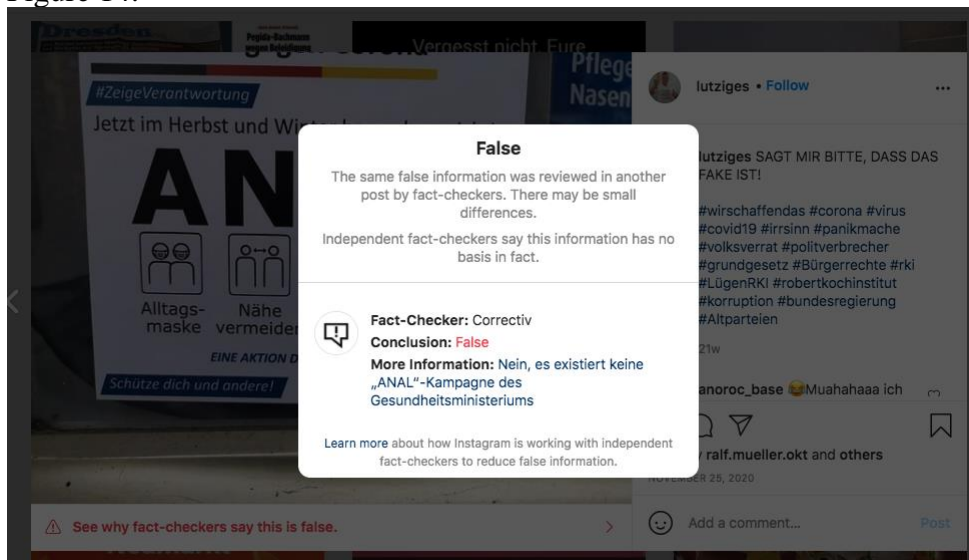
Figure 13:

Source: lutziges, Kinder lacht nicht mehr. September 27, 2020. Instagram. Accessed April 21 2021.

Figure 14:

Source: lutziges, ANAL campaign. November 25 2020. Instagram. Accessed April 21 2021.

Figure 15:

Source: lutziges, Demise of our *Heimat*. February 22 2021. Instagram. Accessed April 21 2021.