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Political Parties as Institutions of a Civil Sphere of Solidarity:

The Shifting German Perception of Eastern Europe

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Abstract

Given political parties' crucial importance for modern democracy, for a long time there has been a striking lack of normative political theory on these institutions. Recent works have pointed out that the lack of a systematic understanding of the link between parties and the civil society constitutes thereby a particular pressing issue. This paper aims to contribute to narrowing this gap by incorporating an innovative conception of the civil sphere into a party theory frame that provides both: tools for empirical analysis and a benchmark for normative evaluation. Applying the developed approach within a case study of the shifting German perception of Eastern Europe during *Neue Ostpolitik* in the early 1970s, the paper examines the role of interparty conflict during the restructuration of the country's civil society. Conducting a critical discourse analysis, the paper shows that parties indeed contributed to a certain extent to a more inclusive civil sphere. However, it also suggests that the party's abilities to do so were limited in a number of ways, for instance when it comes to expanding civil relations beyond national borders. These insights might constitute a promising alternative starting point for further research, for example on parties' potential contribution to a shared European civil sphere.

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Introduction

This thesis is dedicated to the normative study of the role of parties in shaping the civil sphere. Parties are widely acknowledged as a defining feature of modern democracy;¹ and given their essential relevance, it is not surprising that parties are discussed by a broad range of research.² What is, however, indeed surprising is that it was not until recently that political theorists started dedicating serious attention to them.³ Especially normative thinkers often seemed to have considered parties as a mere “necessary evil”,⁴ leaving parties for a long time as “the orphans of political theory”.⁵ At the same time, the need for normative theorizing on parties nowadays might be bigger than ever: A growing sense of crisis has pervaded academic and public debates, turning attention to a series of structural changes at times perceived as a thread to the well-functioning of our democracies.⁶ Such an assessment, however, implies assumptions about how parties should act *ideally*. This presents a normative puzzle to Political Theory: How can the performance of political parties be evaluated? Focusing on the subdomain of parties within the civil sphere, the present thesis aims to contribute to the finally growing body of literature concerned with this overarching question.⁷

Consequently, the paper starts by reviewing the literature on normative party theories that has emerged during recent years. This assessment confirms that the present contribution serves the agenda outlined by previous writings best by focusing on the role

¹ Dalton 2002: 3; Decker 2013: 21.

² Wiesendahl 2013: 13.

³ Lembcke 2018: 160.

⁴ Portis/Gundersen/Shively (2000) is dated as one of “the earliest works in this area” (Bader/Bonotti 2014: 255); and Rosenblum (2008) is usually considered as the starting point for an increased interest of normative theorists in parties. Caramani 2017; Wolkenstein 2018.

⁵ Schattschneider 1942; recently renewed for instance by Bader/Bonotti 2014.

⁶ See, for instance: Van Biezen/Mair/Poguntke 2012: 31-35; Dalton/Wattenberg 2002: 21-22, 266-270; Scarrow/Gezgor 2010.

⁷ Bonotti et al. 2018; Wolkenstein 2018: 256.

of interparty conflict in shaping a society's civil sphere. ⁸ When exploring this matter, three questions arise that together constitute the paper's main theoretical research questions. The first step is to show *why parties should be expected to play a role in shaping a civil sphere*. This thesis claims that parties should be expected to take effect in the creation of a more inclusive civil sphere. Once this claim has been established, a second, explanatory question follows, namely: *How do parties contribute to the creation of "a more inclusive civil sphere"?* Lastly, the third concern is *how the contribution of parties to "a more inclusive civil sphere" can be normatively evaluated*. In an extensive theoretical chapter, the thesis intends to respond to these questions by what subsequently is described as a "reconstructive theory of justice" that understands parties as institutions of a solidary civil sphere of social freedom.

In the paper's second half, this approach is then applied within a case study. The study normatively evaluates the role parties played in the shifting German perception of Eastern Europe – from colonial Other to fellow European – in the second half of the 20th century. It does so based on a critical discourse analysis of the party disputes accompanying the crucial period of the *Neue Ostpolitik* in the early 1970s that explores how the German public came to terms with the Oder-Neisse Line as the permanent German-Polish border. The study shows how parties contributed to a more inclusive, Europeanized recodification of the public perception of the concerned social groups: Eastern Europeans and the so-called *Heimatvertriebene* ("Expellees"). However, it is also suggested that the parties' abilities to do so were limited in a number of ways: Parties incorporated the alternative civility codifications slower and in more national-centered versions than other civil institutions. The thesis ends by summarizing these insights on the linkage parties provide between the state and the civil sphere and by outlining some suggestions for

⁸ Rosenblum 2008: 458.

subsequent research, for instance on parties' potential contribution to the emergence of a "European civil society".

Normative Party Research

Following Rosenblum's pioneering book *On the Side of the Angels*, "the literature on the normative dimensions of partisanship and party politics has rapidly grown".⁹ This increase is also reflected in a recently published review article by Muirhead and Rosenblum that acknowledges the scholarly community's improvements.¹⁰ At the same time, however, the authors stress the necessity to bring normative theory and empirical science closer together on matters of party research.¹¹ Research that combines these disciplines is often classified into *constructive* or *reconstructive* approaches, depending on how the respective theory's normative foundations are derived.¹² Within the long-time dominant constructive tradition, a theory's normative core is developed through abstract philosophical reasoning.¹³ To have a critical look at institutions, constructivists consequently have to apply their theories to the societal reality *subsequently*. Thus, normative ideal and social criticism are detached; the theories' critical potential is decisively weakened.

Reconstructivists argue that the only way to avoid this gap is to develop the normative core of critique directly through societal analysis. Consequentially, empirical science is already involved in the extraction of the commonly shared values that provide institutions with societal legitimacy.¹⁴ These normative ideals inform the societal expectations towards institutions and serve the reconstructive theory as normative benchmarks. The normativity is therefore not appended to a societal analysis, it is already rooted in the

⁹ Wolkenstein 2018: 256.

¹⁰ Muirhead/Rosenblum 2020.

¹¹ Muirhead/Rosenblum 2020: 96-97; see also: Van Biezen/Saward 2008.

¹² Gaus 2013: 231, 236.

¹³ For a constructivist party theory see: Bonotti 2017.

¹⁴ Honneth 2015 [2013]: 20-24.

criticized institutional complexes themselves: philosophical *ought* and societal *be* are informed by each other.¹⁵

At times, reconstructivism is accused to undermine “Critical Theory’s aspiration to be [...] unreservedly critical”.¹⁶ This criticism is twofold. Firstly, it is objected that reconstructivism is merely reaffirming societal institutions. As its normative benchmark is developed from values that are assumed to be constitutive for exactly these institutions as their normative core, normative reconstruction is accused to lack responsiveness to alternative forms of sociality.¹⁷ Secondly, reconstructivism’s model of progress is criticized: By invoking a commonly shared set of values, the theorist allegedly becomes blind for disruptive “normative revolutions”¹⁸ of norms and institutions.¹⁹

However, reconstructivism has been defended convincingly against these accusations. First, regarding its low reactivity, it has been pointed out that reconstructivism must rather avoid to be *too* reactive: If emerging institutions are considered before their underpinning values are spread within society, the critique might lose its societal relevance by falling back on “a mere ought”.²⁰ Reconstructivist theories, to not just reproduce the flaws of constructivism, therefore do well to carefully choose what institutions they analyze.²¹

Second, reconstructivism is not abandoning emancipatory aims. On the contrary, it carries on with Critical Theory’s core concept of *immanent transcendence*.²² Criticizing reconstructivism as affirmative underestimates the critical potential of a “not-yet” entailed in commonly acknowledged norms. In this light, emancipatory movements claiming their moral right aim for the fulfillment of the normative promises at the heart of

¹⁵ Strydom 2013: 530.

¹⁶ Schaub 2015: 107.

¹⁷ Busen/Herzog 2012: 283.

¹⁸ Schaub 2015.

¹⁹ Honneth 2015 [2013]: 14-15.

²⁰ Busen/Herzog 2012: 282-283.

²¹ Honneth 2015 [2013]: 9.

²² Petherbridge 2013: 4; Strydom 2013: 531; Strydom 2011.

institutions' legitimacy.²³ Thus, instead of delineating utopian "normative revolutions", reconstructivism provides a critical benchmark for societal pathways that is deeply rooted in society's normative foundations:²⁴ and it thereby indeed brings "democratic theorists and party scholars [...] to talk to each other"²⁵ on normative party theories.²⁶

Rosenblum's *On the Side of the Angels* concluded with an agenda for subsequent normative party research. This thesis aims to contribute by means of a normative reconstruction to the exploration of one of these suggestions, namely her assessment that "it remains to set out a better account of the positive relation between civil society groups and parties".²⁷ A brief review of the writings that followed Rosenblum's call shows the project's limited success. For this evaluation, it is helpful to follow Muirhead and Rosenblum's distinction of three schools of normative party thought. The first school highlights the role of *parties as institutions of peaceful political conflict* and non-violent changes of government; and it thereby provides little reference to the civil society as a societal sphere distinguished from politics.²⁸ The second school, that depicts *parties as agents of public reason*,²⁹ tends to "understate their role in linking government and pluralist civil society. [...] Their value is not justification in terms of public reason but rather their 'bilingual' translation between civil society and the constitutional sphere."³⁰ These writings therefore contribute little to an understanding of the relationship between parties and civil society.

The third approach understands *parties as deliberative forums* and does better in this respect. Authors of this school have argued how communicative processes within the

²³ Zurn 2000: 115; Honneth 2014 [1994]: 259.

²⁴ Busen/Herzog 2012: 282.

²⁵ Muirhead/Rosenblum 2020: 96-97.

²⁶ Once reconstructivism as such is accepted, the chosen normative benchmark requires careful justification as well. However, as this concerns the *specific* chosen reconstructive approach, it will be discussed further below.

²⁷ Rosenblum 2008: 458.

²⁸ Muirhead /Rosenblum 2020: 97, 99-101.

²⁹ Muirhead /Rosenblum 2020: 96.

³⁰ Muirhead/Rosenblum 2020: 102.

parties “from the bottom up connects the party base and government [...] so that parties mediate between society and the state”.³¹ Yet, this understanding of the interaction between parties and civil society is incomplete without taking into account how parties interact “in the open public sphere”, viz. their involvement in “shaping opinion and garnering support”.³² Unfortunately, it is precisely this “creative political role” that is missing in these approaches: What is required is a normative approach that focuses on parties’ “creative political role” on the interparty level when it comes to the “bilingual translation” between state and civil society.

In order to develop such an approach as a reconstructive project, what is needed is a conceptualization of civil society that allows both: empirically operating analysis and normative critique. Jeffrey Alexander has argued that there are two distinct traditions among writings on the civil society: Either, a widely defined civil society aims to include all activities conducted by non-state organizations (*CSI*), resulting in a “rather diffuse, umbrella-like concept referring to a plethora of institutions”.³³ Or, on the other extreme, civil society is “associated with market capitalism alone”;³⁴ which usually means for such contributions to be merely slight variations of the classic strong-state versus free-markets debates (*CSII*). Given “the reductionism of CSII” and “the diffuse inclusiveness of CSI”,³⁵ both traditions are equally inadequate for the present project’s aims.

This thesis therefore follows Alexander’s “third approach to civil society [...] that reflects both the empirical and normative problems of contemporary life”,³⁶ as this approach can be incorporated in a reconstructive evaluation of interparty conflict. His conceptualization of the civil sphere as, in brief, an institutional complex structured by

³¹ Muirhead/Rosenblum 2020: 103.

³² Muirhead/Rosenblum 2020: 103.

³³ Alexander 2006: 24.

³⁴ Alexander 2006: 26.

³⁵ Alexander 2006: 31.

³⁶ Alexander 2006: 31.

solidary ties has received widespread praising within the scholarly community³⁷. His writings contribute to a sociology of “cultural membership”, examining how societal groups become “collectively defined as valued members of a community”.³⁸ What makes Alexander’s theory, in contrast to other writings of this research line, particularly promising for the present purpose is the fact that it is also stimulated by the ideas of “a renewed sociology of parties”.³⁹ It is this influence that leads Alexander to stress the importance of “meaning making in party politics”, with parties being “key agents in the production of shared meanings”.⁴⁰ Alexander’s theory provides precisely the conceptual tools needed for the present project’s intersectional aims. *The Civil Sphere’s* remarkable academic impact⁴¹ included the recent publication of several extensive studies aiming for the theory’s “de-provincialization”,⁴² and the case study in the second half of this thesis can be seen in the context of these attempts. Going beyond this, however, the envisioned theoretical approach furthermore sheds light on an aspect that remains somewhat underrepresented in most writings on the civil sphere: While their importance is acknowledged in *The Civil Sphere’s* theory sections, parties are barely considered in subsequent empirical studies. This shortcoming constitutes a promising point of departure for further research.

Taken together, this brief literature review allows the following conclusions to be drawn regarding the further proceeding of this thesis: First, Alexander’s conceptual achievements have to be integrated in the frame of a reconstructivist party theory. Complementary to existing normative theories, the focus is thereby on the level of interparty conflict and its linkage between state and civil sphere. While the paper’s first half is

³⁷ See, for instance: Goldberg 2007; Sciortino 2007.

³⁸ Lamont 2018: 423. See also: Edgell/Tranby 2010; Lamont et al. 2016.

³⁹ Mudge/Chen 2014: 320.

⁴⁰ Mudge/Chen 2014: 319.

⁴¹ See for example the follow-up essay collection edited by Kivisto/Sciortino (2015).

⁴² See the studies on Latin America (Alexander/Tognato 2018), East-Asia (Alexander/Palmer/Park/Ku 2019) and Northern Europe (Alexander/Lund/Voyer 2020).

dedicated to the development of the thereby outlined theory, its second half complements these efforts by applying the established approach within a case study.

A Reconstructive Theory of Interparty Conflict

A major step towards the envisioned reconstructive party theory is the establishment of its normative benchmark of critique. The present thesis follows Axel Honneth's proposal to consider freedom to be this core value at the heart of modern societies.⁴³ This seems to be a natural choice, not least since Honneth constitutes a key philosophical reference point for the sociology of "cultural membership" Alexander has been assigned to above.⁴⁴ Honneth distinguishes three understandings of freedom that are institutionalized in different complexes within modern societies. The first two – negative and reflexive freedom – can thereby best be understood analogously to Berlin's conception of negative and positive freedom.⁴⁵ A party theory's normative benchmark, however, can not be gained from these two conceptions: On an *empirical* level, they fail to explain why democratic participation constitutes one of the most sacred ideals within our societies; because on a *theoretical* level, they cannot grasp the normative core of practices whose normativity can not be understood on an individualist level.⁴⁶ Thus, these conceptions are insufficient as sources of normativity in our societies. If one aims to take freedom as the guiding value behind societies' institutions, this gap has to be filled; and Honneth therefore introduces the concept of *social freedom*. Within institutions of social freedom, individuals interweave their acts cooperatively in a way that the act of Alter presupposes and implies the act of Ego, and vice versa.⁴⁷ Here, the social practice is no longer a

⁴³ Busen/Herzog: 2012: 273-274.

⁴⁴ Lamont 2018: 423.

⁴⁵ Honneth 2015; Honneth 2015 [2013]: 59.

⁴⁶ Honneth 2015: 114-120.

⁴⁷ Honneth (2015) identifies institutionalized forms such supra-individual practices at the heart of personal emotional relations; interactions within the economic sphere; and during the formation of a democratic will.

potential obstacle for an individual's freedom; instead, it becomes an integral part of the constitution of the interacting individuals' wills.⁴⁸ This paper aims to develop this theoretical figure to be the normative core of the proposed party theory subsequently.

A reconstructive theory's normativity requires careful justification: "Social freedom [...] may be an attractive normative ideal, but we need to know why"⁴⁹ Even though Honneth's *Freedom's Right* does not provide a systematic linkage of freedom and recognition, his writing on the former is strongly marked by his thinking on the latter. In order to provide the required justification, the following section therefore retraces the theoretical link between them and shows how one can respond to Honneth's most profound critics without abandoning his reconstructive project.

The Ideal of Social Freedom and an Anthropology of Vulnerability

In *Freedom's Right*, Honneth describes how the quasi-utopian vision of individual freedom shapes our societies' institutions. However, in order to fully grasp the normativity behind his argument, his earlier book *Struggle for Recognition*⁵⁰ has to be taken into account. Here, Honneth develops fundamental assumptions that lay at heart of his subsequent writings. This thesis interprets "recognition" in such a way that individuals are vulnerable in their "fundamental dependency on the address of the Other",⁵¹ because they can "gain subjectivity only intersubjectively"⁵² through relations of recognition. While this means to understand recognition as an anthropological fact within an "anthropology of vulnerability",⁵³ Honneth himself often treats recognition as an intrinsically normative concept.⁵⁴ This confusion is at the core of the debate about Honneth's

⁴⁸ Honneth 2015: 114-121; Heidenreich 2016: 286-287.

⁴⁹ Claasen 2014: 80.

⁵⁰ Honneth 2014 [1994].

⁵¹ Butler 1996: 5.

⁵² Zurn 2015: 6.

⁵³ Ferrarese 2011.

⁵⁴ Petherbridge 2013: 180.

recognition theory: Contrary to Honneth, several authors have described recognition as repressive;⁵⁵ and Honneth has repeatedly been criticized ignoring this problematic side.⁵⁶ Petherbridge has argued that Honneth's overly positive conceptualization originates from his "unfinished studies on a theory of power"⁵⁷ Honneth tends to equate power with dominance and consequently poses power as antithetical to recognition when developing his theory on a positive vision of recognition.⁵⁸ However, since certain cognitive relations provide identities that allow individuals to feel recognized only within subordinate self-conceptions,⁵⁹ a purely normative understanding of recognition is simplistic as it ignores such "negative [...] forms of subject-constitution".⁶⁰

Understanding recognition anthropologically allows for a different power conceptualization. Here, power is not domination, but "constitutive principal" of any social interaction.⁶¹ Going even beyond Petherbridge's conclusion that *certain* relations of recognition "at times [show a normative] ambivalence" because they *might* embody "power-saturated forms of subject-constitution",⁶² this thesis proposes that "recognition rather *always necessarily* involves a moment of subjection".⁶³ Following Lepold, it is argued that power, contrary to violence, presupposes co-actors that can be targeted in their capabilities to act guided by subjective wills. Being targeted in this way therefore allows individuals to experience themselves as being recognized as subjects that cause re-action.⁶⁴ This way, recognition becomes *constitutive* precondition to free interaction between individuals.

⁵⁵ See, for instance: Althusser (2010: 71-102) and Butler (2004: 17-39); Honneth 2007a: 323-325.

⁵⁶ Stahl 2014.

⁵⁷ Petherbridge 2013: 33-78.

⁵⁸ Honneth 2007a: 325; Honneth 2014 [1994]: 303-341; Saar 2010: 13.

⁵⁹ McQueen 2015.

⁶⁰ Petherbridge 2013: 195.

⁶¹ Saar 2010: 10-12.

⁶² Petherbridge 2013: 194-195.

⁶³ Lepold 2014: 297.

⁶⁴ Lepold 2014: 304-305.

Defined this broadly, however, experiencing recognition can hardly serve as a normative ideal.⁶⁵ Instead, the individual depends on – and therefore, is vulnerable towards – the Other’s recognizing re-action. This interplay of action and re-action is defined by power structures determining the scope of recognizable actions. Crucially, these structures are beyond control of the interacting individuals, leaving them to interact within social institutions that are structured by complexes of “knowledge and norms [...] formed and transformed in complex historical processes, in which the authority of individual subjects is always only a limited one”:⁶⁶ *any* relation of recognition has a subjecting side inherent. Following Lepold, the present text deviates from Honneth’s one-dimensional recognition concept, and recognition becomes defined as ambivalent *by definition*, as simultaneously enabling freedom and containing subjugation.

As the “social rules of recognition”⁶⁷ remain beyond individual grasp and consequently always entail a subjecting side, there can be no telos of an all-embracing autonomy.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, reconstructivism can provide a powerful critique of social conditions by the exposure of institutions that impeded the autonomous gain of subjectivity and thereby contradict their initial normative purpose.⁶⁹ Institutions could constitute such “social pathologies”⁷⁰ in three different ways: a) by providing individuals only with recognition within relations of subjugation; b) by systematic exclusion from relations of recognition; or c) by narrowing the scope of recognizable acts and thereby decreasing an individual’s degree of freedom to individualization within the process of subject-becoming. Thus, the applied examination techniques must allow for these culturally institutionalized social complexes “to be differentiated according to the room for autonomy they open

⁶⁵ Lepold 2019.

⁶⁶ Lepold 2014: 297.

⁶⁷ Honneth 2007a: 331.

⁶⁸ McQueen 2015.

⁶⁹ Honneth 2007b.

⁷⁰ Honneth 1994; Honneth 2009.

up”,⁷¹ based on their degree of “individualization and inclusiveness”.⁷² Honneth’s reconstructivism examines institutional complexes therefore ultimately regarding the extent to which they allow to gain subjectivity through affirmative experiences of recognition.⁷³

Reading Honneth in the suggested way, new conclusions can be drawn regarding the institutionalized formations of the different freedom conceptions. Due to the individualistic structure of negative and reflexive freedom, their respective institutionalized forms – legal and moral freedom – follow a logic of moral universalism.⁷⁴ Since they recognize people simply based on their humanity, these institutions are blind for a person’s specific qualities.⁷⁵ In order to gain subjectivity however, individuals must also feel recognized in their particularity.⁷⁶ Such practices of recognition are embodied in institutional complexes based on social freedom. This feeling of appreciation emerges when individuals experience their inclusion in reciprocal forms of solidarity,⁷⁷ where members of society feel valued in their particularity by their community. This requires a certain extent of a shared deliberation, so that individuals can “positively contribute to [...] shared projects of that solidaristic community”.⁷⁸ This paper argues that parties play a crucial role within our societies when it comes to enabling the experience this form of recognition. Above, the aim of critical theory has been defined as the examination of the structures that define a society’s relations of recognition; and a critical party theory must analyze how parties contribute to progressive change of these structures. The subsequent section develops this thought in the context of the institution of interparty competition and its contribution to structuring the civil sphere.

⁷¹ Honneth 2007a: 331.

⁷² Petherbridge 2013: 173.

⁷³ Honneth 2014 [1994]: 271.

⁷⁴ Honneth 2014 [1994]: 181-183; Honneth 2015 [2013]: 149.

⁷⁵ Honneth 2014 [1994]: 175, 177; Zurn 2000: 116.

⁷⁶ Honneth 2015 [2013]: 92.

⁷⁷ Honneth 2014 [1994]: 211.

⁷⁸ Zurn 2000: 116.

Parties as Regulative Institutions of a Solidary Civil Sphere

In the following, the reconstructive framework of a party critique developed beforehand is complemented with a conceptual equipment that allows to capture and normatively evaluate the shifts within the social rules of recognition. It is argued that the writings of Jeffrey Alexander are particularly appropriate for this purpose because they can grasp parties in the outlined way as institutions of social freedom and furthermore allow to evaluate them regarding the degree of freedom they allow to experience. After demonstrating that Alexander's writings comply with these requirements, the developed approach can then be applied within a case study.

Alexander, like Honneth, is operating on the line between sociology and normative philosophy.⁷⁹ The normative centerpiece of Alexander's thinking is the "civil sphere", which this thesis understands as an institutional complex structured by the idea of social freedom. Alexander defines a civil sphere "as a solidary sphere, in which a certain kind of universalizing community comes to be culturally defined and to some degree institutionally enforced".⁸⁰ The idea of an all-embracing community of citizens enjoying equal status as a societal vision is thereby anchored at the heart of our societies, documented most prominently by the claimed universal validity of this ideal incorporated in democratic constitutions.⁸¹ This ideal puts pressure on societal structures whenever they systematically exclude parts of society from such solidary relations: Acts of exclusion contradict the constitutional language of universality. Thus, group discrimination within democratic societies demands for justification; otherwise, societies struggle to hold up their self-understanding as democratic communities.

⁷⁹ Honneth 2013: 291-292.

⁸⁰ Alexander 2006: 31.

⁸¹ Alexander 2006: 164-169.

It will be argued below that this motif of universality cannot be fully realized; however, for Alexander, normative progress means to move towards an ever-more inclusive civil sphere that allows its members to be involved in relations of solidarity.⁸² Alexander does not further elaborate on the reasons why the experience of solidarity is so valuable. However, this missing piece can be filled by an article by Honneth⁸³ that identifies social freedom as constitutive for solidarity's normative appeal. The previously gained insights provide further context for this idea: Membership in a solidary community allows individuals to feel valued. An hypothetical all-inclusive civil sphere would therefore allow for every member of society to experience itself as recognizable. In line with this interpretation, Alexander describes the experience of belonging to the civil sphere not as a merely cognitive process of deliberation but as defined by an emotional feeling of belonging-together.⁸⁴ Alexander's sources of normativity therefore allow the integration of his ideas into a recognition-theoretical framework.

If one is to understand the civil sphere as an institutional complex structured by solidary relations of social freedom, the claim of *universality* becomes a challenge: recognition complexes of social freedom consist of experiences of recognition of *particularity*. Thus, to consider the civil sphere as an institutional complex that provides such experiences, its relations must allow individuals to experience their particularity as a "variety of the universal". Alexander's research identifies a culturally mediated system of meaning production that makes exactly this possible: He shows how civil membership is constituted through an ongoing process of cultural coding of *particular* group characteristics as valuable variation of the community's shared *universality*.⁸⁵ Every society constantly (re-)produces these shared complexes of accessible recognition forms through a specific

⁸² Alexander 2006: 31-34.

⁸³ Honneth 2015.

⁸⁴ Sciortino 2007: 563.

⁸⁵ Alexander 2006: 54-57.

system of binary codes. This system defines societal groups discursively either as part of a civil “We” or an uncivil “Other”. Being perceived as “civil” means for societal groups to be recognized as equal members within their society’s civil sphere, which entitles them to be included in a “complex set of mutual obligations [that] is usually taken for granted”.⁸⁶ Being perceived as “impure”, however, means the exclusion from ties of solidarity and rights of democratic participation.⁸⁷ the related practices of mutual recognition remain inaccessible. As Sciortino notes: “civil society is the locus of inclusion and exclusion, of liberty and repression. Indeed, [...] the very same cultural codes that account for the civil sphere’s emancipative potential also provide for negativity and enslavement”;⁸⁸ a description that very well illustrates how civility discourses can constitute an empirical counterpart to the theoretical considerations on ambivalent recognition.

Thus, this binary code system is extremely instructive for this thesis, as it allows to get a hold of the structures previously identified as key to the formation of accessible relations of particular societal recognition. If civil recognition becomes the key to intersubjectively gain subjectivity, then the practices of cultural re-codification of this attribution are relevant for the present critical theory. “Civility” thereby becomes ambivalent: it allows individuals under certain conditions to feel valued in their human particularity; while thereby necessarily in turn defining the scope of action within which their social actions are recognizable and, furthermore, systematically excluding individuals from experiencing recognition.⁸⁹

Alexander proceeds by discussing several institutions that, by re-producing the binary codes, shape a society’s perception of civility. He distinguishes between communicative and regulative institutions; and one of the discussed regulative institutions are

⁸⁶ Sciortino 2007: 564.

⁸⁷ Honneth 2013: 295.

⁸⁸ Sciortino 2007: 569.

⁸⁹ Alexander 2006: 53-67.

parties. Regulative institutions – “executive organs and legal courts”⁹⁰ – do not just moderate public opinion on membership within the civil sphere – like mass media, civil associations or public opinion polls do;⁹¹ they translate this discourse into a regulative body and thereby allow the coded solidary relations to be called. Thus, even though the state is distinguished from the civil sphere, the two are deeply interwoven insofar as public *civil* discourse is coded via legislative acts that are enforceable by the legal means of *state* authority.⁹²

In order to enter public offices, candidates must prove their suitability throughout the procedures of electoral competition that eventually culminates in the holding of democratic elections. These “struggles over how [...] votes should be cast” are “structurally similar”⁹³ to the ones that define civil sphere membership; as the candidates try to convince the voters that they hold civil qualities making them worthy of public office. In mass democracy elections, it is on parties to “propose platforms obligating candidates to exercise state power in relation to shared political values”⁹⁴; and they thereby reduce complexity by pooling the field of candidates into a number of competing groups. It is this conglomeration under the umbrella of a partisan ideology that allows the competing parties the formation of to some extent coherent visions of the shared civil community.

Party competition is shaped by civil discourses in a double sense. Firstly, parties are involved in the legal institutionalization of a society’s recognitional relations by developing competing visions of the civil sphere and its legislative codification. Parties’ legislative proposals are informed by their ideological horizons, that shape and are shaped by the civility discourses within the party organizations. Secondly, parties are engaged in

⁹⁰ Sciortino 2007: 564.

⁹¹ Alexander 2006: 69-105.

⁹² Alexander 2006: 107-114.

⁹³ Alexander 2006: 123.

⁹⁴ Alexander 2006: 123.

a struggle with each other that is coded in a “structurally similar” way to other civility discourses. During these confrontations, parties try to convince the electorate not only of their vision of society, but more generally of their civil quality. This often includes the discreditation of their competitors as “uncivil” threats to a pure civil sphere that consequently has to be kept from office. It is in “this antagonistic manner, [that] the binaries of civil discourse become specified in terms of party conflict”.⁹⁵

The institution of party rivalry also has another important facet: Where binary discourses of civility can develop oppressive, destructive force, the discourses of party conflict are institutionalized within an overarching *shared* political space of confrontational encounter. Within this common sphere, the existence and actions of the Others – of the political opponents – are integral parts of a party’s action: the very existence of a *party* presupposes the existence of a counterpart. It is the institutionalization of this relationship of mutual referencing in the logic of social freedom that is reflected in the fact that after every [electoral] battle, the enemies come together again as peers. The defeated party affirms its commitment “to the shared democratic space and promise to respect their opponents when they assume legitimate [state] power”; whereas their victorious opponents “express their humility and promise to serve the entire collectivity, not only their party group”.⁹⁶

It is this internalization of Mouffe’s idea of “friendly enemies”⁹⁷ that allows a more complete understanding of the relationship of interparty competition and the civil sphere. Parties are gatekeepers for offices that allow the legislative manifestation of a society’s solidary relations. During the legislative procedure, they develop proposals within a – to some extent – coherent ideological frame; while competing publicly for the

⁹⁵ Alexander 2006: 123.

⁹⁶ Alexander 2006: 130.

⁹⁷ Mouffe 2000: 13.

electorate's support of their respective visions of the shared civil community. This provides democratic legitimacy for the eventually enforced legislative body, and it simultaneously acknowledges the legitimacy of the existence of "inferior" visions presently incapable of winning a political majority. It thereby allows the peaceful coexistence of competing visions of the shared civil sphere; and through the counter-projects of opposition parties, it creates a space for new civility conceptions emerging within a society to become visible on the political stage. In this manner, Alexander's writings can be integrated in a recognition-theoretical framework to analyze party activity. To evaluate *normatively* however, one step is missing to fuse Honneth's recognition theory and Alexander's civil sphere: a review of Alexander's notion of moral progress and its incorporation in the normative core of the present theory.

Alexander's writings complement the previously outlined definition of moral progress as a more inclusive re-codification of societal institutions of affirmative recognition remarkably well. He describes more inclusive recodifications of civil discourses in three distinctive pathways towards an incorporation of formerly excluded groups: *assimilation*, *hyphenation*, and *multiculturalism*.⁹⁸ Within the incorporative mode of assimilation, "not the qualities themselves [...] are purified or accepted but the persons who formerly, and often still privately, bear them".⁹⁹ Thus, within this incorporative mechanism, the cultural stigmatization of the initial qualities associated with an polluted group remains stable: incorporation means in this context for the members of the formerly excluded group to "shed these qualities in their public lives".¹⁰⁰ Such incorporation is progressive insofar as it allows formerly excluded groups under certain circumstances to gain societal recognition and thereby equals an enlargement of solidary relations. However, the societal

⁹⁸ Alexander 2006: 425-458.

⁹⁹ Alexander 2001: 243.

¹⁰⁰ Alexander 2001: 244.

identity conceptions that provide access to affirmative recognition remain equally limited, and the degrees of autonomy to the individual are the same.

Similarly within hyphenation, assumingly polluted trades remain oppressed: Hyphenation “does not in any sense suggest the equal valuation of core and outsider qualities”.¹⁰¹ However, it “allows more fluidity and transferability between primordial categories that remain more and less polluted”.¹⁰² Outsiders can gain recognition through a shift in their perceived essential qualities. This opens a window of opportunity for a merger of prior identity conceptions resulting in “a common collective identity that may be neither core nor peripheral in itself”. Thus, this mode enables larger groups to construct a positive self-conception as being “civil”. However, just like with assimilation, the resulting self-conceptions are comparably limiting regarding the degree of autonomy, as for the originally attributed characteristics “significant stigmatization remains”.¹⁰³

In clear distinction from these pathways, multiculturalism follows a different logic: “Instead of trying to purify the characters of denigrated persons, however, discursive conflicts [...] revolve around efforts to purify the actual primordial qualities themselves”.¹⁰⁴ It is thereby the *most democratic* mode, resulting in the *most stable* incorporation.¹⁰⁵ While Alexander does not further elaborate on this hierarchization, the developed framework allows further contextualization: Multiculturalism is superior, because it enlarges the group of society that has access to experiences of affirmative societal recognition *and* means the diversification of self-constructions that allow a positive self-relation. While assimilation and hyphenation require the excluded individuals to adapt themselves

¹⁰¹ Alexander 2001: 245.

¹⁰² Alexander 2001: 245.

¹⁰³ Alexander 2001: 245.

¹⁰⁴ Alexander 2001: 246.

¹⁰⁵ Alexander 2006: 450-457; Alexander 2001: 238.

to narrow identity-constructions encoded in their society's civility discourse, multiculturalism increases individual autonomy by redefining civility more inclusively.

All three incorporation modes mean progressive change, but from assimilation to hyphenation to multiculturalism, an increasing degree of freedom can be gained. Along this ideal typology, societal change can be evaluated; and within the intended party theory, party activity can be evaluated against the background of an ever-more inclusive civil sphere. Parties thereby act in an area of tension: Even if a party proposes radically inclusive change, for the proposal to become regulative reality the respective party must gain political majorities; otherwise, it seems hardly convincing to claim a party's emancipatory capacity. Emancipatory aims must be framed in ways that allow political majorities to support them, once they enter party conflict: As regulative institutions, parties cannot act as progressive institutions merely through communicative acts. This is their ambitious benchmark: By means of democratic legislation, they ought to contribute to the regulative enforcement of an ever-more inclusive civil sphere. They thereby produce a regulative body that then is to be accepted as legally binding for the entire society – even by the defeated party. It is in this double way, that parties play a key role in the institutionalization of mutual relations of societal recognition: They simultaneously contribute to a more inclusive civil sphere *and* structure the stage of political conflict as a pluralistic space of competition.

In the next chapter, the thereby outlined approach is applied within a case study. The study neither aims to simply prove the empirical applicability of the developed theory, nor is the goal to only provide an isolated normative evaluation of the party interaction in the given case. Instead, the study intends to target a theoretical ambiguity that has remained throughout the preceding section when it comes to the description of parties as regulative institutions, namely whether parties are also relevant *communicative*

institutions. The above outlined normative understanding of parties as bilingual translators between state and civil sphere would in principle allow for two different answers. In a narrow sense, such translation could mean that parties “regulate state power in the name of the civil sphere”¹⁰⁶ primarily by incorporating civil discourses that emerge within other civil institutions into their partisan battles. It seems equally possible, however, that the continuous partisan confrontation of competing ideologies *also* enforces the creation of alternating civility conceptions within parties in the first place, that are *then* introduced into the wider civil sphere where they are communicatively reproduced by other (communicative) civil institutions during incorporative processes.¹⁰⁷ Both conceptions seem to allow the outlined understanding of parties as regulative institutions and can therefore hardly be answered conclusively within this theoretical chapter. Nevertheless, this is an important aspect in the relationship between parties and the civil society that has not been considered sufficiently in studies on Alexander’s civil sphere concept, as many of these tend to diminish or ignore the parties in their studies of civil incorporation. It therefore constitutes an interesting additional aspect during the subsequent study.

The Shifting German Perception of Eastern Europe: A Case Study

In the second half of this paper, the developed critical party theory is applied within a historic case study. The paper evaluates the role parties played in the shifting German perception of Eastern Europe in the second half of the 20th century. What makes this case so remarkable is that on the one hand, recent studies have shown how “Eastern Europeanness” was historically coded as constitutive Other, contrasting the allegedly superior German *Kultur*.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand however, at turn of the millennium Germany had become one of the biggest supporters of the EU’s Eastern enlargement with a “high

¹⁰⁶ Alexander 2006: 124.

¹⁰⁷ Van Dalen/Van Aelst 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Liulevicius 2010: 4, 131; Kienemann 2018.

degree of normative grounds” as a “striking feature of [...] [the enlargement-]debate”¹⁰⁹ in the country. The present study therefore deals with an intriguing examples of an emerging European sphere of solidarity: The re-codification of the German perception of “the East” that eventually came with the acceptance of certain solidary obligations towards the Eastern fellow-Europeans.¹¹⁰

The thereby outlined recodification process involved the incorporation of numerous historic experiences into the collective German memory that shaped the ways in which Eastern Europeanness – and civility more generally – was codified. The present paper however focuses on the crucial time leading to the FRG’s *Neue Ostpolitik* in the early 1970s. A core piece of this policy was the German de-facto recognition of the German-Polish border. In line with existing research,¹¹¹ this paper claims that the societal significance of this policy can only be understood when both the Germans’ perception of their Eastern neighbors¹¹² and the public perception of the societal group of “expellees”¹¹³ are taken into account. Considering these issues as inextricably linked, it is argued that what actually was at stake was a fundamental re-codification of the German recognitional structure; and what is to be examined is how this process was shaped and legitimized in the accompanying party disputes.

The developed approach, in principal, claims applicability to any modern liberal democracy, as the institutionalization of cultural complexes of social freedom is a defining feature of such societies according to the developed understanding.¹¹⁴ However, the study object is by no means chosen arbitrarily. Firstly, the case allows for the historic

¹⁰⁹ Ecker-Ehrhardt 2002.

¹¹⁰ Ecker-Ehrhardt 2006; see also: Atzili/Kantel 2015.

¹¹¹ See, for instance: Demshuk 2012.

¹¹² Focusing on the initial period of *Neue Ostpolitik*, most of the examined materials are concerned with the German perception of Poland and the Oder-Neisse Line.

¹¹³ On the heterogeneity of this generic group and its political connotation see: Ahonen 2014.

¹¹⁴ See the preconditions of reconstructivism outlined above, or Roberge 2011: 15.

retrospective reconstructive theorists often consider to be indispensable.¹¹⁵ Secondly, the selected case picks up the threads of Honneth's reconstructivism in two ways. First, by examining a cross-border case, it contributes to the Europeanization Honneth envisioned for his project.¹¹⁶ Second, by focusing on the arguably unique German relationship to its Eastern European neighbors the chosen case meets Honneth's demand for a closer examination of national peculiarities in the cultural transformation of societal complexes.¹¹⁷ The chosen case therefore constitutes a promising starting point to continue Honneth's project. Lastly, the study carries on the previously described aim of de-provincializing Alexander's *Civil Sphere*. The transnationalism of the European "we" is thereby an important difference from the initial American context that becomes immediately apparent. Alexander argued that territorially based distinction of native and foreign constitutes one of the important structural features in the binary language of modern nation states. Complementary to this, the present case might provide valuable insights how a nation civil sphere develops elements of a transnational incorporation – especially if mediated by *national* parties.

Methods and Materials

Due to the societal importance attributed to the topics, both *Neue Ostpolitik* and *Heimatvertriebene* are extensively discussed in scientific literature highly instructive for the present project. It is only against the background of this research that shifts in the parties' practices can be detected and interpreted as civil incorporation. In order to examine the party discourses of interest within the framework of this literature, discourse analysis is a useful tool because it allows for the thereby negotiated structures of knowledge to be examined as "practice[s] not just of representing the world, but of [...] constructing

¹¹⁵ Busen/Herzog 2012: 281-282.

¹¹⁶ Honneth 2015 [2013]: 620-624.

¹¹⁷ Honneth 2015 [2013]: 11.

the world in meaning”.¹¹⁸ Discourses produce social reality by the repetition of coherent, interlinked statements that establish knowledge about the world. A discourse therefore consists of an entirety of statements, that in turn can only be understood through their sense-making discourses. Statements that are not in line with a discursively produced truth – quite literally – would not make sense.¹¹⁹

The present study therefore conducts a *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA), a method developed with a distinctively “emancipatory aim”¹²⁰ that uses discourse analytical tools to deconstruct “social relations of power and subjugation”.¹²¹ As a qualitative, interpretative approach, CDA does not comply with quantitative research standards.¹²² Its epistemological premises require a conceptual openness and adaptability to the respective research material that would conflict a narrow predefinition of the envisioned research process.¹²³ In order to nevertheless provide at least sufficient transparency, Keller has provided a rough guideline on how to conduct a discourse analysis. In addition to emphasizing the importance of “consistency [...] between research question, data acquisition, evaluation and interpretation”,¹²⁴ Keller’s text among others features instructions on: a) the *creation of a data corpus*; b) the *analysis* to the selected data in order to identify the entailed statements; c) and finally the interpretative *aggregation of interlinked statements into discourses*. His instructions inform the subsequent study.

Civility discourses on Eastern Europeanness and German expellees in the German party interaction regarding the Eastern treaties and the Oder-Neisse Border constitute the study’s core interest, and this focus has to be reflected in the accumulation of the data

¹¹⁸ Fairclough 1992: 64.

¹¹⁹ Landwehr 2008: 92.

¹²⁰ Titscher/Wodak/Meyer/Vetter 1998: 181.

¹²¹ Keller 2011: 31; see also: Van Dijk 1997: 32.

¹²² Keller 2011: 115.

¹²³ Potter 1997: 147-148; Bryman 2012: 530.

¹²⁴ Keller 2011: 115.

corpus.¹²⁵ Generally, every party activity touching these issues (re-)produces knowledge. However, this “virtual corpus”¹²⁶ of discursive elements is *naturally* limited to the preserved elements; and *artificially* reduced by a careful selection of materials relevant for the respective project, while trying for instance to counterbalance potential disparities in the available documents.¹²⁷ This leaves the researcher with the “concrete corpus”¹²⁸ of research material, that is then examined in depth in order to analyze the individual statements that, taken together, constitute the targeted discourses. In the given case, particularly promising material originates from election campaigns, usually constituting periods of particularly heated party confrontation. Campaign speeches and election materials provide therefore valuable insights. Another source are parliamentary debates, as they constitute the main public stage of partisan confrontation over legislative manifestations of civil relations. Complementary insights are gained from party statements, manifestos, party newspapers, or conference materials.

While most of these sources are authorized by the party apparatus, leading political figures are also individually key players. Documents providing information about them are interviews, speeches, biographies, memoirs, and correspondences. Lastly, complementary context information is gained from studying materials on and originating from further institutions of the civil sphere as described by Alexander. Only by including this information it becomes possible to assess the interaction between parties and the other civil institutions that is crucial to investigate the question whether – in the given case – parties operate as regulative institutions merely “translating” competing civil orders preexisting within other civil institutions into partisan conflicts, or whether they are actually actively involved in the production of alternative civility codifications themselves.

¹²⁵ Keller 2011: 83-85.

¹²⁶ Landwehr 2008: 102-103.

¹²⁷ Keller 2011: 88.

¹²⁸ Landwehr 2008: 103. For further strategies for the material corpus see: Keller 2011: 90-91.

Next, the analysis examines how statements attribute (un-)civil characteristics to Eastern Europeans and German expellees. Importantly, during the party disputes on *Ostpolitik*, such civil codes are expected to be not only applied with regard to the primarily concerned social groups, but also to the respective party opponent. These processes of “civility making” operate on three levels, determining the perceived purity of the groups’ *motives, relations* and *institutions*.¹²⁹ The examination of the concrete corpus thereby combines macro- and microlevel tools of analysis.¹³⁰ While the “outer” macrolevel analysis is interested in *who* produced a statement *for what audience* and within *what contexts*,¹³¹ the microlevel analysis, in brief, examines *what* statements are *by what linguistic means* (stylistic devices, vocabulary, grammar) encoded in a respective source.¹³²

Lastly, the analysis traces how the identified statements are interlinked to narrative structures, and aggregates them interpretatively to party discourses.¹³³ These discourses constitute coherent horizons of meaning that establish truth about the respective social groups’ alleged (un-)civility that can then be perceived by the German public. The discourses accordingly can be normatively evaluated, distinguishing between mechanisms of exclusion and the defined incorporation modes. Of special interest is furthermore to what extent the governmental parties as regulative institutions provide the regulative embodiment of their communicatively staked out order of recognition. Only if such a link between communicative and regulative action is provided at least to a certain extent, parties meet the normative demand to link civil society and the state.

¹²⁹ For the schemes featuring the respective attributes for each level, see *Appendix 1*.

¹³⁰ Keller 2011: 98.

¹³¹ Landwehr (2008: 105-110) distinguishes between *situational, historic, medial* and *institutional* context. While taking all context dimensions into account, the institutional one is here arguably of the biggest interest: the party competition structured by the logic of friendly enmity: Confrontation on competing political visions, but mutual respect as counterparts within the pluralist democratic system.

¹³² Keller 2011: 31-32, 34, 98.

¹³³ Keller 2011: 101-112.

Above, some general criticisms have been mentioned that most qualitative approaches in the social science have to face, and this project is no exception to this. Beyond that however, this study has some additional limitations due to restrictions in time and space that shall not go unmentioned. Firstly, in line with the theoretical aim to explore interparty rivalry, intraparty processes are barely taken into account. Secondly, the analysis focuses almost exclusively on the two main German party competitors of the time: the social-democratic SPD and the conservative CDU/CSU (“Union”), excluding the third party, the liberal FDP. As CDU/CSU and SPD gained almost 95% of the parliamentary seats in the particularly relevant elections of 1969 and 1972, their interaction was arguably the defining one for the German party competition.¹³⁴ And lastly, as parties constitute only *one* type of civil institution, the extent of their impact cannot be conclusively estimated, because an analysis of party discourses does not allow to approximate the impact of alternative institutions of the civil sphere.

As described above, the study aims to counterbalance these shortcomings by contextualizing the party discourses through complementary sources originating from other civil institutions and pre-existing research. This way, the study furthermore hopes to also gain insights on the nature of the relationship between parties and the surrounding civil institutions. What is hereby of particular theoretical interest is whether parties’ contribution to civil incorporations was limited to the regulative manifestation of codifications priorly shifted within communicative institutions; *or* whether parties were already involved in the preceding communicative processes that determined who is to be perceived as civil. The subsequent case study therefore aims not only for the mere application of the developed theoretical approach within a normative evaluation, it also hopes to gain further

¹³⁴ Niedermayer 2000: 113-115.

insides on the mechanisms through which interparty conflict and the public production of civil meaning are interwoven.

Findings

Public perception after World War II: Eastern Europe and the expulsions.

The expellee integration constituted a big challenge for the German post-war civil sphere. Millions stranded in Western Germany, coming often with few personal belongings from a variety of territories eastwards.¹³⁵ The public reproduction of their fate was strongly influenced by their organized representation, the *Bund der Vertriebenen* (“Federation of Expellees”, BdV).¹³⁶ The propagated narrative of expulsions of German compatriots quickly became consensually shared by mass media and, crucially, all parties.¹³⁷ This expulsion-centered narrative established a clear distinction between civil insiders and uncivil outsiders: The expellees were victims to communist eastern perpetrators who, “crusad[ing] against the German people”,¹³⁸ committed “the greatest collective crime in history”¹³⁹ “and a violation of the basic ethical principles of our civilization”.¹⁴⁰ This perceived shared German fate eased the arrivers’ civil incorporation, a project of initially uncertain outcome.¹⁴¹

The expellees’ civil incorporation can thereby be described as a hyphenation: The arrivers were primarily acknowledged not as East Prussian, Pomeranian or Silesian – rather “foreign” identities¹⁴² – but as “expellees”. This new variation of Germanness could emerge only after their journey, hyphenating their “original” self-conception with the

¹³⁵ Ahonen 2014: 606.

¹³⁶ Moeller 2001; Luppés 2014: 94.

¹³⁷ Atzili/Kantel 2015: 595.

¹³⁸ From a speech hold on an expellee demonstration in 1952 (Ahonen 2014: 600).

¹³⁹ Member of Parliament (MoP) Rinke (CSU) at an expellee demonstration in 1954 (Ahonen 2014: 601).

¹⁴⁰ From an expellee organization publication in 1952 (Ahonen 2014: 601).

¹⁴¹ Many sources show the native population’s lack of solidarity towards the arrivers and that what was questioned was the incomers’ civil abilities to adapt to the emerging democratic community – or their “Germanness” altogether (Ahonen 2014: 606).

¹⁴² Douglas 2012: 301-25; Connor 2007: 18-93.

realities they found in their receiving society. The propagated expulsion narrative contributed to the German “rhetorics of victimization” through which “Germans [...] identified themselves as victims of a war that Hitler started but everyone lost”¹⁴³. Ahonen showed how this “discourse helped to construct an integrative myth of suffering and hardship that served as a source of collective legitimacy and identity for the new state”¹⁴⁴. The expellees, becoming the incarnation of the German-victimhood-narrative, contributed to the construction of the two main uncivil *Others* of post-war Germany: the communists in its East, and the Nazis in its past. It is in line with the outlined understanding that these processes “tended to solidify, not dissolve, the bases for social solidarity”¹⁴⁵.

This narrative greatly reinforced traditional anti-communist and anti-Slavic resentments.¹⁴⁶ The expellees’ “right to homeland” was “unilaterally raised to the status of ‘a basic right of international law’”¹⁴⁷ – without elaborating *how* this could be realized without anew expulsions. Bonn’s early *Ostpolitik* was not aiming for peaceful rapprochement; it was primarily an externalized acknowledgement of its expellees’ moral entitlement towards their perpetrators:¹⁴⁸ Hitler’s uncivility was dissociated from (Eastern) German victimhood.¹⁴⁹ Talking about Eastern Europe meant to enter the discursive battlefield about what civility could still mean after the 3rd Reich, and deviation from the dominant narratives caused indignation.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³ Moeller 2005: 152.

¹⁴⁴ Ahonen 2003: 272.

¹⁴⁵ Moeller 2005: 152.

¹⁴⁶ See narratives of the “colossal” thread “pan-Slavic imperialism” and “Asiatic Bolshevism” at the German borders threatening Western “culture and civilization” (Ahonen 2014: 608); or Luppés’s study (2014) on monuments memorializing the expellee’s former homelands that strongly echoed the colonial German discourses described by Kienemann (2018).

¹⁴⁷ Kaiser 1980: 35.

¹⁴⁸ Luppés 2014: 87.

¹⁴⁹ See for example MoP Czaja’s letter to chancellor Kiesinger (CDU), expressing the incomprehension for why the German east should be a “price that *Germany* would have to pay for the war that had been launched and lost by *Hitler*” (Ahonen (2003): 219, italics added).

¹⁵⁰ See for instance MoP Schmid (SPD), who wrote in the visitor book of the former prison of the Nazi Secret Police in Warsaw that he was “deeply ashamed at this place of German disgrace”. Schmid was

Despite their verbal revisionism, Germany's politicians were well aware that a return of eastern homelands was extremely unrealistic.¹⁵¹ However, any party with intentions to win elections seemed to need the expellees' support, resulting in an enthusiastic adoption of the outlined narrative by all parties.¹⁵² This courtship of the expellee leaders was particularly strong in the CDU/CSU, the leading force in government for the republic's first twenty years. While the closeness between expellee activists and Union's party personnel for a long time contributed to the party's power; the expellees' intense involvement prevented reforms on *Ostpolitik*: the successful expellee incorporation came at the cost of a standstill towards Germany's eastern neighbors.

Civil institutions in the 60s: Challenging post-war narratives.

Neue Ostpolitik was the political constituent of a major civil recodification; however, it can hardly be understood as an isolated event. Germany's recognition order became contested within multiple civil institutions long before parties even entered the battlefield.¹⁵³ From the late 50s onwards, especially transnational religious organizations¹⁵⁴ and certain media¹⁵⁵ began to include Eastern voices more prominently within their expulsion narratives. Eastern Europeans equal "right to homeland" was declared; the widespread claim of a civilizational decay since the vanishing of German *Kultur* was objected; and Nazi atrocities were connected with the subsequent expulsions. German suffering was acknowledged, but it was interpreted in the context of the war the German "political leadership had launched and lost":¹⁵⁶ Expellees were recognized for their valuable

subsequently publicly disparaged as a "traitor" (Stokłosa 2011: 120) who had violated the "national honor" (Weber 1996: 599).

¹⁵¹ Ahonen 2014: 601-602.

¹⁵² Wolff 2002; Faulenbach 2008: 106.

¹⁵³ Not explored in this paper are the impact of socio-demographic changes (Luppens, 2014: 88; Ahonen 2003: 223) and the international environment (Rynhold 2011).

¹⁵⁴ Stempin 2005.

¹⁵⁵ Kittel 2011: 31-57; Thiemeyer 2005; Frieberg 2010.

¹⁵⁶ From a publication of the catholic organization *Bensberger Kreis* in 1968 (Ahonen 2003: 223).

“contribution” to a peaceful post-war world – in return for their acceptance of Poland’s territorial integrity.

These challenges of the established narratives were vigorously attacked.¹⁵⁷ Countless contributions reassured the Eastern uncivility and denounced advocates of a more open approach as puppets on the communist strings, “undermining Western defenses against Soviet expansionism”.¹⁵⁸ These pronouncements testified to the high stakes of what – and who – was to be recognized as civil, stating that “the entire free world has to thank them [the expellees] that after 1945, they did not indulge in Anarchism, [...] a deep disappointment for communism”.¹⁵⁹ Instead, however, the respective media allegedly had “achieved that the expellees [...] are considered to be almost ostracized” by their fellow citizens.

Contrasting these civil confrontations, the conflict line remained remarkably absent from party disputes during most of the sixties.¹⁶⁰ This discrepancy critically contributed to the emergence of the “Extra-Parliamentary Opposition” (*Außerparlamentarische Opposition*, APO), an umbrella term comprehending “various overlapping protest movements”.¹⁶¹ Expressing discontent with the perceived absence of an inner-parliamentary opposition, APO constituted thereby a public accusation that the party system was failing its normative purpose: the unanimity of the supposed parliamentary antagonists had critically endangered the institutionalized place of peaceful confrontation between competing ideologies. The post-war party consensus of standing with the expellees that had

¹⁵⁷ Demshuk 2012: 236-37.

¹⁵⁸ From an expellee newspaper in 1965 (Ahonen 2003: 205).

¹⁵⁹ Kittel 2011: 57.

¹⁶⁰ Hölscher (2010) described this time as the high phase of the “bipartisan foreign policy” that avoided any parliamentary party confrontation on the respective issues. This development peaked with the “flattering contest for the favor of the expellee organizations” (Stickler 2004: 229) during the 1965 campaigns, and SPD and CDU/CSU entering a grand coalition in 1966.

¹⁶¹ Ahonen 2003: 223-224.

initially crucially contributed to the stabilization of the German society increasingly threatened the party system's legitimacy.

Neue Ostpolitik: Recoding the East through party conflict.

The impression of a complete standstill of party confrontation on *Ostpolitik* was somewhat misleading: Even though it often remained unnoticed to the public eye, change was indeed emerging. Parts of the SPD, especially, stood in intense exchange with reformist forces among journalists and in church circles already in the early sixties and showed openness to the alternative voices, deviating at times sharply from older narratives. ¹⁶²

However, the ever stronger signs of a paradigm change on the party's *Ostpolitik* were counterbalanced – and for most of the 60s covered up – by public statements assuring the SPD's loyalty towards the expellee organizations' case. ¹⁶³

This two-layered approach could not proceed forever, and during the 1969 election campaigns the increasing distance between SPD and BdV turned into open confrontation. Leading social-democrats openly attacked defenders of the republic's *Ostpolitik* and their "illusions of the 1950s". ¹⁶⁴ The self-description as reasonable statesmen whose "political action must proceed from the realities: from facts, not from aspirations", ¹⁶⁵ was thereby a constant feature of the new course. The effect of this civil discourse was two-fold: Firstly, it framed the political opponent as irrational and incapable to accept "the situation as it is, as it now has already been for twenty-five years"; ¹⁶⁶ thus, as in lack of the civil qualities necessary to hold public offices. Secondly, "the courage to be

¹⁶² See a series of articles in the party newspaper *Vorwärts*, or the advances of several regional party branches and the party's youth organization (Kittel 2011: 102-105).

¹⁶³ See Brandt in 1963 publicly claiming that "renunciation is betrayal" (Hupka 1994: 87); the 1964 party conference slogan "heritage and mission" in combination with a map of Germany in the borders of 1937 (Frömel 1999: 19); and SPD deputy Wehner's calling at the party conference in 1969 to "do justice to the expellees [...] because for social-democrats, human rights inalienable." (Kittel 2011: 102).

¹⁶⁴ SPD-group chairman Schmidt in 1968 (Ahonen 2003: 232).

¹⁶⁵ Brandt, by then foreign minister (Atzili/Kantel 2015: 601).

¹⁶⁶ Demshuk 2012: 232.

truthful”¹⁶⁷ included to not blame Eastern Europeans and to face the fact that a different *Ostpolitik* would be “lost [...] that was not gambled away long ago¹⁶⁸ by the uncivil Nazi regime.

Given their close personnel ties, CDU/CSU hesitated to break with the expellee organizations. Instead, the opponents’ “illusionary schemes rooted in wishful thinking¹⁶⁹ were attacked. This resulted in a politization of *Ostpolitik* along party lines during the campaigns of 1969,¹⁷⁰ with the expellee organizations – for a long time claiming loyalty only to the government¹⁷¹ – getting engaged in partisan battles. Sighting the CDU/CSU’s steadfast hardline position, the BdV-president announced publicly towards the “Eastern German comrades” that “what is at stake is Germany”, stating that his fellow-citizens would know “who in our country retreats little by little when faced with the excessive demands of the Soviet Union [...] Thus, do not waste your vote!”.¹⁷² Open partisanship became a widespread phenomena in the public: The media became increasingly divided along the main party line;¹⁷³ and an unprecedented partisan engagement of public figures took place, many of which campaigned independently from the SPD for a social-democratically lead government.¹⁷⁴ While APO embodied an disengagement between partisan and societal conflict, the 1969 elections translated the societal tensions into the binary logic of party competition and aligned actors from the entire society within partisan confrontation. When election day came, SPD and FDP gained a slight majority allowing them to form the first government in the FRG’s history without CDU/CSU: Once parties openly

¹⁶⁷ SPD-group chairman Schmidt in 1968 (Ahonen 2003: 232).

¹⁶⁸ Brandt, by then chancellor, in a televised speech after signing the Warsaw treaty in December 1970 (Behrens 2010: 42).

¹⁶⁹ Finance minister Strauss (CSU) in a newspaper interview in 1967 (Ahonen 2003: 236).

¹⁷⁰ Ahonen 2003: 206, 235-236.

¹⁷¹ Ahonen 2003: 241.

¹⁷² Kittel 2011: 105.

¹⁷³ Ennen 2007: 182-183.

¹⁷⁴ Niclauß 2015: 123-124; Ennen 2007: 184-185.

entered the discursive battlefield over the civil recodification of Eastern Europeans and expellees, within few months reformist forces had gained a political majority.

The new government quickly began to make use of its means to restructure the civil sphere. The expellee ministry was dissolved and the respective matters were assigned to the interior ministry,¹⁷⁵ abolishing any “territorial demands whatsoever”.¹⁷⁶ In a similar manner, the coalition pushed for exchanging “the term ‘expulsion’ in [...] school textbooks with the more comprehensive and neutral – albeit arguably euphemistic – term ‘population transfer’”:¹⁷⁷ The coalition was determined to recode Eastern narratives, and “officially acknowledged Poland’s status as the primary victim of the war”¹⁷⁸ – being the first FRG government to do so. Increased diplomatic activity followed, resulting in the treaties of Moscow and Warsaw in 1970. Especially the stay in Poland also laid the foundation for an increased cultural exchange of the countries’ civil societies under the patronage of the political activities, aiming for rapprochement in the longer term as an integral component of *Neue Ostpolitik*.¹⁷⁹ Targeting “the shared elements of the cultural heritage”,¹⁸⁰ they contained a decisively multiculturalist element of a joint European civility. However, the primary testimony and defining moment of the continued memorial re-codification without doubt was Brandt’s iconic *Warsaw Genuflection*: Kneeing publicly in front of the Jewish Ghetto memorial, Brandt symbolically acknowledged the collective German guilt for the suffer Nazi atrocities brought over Europe, and Eastern Europeans were by hyphenation re-coded from Slavic barbarians into victims of Nazi German atrocities within “a dark chapter of European history”.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁵ Ahonen 2003: 243.

¹⁷⁶ Chancellor Brandt on a SPD party conference in 1970 (Ahonen 2003: 243).

¹⁷⁷ Ahonen 2014: 602.

¹⁷⁸ Atzili/Kantel 2015: 599.

¹⁷⁹ Behrens 2010: 29.

¹⁸⁰ Chancellor Brandt during a toast after signing the Warsaw Treaty (Behrens 2010: 45).

¹⁸¹ Chancellor Brandt in a televised address in November 1970 (Brandt/Ahlers 1971: 243-244).

The gesture's civil significance is also reflected by the subsequently unfolding debates. The acknowledgment of Polish contributions to a multicultural European civility vanished almost completely from the civil discourses; instead, the hyphenating recodification of perpetration and victimhood between Eastern Europeans and Germans dominated.¹⁸² While in the longer run, *Neue Ostpolitik* contributed to a fundamental change of the perception of Eastern Europeans; polls showed that in the immediate reaction, a majority of Germans thereby considered Brandt's behavior to be "exaggerating",¹⁸³ and conservative forces in media and parliament furiously denounced his "undignified" gesture as "surrender, subjugation"¹⁸⁴ and treason against the nation. Against this backdrop, the undertaken reorientations might have already exploited the governmental scope of change processible for the German public, as every shift regarding *Ostpolitik* was closely monitored, and heavily criticized by the opposition. Repeatedly, the government was accused of betrayal in the face of Eastern excessiveness. Depicting them as secretive and deceitful, "expellee leaders increasingly began to label the two governing parties as outright enemies",¹⁸⁵ insisting in strong civility terms on their own moral righteousness.¹⁸⁶ CDU/CSU complemented these claims in the parliament, stating that they constituted "the convictions [all] Germans hold, or at least should hold."¹⁸⁷

The governing parties, in turn, did not avoid the confrontation with such "restorative elements".¹⁸⁸ However, their narrative did not aim for the expellees' repudiation.¹⁸⁹ Quite the contrary, the expellees occupied a prominent place; with the crucial difference

¹⁸² Behrens 2010.

¹⁸³ Frevert 2017: 198.

¹⁸⁴ Frevert 2017: 198.

¹⁸⁵ Ahonen 2003: 247.

¹⁸⁶ A recurring theme was for instance the rhetoric equation of hostile attitudes towards the expellees and antisemitism, attaching strong incivility to the opponent in the historic context of Post-Nazi Germany (Ahonen 2003: 246-249; Kittel 2011: 57).

¹⁸⁷ CSU-Party Chairman Strauß in June 1970 (Demshuk 2012: 245).

¹⁸⁸ Brandt in a meeting of the SPD's parliamentary group in 1970 (Ahonen 2003: 247).

¹⁸⁹ For a more detailed description of the SPD's multilayered approach towards the expellees see: Demshuk 2012: 243-244.

that they were no longer primarily constructed as the victims of Eastern aggressors. Instead, the post-war hyphenation became creatively reinterpreted: ¹⁹⁰ Now, by sacrificing their homelands, eastern expellees were entitled to their fellow citizens' recognition as martyr figures, making amends for the collective guilt towards Nazi victims like the Eastern Europeans. The German nation was jointly responsible for the "result[s] of Hitler's crimes", and it was on the Germans "to muster understanding and attentiveness for a burden which [expellees] carry with them for us all".¹⁹¹

Instead of exclusively focusing on the lost territories however, the government's narrative also emphasized the Eastern German "cultural and spiritual substance".¹⁹² While the hyphenating post-war narrative provided recognition by opposing German expellees and Eastern expellers; the German East now became discursively detached from the integrity of the former settlement areas. In this multicultural logic, the Prussian, Silesian and Pomeranian heritage were stressed as valuable variations of German *Kultur*.¹⁹³ To acknowledge the expellees for preserving these variations was defined as a solidary obligation "for the whole nation. Only in this way can that which was lost outside be won internally".¹⁹⁴ Many surrounding communicative institutions accompanied this course supportively: The increasingly influential television broadcast acclaimed *Neue Ostpolitik*,¹⁹⁵ and many newspapers extensively stressed the positive international reactions.¹⁹⁶ The message was clear: By acknowledging its historic guilt, Brandt's Germany was a respected member of the international community and constituted an antithesis to its Nazi

¹⁹⁰ Jacobsen/Mieczysław/Kunesch-Jörres 1992: 220.

¹⁹¹ Chancellor Brandt in a televised address in November 1970 (Brandt/Ahlers 1971: 243-244).

¹⁹² Brandt in 1969 (Kittel 2011: 12).

¹⁹³ Chancellor Brandt in a televised address from Warsaw in December 1970 (Brandt/Ahlers 1971: 250-251).

¹⁹⁴ Brandt in 1969 (Kittel 2011: 12).

¹⁹⁵ Niclauß 2015: 125.

¹⁹⁶ Niclauß 2015: 132-133; Zons 1984.

past. This contributed crucially to rapidly growing support levels of the Oder-Neisse Border¹⁹⁷ and chancellor Brandt himself.¹⁹⁸

Despite this increasingly apparent public support CDU/CSU continued their aggressive confrontation of *Neue Ostpolitik*, in the hope of a governmental split under oppositional pressure.¹⁹⁹ The conflict culminated in 1972, when, after the thin social-liberal majority had shrunk due to several defectors, the opposition “attempted to topple the Brandt regime with a vote of no confidence [which failed spectacularly], and there was a protracted struggle to prevent the treaty’s ratification.”²⁰⁰ However, in the two years since their signatures, the treaties’ political significance had raised to an extent that a parliamentary “no” would have incalculable consequences, both domestically and internationally.²⁰¹ The CDU/CSU was trapped: On the one hand, the parties’ moderates were perfectly aware of the tremendous costs of a parliamentary rejection.²⁰² On the other hand, the opposition had constantly denounced the chancellor’s actions to pressure the government and secure the expellee functionaries’ support.²⁰³ Ultimately, CDU-chairman Barzel convinced his parliamentary group to enable the treaties’ ratification by abstention, and this paved the way free for the parliamentary approval of the arguably most fundamental readjustment of post-war Germany neighborhood policies.²⁰⁴

Notwithstanding this major success, the government had to face the loss of its parliamentary backing. In order to ensure governability, all parties agreed on new elections for fall 1972.²⁰⁵ During the subsequent election contest, media again played a crucial

¹⁹⁷ While in 1965 surveys estimated the public acceptance of the Oder-Neisse border at under 20% (Al-lensbach Institut für Demoskopie 1965), more than 50% of the population supported such a course according to published polls by 1970 (Der Spiegel 1970).

¹⁹⁸ Niclauß 2015: 120.

¹⁹⁹ Ahonen 2003: 248.

²⁰⁰ Demshuk 2012: 238.

²⁰¹ Ahonen 2003: 250.

²⁰² Ahonen 2003: 250-251.

²⁰³ Ahonen 2003: 248.

²⁰⁴ Ahonen 2003: 252.

²⁰⁵ Niclauß 2015: 135.

role, proclaiming a “plebiscite over the foreign policy initiatives of the social-liberal coalition”;²⁰⁶ and media coverage of the subsequent campaigns showed a striking extent of partisan involvement.²⁰⁷ The parties’ campaigns themselves featured many of the characteristics prominent during the previous public confrontations. CDU/CSU tried to reconnect with the dominant binary codes of the immediate post-war era, framing the SPD as a communist thread, as the “gravediggers of the nation”.²⁰⁸ The SPD responded by emphasizing the party’s civil ability to open and critical deliberation, while questioning the conservatives’ capability of these basic democratic virtues.²⁰⁹ Regarding *Neue Ostpolitik*, the conservatives’ equation of the acceptance of the Oder-Neisse border with a betrayal of the German cause was fought back by the social-democrats by framing it as a source of national self-esteem.²¹⁰

A striking feature of the SPD campaign however was its close association with actors of the wider civil sphere. With “politics penetrating every sphere of life”,²¹¹ it was accompanied by an “unprecedented advertising campaign by authors and scientists, actors and artists”²¹² that exceeded even the one of 1969, including civil organizations outside the organizational structures of the SPD once again campaigning massively for chancellor Brandt.²¹³ Contrasting these developments, the expellee organizations for various reasons failed to mobilize support for their political rallies.²¹⁴ When the advocates of the traditional expellee narratives aimed to gather protesters for a “final battle for freedom”,²¹⁵ many expellees simply stayed at home. After a decade of civil confrontations over guilt,

²⁰⁶ Niclauß 2015: 136.

²⁰⁷ Ennen 2007: 186.

²⁰⁸ Müller 1997: 52.

²⁰⁹ Müller 1997: 46-47, 122-123.

²¹⁰ Seebacher 2004: 234.

²¹¹ Ennen 2007: 186.

²¹² Merseburger 2002: 653.

²¹³ Müller 1997: 66.

²¹⁴ Demshuk 2012: 250.

²¹⁵ Springer 1980: 127.

perpetration and victimhood, the expellee organizations' revisionist incriminations of the government's *Neue Ostpolitik* had politically alienated them not only from the wider public, but even from large parts of the "rank and file expellees" they assumingly represented.²¹⁶

The 1972 election results confirmed these developments. The ever-increasing politicization of society in combination with the electoral confrontation between two party blocks publicly perceived as an unofficial plebiscite resulted in an all-time-record turnout of 91,1%. The social-liberal coalition, and especially the SPD with its all-time-record result of 45,8%, triumphed over the conservatives. The government was provided with a comfortable parliamentary majority, and the result was interpreted as the electorate's unambiguous confirmation of *Neue Ostpolitik* – crucially, a view accepted as "indisputably valid"²¹⁷ by *all* parties. This subsequent acceptance of the new realities by the opposition therefore constituted the closing act to the partisan confrontation on the issue: From 1972 onwards, a new point of no return for *Ostpolitik* was unanimously acknowledged within the German party system – based on a narration of the fate of the lost German Eastern territories that by 1960 would have provoked public outrage.

Discussion

The civility codification of *Neue Ostpolitik* was decisively more diverse and inclusive than its predecessors: The consensual party discourses of the 50s had incorporated the expellees through hyphenation by Othering Eastern European uncivility. They thereby, however, also crucially contributed to the German public's ability to hold up the self-perception as a civil community. Politicians of all parties enforced this exclusive and illusionary revisionist discourse – usually against better knowledge; so that a constant

²¹⁶ Demshuk 2012: 260.

²¹⁷ CSU-chairman Strauss on the Eastern treaties after the 1972 election (Ahonen 2003: 251-252).

discrepancy between communicative and regulative action marks party activities of this time.

While parties, afraid of electoral consequences of open challenges to a societal consensus, persisted in these discourses for decades, other civil institutions began to progressively challenge the expulsion narrative already from the late 50s onwards. As the discrepancy between partisan and societal conflict lines increasingly became publicly perceived as problematic, especially the SPD benefited from its intense exchange with the alternative voices in the communicative institutions. Thanks to these ties, the party was able to translate alternative positions from the civil society into the partisan arena relatively quickly - once the leading figures considered them to be capable of gaining majority support. The party's "bilingual translation" between state and civil society therefore consisted of a deliberate political adoption of civility discourses that had emerged over a period of roughly ten years in the diverse context of several communicative civil institutions. The contribution of the SPD was to incorporate these discourses into the partisan disputes, where they eventually were legislatively manifested and subsequently confirmed by the electorate. By enabling this democratic legitimation, the party system provided a crucial contribution to a more inclusive civil recodification of both expellees and Eastern Europeans. Thus, the parties acted primarily as regulative institutions in the narrow sense; however, they thereby manifested the civil recodification legislatively and democratically in a way communicative institutions would hardly have been able to do. This positive verdict explicitly also includes the oppositions' post-election acknowledgement of the new political and societal realities in 1972.

This decidedly positive evaluation contains two considerable reservations, however. Firstly, when the more inclusive narrative became translated into the partisan logic, it was modified in one important aspect: While other civil institutions had much closer

transnational networks and included Eastern European voices in their narrations, much of the social-liberal partisan rhetoric remained German-centered. Unlike the precious variations of Germanness the expellees' origins were proclaimed to constitute, Eastern Europeans often appeared in the public governmental narrative as a mere projection surface to Nazi German crimes. This already constituted a major shift from the discursive Othering of Eastern Europeans of the post-war period; however, their incorporation into a full-scale shared European Civil sphere of social freedom would have arguably required the more explicit attribution of a particular value. Such an acknowledgement can hardly be detected in the respective discourses of Eastern victimhood, especially when the German public was directly targeted. Unlike the *Neue Ostpolitik's* discourse of the expellees' *sacrifice* in the face of the collective German guilt, Eastern European *victimhood* constitutes barely a valuable contribution to a shared civil community of social freedom. Victimhood is a legalistic expression of a violation of negative freedom: To recognize victimhood means recognizing *humanity*, not necessarily *particularity*. Eastern Europeans were recognized in their right for self-determination within their borders, but the only "particularity" in this narrative originates from the German moral debt to the Eastern people resulting from Nazi crimes.

This hyphenating incorporation of Eastern European victimhood into the narration of a wider European tragedy shows certain structural similarities to the expellee hyphenation of the 50s. In the post-war period, expellees were constructed as the embodiment of German victimhood to Eastern perpetration; in the discourse of *Neue Ostpolitik*, Eastern Europeans became recognized as European victims to Nazi atrocities. However, the expellees' suffer was publicly acknowledged much more willingly on a larger scale, arguably due to its crucial role in the construction of German civility against Eastern barbarism. What distinguishes the two hyphenations furthermore is that the victimhood-based

expellee incorporation was multiculturally recoded during *Neue Ostpolitik*. The government's attempts to initiate a cultural exchange might have contained the seed of an increased transnational, more multiculturalist interlinkage between German and Polish communicative civil actors that, in the longer run, enabled such mutual appreciation of a shared Europeanness. However, if parties actually accompanied the full civil recognition of Eastern European particularity into a solidary sphere in the outlined sense; the greater part of this shift took place after the examined time periods. A study of the discourses of Eastern Europeanness prior to the EU's Eastern Enlargement might therefore constitute a promising subject for future research. This thesis, however, suggests that the examined party disputes of *Neue Ostpolitik* primarily coded a *national* civil sphere integrated in a somewhat rudimentary European civil community.

The second reservation concerns the expellee incorporation. Contrary to the social-liberal proclamations that the Eastern heritage constituted a mission for society as a whole, the expellees' fate became almost invisible to the public eye in subsequent years.²¹⁸ To keep Eastern "cultural and spiritual substance" alive either became the mission of ultraconservative circles on the margins of society, or it meant private memorialization by a shrinking group of pariah;²¹⁹ adding retrospectively at times an assimilative component to the assumingly multiculturalist incorporation.²²⁰ To publicly denounce this development was mostly up to the expellee organizations, who, however, never managed to return from the conservative partisan niche existence they adopted from 1969 onwards.²²¹ Sporadic attempts within the SPD to counteract this conservative appropriation of the expellee representation by forming social-democratic expellee organizations were

²¹⁸ Kittel 2011: 12, 111-146.

²¹⁹ Demshuk 2012.

²²⁰ Ahonen 2014.

²²¹ Ahonen 2003: 252-254.

dismissed by the parties' leading figures.²²² This assimilative aspect of the expellee incorporation – their vanishment into private remembrance – and the still reductionist perception of Eastern Europeans constitute two limitations to the nevertheless remarkable contribution of interparty disputes to the civil recodification of Eastern Europeans and expellees.

Conclusion

Normative party theory has been a growing field of research during the last fifteen years. Nevertheless, many questions still deserve greater scholar attention, and one of the most pressing issues is the involvement of parties with the civil society. Focusing on the role of interparty conflict, this paper aimed to understand this relationship by incorporating an innovative conception of the civil sphere into a reconstructive theory of social freedom that allows to combine empirical analysis and normative evaluation. *Normatively*, a civil society is a civil community of citizens that are related by relations of solidarity. The experience of being included in these solidary ties allows individuals to perceive themselves as acknowledged in their particular identity and recognized part of the civil whole. *Empirically*, membership in the civil sphere is defined through the discursive attribution of civil qualities, and parties are one of several civil institutions involved in this attribution process. Parties thereby translate communicatively claimed solidary relations into a regulative body of solidary obligations. Party competition consequently constitutes the electoral confrontation of competing visions of the shared civil community. This allows to peacefully determine a victorious party that can enforce its vision of the civil sphere with democratic legitimacy, *and* it also implies the legitimate coexistence of defeated counterparties holding alternative conceptions of the shared civil sphere.

²²² Demshuk 2012: 243-244; Kittel 2011: 106-109.

Interparty conflict therefore plays a crucial role in the civil sphere's constitution and regulative enforcement. While the binary structure of civility discourses by definition contains an element of oppression of the "uncivil", the produced discourses vary regarding the extent of such exclusion. Thus, parties can be evaluated regarding the discursively constructed civility perceptions that inform their actions. The proposed approach allows to assess these discourses not only one-dimensionally regarding their inclusiveness or exclusiveness, it also provides an ideal typology of three modes of incorporation of formerly excluded groups in order to further distinguish different normative qualities of inclusive change.

In the paper's second half, the outlined approach was applied within a historic case study on the German perception of Eastern Europe. A critical discourse analysis of the party disputes leading to the *Neue Ostpolitik* in the early 70s showed how parties shaped the civil sphere's recodification. The post-war party consensus contributed to the Eastern expellees' civil incorporation. Once the underlying narratives came under increasing pressure within other civil institutions however, parties were also able to align the conflicting discursive constructions on the relationship between Eastern Europeans and German expellees along party lines. They enabled a peaceful electoral confrontation of the competing civility attributions that ultimately resulted in a new societal consensus: the acceptance of the Oder-Neisse border. This leads, despite some reservations, to a positive verdict on parties' contribution to a recodification of the civil sphere that allowed the acknowledgement of the civil qualities of both Eastern Europeans and expellees.

Conclusively, the paper aims to highlight two aspects that might deserve the attention of subsequent research in order to investigate to what extent they exceed the context of the examined case. The first issue is the relationship between parties and other civil institutions. In the examined case, parties acted in public primarily as regulative

institutions in a narrower sense; they were decisively more careful to openly incorporate new civility discourses than other civil institutions. The linkage parties provide between state and civil sphere, however, might be more complex than this characterization as a “delayed one-way translation” suggests. In the examined case, the development of transnational platforms for Polish-German cultural rapprochement by the social-liberal government that accompanied *Neue Ostpolitik* aloof from the main party disputes indicates an additional layer of links between state and civil sphere: The political means in the hands of the governing parties allow them to provide actors from other civil institutions with experimental ground to develop alternative civility conceptions. This is a linkage *from state to civil sphere* that is often overlooked in normative writings on parties and therefore deserves further examination.

Another notable aspect is that, even before the SPD publicly deviated from the post-war expellee narrative, the party had close ties to the groups within the civil sphere that had challenged these discourses in the previous decade. This eased the party’s eventual adoption of the new discourse,²²³ and once the party then openly changed its course, it was subsequently backed by a great alliance of civil actors, supporting the party’s campaigns outside its official structures. Thus, close ties between parties and other civil institutions eased the “bilingual’ translation” of alternative civility codifications from the “primary” civil to the partisan discourses. Subsequent research could ask to what extent this mechanism can be generalized, and to what extent recent structural changes in party organizations might reshape this relation.

A possible explanation for the parties’ initial hesitation to openly adopt new civility discourses is that they might be eager to only do so if they see a chance to win elections

²²³ For normative approaches focusing on this *intraparty* level see: Wolkenstein 2016; Invernizzi-Acetti/Wolkenstein 2017.

with them. If other civil institutions in comparison to parties indeed tend to *generally* hold such a pioneering role in cultivating new civility discourses, it would be interesting to observe whether this effect varies depending on the respective type of party: the examined SPD and CDU/CSU are catch-all parties that could be particularly eager not to alienate the electorate by adopting pathbreaking civility discourses.²²⁴ Other party types – such as niche parties²²⁵ – however might be less afraid to do so, as long as they expect these changes to not offend the specific parts of the electorate they target. Party systems featuring such parties might therefore tend to be more reactive to alternative civility discourses.

The second issue concerns the Europeanization of national civil spheres. Even the examined social-liberal party discourses publicly often reproduced more nationalist civility codes than reformist elements within other civil institutions, that more frequently incorporated a transnational perspective. Party discourses coded Eastern Europeanness mostly from a genuinely German perspective, perceiving them merely as victims of Nazi Germany and thereby in their humanity instead of their particularity. To determine to what extent this was due to the nationally organized parties, and to what extent this was due to the nationally organized elections targeting a national electorate exceeds the present study's scope and remains up to subsequent investigation.²²⁶ Of particular interest might thereby for instance whether there is an increase in Europeanized civil party discourses over time, or to what extent such Europeanization varies from country to country in manner and extent. The provided theoretical foundations could constitute a fruitful basis for such research that would further narrow the gap between normative theorists and empirical party scholars.

²²⁴ Smith 1982.

²²⁵ Andeweg 2001.

²²⁶ For a normative approach to the idea of *transnational* partisanship as a promising point of departure for future research see for example: White/Ypi 2016: 185-208.

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Appendix

Table 1: Binary Structures of Motives (taken from Alexander 2006: 57)

Civil Motives	Anticivil Motives
Active	Passive
Autonomous	Dependent
Rational	Irrational
Reasonable	Hysterical
Calm	Excitable
Self-controlled	Wild-passionate
Realistic	Distorted
Sane	Mad

Table 1: Binary Structures of Relations (taken from Alexander 2006: 58)

Civil Relations	Anticivil Relations
Open	Secretive
Trusting	Suspicious
Critical	Deferential
Honorable	Self-Interested
Altruistic	Greedy
Truthful	Deceitful
Straightforward	Calculating
Deliberative	Conspiratorial

Table 2: Binary Structures of Institutions (taken from Alexander 2006: 59)

Civil Institutions	Anticivil Institutions
Rule Regulated	Arbitrary
Law	Power
Equality	Hierarchy
Inclusive	Exclusive
Impersonal	Personal
Contracts	Bonds of loyalty
Groups	Factions
Office	Personality