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On the Edge of Virtuality: Jewish Spaces after October 7

Introduction

Shortly before Hamas's terror attack on October 7, 2023, which shattered the Jewish world in Israel as well as globally, we began to write an article on the role of the Jewish past in today's Sweden. But the attack and the global response to the ensuing Israel-Hamas war radically changed the conditions for our writing, forcing us to pose new questions and rephrase our purpose. The Jewish world as well as us, who live in it and research it, faced a new reality and a new future. The "new normal" for Jews in European societies is a life radically different and more vulnerable than before. To be sure, Jews have a strong minority status in many countries, with national, EU, and UN legislation protecting Jewish culture, religion, and education. Furthermore, Jewish Studies is well established in universities. The fact that we are writing this article within academia reflects a society which asserts the right to Jewish life. At the same time, the breadth and width of antisemitic and anti-Israel propaganda and violence towards Jews and Jewish institutions around the world in the wake of October 7 and the Israel-Hamas war is overwhelming.[1]

In Europe, memorial sites and statues linked to Jewish history have been vandalized, and antisemitic and anti-Israel graffiti has littered urban landscapes. In light of this, we began to ask ourselves: How has October 7 impacted the presence and role of the Jewish past, evoked in sites of heritage or through cultural events? Diana Pinto's chapter in this book, written before October 7, succinctly recounts two trends that already made Jewish life in Europe difficult before the terror attack: Jewish spaces' navigation of anti-Israel views, sometimes from within their own organizations, and the "competition of suffering" between minority groups in Europe. Since October 7, these trends have exploded in antisemitic magnitude. We now live in a time where Jewish spaces, in Pinto's harrowingly prophetic words, "live on the razor's edge of both Jewish and non-Jewish democratic controversies and even attacks", and need to "reinvent themselves in a time of raw vio-

1 Jamey Keaten and Laurie Kellman, "With antisemitism rising as the Israel-Hamas war rages, Europe's Jews worry", *AP News*, November 26, 2023, accessed August 20, 2024: https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-antisemitism-europe-massacre-war-protests-1d26266dfd9b2b8dd4c795f420abab47.

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lence and war".[2] In this chapter, we ask what the terror attack and the spiking antisemitism has exposed about the longevity and integrity of Jewish spaces in Europe. To do so, we define and apply the concept of virtuality on three cultural institutions in Sweden and discuss what they unveil about European Jewish spaces in crisis. We find efforts that both adapt to and resist the new normal. Most importantly, in pinpointing virtual dilemmas that have emerged after October 7, we reveal Jewish spaces to be fragile and flexible, contested as well as resistant, yet unable to respond in ways that unite rather than divide as they face the volatile antisemitism of post-October 7.

Europe and Sweden after October 7

To say that Europe and everyday life for its Jewish inhabitants changed after October 7 is not an understatement. The terror attack by Hamas on Israeli civilians was the deadliest and most violent attack against Jewish people since the Holocaust. According to statistics published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, it was also the third deadliest terror attack in the world since 1970, the year that data on terror attacks started to be recorded.[3] Official statistics show that 1,200 people were murdered, 4,834 people were wounded, and another 240 were taken hostage in Gaza. The torture of women and children, including rape and bodily mutilation, defined the systemic terror that Hamas unleashed on people. Shortly after October 7, Israel attacked Gaza in order to destroy Hamas, bring back the hostages, and demilitarize the territory. The Israel-Hamas war has led to the death of tens of thousands of Palestinians and great humanitarian suffering among the people in Gaza, and as we write this in October 2024, the war has come to involve both Iran and the Hezbollah in Lebanon, with the civil population in the latter country suffering from air attacks. In relation to Europe, the war has incited a new wave of antisemitism.

For European Jews, the terror attack in Israel and the Israel-Hamas war were followed by threats, violence, and crimes against Jews in public spaces, at work,

2 See Diana Pinto's chapter, "Jewish Spaces in a Topsy-Turvy Europe", pp. 23, 33, in this current volume.

3 Daniel Byman et al., "Hamas's October 7 Attack: Visualizing the Data", *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, December 19, 2023, accessed August 20, 2024, https://www.csis.org/analysis/hamass-october-7-attack-visualizing-data.

in state institutions, and in Jewish homes and religious institutions.[4] In Sweden, as in other countries, Hamas's terror attack prompted public celebrations by inhabitants with an Arabic background. Already on October 7, corteges of cars drove through cities in southern Sweden, honking, waving flags, and shouting antisemitic insults. Fireworks and celebrations were enacted on streets and squares.[5] The journalistic website of Doku, which surveys Swedish "Islamism that is dangerous to democracy", counted over 20 vehicles in a car cortege in the town of Kristianstad and listed examples of antisemitic comments posted on the circulation of clips from the celebrations on social media.[6] Barely a month later, the Israeli flag was burned in front of the synagogue in Malmö.[7] As described in the introduction, such hate crimes were not unique to Sweden. According to the Anti-Defamation League, antisemitic attacks have increased a thousandfold across the globe since October 7.[8] Synagogues and Jewish communal centers, cemeteries, Holocaust memorials, and Jewish homes have been vandalized, and Jews have been verbally insulted and violently assaulted across Europe. On top of this, as the Israel-Hamas war continues, anti-Zionist and anti-Israel discourses fill public space, affecting anything from social media to presidential elections.

Unsurprisingly, many Jews express great fear in their daily lives and carry an enhanced worry for verbal or violent attacks. This is exemplified in a survey on the situation for Swedish Jews after October 7, carried out by the Jewish Central Council in Sweden and the analysis company Infostat at the end of 2023. Members of Jewish communities in Helsingborg, Gothenburg, Malmö, and Stockholm responded to the survey and the result showed that half of the respondents said

4 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, "Jewish People's Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism", July 11, 2024, https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2024/experiences-and-perceptions-antisemitism-third-survey.

5 Hannes Lännerholm and Anette Holmqvist, "Hamas blodiga attacker firades i svenska städer", *Expressen*, October 9, 2023, accessed August 20, 2024, https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/hamas-blodiga-attacker-firades-i-svenska-stader/; Henrik Sköld, "Efter Hamas attack på Israel: Klipp visar firanden i Sverige", *SVT Nyheter*, October 9, 2023, accessed August 20, 2024, https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/skane/videoklipp-pastas-visa-firande-hamas-israel-sverige-sprids-sociala-medier.

6 See "Palestinskt firande i Sverige efter attackerna mot Israel", *Doku*, October 8, 2023, accessed August 20, 2024, https://doku.nu/2023/10/08/palestinskt-firande-i-sverige-efter-attackerna-mot-israel/.

7 Niklas Lindberg, "Israels flagga brändes vid synagogan i Malmö", *Sydsvenskan*, November 4, 2023, accessed August 20, 2024, https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2023-11-04/israels-flagga-brandes-vid-synagogan-i-malmo.

8 Anti-Defamation League, "Global Antisemitic Incidents In the Wake of Hamas' War on Israel", May 20, 2024, accessed August 20, 2024, https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/global-antisemitic-incidents-wake-hamas-war-israel.

that although they had previously felt quite safe to live as a person with a Jewish identity in Sweden, that sense of security was abruptly destroyed. Concerns about violence and harassment, and an anxiety for having to reveal one's Jewish identity openly, were some consequences of the new reality. The survey also conveyed a deep pessimism about the future: many expressed a belief or feeling that "everything will get worse".[9] The Jewish community in Gothenburg even encouraged their members to hide their identity in public spaces; to avoid speaking Hebrew and wearing clothes or jewelry that might reveal their identity.[10] A study by The Segerstedt Institute on Swedish Jewish responses to October 7 underlines, among many things, the group's broken faith in Swedish society's ability to keep them safe.[11] In relation to a Jewish public life of heightened fear and repression, how have spaces that commemorate, educate about, or discuss Jewish history and culture, whose very existence depends on encounters and relations between Jews, non-Jews, and non-Jewish societies in public spaces, experienced and reacted to the European world after October 7? This is the premise of our study, and we will explore our results through the prism of virtuality.

Virtuality as a Concept for Jewish/non-Jewish Relations

Although largely unused in studies on cultural institutions related to a Jewish past, the concept of virtuality has a long history and should, we argue, be incorporated in analyses of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews as they together construct a common future through engagements with Jewish culture and history. This is because the hopefulness and creativity deeply embedded in the concept can serve as a guiding rod in times where antisemitism increases and affects Jewish/non-Jewish relations. When laying the conceptual foundation for this field some thirty years ago, both Ruth Ellen Gruber and Pinto emphasized the virtual

9 Infostat, "Antisemitism i Sverige. I svallvågorna av sjunde oktober", November 20, 2023. https://www.judiskacentralradet.se/single-post/svenska-judars-upplevelse-av-antisemitism-efter-7-oktober

10 Federico Moreno, "Uppmaningen till svenska judar: 'Tala inte hebreiska'", *Expressen*, October 10, 2023, accessed August 24, 2024, https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/uppmaningen-till-svenska-judar-tala-inte-hebreiska/.

11 Mirjam Katzin and Pontus Rudberg, "Konsekvenser av den 7 oktober för judar i Sverige: tankar, emotioner och reflektioner", in *Antisemitism i Sverige efter den 7 oktober: Upplevelser och konsekvenser*, ed. Christer Mattsson, Robin Andersson Malmros, and Morten Sager (Göteborg: Segerstedtinstitutet, 2024), pp. 32–3.

dimension of their respective terms: "virtual Jewishness" and "Jewish Space".[12] Gruber defined virtual Jewishness as an "intense, visible, vivid [Jewish] presence in places where few Jews live today".[13] It is a physical or abstract site that both facilitates and is the very product of non-Jewish cultural interaction with themes related to the European Jewish past destroyed in the Shoah. Here, the virtual notion points to the non-Jewish cultural creation of something that is reached through a dialogue with Jewish history but inevitably is, due to the identity of the creator(s), inherently different from a cultural manifestation constructed by Jews. In her later work, as well as in her chapter in this book, Gruber stresses that even though a virtual Jewishness might seem like a mimicry or simplification of a Jewish past, it is a "new authenticity" or a "real imaginary" space, a non-Jewish cultural expression of

> things, places, and experiences that in themselves are real, with all the trappings of reality, but that are quite different from the "realities" on which they are modeled or that they are attempting to evoke. This process, which can be seen as "creating" something new in itself rather than "re-creating" something that once existed, has led to the formation of its own models, stereotypes, modes of behavior, and even traditions.[14]

In other words, non-Jewish engagement with the Jewish past – be it the opening of restaurants with dishes and milieus emulated on an idea of what Eastern European Jewish life was like before the Shoah,[15] or the embrace of Klezmer music[16] – are not meant to recreate a Jewish presence in Europe as it was before the Second World War but should instead be understood as a new form of culture with a new function. The former developed as a way for Jewish peoples to define and express themselves. Virtual Jewishness, on the other hand, is closely linked to the non-Jewish environment and its products are thus constructed for the cultural and social benefit of non-Jewish societies.

In her discussion on Jewish Spaces, Pinto expands this definition of virtuality beyond newly created cultural expressions linked to Jewish history and presents

12 Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Diana Pinto, "A New Jewish Identity For Post-1989 Europe", *JPR Policy Paper* 1 (1996): 1–15.

13 Ruth Ellen Gruber, "Beyond Virtually Jewish: Monuments to the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe", in *Jewish Cultural Studies 4: Framing Jewish Culture: Boundaries and Representations*, ed. Simon Bronner (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), p. 336.

14 Ruth Ellen Gruber, "Beyond Virtually Jewish: New authenticities and real imaginary spaces in Europe", *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 99/4 (2009): 487–504 (at pp. 490–1).

15 Gruber, "Beyond Virtually Jewish: New authenticities", pp. 492–6.

16 Magdalena Waligórska, *Klezmer's Afterlife: An Ethnography of the Jewish Music Revival in Poland and Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

it as a space that not only encourages but is defined by Jewish/non-Jewish interaction:

> For it is a virtual space, present anywhere where Jews and non-Jews interact on Jewish themes or where a Jewish voice can make itself heard. It will be a way of being and of living and not a way of commemorating death through the Holocaust. It goes without saying that this space is open to all; it is controlled neither by Jews, nor by non-Jews, but rather it is a meeting point. Jews must learn to navigate in it just as their non-Jewish interlocutors do. Out of these interactions new symbioses will be born, new identities composed while older ones can also be strengthened.[17]

The virtuality of a Jewish space is marked by an active Jewish/non-Jewish relation that is defined by adaptiveness, inclusion, creativity, and life – or in Gruber's words, vividness and intensity – and focused on societal needs for a pluralistic and democratic Europe here and now.[18] Later applications of this lens, most of the time without explicit reference to the virtual dimension, further underline and explore how Jews and non-Jews meeting up around themes of Jewish history, or non-Jewish creations of new forms of a Jewish-inspired culture, hold potential for moral and empathic negotiations, as well as identity processes beyond the Jewish/non-Jewish dichotomy.[19] Based on Gruber's and Pinto's conceptualizations, a space linked to Jewish history and culture is virtual if it helps Jews and non-Jews to reach beyond a consumption of the Jewish past towards an interactive, co-constructive process that welcomes the Jewish minority into mainstream culture, teaches acceptance and empathy for cultural differences, promotes multicultural societies, and even moves people to find similarities across ethnic and religious boundaries. If we bring the concept to its extreme, a fully functioning virtual space should activate its visitors' democratic potential and in this way impact larger society.

Despite these early conceptualizations of virtuality and the inclusive and open society the concept's creators hoped for, the term has often been reduced through a conflation with either digital platforms or reimagined historical pasts.[20] Only the last couple of years have seen a more thorough engagement with Gruber's and Pinto's understanding of virtual spaces. Peter Margolis argues

17 Diana Pinto, *The Third Pillar? Toward a European Jewish Identity* (Budapest: Central European University, 1999).

18 Pinto, "A New Jewish Identity".

19 Erica Lehrer, and Michael Meng, "Introduction", in *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland*, ed. Erica Lehrer and Michael Meng (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016), p. 8; Waligórska, *Klezmer's Afterlife*, pp. 8–12.

20 See, for example, this otherwise excellent study: Winson Chu, "'Lodzermensch' and Litzmannstadt: Making 'virtually German' sites in Lodz after 1989", in *Jewish Space in Contemporary Po-*

that online landscapes only become virtual when they advocate for personal choice, novel interpretation, voluntary participation, and individual empowerment, all of them processes that can lead to reevaluations of what it means to be Jewish.[21] Similarly focusing on the creation of new meanings, Victoria Grace Walden comes full circle with Gruber and Pinto and asserts that virtuality should not be conflated with digital forms. While the latter might be one arena for its expression, she notes that virtuality first and foremost demands a person's conscious and bodily engagement and interaction with Jewish present and past cultures and involves actors taking "responsibility for memory".[22] To further explain the virtual process, Gruber, in her chapter in this book, defines it as a "tangible gateway"; a space that exhumes a sensory presence of Jewish history, traditionally salvaged in material forms but nowadays also evoked in digital landscapes.[23] Virtuality, they imply, is to *feel* for and with Jewish actors in the past *and* act on it. In line with this, we understand virtuality as a Jewish/non-Jewish co-constructive, creative, inclusive, and anchored process, which erupts from an emphatic engagement with Jewish history in any kind of space and leads to new meanings or identities. To reach such authentic implications for today's European societies, a virtual process demands creativity, inclusivity, flexibility, intensity, visibility, engagement, and affective immersion from all individuals and institutions involved.

As a consequence, and as a difference from other spatial concepts that contemplate Jewish and non-Jewish relations across time and space, virtuality – or a virtual space – does not take a wide range of possible Jewish/non-Jewish encounters into account. The notion of virtuality intentionally focuses on productive relations that lead to the construction of cultural phenomena linked to Jewish culture and history. It thrives on people's hope for the future, demands the absorption of a person's emotional, mental, and physical capabilities, and believes the best of and for people. And it is understood to lead to not only the promotion of differences but people's embrace of them. Firmly situated in the time and space of its creation – Europe in the 1990s and its confidence in politi-

land, ed. Erica Lehrer and Michael Meng (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016), pp. 193–207.

21 Peter Margolis, "Virtuality: A theory of digital Judaism(s)", *Modern Judaism: A Journal of Jewish Ideas and Experience* 43/2 (2023): 202–3.

22 Victoria Grace Walden, "What is 'virtual Holocaust memory'?", *Memory Studies* 15/4 (2022): 630.

23 See Ruth Ellen Gruber's chapter, "Life after Life: Shifting Virtualities (and Realities) 20 Years after *Virtually Jewish*," p. 16, in this current volume.

cal peace and cultural pluralism[24] – it was not developed to explain less fruitful encounters between non-Jews, Jews, and Jewish history and culture. Since October 7, the positivism underlined by virtuality might seem difficult to attain, if not naïve. Furthermore, Gruber's and Pinto's explanations of less emphatic and less democratic uses of Jewish spaces either still rest on the idea of a non-Jewish actor that engages *with* Jewish history or argue that Jewish spaces are slowly becoming irrelevant and void in today's nationalistic and populistic European societies. As Pinto laments in her chapter in this book, Europe has changed since the 1990s and as October 7 unfolded, we began to ask ourselves, what happens to virtuality's hopeful understanding of Jewish/non-Jewish interaction in relation to the Jewish past when faced with trauma and spiking antisemitism? Are there limits to the relevance of the concept's hopefulness in today's Europe?

Concepts that take a more cynical or postcolonial point of view and understand Jewish spaces as framed and narrated only by and for non-Jews, such as Henryk Halkowski's "Jews by profession" or Judith Coffey's and Vivien Laumann's "goynormativity",[25] position themselves in the other corner. From this point of view, Hannah Tzuberi summarizes the meeting ground between Jews and non-Jews "as bridges for non-Jews *into* Judaism", which results in, she argues, non-Jews engulfing today's German Jewishness.[26] The conceptual gap between virtual Jewish spaces and Jewish spaces created by and for non-Jews is deep; is there a middle-way? We argue that *because* of the high standard virtuality puts on the Jewish/non-Jewish relationship, it can be operationalized into a guiding benchmark with which to test Jewish spaces in times of crises. This way, virtuality – due to its positive, hopeful, and productive understanding of Jewish/non-Jewish interactions – offers a pathway to study contestations of and challenges for spaces that envision such a Jewish/non-Jewish relationship in times of, in Pinto's words, "value battles".[27] By pedestaling virtuality into a standard that democratic European societies should strive for in relation to their Jewish minorities, we can find cracks generated by October 7 and explore how Jewish spaces of virtual Jewishness initially responded to and dealt with the increasingly hostile public landscape.

24 Pinto, "A New Jewish Identity", pp. 2–5.

25 Judith Coffey and Vivien Laumann, *Gojnormativität: Warum wir anders über Antisemitismus sprechen müssen* (Berlin: Verbrecher, 2021). Henryk Halkowski's term is explained in Waligórska, *Klezmer's Afterlife*, pp. 1–2.

26 Hannah Tzuberi, "Between boundary making and philo-Semitic yearnings", in *Jewish Revival Inside Out: Remaking Jewishness in a Transnational Age*, ed. Daniel Monterescu and Rachel Werczberger (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2023), p. 158.

27 Pinto, "Jewish Spaces", p. 33.

Sources and Method

To test the implications of virtuality on the European Jewish new normal, we interviewed representatives from three Swedish Jewish spaces: two museums and one cultural organization. The first space is the Jewish Museum in Stockholm, which has existed since 1987 but went through elaborate changes in exhibition and organizational structure as it was reopened in 2019. At the time of October 7 and its aftermath, the privately-run museum, which answers to a board of members with a Jewish identity, had an interim director, Ann-Sofi Noring, and it was intentionally not in a phase of expansion or transformation. The second museum is the Swedish Holocaust Museum and its director Katherine Hauptmann. It was commissioned by the Swedish government and opened in 2022 as part of the National Historical Museums. Although run by a governmental body, we categorize the Swedish Holocaust Museum as a Jewish space. There are many reasons for this, the first being that it was much longed for by some Jewish individuals, who viewed its realization as the Swedish state's final admission of the horrors of the Holocaust that members of the Swedish Jewry have endured. Furthermore, Jewish actors are consistently invited to set up events under the museum's auspices, and at the time of our interview, people with a Jewish identity worked at the museum. Viewed by some, and in limited ways run as, a space in which people from the Swedish Jewish community are integral to its cultural trajectory, we argue that it should be regarded as a Jewish space insofar as it is based on an interactive, albeit unbalanced, Jewish/non-Jewish relationship. The museum's activities in 2023 and 2024 were generally marked by its ongoing establishment: getting a team together, creating an archive, and working on pedagogical programs and exhibitions. Finally, we interviewed Lizzie Oved Scheja, director of Jewish Culture in Sweden, which is a private organization that has put up cultural events on Jewish-related themes with national and international guests from the media, the arts, and academia since 2012. For comparative reasons, we also contacted The Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities via email to ask about their work after October 7.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Jewish Museum in Stockholm, the Swedish Holocaust Museum, and Jewish Culture in Sweden in April and May 2024. Asking for their institution's administrative, political, cultural, and personal response to October 7, and from time to time probing for further clarifications, we wanted to give the interviewees as much space as possible to explain their organizational realities following the terror attack. While we have looked for absolute facts on how these three Jewish spaces have handled October 7 and the increasing antisemitism, we have also investigated the narratives that each representative constructs for their spaces. These narratives concern how each space

lives up to the relational and educational functions that all representatives believe them to hold. Importantly, the interviews reveal how the role of and belief in democracy – understood and practiced in different ways – becomes the main framework and strategy for directors still in shock, trying to handle a crisis and meet needs of the audience, while battling an increasing antisemitism. As we will see, the virtuality of these three Jewish spaces was tested on three aspects: visibility, intensity, and inclusivity.

(Not) Business as Usual

From October 7 onwards, the Jewish Museum in Stockholm, the Swedish Holocaust Museum, and Jewish Culture in Sweden were all keen on safeguarding the visibility of their spaces. Here, we understand visibility not only as physical marks – signs, advertisement, or guided tours – that are noticeable to people in the streetscape, but also as a presence in public space, offering people encounters with a Jewish past and present. Although all three Jewish spaces strove to continue with their activities as usual after the terror attack, their visibility was faced with both imposed and selected modifications.

But as a start, no Jewish space closed their doors, not even for a day. Ann-Sofi Noring at the Jewish Museum in Stockholm stressed that

> to put everything down and cancel and not take the, should I say, normal tasks seriously would be at odds with all that we stand for. [. . .] Our strategy has been to continue our activities. To not change too much, because that leads to more worry.

Likewise, Katherine Hauptmann remembered that news of the terror attack and the ensuing car corteges celebrating the massacre of hundreds of Jews "shocked her", and October 7 was thereafter reflected upon by her at the beginning of each planned event at the Swedish Holocaust Museum. Jewish Culture in Sweden also continued with their program of cultural events. Lizzie Oved Scheja explained:

> To close something like that would be . . . You know, no way, no way, no way. There is a responsibility to so many people, and I do not see any other institutions that can fulfill this function in Sweden.

But keeping business as usual was not decided upon without hesitations. Oved Scheja described her first days after the terror attack:

> I lost all words. I lost my language after October 7. I could not do anything. I did not know how to go through with the next event on October 10. But everything was already set and I had to do it. [. . .] Until October 9 in the evening, I lost the words, I lost everything.

Shocked, some temporally at a loss of strategies normally used to work through difficult situations, and in a prolonged "state of emergency",[28] the Jewish Museum in Stockholm, the Swedish Holocaust Museum, and Jewish Culture in Sweden strove to "keep a sort of normalcy"[29] and followed their already staked out paths as the magnitude of October 7 unfolded.

Still, as time passed public programs and internal tasks did change. Although unable to speak about it explicitly, procedures around security intensified in the two museums. Ann-Sofi Noring and Katherine Hauptmann also stressed that October 7 has led to increased cooperation between Jewish spaces, as well as between Jewish spaces and other institutions, in terms of both security and cultural activities. While the emergence of long-term plans across institutional borders was a welcomed outcome, Noring pondered on how the terror attack had affected the everyday tasks of the Jewish Museum in Stockholm during the autumn of 2023 and the first months of 2024. She noted that instead of decreasing the number of public events, "we might have asked ourselves: should we increase our program?". In part thanks to an anonymous donation,[30] the museum's personnel instead turned their efforts towards internal tasks, such as planning for future refurbishment, taking care of existent exhibitions, and moving into new offices.

Oved Scheja also limited the visibility of Jewish Culture in Sweden, but for a partly different purpose. While their advertisement signs across Stockholm were taken down from 2024 onwards, the slowing down of the spring program was done to give the organization a moment to breathe and plan a single event dedicated to October 7. Oved Scheja explained both the sparse spring program and the subsequent "October 7 Forum" to be results of a conscious effort to refocus on the needs of themselves and their audience:

> It is the first conversation in Sweden on such, you know . . . There have been conversations on antisemitism, but they are beating around the bush. We are putting this on the table; October 7 and what it did to us. We have the right to speak about our trauma as well. We are not going to ignore the war in Gaza, we are not going to ignore the Israeli government, but we are speaking about October 7 as a defining factor for Jews. This has not been done in Sweden, as far as I know. First of all, we get also a good delegation to come, interesting people to come. I think people need to listen. Also, our program on Zionism [on April 7, 2024] was totally packed. People are interested. They do not get information from the mainstream media.

28 Interview with Katherine Hauptmann, Stockholm (May 14, 2024).

29 Interview with Ann-Sofi Noring, via Zoom (April 4, 2024).

30 The money would have been donated irrespective of October 7.

Hauptmann similarly contemplated how the Swedish Holocaust Museum might mobilize future public events as a response to the terror attack:

> I'm thinking that we probably need to do something about it in the future. My first thought was that we wouldn't, but we probably will. But it needs . . . We need to learn more and link arms with the right organizations. And we have just talked about having teachers' conferences about what happened in the classroom after October 7 [and] public events on that. I have been convinced when talking to different people that if this is to have any kind of good future, we need to be able to talk about it in a better way and perhaps we [the Swedish Holocaust Museum] should then be one of the actors.

Although striving to meet demands arising from October 7 with various flexibility, with the Jewish Museum in Stockholm possibly affected by its interim directorship, their collective visibility was somewhat tempered. Significantly, it took a lot of time and effort, and in the case of Jewish Culture in Sweden, a decreased visibility, for Jewish spaces to determine, plan, and execute public events on the terror attack and its impact on Jewish everyday life.

In trying to find an appropriate way to continue their work, the three Jewish spaces backtracked to the role each space hopes to play in Swedish society. Representatives hinted at their tasks of educating about and providing a space for Jewish culture and history, but, more importantly, grounded their discussion in qualities we have attached to the concept of virtuality. Hauptmann noted that October 7 has been a catalyst for a "community" with a locus at the Swedish Holocaust Museum. People with a faint Jewish background, mostly relatives to Holocaust survivors, turn to the museum to both explore their ambivalent identity and safekeep their oral histories. Similarly to Jewish Culture in Sweden, the museum has become a hotspot for Jews not linked to official Jewish communities to grapple with the massacre and what it means for them personally. In emphasizing Jewish Culture in Sweden's communal function, Oved Scheja explained that they continued with their activities because:

> [This is a] significant meeting place, a significant platform, for meeting, for conversation, for learning, for exchanging, for dialogue, for both Jews and non-Jews . . .

In stressing the relational and educational roles of Jewish spaces, all institutions found reason to continue doing what they had already planned. Furthermore, creativity and flexibility – two other aspects of virtuality – also prompted Jewish Culture in Sweden and the Swedish Holocaust Museum to start planning for public programs that take October 7 into account. While visibility, for different reasons, was somewhat inhibited over time, it partly connects to Jewish spaces regaining their voices after the initial shock.

(Un)limited by Antisemitism

Antisemitism also impacted the intensity of Jewish spaces, which we define as an unchallenged and unlimited existence in the sector within which it is located. Hauptmann at the Swedish Holocaust Museum listed "digital opinions" and certain organizational constraints as specific outlets of an antisemitism that is partly hidden behind criticism of Israel's military actions in the Israel-Hamas war. Just as Jewish voices asked the museum for a public statement after October 7, anonymous comments posted on its social media accounts demanded to know how the latter "can talk about the Holocaust when children are dying in Gaza". Jewish suffering today *and* in the past was disputed in light of current events. Hauptmann described that

> We have partners that say . . . They . . . Not something they demand from us, but they say that: "no, we cannot . . . For this event that we do together we cannot invite the Israeli ambassador because that would make our suppliers boycott us and then our establishment would founder". There hasn't been an occasion where we would have invited the ambassador anyway, it's not something you do every day, but *that* they tell us this. So, there's also that. That they expect us to take a different stand. [. . .] In this case, it was just a normal partner, they, well . . . Their suppliers, stakeholders and so on, get scared because the connection to us make . . . So I would say that this is a type of antisemitic thought, but it is difficult to respond to in this situation. Yes, it is incredibly . . . I think it is very odd to get such a comment.

In bracketing the memory institution of the Holocaust with Israel's war efforts, digital visitors and partners to the Swedish Holocaust Museum tapped into an anti-Zionist discourse that has existed among the Western Left and Europe's socialist countries since the 1960s and become an inherent ingredient of postcolonial studies since the 1980s.[31] Crucially, anti-Zionism is known to intensify during conflicts between Hamas and Israel, making it the latest outgrowth from the "hydra-headed phenomenon" that is antisemitism.[32] Similarly, the European Jewry has been conscious and anxious about this specific aspect of antisemitism for a long time. Published fifteen years ago, Nick Lambert summarized his investigation on European Jewish intellectuals and their relationship to Europe: "some respondents have a bout of Europanic: what if the EU superstate becomes domi-

31 Bryan Cheyette, "Postcolonialism", in *Key Concepts in the Study of Antisemitism*, ed. Sol Goldberg, Scott Ury, and Kalman Weiser (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), pp. 230–8.

32 Danny Ben-Moshe, "The new Anti-Semitism in Europe: The Islamic dimension of, and Jewish belonging in, the EU", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 26/2 (2015): 219–36; Ben Cohen, "'The Jews are our Misfortune!' Contemporary antisemitism as a hydra-headed phenomenon", *Israel Affairs* 29/1 (2023): 13–18.

nated by populists hostile to Israel?".[33] Today, European hostility towards Israel has grown all the more complicated, with populists, such as Hungary's Victor Orbán, taking a pro-Israel stance while socialist governments, such as Spain and Norway, support anti-Israel politics. These shifts in the last decade have surely not diminished Jewish fear for the unpredictability and volatility of the anti-Israeli dimension of antisemitism. In Sweden after October 7, the Israeli embassy's participation in cultural events in Stockholm and Israel's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest in Malmö were subjected to public appeals, demonstrations, and boycotts. The spring of 2024 was marked by anti-Israel student protests across Swedish universities, some of them leading to antisemitic attacks against university personnel.[34] The fact that the Swedish Holocaust Museum has been placed inside this pressure-cooker further demonstrates people's inability to see Israel and Jewish history – and the memory of it – as two separate entities.

The Jewish Museum in Stockholm did not receive any similar comments or demands. This highlights the fact that Jews as victims – of both a contemporary terror attack and previous historical events – is a reality incompatible with public discourse after October 7. Hauptmann argued that people seem unable to hold and understand the complexity of the current situation, and their quick turn to antisemitism was difficult to handle:

> The comments we get turn antisemitic quite quickly. I think this is also very . . . problematic to respond to because apart from what people are saying, it proves that it has been something that lies beneath the surface, only it hasn't been as noticeable. And that it goes so quickly [she snaps her fingers], that it comes to this, is something I find far more uncomfortable than I thought it would be, and it makes it difficult to act.

Indeed, the difficulty of the situation for the Swedish Holocaust Museum was palpable during the interview. Throughout the conversation, Hauptmann spoke with confidence, but when she approached issues of antisemitism she faltered, left sentences hanging in the air, and searched for words to explain the situation. She was ambiguous about details and stopped herself from issuing statements that were too strong or emotional, as both excerpts above are examples of. Every word mattered. Each of them seemed heavy with the risk of positioning the museum in the current political landscape or sparking societal discontent. Clearly, Hauptmann's ambivalence to the doings of the Swedish Holocaust Museum

33 Nick Lambert, *Jews and Europe in the Twenty-First Century: Thinking Jewish* (London/Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008), p. 166.

34 Anders Svensson, "Jag har utsatts för ett antisemitiskt hatbrott", *Dagens Nyheter*, June 11, 2024, accessed June 27, 2024, https://www.dn.se/kultur/anders-persson-jag-har-utsatts-for-ett-antisemitiskt-hatbrott/.

after October 7 was a result of an antisemitism that has grown more complex, more unpredictable, and increasingly difficult to respond to.

As we continued to talk about the antisemitic offences that the Swedish Holocaust Museum had received, we asked if Hauptmann was worried about the future of the museum. She was silent, and then answered:

> Yes, a bit. Yes . . . And it can certainly be that October 7 has amplified it. But it's not only about that. This was also something I felt earlier, a hidden antisemitism. Without accusing anyone. This is more about a structural way of thinking that perhaps . . . Because what I've noticed within the cultural sector, or whatever we like to call it, straight away the different . . . Then someone says: "Right, that museum got that many millions, why is so much money spent on that". It has happened after October 7, but I don't know if it has to do with it. I think it would have been said anyway, because there's an underlying resistance . . . "Now there's too much Jewishness again".

Similarly to the anti-Israel layer of antisemitism that has been noted for years by Jews and scholars in Jewish studies alike, Hauptmann's observations regarding Sweden's structural antisemitism are not new.[35] However, her account offers insight into why the very existence of some Jewish spaces is increasingly contested post-October 7. Contemporary Jewish suffering did not increase people's empathy for the European Jewry's experience as victims of assault, violence, and genocide throughout history. Instead, underlying antisemitic hesitation regarding the presence and role of the museum were drawn to the surface. The complexity of the situation in the Middle East and the trenched political landscape in Sweden, as well as the vulnerability of this newly created Jewish space, gave the museum very little wiggle room to face antisemitism, since any reaction might have impacted its intense presence in the long run.

Democracy and Virtuality

To battle antisemitism, Noring, Hauptmann, and Oved Scheja referred to democracy as their guiding rod. It is no news that Jewish spaces are seen as integral to democracy. They played a strategic role as nation-states proclaimed their democratic adjustment in the post-Soviet era,[36] the memory of the Holocaust serves to

35 Hansalbin Sältenberg, "Anti-Jewish Racism: Exploring the Swedish Racial Regime" (PhD diss., Lund University, 2022).

36 Ljiljana Radonic, "From 'double genocide' to 'the new Jews': Holocaust, genocide and mass violence in post-Communist memorial museums", *Journal of Genocide Research* 20/4 (2018): 510–29.

unite EU countries around a common narrative,[37] and it is hoped, but increasingly questioned, that sites commemorating the Holocaust can inform visitors about democratic ideas.[38] As Pinto points out in her chapter in this book, Jewish spaces have always been placed on a scale where they are to either "serve as a buffer or protective barrier against the onslaught of antisemitic, conspiratorial, and political attacks leveled against Jews, and other minorities", or "remain neutral, claiming that their mission is not to be involved in politics".[39] During our interviews, it became clear that the Jewish Museum in Stockholm, the Swedish Holocaust Museum, and Jewish Culture in Sweden position themselves on this scale and dress their positionality in the idea that democracy is about inclusivity: the inclusion of the Jewish trauma in Sweden's public discourse after October 7, as well as each space's openness to people of all kinds of political views. As we will see, at this specific time in history, these two interpretations of democracy – Jewish spaces as either a buffer against antisemitism or with a neutral mission – are not complementary. Jewish spaces had to tread a narrowing gap between definitions of antisemitism and Jewishness, leading to an inhibited virtuality.

The very first question asked to Hauptmann at the Swedish Holocaust Museum during our interview was "what did you do at the museum the day after October 7?". In her reply, she moved rapidly from talking about her initial shock to people's disappointment of the museum's refusal to post a statement regarding October 7:

> There were many . . . both people and organizations that were frustrated that we did not post a statement on the website, that type of thing. And we discussed it a bit. At the same time, a pretty strong incentive for this museum has been that it is about this history [the Holocaust] in its own right. And I have a great understanding for people wanting us to act politically, but, from a long-term perspective, I also find it important that we don't, precisely because we are a historical museum. It's almost the very same people that earlier did not think that it [the museum] should be political that now wants us to act in that way.

Implicit in Hauptmann's reply is the fact that those who were frustrated with the museum post-October 7 were mainly Jews. In declining to publicly express their sympathy for victims of the terror attack, or indeed take a stand in the Israel-

37 Wolfram Kaiser, "Limits of cultural engineering: Actors and narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History Project", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55/3 (2017): 529.
38 Andy Pearce, Stuart Foster, and Alice Pettigrew, "Antisemitism and Holocaust education", in *Holocaust Education: Contemporary Challenges and Controversies*, ed. Stuart Foster, Andy Pearce, and Alice Pettigrew (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020), pp. 150–70.
39 Pinto, "Jewish Spaces", p. 24.

Hamas war, the museum's role as a community builder contracted, alienating Jews that felt threatened by the increasing antisemitism in Europe.

At the same time, and as explained above, the Swedish Holocaust Museum navigated an antisemitism from partners that both bracketed the museum's focus on the Holocaust with a pro-Israel stance and, without asking if this was the case, imposed restrictions on their collegial relationship. Hauptmann's ambivalence on how to respond to the rise of such a structural antisemitism was mirrored in her several attempts to describe to us why the museum could not meet the needs of and disappointments from, in her words, a group of frustrated individuals. It seems reasonable that her approach to both partners and Swedish Jews was based on the fact that Israel and what counts as Jewish are two different things. While she clearly argued that Jews in Sweden should not be held responsible for Israeli military actions during the Israel-Hamas war, some Jewish individuals and organizations wanted the museum to publicly make the link between Jewish identity and Israel by publishing supportive statements. In refusing to conflate Jewishness with Israel, the openness of the Swedish Holocaust Museum towards this group of Jews was tarnished. Hauptmann's refusal in defining the group as Jewish during the interview further demonstrates the intricateness and potential explosivity of the dented relationship between the museum and the Swedish Jewish community. In our interview, Hauptmann depicted democracy, as well as the museum's infancy, as the very reasons for this virtual contraction:

> It [a political statement] would undermine our credibility in the long run, and I think that it would be bad for the possibility to develop the museum. One could certainly also ask oneself if this is the right decision, but a museum is a long-term enterprise, and one must think with a long-term perspective. [. . .] The museum is one of the institutions in society that must work for all people in the long-term. And offer some sort of continuity. And we are now in a phase of startup. We have no history as an institution to rest upon. We are still building for the future. That's why I think . . . It would have been a difference if I would have worked in another type of institution; I would have been able to act in a different way. But I think it is an unreasonable expectation to put on a museum.

As a freshly inaugurated museum without a permanent venue or a large network of partners, with its outspoken role to offer an educational space for anyone and everyone, including people of any political point of view, and in combating antisemitism by separating Jewishness from Israel, the Swedish Holocaust Museum's post-October 7 inclusivity hinged on silence, the very thing that Swedish Jews claimed to be the source of their sense of national non-belonging after the terror

attack.[40] As a contrast, The Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities, for example, was publicly very outspoken about antisemitism after October 7, using channels such as social media, interviews, and editorials to shine a light on antisemitism in politics, schools, and universities, as well as "mainstream antisemitism" evoked by cultural profiles, civilian organizations, and governmental bodies.[41] The fact that the Swedish Holocaust Museum is funded by the state seemed to not make any difference in how it understood and acted upon democratic values after October 7. The Jewish Museum in Stockholm, which is funded and run through private means, made the same decision, arguing that "we are not a forum for political debate, and we are not a forum for societal criticism either, but we are also not a space that prohibits such discussions".[42]

Jewish Culture in Sweden interpreted its democratic role differently. As director of a privately funded, cultural institution that does not focus on education but on dialogue and conversation, Oved Scheja believed that democracy is not only about keeping the space open but also about freedom of speech, about providing Jews and non-Jews, but especially Jews, with a public arena to talk about their trauma:

> *Judisk kultur* [Jewish Culture in Sweden] is not political, we are non-affiliated, we are not political. We don't, you know . . . But on the other hand, we do not put our head in the sand. [. . .] I couldn't ignore it. And so, that we are not political doesn't mean we couldn't talk about it. Because there is no way as a Jewish institution that we don't clearly say how

40 Karin Brygger, "Varför fördömer inte det feministiska systerskapet våldet mot judiska kvinnor?", *Dagens Nyheter*, July 30, 2024, accessed October 8, 2024, https://www.dn.se/kultur/karin-brygger-varfor-fordomer-inte-det-feministiska-systerskapet-valdet-mot-judiska-kvinnor/; Karin Brygger, "Judehatet efter den 7 oktober har nått fasansfulla nivåer", *Sydsvenskan*, April 7, 2024, accessed October 8, 2024, https://www.sydsvenskan.se/artikel/judehatet-efter-den-7-oktober-har-natt-fasansfulla-nivaer/; Hynek Pallas, "Jag har aldrig upplevt ett konstigare år som antirasist", *Göteborgs-Posten*, October 1, 2024, accessed October 8, 2024, https://www.gp.se/kultur/kulturdebatt/jag-har-aldrig-upplevt-ett-konstigare-ar-som-antirasist/773f9c01-0e07-4795-8349-35880489022f; Hynek Pallas, "När judar slutar räknas – en årsdagsreflektion över tystnad och antisemitism", *Judisk krönika*, October 3, 2024, accessed October 8, 2024, https://judiskkronika.se/nar-judar-slutar-raknas/.

41 Interview with Charlotte Manderman, via email (August 8, 2024); "Öppet brev till Världskulturmuseerna med anledning av pressmeddelandet om utställningen 'Nakba – palestinska berättelser från 1948'", *Judiska centralrådet i Sverige*, accessed October 8, 2024, https://www.judiskacentralradet.se/single-post/öppet-brev-till-världskulturmuseerna-med-anledning-av-pressmeddelandet-om-utställningen-nakba-pale; "Politisk aktivism med antisemitiska undertoner på universiteten", *Judiska centralrådet i Sverige*, November 7, 2024, accessed October 8, 2024, https://www.judiskacentralradet.se/single-post/politisk-aktivism-med-antisemitiska-undertoner-på-universiteten.

42 Interview with Noring.

> appalled we are by what happened on October 7 and give some strength to our members and friends . . .

Earlier in the interview, Oved Scheja also explained the institution's decision to continue with their set program as a conscious strategy of extending Jewish "support systems" – spaces in which Jews come together for support in the aftermath of the terror attack, such as WhatsApp groups or Facebook groups – *beyond* closed doors:

> There is no such thing in the public space. Because people are afraid. Or people don't feel comfortable enough to go in the street and . . . [. . .] I don't want to create a community centre, I want to create a cultural institution for everybody, not only for Jews. Otherwise, there is no point doing it. If we just sit with each other and discuss with each other behind closed doors . . . There are others that do the same thing, I don't need to do it.

Here, Oved Scheja emphasized that the democratic dimension of this Jewish space is not only about free speech and the presence of Jewish lives and loves in the public arena, but also about its relational function. Offering public events after as well as *on* the terror attack, and inviting non-Jews to participate, was at the very heart of the institution's response to October 7. Even if doing so might have been regarded as provocative by society, and even if security threats amassed – as they did for "The October 7 Forum"[43] – Oved Scheja asserted that

> LOS: "The October 7 Forum." The October 7 happened. The nine eleventh forum . . . The, I don't know . . . If someone thinks it is provocative it means that they deny the right, our right to speak about this trauma.
>
> MH: But don't you think this is happening?
>
> LOS: That they deny it?
>
> MH: Yeah.
>
> LOS: Yes, they deny but that's why we . . . We disagree to that. [. . .] And if people are provoked, I'm very sorry, but you don't have to come.

In Oved Scheja's version of a Jewish space, inclusivity – interpreted as a democratic function – offered resistance to the antisemitic discourse that dominated

43 Matilda Arborelius, "Polisen ökar bevakningen inför judisk konferens", *Dagens Nyheter*, May 24, 2024, accessed August 24, 2024, https://www.dn.se/kultur/polisen-okar-bevakningen-infor-judisk-konferens/.

Swedish public space after October 7, allowing the organization to actively challenge anti-Zionist views.

The museums' interpretation of inclusivity might seem passive in relation to Jewish Culture in Sweden, but we must be careful in comparing these two very different spaces. They operate with different managements, funds, and goals. Furthermore, Hauptmann reminded us during the interview that no museum – or Jewish space, we might add – can please everyone. Her point was evoked by Pinto over ten years ago; Jewish spaces, such as a museum, "cannot give primacy to Jewish 'views', and Jewish activists must learn to accept that this does not make their interlocutors particularly antisemitic".[44] Similarly, when asked if the Swedish Holocaust Museum functions as a "Jewish space", Hauptmann answered: "for some and not for others", adding that people with a strong Jewish identity were not among those feeling most seen by the museum. But as mentioned above, the museum fills a crucial communal role for Jews without relation to either official communities or Jewish ways of life, especially after October 7. Nevertheless, Jews with a strong identity that want to connect to and be seen by the museum in this time of crisis found themselves at odds with the museum's refusal to conflate Jewishness with Israel and its consequential democratic practice of silent neutrality. In this crisis, the Swedish Holocaust Museum's goal of being inclusive of *everyone* was impossible to practice, leading to a constricted virtuality.

The conundrum of both museums – their inability to merge democratic neutrality and relational connectedness – hints at the extent of the crisis that the terror attack and the ensuing war has thrown Europe's Jewish spaces into. Pinto has already warned that "misusing them [Jewish spaces] or nurturing the wrong expectations for any one of them in particular can only upset the finely tuned and delicate equilibrium of society as a whole".[45] While we are not talking about a misuse of space here, the Swedish Holocaust Museum's impossibility to meet certain expectations positioned it involuntarily inside the polarized political framework where they had to defend a separation of Israel and Jewishness while both some Swedish Jews and non-Jewish partners claimed the opposite. In trying to keep their inclusive dimension, both museums, but the Swedish Holocaust Museum in particular, and as one of very few museums in Sweden, could not continue with its foundational apolitical stance.

44 Diana Pinto, "Negotiating Jewish identity in an asemitic age", *Jewish Culture and History* 14/2–3 (2013): 76.

45 Pinto, "Negotiating Jewish identity", p. 77.

"We Have to Continue", But Also: The Price of Virtuality

As we have seen, the virtual dimension of the Jewish Museum in Stockholm, the Swedish Holocaust Museum, and Jewish Culture in Sweden was dented in the wake of October 7. Although there are no consistent patterns to suggest a general shift in Swedish society's attitude towards Jewish spaces, the increasing antisemitism and the conflation of Israel and Jewishness (by both Jews and non-Jews) have made Jewish spaces fear for their future and reduce their public presence. We found efforts to both adapt to and resist the new normal. In continuing to keep open, to complete public programs, and to plan for new events specifically on October 7, Jewish spaces are revealed to be both flexible and fragile, contested as well as resistant. At the same time, we have highlighted how the anti-Israeli dimension of antisemitism and the increased sense of affiliation with Israel among diasporic Jews was either opposed or embraced, leading to the alienation of some Swedish Jews or the increase of antisemitism respectively. In other words, although acting according to (differently defined) democratic values, Jewish spaces came to be regarded (by different groups of people) as either dismissive of Jewish victimhood or politically incorrect. Furthermore, our study shows that virtual dilemmas experienced by the two museums and the cultural organization, such as how visible or inclusive they should be, emerge from an intensification of each space's already fragile circumstances. The interim directorship at the Jewish Museum in Stockholm resulted in a somewhat passive stance since Noring, out of respect for the new director, did not want to affect its shape and role. The recent establishment of the Swedish Holocaust Museum impacted how Hauptmann strived for an apolitical approach in public space. It seems as if the virtuality of Jewish spaces needed perfect circumstances to survive unscathed from the antisemitism unleashed in Europe after October 7, and even if it was, it could not hold back the magnitude of the anti-Israeli dimension of antisemitism.

Indeed, our interviewees hinted at or explicitly described the hesitation, fear, and sorrow that had marked their work since October 7. Concerns about how the aftermath of the terror attack might impact their existence in the long run, or the emotional weight of continuing to run their institution, were prominent in interviews. Noring will remember her time as interim director as "characterized by sorrow". When we asked Oved Scheja what it had been like shouldering a Jewish space after October 7, she answered:

> I have had super serious problems with my shoulder all of the sudden, came out of nowhere. And they did x-ray, and then they did *magnetröntgen* [MRI scan], and then they put me on terrible painkillers, anti-inflammatory. They found that, they asked "what did it

> come from? Did you fall down, did you do this", and I said "no", "did you overwork that", "no, no". So, it is now . . . I just left the painkillers a week ago, and I feel like . . . I feel it, but it is okay. So when you say shouldering, that's very strange because that's exactly what it is . . . But I think that . . . Sure. And sometimes it is difficult and tiring. Sometimes, I have to say, especially at night, I feel like, *jag orkar inte* [I can't take it], I can't, I have to step back. I have to step back, I have to take a pause, I have to rethink, but then the morning comes, and I feel like, no, I have to continue, we have to continue, we need to do that. I cannot imagine us closing down and letting us . . . You know, not being available for our audience.

Clearly, keeping business as usual and responding to emerging needs among visitors took its toll on people working in a Jewish space after October 7. During such a crisis, virtuality is not cheap. It comes with a cost, as employees at the Swedish Holocaust Museum have learnt:

> KH: It has been difficult for some employees. [. . .] Some of them wonder, "can I manage?"
>
> MH: That's another question I have. Without talking about the personnel or on their behalf. What's the workplace been like?
>
> KH: A little . . . One could say that it has been quite an unrest, in different ways. Not least . . . It has been different. It has been very personal for some, some have friends who are directly affected, and I'm talking about both the terror attack and the war, and fighting. Surely people who have difficulties, on one hand with what we do and Jewish traditions and perhaps think that Israel's politics are very problematic and don't know how to relate to it. And I know that for some it has become problematic among one's circle of friends, one has simply lost friends and become disappointed with friends. Some are also worried about themselves, their family, the museum. Naturally, those kinds of thoughts are triggered.

As we finish writing this chapter around the first anniversary of October 7, the Jewish Museum in Stockholm, the Swedish Holocaust Museum, and Jewish Culture in Sweden, as well as ourselves, are still in a state of emergency. In her chapter, Pinto defines Europe before October 7, marked by a normalization of extreme right-wing rhetoric, as "Orwellian" and an "augmented reality", in which Jews and the Holocaust "are terms which are bandied about with nonchalance and ill will".[46] From her point of view, a Europe marked by nationalism, populism, and antisemitism, with the consequential hollowing of pluralism and democracy, is dystopian and fake in comparison to what it could be – and was hoped for in the 1990s. How much more "fake" is Europe now after October 7? Relatedly, if the cultural authenticity of a Jewish space is linked to virtual processes, which today's increasing antisemitism and anti-Zionism have dented and cracked, are Jewish spaces losing their relevance, not because they have changed any of their mission

46 Pinto, "Jewish Spaces", pp. 22, 25.

or work but because a society ridden with antisemitism cannot support them? As this chapter has shown, in trying to navigate post-October 7 Europe according to democratic values, some Jewish spaces have – unwillingly – divided rather than united Jews and non-Jews in Swedish society. We do not know if this wave of antisemitism will scar the longevity and integrity of Jewish spaces permanently. But in employing virtuality and its hopeful approach as a lens, we have been able to pinpoint early signs of a breakdown of Jewish/non-Jewish co-construction of meanings attached to a Jewish past. As Pinto explains, "such Spaces were not *ends in themselves* but above all starting points for other pluralist understandings of Europe's many religious and cultural minorities".[47] Building upon her work, we have shown that Jewish spaces need to be understood as fragile, unstable, and dependent on forces beyond individual, communal, or institutional control. Virtuality's dependency on Jewish/non-Jewish relations makes it vulnerable for and targeted by societal and political changes, particularly as antisemitism increases. Thus, Jewish spaces – the integral place of Jewish history and culture in Europe – never reach a point of acceptance but must be continuously practiced and steadfastly protected. In operationalizing virtuality into a guiding benchmark for productive and societally integral Jewish spaces, this chapter has provided a first-row seat to the emotional toll and hard work elicited during the keeping and failing of "'*engagé*' cores of the endangered pluralist world we all cherish" in the wake of October 7.[48] In the shadow of "Black Sabbath",[49] it is the hopefulness and relational creativity of virtuality that has helped us discover the negative impact of today's increasing antisemitism on Jewish/non-Jewish relations in Jewish spaces, and the latter's ambivalent and heterogeneous responses to it.

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47 Ibid, p. 23.

48 Ibid.

49 "Black Sabbath" is the name given to Hamas's terror attack in Israel on October 7. We have found no information on exactly who or when the name came to be. We have also found other suggestions to name the massacre. The common understanding is that a name is necessary to explain the attack and to give it a place in history. See, for example: "Black Sabbath", October 7, 2024, accessed October 8, 2024, https://oct7th.org/en/; Havi Dreifuss, "Can the Hamas Oct. 7 massacre be compared to the Holocaust?", *The Jerusalem Post*, October 29, 2023, accessed October 8, 2024, https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-770704.

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