

Stories of  
Change



Influencing attitudes towards Muslims in Germany

● **Gemeinsam menschlich  
(Together Human):  
A public campaign to  
move the middle**

*A Case Study*

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June 2020

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SOCIAL  
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INITIATIVE

# Foreword

Social Change Initiative collaborates with activists, policy makers and funders to deliver lasting social change. In 2015, at the height of tensions around the arrival of increased numbers of refugees and migrants into Europe, we were asked if we could help to tackle the pervasive, negative narratives about migration and migrants. In response we were able to mobilize resources to establish the Migration Narrative Project (MNP). SCI is grateful to The Atlantic Philanthropies and the Human Dignity Foundation which provided funds to enable SCI to support the initiative. SCI would also like to acknowledge the wide range of donors who have supported our partners in their narrative change work.

The MNP began with groundbreaking segmentation research in France, Germany, Italy and Greece followed by efforts to enhance the capacity of NGO networks in those countries to develop new communications approaches and more effective inclusive narratives. SCI supported lead partners in each country to pilot new methods to shift the public narrative.

Much of the work is still evolving and underway but what follows here is a detailed account of how the work has unfolded in Germany. While it is too early to offer definitive conclusions on the impact of the project, we believe that there are already a number of positive results. We hope that others will be encouraged by the progress made and that the insights presented will help to shape further efforts.

This case study tells the story of a public campaign ‘Gemeinsam menschlich’ to change the perception of Muslims in Germany. A particular feature of the work is that it was initiated to appeal specifically to a segment of the population identified and defined by segmentation research. The campaign was developed and tested in the Narrative Lab at the International Centre for Policy Advocacy (ICPA) by JUMA, an NGO that gives young Muslims a voice and makes their social commitment visible. SCI thanks the teams at JUMA and ICPA for sharing their journey. They are considering running the campaign again after taking account of some of the testing results and lessons from the first round. A second case study, telling the story of a pilot project using segmentation research in France can be found on SCI’s website.

SCI is grateful to all our MNP partners throughout Europe. Your tenacity and commitment to transforming the narrative on migration is inspiring. We are honoured to work alongside you.

**Martin O’Brien**

Executive Director  
Social Change Initiative





# Overview

From 26 November to 7 December 2019, the Young Muslim Activists Association ([JUMA](#)) ran a public media campaign under the slogan 'Gemeinsam menschlich' (Together Human) to show that Muslims and non-Muslims in Germany have much in common. Through a series of portraits, Muslims and non-Muslims are seen working together, interacting, and taking part in shared activities.

The campaign was produced and developed within the Narrative Change Lab of the International Centre for Policy Advocacy (ICPA), as part of their project 'Reframe the Debate! New Migration Narratives for Constructive Dialogue.' The Lab was a pilot project supported by the German federal programme 'Demokratie Leben' and by the Migration Narrative Project at Social Change Initiative. Through the Lab, advocates and activists were encouraged to explore new narratives concerning migrants and migration. Specifically, ICPA invited the group to target a significant part of the population, the movable middle which can feel quite anxious about migration but, at the same time, values the importance of welcoming and integrating migrants.

**The 'Together Human' campaign was a public narrative change campaign targeting the German movable middle.**

**Its goals were:**

- **to reconnect with a population that has grown more hostile to migrants,**
- **to produce messages that foster openness, diversity and inclusion and**
- **to shift how the campaign's audience felt about Muslims.**

This is the story of how the campaign came to be, why the organizers decided to pick the message 'Together Human,' and what the wider social change sector can learn from the methodology and philosophy that underpinned the campaign.

# I. The migration debate is riddled with narratives that hinder pro-migrant work

The story of the ‘Gemeinsam menschlich’ (Together Human) campaign, began with the meeting of ICPA and JUMA at a moment when both organizations were finding it more and more difficult to promote pro-migrant attitudes without triggering backlash or extremely negative reactions.

- **The International Centre for Policy Advocacy:**

*“Democracy has become a value issue.”*

ICPA supports the capacity of activists and policymakers to further human rights and democratic values. They have worked throughout Europe and Central Asia building advocacy capacity and bringing more research evidence to policymaking. ICPA is concerned by the global rise of authoritarian regimes and nationalist populists threatening democracy and moving the political debate to the right.

In the migration debate, what not long ago would have been unacceptable to say has now entered mainstream discourse. Whether it is on the left, right or centre of the political spectrum, it is not uncommon to hear public leaders use national security and economic scarcity to justify policies that have become harsher for migrants and refugees. Others have popularized narratives of a so-called threat to European culture. The influx of refugees in Europe since 2015, the various terrorist attacks and economic uncertainty, have created an environment where these narratives feed on fear and anxiety.

ICPA believes *“the public debate sets the boundaries for acceptable policies.”* As a result, it has become challenging to promote pro-migrant policies because the typical narratives that seek to activate values of compassion or tolerance are not working well. Advocates feel they are losing the migration debate, and ICPA was keen to intervene to promote open values with narratives that appeal to the mainstream.

- **JUMA: “The situation of Muslims in Germany has not changed, it has worsened.”**

JUMA is an organization run by young German Muslim activists. It offers them a space to engage collectively on issues affecting Muslims in Germany. JUMA is an empowerment project, but it also seeks to advocate for better policies impacting Muslims in the country.

Over the past couple of years, JUMA has seen the anxiety around Islam grow in Germany. Islamophobia and other anti-Muslim narratives have become more normalized, even among the media. People who used to support JUMA’s mission started distancing themselves to avoid any association with Muslim organizations. Events such as the 2016 terrorist attacks in Cologne and the arrival of many refugees from Muslim countries have accelerated this change in attitudes. In public opinion, migration and Islam are intimately linked. JUMA members have noticed that *“Islam is a turning point.”* When people hear ‘migrants’ or ‘refugees’, they hear ‘Muslims’.

For JUMA, the public debate has a direct impact on its members who find themselves on the frontline. When Islamophobia becomes common currency, JUMA members are directly exposed. *“They feel the narratives. They can feel that the public debate has changed on the bus, in school, at university.”* With verbal and physical attacks increasing against Muslims - whether German citizens or not - JUMA members felt that something different had to be done.



- **Finding each other**

Both organizations saw the importance of trying a different course of action in a context where values of openness, inclusion and diversity were losing ground against stigmatizing narratives about people from an immigrant background, particularly Muslims. JUMA was looking for new capacity and ideas to influence the narrative through their communications work; ICPA wanted to pilot a new method to promote open values. Both organizations wanted their work to impact the largest audience possible. So JUMA joined ICPA's pilot, the Narrative Change Lab, and began the journey of working with 'the middle'.



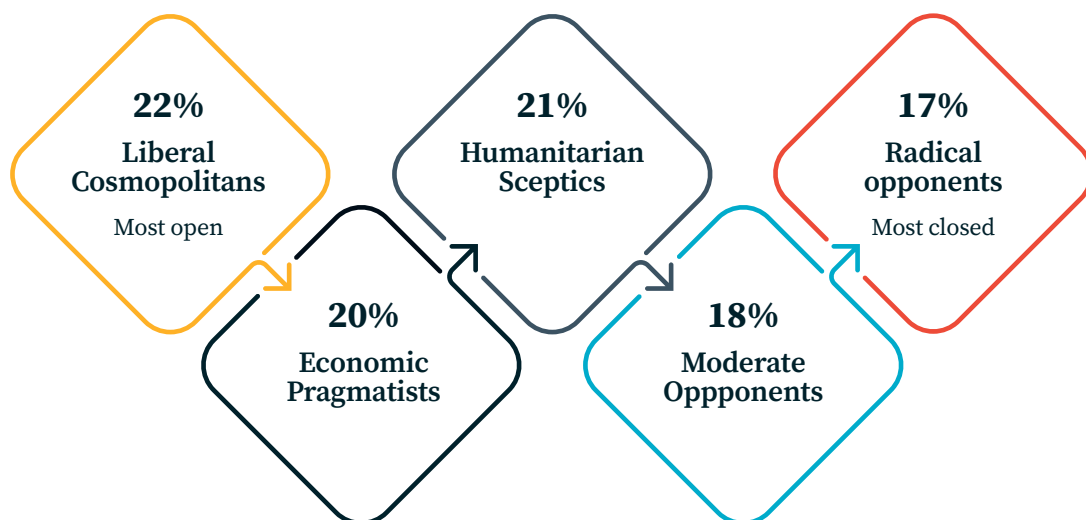
## II. The existence of a middle in the migration debate

The concept of ‘the middle’ emerged from research that helped to identify a large part of the population who, thus far, had been overlooked in pro-migrant communications, but who represented an opportunity to change the migration debate.

- **Public opinion is not as polarized as you may think**

In 2017, the think-tank More in Common, in conjunction with Social Change Initiative, released the study, ‘Attitudes towards National Identity, Migration, and Refugees in Germany’, which would prove to be a game changer. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures, the study sought to analyze the opinions of Germans regarding issues of migration and identity. From there, it was able to categorize the population into segments of opinion and provide a more accurate snapshot of public attitudes.

Five segments of public opinion were identified on a spectrum that ranges from closed to open views.



The ends of the spectrum represent those who are most accepting of migrants – the Liberal cosmopolitans (22% of Germans) – and those most hostile to migrants - Radical opponents (17% of Germans). Nothing about the traits of these segments came as a surprise. Liberal cosmopolitans tend to live in big cities, are often highly educated and believe in the willingness of migrants to integrate. Radical opponents feel left behind by globalization and see migrants as a threat to their identity and the economy. They tend to vote for the far-right Germany party, the AfD. These groups are easily recognizable because they are the most vocal and their views are discussed more frequently in the media. They are the reason people are under the impression that the debate on migration is highly polarized.

However, a larger portion of the population, do not hold as firm views as the 'extreme' segments. They fall in the middle and comprise 40 to 60% of Germans. They are classified as the anxious or moveable middle because they feel conflicted and hold mixed feelings about migration.

Three middle groups were identified: Economic pragmatists, Humanitarian sceptics and Moderate opponents. Economic pragmatists (20% of the population) is the most positive middle group. They are proud of their German identity and feel confident in the future. Their ambivalence on migration comes from the fact that they are concerned about the compatibility of Islam with German culture. They are a mixed age group with medium to high income that tend to vote on the left and centre of politics. On the other hand, Humanitarian sceptics (21% of Germans) see accepting migrants as a responsibility, because of the role of European countries in the wars in the middle east. They are, nonetheless, unsure of the capacity of migrants and refugees to integrate into German society. They are the oldest group with high levels of education but lower incomes. Moderate opponents (18%) is the middle segment that holds the most negative views of migrants. They share similar views with Radical opponents but with less intensity: in favour of closing borders, doubtful of refugees' genuine intentions, negative about Islam. They are present across different age groups, but many are pensioners and tend to have lower incomes.

### **Economic Pragmatists**

- Proud to identify as German
- Positive about the future
- Believe that immigration makes Germany more open to new ideas and cultures
- Concerned about the chances to integrate Muslims and don't think refugees should stay permanently

### **Humanitarian Sceptics**

- See accepting refugees as an obligation, but have reservations and are conflicted
- Think other Europeans should carry the load more
- Doubts about successful integration
- Older sections of society

### **Moderate Opponents**

- Deep reservations about Germany's refugee intake
- Question the motives of refugees and worry about benefit tourism
- Negative views of Islam
- Don't think refugees should stay permanently and even some want to close borders
- Most have no political party affinity

The segmentation research allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the views held by a majority of the population.

While it seemed that the migration debate was highly polarized, the research showed that a considerable part of the population is neither for nor against migration. In general, middle groups are reluctant to speak up and engage. Therefore their opinions are often not reflected in the public debate.

- ***“We all know there is a middle.”***

The segmentation data, confirmed an intuition that many people, including JUMA activists, already had. Most people likely have relatives, friends, or colleagues, whose opinions move on a spectrum where they can lean towards more closed or open opinions. In reality, the majority of people do not hold strong and unhesitant opinions about social issues, including migration. For JUMA, this was a big lesson: *“The more and more we learned about this segmentation, the more I realized ‘ah, this kind of argumentation, I heard that once from that person.’”*

It allowed activists to name what they had only been able to sense. As an activist from JUMA observed: *“Everyone knows about the middle, but we did not have a way to talk about it.”* It provided an analytical tool for JUMA members to understand the discourse that they were often facing, whether in the media or with the politicians that they were meeting.

Knowing your audience is a precondition for effective communication including running a campaign. Data allows us to stop relying on guesses or intuition and instead makes it possible to build a campaign directed at a specific audience.

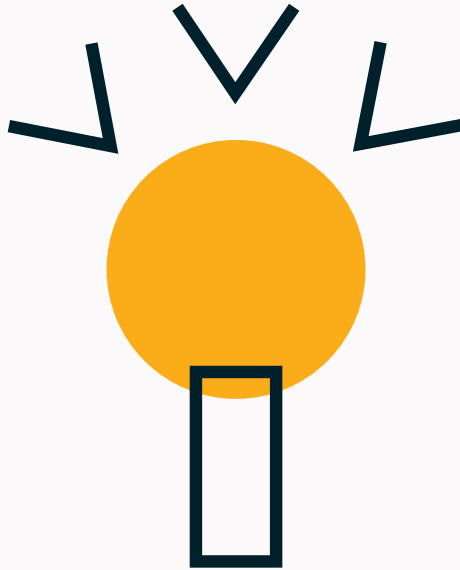
- **The middle offers an opportunity to change narratives**

The middle offers a unique opportunity to change narratives on migration because their opinions are less entrenched than those on the extremes. The middle is movable. As ICPA summarizes,

*“the movable middle means that they are movable one way, and they are movable the other way. Therefore, there’s a possibility to talk reasonably to people in a way that they feel ‘yes that’s common sense.’”*

For campaigning purposes, the existence of the middle represented a new, more receptive audience to whom it might be possible to promote pro-migrant opinions. *“Usually, in campaign, you always think of the extremes, and that if you can convince them, then this will solve all your problems.”* But, in JUMA’s words, *“focusing on people who do not have a really strong opinion regarding the matter, it made sense. It is just funny that no one thought about it before.”*





### III. Create the campaign through the Narrative Change Lab

JUMA did not join the Lab with the express desire to create a campaign to influence public opinion, they had been interested in capacity building for their organization. But they saw the opportunity to run a campaign that had a real chance of impacting the middle's attitudes and decided to take it.

- **A space to learn and create campaigns targeting the middle in Germany**

The Lab took JUMA through its step-by-step process which includes training workshops, testing, peer-review and dynamic tools, including the excellent Reframing Migration Narratives **toolkit**, to make the segmentation research accessible and understandable. After participating in the first two workshops, JUMA developed the initial proposal of what their campaign content could be. *“We had pictures, most of them pulled from the internet.”* They also began articulating their campaign goal: to make a positive shift in how middle audiences felt about Muslims.

Throughout the process, the Lab held feedback clinics where JUMA could exchange and workshop ideas with peers and other experts (creatives, organizers, etc.) as they were developing their content. JUMA was able to receive feedback from other organizations representing Muslims in Germany and from established migrant organizations. In addition to supporting campaign development, peer review was fundamental in boosting confidence and helping campaigners not to feel alone in this experiment. It also helped foster the emergence of a community of practitioners who understand, support and can engage in campaigns to middle audiences.

The Lab's pilot campaigns – of which JUMA's was the first - would prove several things: that the middle did exist in flesh and bones, that these audiences were receptive and movable, and that this kind of work could be successful in Germany.

## IV. What does it mean to be targeting the middle?

How the middle thinks can be surprising and counterintuitive for many. Campaign development in the Lab helped JUMA systematically find common ground with the middle, identify overlapping values and embody those values in effective messages and messengers.

- **Personify the middle to understand the middle**

Knowing your audience is admittedly crucial for any communications work. It is all the more important for a campaign targeting an unusual audience like the movable middle. ICPA advises personifying the middle to understand it. *“You need to take the middle off the research page.”* In one of the first workshops, the ICPA team created fictional stories of characters that would possess the main traits of each of the middle segments. Suddenly, Lab participants stopped talking about abstract concepts of economic pragmatists and humanitarian sceptics; and started talking about human beings and people they could encounter in real life. They were able to visualize the middle. *“Knowing who you are targeting is so important, not only for your written communication but all of the content production that you are visualizing.”*

Then JUMA “met” the middle. JUMA and other Lab participants were able to observe members from the middle as they took part in the focus groups organized by ICPA to test the campaign’s prototypes. Observers were hidden, so the middle was free to express their true opinions about migrants and Muslims. This allowed JUMA to witness firsthand what the research could only convey on paper: the human complexity that hides behind opinions. The team recalled: *“One of these persons was talking about refugees. They would say ‘it is impossible to welcome them’ and then five minutes later say, ‘but we can’t let them drown in the sea.’”* The focus groups also allowed the young activists to debunk their own misconceptions and empathize a bit more with a group that they could see as humans who felt conflicted and unsure.

*“We think of them (the middle) as being quite far right rather than as people with quite complicated feelings and opinions who are very affected by the media that they hear and by the populist politicians that speak to them.”*

It cannot be stressed enough how important it was for JUMA activists to observe the focus group. As young Muslims, whether it is through their work or their personal lives, they are often not able to really grasp the fears and emotions of the middle. Members of JUMA who worked on the campaign recognize that *“when you are in a discussion, and you are visibly Muslim or your name sounds Muslim, they won’t say the things they said in this testing. Even if they are against you, there are some filters.”*

- **“We have to start where the middle is. Not where we want them to be.”**

The term ‘movable middle’ can be misleading and convey that we are campaigning only to bring the middle to the progressive side. On the contrary, ICPA points out that *“you don’t have to make them urban cosmopolitans. It is not a conversion process. It is a take back the middle process.”*

Far from forcing an agenda on middle audiences, the goal of a campaign to the middle is, first and foremost, to reopen the dialogue with a group of the population that has often been sidelined and tagged as belonging to the far right. The process is gradual. In recognizing the ambivalent nature of the middle, the most immediate goal should be to inoculate the middle from populist and far-right narratives. Therefore, keeping the middle where it is on the spectrum between open and closed views can be a valid goal. This is done by setting aside narratives, that have already proven to backfire with the middle, and instead finding narratives that will allow for conversation and education to happen.

This type of goal can be quite surprising for campaigners that are used to naming and shaming and/or framing their messages only in opposition between what is right and what is wrong. For JUMA, it meant departing from their typical messages. *“As an activist, it is mind blowing because, especially in discrimination, it is either you are against discrimination and racism or you’re not.”* A new type of messaging is needed; one that resonates truthfully with the middle. Campaigners learned that it is counterproductive to shame the middle for expressing our common values in a different way, or with different language.

- **Identifying overlapping values with the middle**

To implement this new style of messaging for its campaign, JUMA had to identify the values they share with the middle. That overlap is the positive values space: the space where you can develop messages that resonate with the middle and overlap enough with your values to make sense to your base. At first glance this may seem difficult because the middle does not necessarily use recognizable value language, *“They don’t talk about diversity, justice and rights like we do, but these were a lot behind what was talked about.”* In spite of the language used, many of the values that the middle hold are relevant and resonant in the social change sector.

Part of the problem seems to be that we have relegated many middle values to right-wing value spaces. For instance, family values, community or religious practice do not necessarily only belong to the right-wing. For ICPA, the goal is clear. *“We have to reclaim shared value space in the middle.”*

These overlapping values - captured in what the JUMA team called their social value map - became the compass for all decisions regarding the campaign messages, protagonists, images, etc. Many times, during the campaign, JUMA would go back to this map to make sure they were on the right track.

- **Pick the middle audience you are more likely to move and resonate with**

It may not be possible to speak to all middle audiences at once. It is important to aim, at first, for audiences that will be receptive to your messages without having to move too far away from your position, or to risk losing your own organizational identity.

While the research identified three middle segments, only two were initially considered for the JUMA campaign: Economic pragmatists and the Humanitarian sceptics. The Modest opponents were left out as their positions were nearest to the closed end of the opinion spectrum and messaging to them would have required a strong investment in time and resources for a group that would have been unlikely to move. Also, JUMA would have run the risk of compromising its mission by having to produce messages too far from their own position.

A sample of the Economic pragmatists and Humanitarian sceptics were then invited to participate in the focus group that tested JUMA’s prototype campaign. The discussions revealed that Humanitarian sceptics had hardened their position since the 2017 segmentation research. Populist narratives had become even more prevalent in this group, and the topic of Islam triggered extremely negative reactions. The decision was therefore made to focus on the Economic pragmatists alone.



- **Find the message and the messengers who will embody these common values**

Through rounds of value mapping and testing, JUMA identified values of humanity, tradition, teamwork, responsibility, and an appreciation for the environment as being both consistent with its mission and important to the Economic pragmatist segment of the middle. In addition, JUMA wanted to counter nationalist populist rhetoric by focusing on what Muslims and non-Muslims already have in common. They wanted to show that they work together, live together and regularly share moments of daily life.

*“Rather than talking about the issue of Islam or institutional racism, it was talking about what we are on a day to day level; we engage, we connect, we make positive experiences together, we share the good, the bad and the ugly.”*

They drafted, tested, and redrafted images, slogans and protagonists to embody these commonalities. ‘Gemeinsam menschlich’ (Together Human) became the slogan and the hashtag of the campaign. Three protagonists were cast: a fireman, Ali, a medical student, Säli and an army officer, Nariman. The three protagonists could illustrate teamwork, humanity and responsibility. The army officer symbolized tradition and the medical student happened to practice rowing, a sport that shows appreciation for nature. All of them were shown in scenes of daily life, practicing sports, working and interacting with all members of society.

The campaign followed a “*show not tell*” approach. “*How can we show that they embody these values without actually having to say, ‘ok now we are talking about teamwork, for instance?’*” Importantly, the goal was to produce a campaign that does not talk at the middle, but rather talk with the middle. The stories, images and slogans needed to sufficiently catch the middle’s attention to challenge its stereotypes, but not trigger hostility and therefore lose the chance for dialogue.

## The Campaign

The campaign's goal was to shift to more positive opinions how its target middle audience felt about Muslims. Intermediate goals were to establish a connection to the middle audience and to use messages that would foster openness, diversity and inclusion.

The campaign ran live and online over a two week period from 26 November to 7 December 2019. 1000 posters featuring 'Together Human' slogans and images of Muslim protagonists were put up on the streets of three German cities, Berlin, Stuttgart and Leipzig. Posters and videos starring the protagonists were disseminated via social media campaigns on Facebook and Instagram.

Following are the campaign's six poster images and three videos.



*"Together, enjoying nature"*



*"Being there together when it really matters"*



*"Together, excited to learn"*





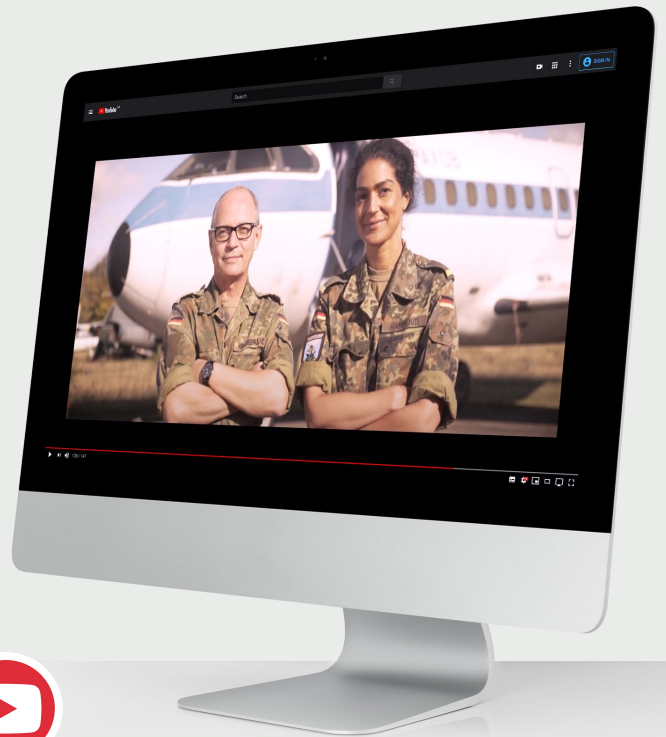
*“Together, carrying responsibility”*



*“10 feet, one goal”*



*“Together, team spirited”*



Click here or visit the ‘Gemeinsam menschlich’ YouTube channel to watch the videos



## V. “Test, test, test”

Did the campaign achieve its goal? Testing showed that when the campaign reached its audience it moved them. Testing and retesting impact had been such an integral part of the campaign’s development that one of the interviewees for this case study summarized his key learning in three words: “*test, test, test*”.

- **Why test?**

Testing allows you to set aside preconceptions and to create a campaign that is more likely to be authentic. For JUMA testing was everything.

*“What we are trying to do, at the end of the day, is an assumption. (...) you might have made a wrong decision, you never know. The testing is what tells you, ‘ok next time avoid this, and next time try to focus on that’.”*

Testing was also key to know whether the method developed through the Lab was working.

- **What kind of testing?**

To test the campaign, ICPA created an evaluation process that mixed traditional analog methods (i.e. focus groups) with tools made available through social media and employed them before, during and after the run of the campaign. The testing methods sought to answer three questions: Is the campaign reaching the middle audiences? Are the values conveyed by the campaign resonating with the middle audiences? Is the audience responding positively to the campaign?

Before the campaign was launched, three tests were carried out. JUMA’s prototype ideas were tested through the focus groups where JUMA observed the reactions of members of the middle.<sup>1</sup> JUMA then used this feedback to develop the six campaign posters and the three videos. The final group of posters was tested using an AB testing method, which consisted of measuring content performance on Facebook.<sup>2</sup> To test the videos, ICPA commissioned a randomized control trial test<sup>3</sup>, which measured the average change in opinion after watching the videos.

Once the campaign was launched, ICPA and JUMA monitored social media<sup>4</sup> (Facebook, Instagram and YouTube) responses to track reach (number of persons who viewed the post and/or the video at least once) and engagement (number of likes, shares and comments).

A couple of months after the campaign, the team also wanted to find out whether media outlets with middle audiences were picking up and relaying the campaign, in order to measure the potential of the campaign to gain broad reach. ICPA commissioned another company<sup>5</sup> to run a series of phone interviews with journalists from local, regional and national newspapers.

<sup>1</sup>The focus groups were organized with the assistance of IPSOS which helped select the middle participants.

<sup>2</sup>This is done through Facebook Ad manager. The Ad manager allows you to identify the middle audience through a selection of proxies: geography, age range and areas of interest that may match different individuals belonging to these groups; areas of interest are a tentative mixed bag including certain types of sports (football and football team), certain political parties and celebrities or influencers.

<sup>3</sup>ICPA commissioned Swayable, to run the randomized controlled trial test.

<sup>4</sup>The team also tracked reactions on Twitter and Instagram through a paid online platform, Keyhole.

<sup>5</sup>ICPA commissioned research/evaluation company Syspons to conduct the journalist interviews.

- **What were the impacts and results of the campaign?**

**The campaign significantly moved support for Muslim people**

The test measured the impact of the videos on viewers' opinions about Muslims and migrants. All videos significantly shifted opinion between 10 to 12 points in a positive direction. The videos managed to reduce anxiety towards Islam, increase favourable attitudes towards migrants, convince more people that Islam can be compatible with German society and that migrants are willing to integrate. These are significant advances in the dialogue with the middle.

Interestingly, each video performed differently depending on the age, gender, political affiliation, educational level, or religion of the viewer. Across the board, the medical student who wears a headscarf, Säli, was the protagonist that reduced anxiety the most. She was also the most successful in increasing positive attitudes towards migrants. The video of Ali, the fireman, worked better with men and older people. While Säli and Ali were most effective in reducing anxiety within the oldest audiences, Nariman helped older people increase their perception of compatibility between Islam and Germany society. However, she did not move the opinions of audiences with lower level of education.

Notably, the fact that the female army officer reduced anxiety to a lesser extent than Säli, who is a Muslim woman who wears the headscarf came as a surprise for the whole team, given the apparent tension around the headscarf in the public debate. The JUMA team recalled discussions prior to the campaign: *“It was so surprising because at the beginning of the campaign, we even had a debate about whether we should have a woman with a headscarf. 75% of the Muslim women in Germany do not wear it, so does it make sense to have one in the videos?”*

*“Testing is about proving you’re wrong. This is why, I personally love testing. Because it shows that we also have prejudices about our target group. We assumed that the middle would sympathize with Nariman more.”*

**Positive and warm reactions, but little reach**

The results from the testing were striking. The campaign garnered a warm and positive response on social media (around 99% of positive reactions on Facebook) and high engagement (35% click-through rate on video posts on Facebook) from members of the middle group who saw the content. Their behaviour on social media showed they were interested in the characters and willing to share the content with their network.

The campaign reached between 40,000 to 57,000 people in the three target cities. However, this represents around 5% of the total of the middle audiences from these cities, which means the campaign did not achieve sufficient reach, and that the positive responses and engagement could have been higher.

Because of time constraints, the campaign team could not develop relationships with the media or find influential figures to relay the campaign messages among the middle audiences. This resulted in an absence of traditional media coverage and lower levels of social media spread. The campaign team also learned that Facebook downgraded the posters for containing too many words, which might, at least in part, explain the low reach.

<sup>6</sup>In fact, the videos are among the top 10% of the content – some in the top 5% - tested on Swayable, the platform used to measure the videos' impact.

<sup>7</sup>Surprisingly, even though they were not a target audience, the results showed that all videos managed to catch the attention of AfD voters and garner among this group more favourable opinions towards migrants.

- **What did the testing teach us about the middle?**

**The middle needs authentic and sincere local messengers...**

Feedback from the middle audience during the first focus groups made it clear that whoever conveys the message is also a key factor in how the middle will respond to the message. During the focus group discussions, the Economic pragmatists were reassured to learn it was a group of young German Muslims who put the campaign together. Many participants had expressed their concern for a campaign run by entities spreading propaganda. Knowing that JUMA, a group of young Germans, was behind the message, helped the Economic pragmatists to trust the message. Local familiarity and trustworthiness are important.

The more the messengers are sincere and authentic, the more the message will be heard and generate less skepticism. This would explain why the video of Säli, the medical student, performed the best among middle audiences. *“Säli is young and she was just being herself, and maybe this spoke more to people.”* The team at JUMA recalled that when shooting the video, Säli was more natural in her posture and her way of talking in front of the camera. On the contrary, Ali was less comfortable, and Nariman, who has a large following on social media, was perhaps too comfortable.

**...and positive images of Muslim people interacting in daily life.**

Middle audiences long for everyday, positive images of migrants and Muslim people. This may be another reason why the story of Säli scored so well in the video testing. Many of the tested participants were gladly surprised to see a positive representation of a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf. As a member of the JUMA team put it: *“I think the problem with the headscarf is that we always see it in a negative context and we showed it out of the usual context, in a natural context. It shows the middle needs to see more Muslim women who wear the headscarf until it gets comfortable and it can become something normal - that these women are like everyone else.”*

In the videos the three protagonists are shown interacting with colleagues. From the focus groups, the team also discovered that the middle wishes to see scenes of daily life where Muslims interact with white people, black people, etc. The middle audience is greatly receptive to shared moments of humanity, whether it is through daily experience or acts of service to the community. Conversely, messages or images that are deemed to be too positive can trigger skepticism and be dismissed. The right balance needs to be found to maintain authenticity and sincerity.

**Show don't tell**

The results show the importance of addressing what gives anxiety to the middle instead of brushing it over: the headscarf, the integration of Muslims and migrants into Germany society, etc. However, the testing confirmed that it is important to do so while following a 'show not tell' approach. Instead of creating messages that explicitly denounce racism, or talk about how Islam is compatible with German values, the videos of Säli, Ali and Nariman illustrate these messages through individual stories which allow middle audiences to come to this conclusion on their own.

The more you try to negate an existing message or narrative, the more you are likely to reinforce the negative stereotypes that are associated with it. For that reason, JUMA intentionally decided not to run a campaign that would negate, for instance, that Muslims are terrorists or that migrants are there to take Germans' money. These campaign messages tend to bring attention to narratives that advocates want to remove from the migration debate.

Often campaigns choose 'perfect' protagonists. JUMA strategically did not adopt this method. *“Somehow, campaigns like focusing on heroes, these athletes or exceptions, and this is exactly what the middle does not want because then they would also define these people as exceptions, and then we would not have achieved anything because it is also about normalizing people not about portraying them as the exception.”*



## VI. Lessons from the challenges encountered during the campaign?

Campaigning to reach the middle audience proved to be challenging on many levels. The campaign team faced resistance and criticism from their peers. They dealt with the complexities of running a social media campaign, which happened to be their first, in addition to targeting an unusual audience.

- **Negotiating between the base and the middle**

JUMA is an empowerment project run by and for young German Muslims. While campaigning to the middle, JUMA also felt a responsibility to take account of and maintain support from their base. *“We also had to talk to the base and not just to the middle. We hoped young Muslims could see themselves in these protagonists or relate. This was absolutely important for us.”*

The complexity of this campaign stemmed therefore from the need to anticipate the reactions of different audiences. JUMA had to produce messages and images that resonated with the middle audience while not upsetting their base, plus they wanted to avoid triggering the extremes. Running the campaign was a constant negotiation between what should be done and could be done. *“We had to think in all sorts of directions and anticipate any mistakes.”*

Concerns for the base explained, for instance, JUMA’s decision to not use humour. *“We thought it was not the best subject to try to be funny because it is a really sensitive situation; everywhere Muslims are being attacked. We had a responsibility to produce a campaign that everyone could live with and stand behind.”* In another instance, JUMA decided to edit out an image of a protagonist drinking alcohol to avoid unnecessarily upsetting Muslims who do not approve of Muslims drinking. They also hesitated to reveal that one of the protagonists, Ali, was Palestinian, which would bring another controversy to the table. However, after much discussion, the JUMA team decided to respect Ali’s wishes and shared this part of his identity.

- **Willingness and commitment to engage with the middle**

Because it can be challenging to target the middle while keeping the base on board, any organization interested in this work needs to make a collective decision about whether or not it is willing and ready for the challenge. This decision needs to be made early in the process.

For JUMA, some of the questions they considered included: *“Is it really necessary to target this group, if they are so anti-Muslim?” “What is the prize if we don’t try to talk to this people, who else will do it?”* The fact that JUMA’s primary mission is to empower young Muslims made the decision even trickier. Did it make sense to run a campaign on messages that appeal to the middle and not only to young Muslims? Ultimately, JUMA was convinced by the necessity to change the status quo regarding the perceptions of Muslims in Germany. *“The fact that they (the middle) are movable was really important for us.”*

Once the decision about reaching the middle is made, the organization needs to stand by it. The JUMA team that created the campaign believed in their work. However, they faced concerns from peers who were fearful of being attacked by the base. The team had to ensure that everyone in their organization understood and supported the campaign. This allowed them to weather some criticism from anti-racism activists who did not understand the approach and found it contradictory to the empowerment movement.

- **Creative resistance**

JUMA also had to wrestle with resistance from the creatives who were hired to work on the campaign. Professionals, particularly the creatives (cameramen, designers, editors, etc.), who have always worked in the social change sector can be used to campaigning in a certain way. Yet a campaign to reach the middle requires different content than a traditional social change campaign. For instance, to show Muslim protagonists in their daily life interacting with other Germans, people would preferably have to be outside in day light. *“We had to make sure, not to be stuck in rooms with little light... They (the creatives) wanted to have the protagonist alone in the poster whereas the whole campaign was about ‘together human’.”*

This experience reminded JUMA and ICPA that work culture and habits are hard to change. *“We are so stuck in our ways.”* It served as a lesson that a campaign to the middle requires willingness to challenge long-acquired assumptions, even from the creative sector. For JUMA, the lesson is *“you need to have a team that gets it.”* This includes people from your own organization and people hired to work on the campaign.

- **It is emotionally challenging**

Communicating to middle audiences can be emotionally challenging. Once you leave the theoretical world of research and actively engage with middle audiences, hard conversations come. Activists may be challenged at a personal level. JUMA experienced this firsthand during the focus groups where they observed the discussions of middle segments.

*“You have to hear things about you, and it does not feel good. You feel hurt, attacked, misunderstood. You have to try to understand and dig deeper.”*

Following the focus group, activists had an opportunity to process the hurt and the emotions in a feedback session. They were also introduced to techniques to handle difficult conversations with the middle through the Lab workshops. However, despite having anticipated challenging exchanges, the team was not sufficiently prepared to engage with the reactions of middle audiences on social media. Before engaging in this type of campaign, it is necessary to evaluate how appropriate a campaign of this nature will be for an organization in light of its mission, resources and capacity to take on emotionally challenging work.

## VII. What next?

As the results have shown, the ‘Together Human’ campaign received warm and positive responses from the middle audience it succeeded in reaching. Also, it is very important to note that JUMA did not lose the support of its base. However, one campaign will not be enough to change narratives circulating among the middle audiences. It is therefore important to continue building on what the campaign has started. What is needed to scale it up and significantly change the migration debate?

- **Amplify a campaign that has shown high potential**

Testing showed that when the campaign reached its target audience engagement was high. This means that once exposed to the content, members of the middle engaged with the topic; they felt more positive about migration and felt less anxious about Islam. Therefore, the campaign clearly succeeded in laying the building blocks to change the public debate, however, further work is required to increase its reach.

The next step for JUMA is to work on developing partnerships with messengers that can help build the credibility of the message (through reputation, achievements, etc.) and who are respected and listened to by the middle audiences. These could be journalists, influencers or any institution – schools, unions or organizations - with members who belong to the middle.

Drawing upon learnings from the 2019 campaign JUMA is set to run the campaign again in 2020 to coincide with the 30th anniversary of German unity. JUMA intends to amplify ‘Together Human’ by reissuing the best-testing content with different packaging and placing greater emphasis on reach. They are also thinking of adding new content starring additional protagonists.

- **Build a plan to engage with the audience over time**

After a campaign finishes, the goal remains to create ongoing dialogue with middle audiences. The campaign content is an opportunity to start a conversation, but it is not sufficient in and of itself to fully shift opinions. Preparing for continuing engagement should be incorporated into the organization’s strategic plan.

In addition to considering further public campaigns, JUMA has started exploring techniques such as writing and rehearsing talking points, role playing and scenario plotting, in order to better respond to reactions in person and online and to feel more comfortable in dialogue with the middle.



- **From a single campaign to narrative change**

The ‘Together Human’ campaign is a first step towards changing opinions and narrative.

*“The next step for JUMA is immersion: embedding and socializing those narratives into various communities.”*

More campaigns are needed in order to normalize the narratives that are being promoted. For JUMA, the testing has already revealed the need to create more and different positive stories about Muslims and migrants. *“They need to become the norm, not the exception.”* ICPA emphasizes that the immersion phase takes time. *“That’s the grind. That’s tough work.”*



## VIII. Lessons from the JUMA campaign for the social change sector

The JUMA campaign and the Narrative Change Lab offer invaluable lessons for the social change sectors and organizations that may consider engaging with middle audiences.

- **There is a middle. And it's movable.**

The testing methods proved the existence of the middle audience in the real world, outside of the research sphere. Through the different focus groups, the campaign organizers witnessed firsthand how a group of people can hold contradictory positions and feel uncomfortable taking positions, in general.

The middle moves. The Economic pragmatists targeted by the 'Together Human' campaign responded positively and warmly, and they engaged with the messages and the images conveyed. They felt reassured by images of Muslim people engaging with other Germans in their daily life. They wanted more of these images.

- **There is now a tested method**

Testing showed that the methodology developed through the Lab and implemented by JUMA worked. ICPA's campaign planning process recommends the following steps:

- Ask yourself if you and/or your organization, are willing, ready and able to work this way
- Collect research & data on the different value categories in the population (i.e. segmentation analysis)
- Choose the middle segment(s) to target
- Map common values
- Produce concept & first draft content
- Test
- Develop full content and plan
- Test
- Fine-tune, roll-out and evaluate.

- **Engaging the middle requires a cultural shift**

Working with the middle often requires activists and advocates to revisit assumptions about the public debate and to challenge their own habits and biases. This is not always easy, but JUMA found that in order to accomplish their goal of impacting the middle they had to shift their expectations and expand their communications approach.

- **However, this work is not for everyone.**

Not everyone needs to do this type of work. Can you and should you engage in campaigns targeting the middle? This is an important conversation to be held internally from the outset before engaging in any work seeking a dialogue with the middle.

It is important to consider the mission of your organization and how working with the middle may affect it. If your work entails public advocacy like JUMA, or your mission involves engaging with the public debate, then it may be an appropriate move. However, if your organization is an empowerment project at its core, you might confuse and lose people if you start a dialogue with the middle. ICPA recognizes that *“there’s a lot of work needed in building the courage and skills of the base.”* If an organization is fully focused on this, it does not make sense to pull them away from it.

- **But the movement needs many things,**

The social change movement needs many things and working with the middle is only one of them. As the ICPA team put it: *“It is not either- or. It is both-and.”* *“We have to see base campaigns, middle campaigns, and campaigns marginalizing the far right as part of the same thing. There has to be a way of understanding that we are all working towards the same shared impact.”*

It is essential that those pursuing other strategies understand the middle approach and why certain organizations have chosen to take it. Otherwise, as JUMA experienced, the campaign and the organization can be attacked by members of its own movement which weakens collective impact.

- **...including, a community of practice**

Because it is challenging, campaigning to the middle is best done in community and through partnerships. The community of practice that emerged from the Narrative Change Lab was an invaluable asset to JUMA and to the campaign. *“It was interesting to talk to Lab participants who did not share the Muslim point of view, but who had experienced racism and worked in this field.”*

More generally, this community of practice can form the basis of a movement that understands why it is important to develop narrative strategies for the middle, while pursuing many other interventions in parallel. ICPA will continue building this community in what has evolved into their Strategic Communications Incubator. As the JUMA team moves to the next phase of its campaign and requires further support, they will be able to tap into the expertise available through the Incubator. ICPA will be able to defer to other experts and let the team move forward and grow as campaigners.

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## Closing

There is now a community of practice and a proven way to create campaigns that target the middle. JUMA continues to fine tune this campaign and apply their experience to their broader work. ICPA has moved from the pilot Lab to a five-year program – a Strategic Communications Incubator –to support efforts to embed diversity narratives in communities and public discourse, important groundwork for changing behaviour, rules and norms.

An emerging network of organizations throughout Europe and beyond are embracing the challenge of narrative change by working to move the attitudes of middle audiences. The story and lessons of ICPA and JUMA’s work should give encouragement and confirmation that this approach delivers.



# Stories of Change

## Acknowledgements

This case study was made possible through a series of interviews with the teams at JUMA and ICPA who worked tirelessly to bring the campaign to life. ICPA also shared their activity reports which document the thought-process and the work that happened behind the scenes. Thanks to both teams for their help and support.

Thanks also to Annmarie Benedict Pagliano, Dr. Rachel Williamson, Padraic Quirk and Martin O'Brien at SCI for commissioning the study so that others can learn from and replicate the accomplishments of 'Gemeinsam menschlich' and for providing expert guidance and revision to the manuscript.

Design by Sean Hutcheson.

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