7. The Place of Home

Where are you from? Where is your home? Place is a key element in many definitions of home. This is seen in descriptions of home that recall landscapes, cities, and geographic locations. While home is most often understood as a concrete location that spatially locates identity – a country, a city, a neighborhood, or a house, the spatial turn broadened this definition by revealing ways that place is not static but is instead a changing and dynamic entity. In addition, places often evoke feelings and moods and generate affectivity, and associations with place can shift over time. This shaping and reshaping of place is especially relevant to culturally and personally meaningful places, such as home.

For asylum-seekers who have left home, the place of home is often understood in terms of geographic locations, including country of origin, place of birth, or citizenship, as well as towns and regions, geographic features, and local languages. These spatial identities are reinforced by bureaucratic designations that identify asylum-seekers by political and geographic categories. Losing home means being uprooted from the people and practices that are embedded in place and that often serve as markers of identity. Yet, asylum-seekers continue to be identified by these places and their losses. Other losses of relationships, community, legal recognition, local knowledge, and religious worldviews further complicate connections to home. This is also seen in the complexity of navigating home in a place where they do not know if they belong or will be invited to remain.

In this chapter I draw on my ethnographic data to focus on three concepts relevant to home as place in asylum-seeking. First, I explore home as a location, most often a geographic place, shaped by social and affective associations as well as physical characteristics and local practices. This includes home as it is cultivated by historical and bureaucratic structures as well as by the availability of basic resources that are necessary for life. For many asylum-seekers, the process of finding a new home in Basel was focused on the ability to meet basic needs and to adapt to new cultural and political definitions of home. Second, I focus on the ways home as place is embedded in specific relationships. Relationships to family, especially to the mother, as well as to communities, inform notions of home. Third, I engage home as a place situated amid absence and multiplicity. Because of this quality, some asylum-seekers

find it necessary to separate from the previous home or to locate home in multiple places. Finally, I consider how asylum-seekers occupy a "third space," how home often emerges through multiplicities, and how assumptions about home that are primarily linked with stability and familiarity may be disentangled.

7.1 The Location of Home

For many, the connection to a physical place on earth is an important element of home. As described by Bieler and Kunz, "Geographical attachments are a central means by which people spatially embed their identity: my home or house, my neighborhood, my city, my region, my homeland."[1] These attachments might include smells and tastes, landscapes, architecture, or customs connection with specific places. These sensory associations occupy places of nostalgia, memory, and longing and can often blur the distinction between concrete and imagined aspects of home.

The attachment to a physical place takes on heightened associations for people who have lost home. Many asylum-seekers named a country, village, or region, as well as specific languages, local practices, and landscapes, as home. The places they identified as home included where they were born or raised, their "motherland," or a place they have lived for an extended period. Most asylum-seekers I spoke with missed something specific about their country of origin – the food, their family, the customs, or the climate. A man from Syria described home as his history with a specific place. "Home? Home for me is where I was born, where I grew up, where my family is, where my friends are, and where my childhood things are."[2] Others missed other sensory experiences associated with a place, including the ability to be or act in certain ways, such as hearing and responding to the Islamic public call to prayer or being able to care for elderly family members (see more in section 7.4.3).

7.1.1 Fuss Fassen

Similarly, volunteers at Projekt DA-SEIN often described their sense of home as being connected with specific landscapes, climates, towns, and landscapes. An 80-year-old Swiss volunteer showed up to our interview with a hand-drawn map of Switzerland where he had diagrammed the places he had lived. He described the places with sensory descriptions such as the distinctive landscape, fauna, and flora of the areas, with languages spoken, and with jobs and schooling he had undertaken.

1 Bieler and Kunz, "Responding to the Loss of Home," 136.

2 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 29, 2018: 20180929_7AS_IN, Pos. 403.

In describing his first move, at the age of eight, from a small village in the Alps to another region in Switzerland along the Rhine River, he said, "And that was a very important place, because I loved it. I loved the alpine flowers, the mountains, the snow, the skiing. And here on the Rhine was nothing."[3] Over 70 years later the visceral sensations and physical attributes of the village of his childhood were clearly recalled. There was a familiarity and a longing connected to the landscape where he felt at home.

A visceral familiarity and an embodied connection to place are often evoked when recalling home. This volunteer used the phrase "*Fuss fassen*," translated as a foothold, to describe being rooted in a place. He explained it as follows: "So when I have gained a foothold, then I stand here and now belong on this piece of ground."[4] This metaphor for belonging to the earth invokes an image of home as a rootedness to place through the body. Having one's feet on the earth can include physical sensations such as sights and sounds as well as affective associations evoked through feelings, social connections, memories, and familiar experiences.

An asylum-seeker from Turkey also described home as having his feet are on the ground. For him, this embodied and grounded experience was something that was currently lacking for him and that he hoped to find. As he shared with me, in his current situation, in the middle of the asylum process, he struggled to find a relevant concept of home. He had lost the home he knew but was unsure if he could stay in Switzerland and make a home there. He described the experience of seeking home "as trying to find the ground beneath my feet."[5] He wondered aloud if home is the place where he studied or the village where he grew up. He said he always thought it was these places, but now he wonders if it is Switzerland. He feels that in the future he will need a home in a place, which he described as "feeling the earth beneath his feet." In his current circumstance of waiting for the result of his asylum application, he said he was hovering somewhere above the earth and not in touch with the ground. This distance from the earth persisted despite social connections and involvement with Projekt DA-SEIN. A lack of certainty about the ability to remain in Switzerland distanced him from visceral connections that make him feel at home.

This image of home as having one's feet securely on the earth calls to mind having roots in a place. Roots often describe a person's history and genealogy, or the place that they or their family calls home. This analogy implies that roots and growth are needed for a place to be home, just as roots are necessary for the growth of plants and

3 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 13, 2018: 20180913_1FW_IN, Pos. 33.

4 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 13, 2018: 20180913_1FW_IN, Pos. 165–175.

5 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, December 9, 2018: 20181209_1AS_II, Pos. 7–8.

trees. This rootedness might provide for the physical needs of survival, such as health and housing, as well as the ability to create a meaningful life and pursue important milestones such as education, political and social engagement, or a family. Access to the resources necessary to create a home are often predicated on official citizenship or residency status as well as political systems and historical developments (see more in section 7.1.2). A person's citizenship and access to resources are often called an "accident of birth." Where one is born determines many aspects of a person's home, often in decisive ways, as revealed in asylum-seeking. In addition, historical events, such as colonialism, have impacted the political and economic situations of many countries that experience instability and, often, migration.

7.1.2 Citizenship as a Marker of Home

Official designations of belonging, such as citizenship or ethnic identity, can define a place as home. For asylum-seekers, citizenship is a delimiting factor in their asylum applications. Without papers or the ability to prove citizenship, asylum is often out of reach. Asylum-seekers often expressed home as an association with citizenship or country of origin. This affiliation was sometimes more pronounced for those who had been away from home longer or had fewer options of returning. I spoke regularly with a man from Afghanistan who did not have papers and was unable to obtain asylum in several countries. He was orphaned when young and understood his parents to be from a different country. It was this other country, where he had never lived, that he most often identified as home, referring to himself often by this country's name. This identity with place was important personally and politically, even as it was a cause of being separated from home and even denied asylum in Switzerland.[6] The understanding of home as an official document can also create a focus on adopting local migration requirements for some migrants. Meeting requirements becomes not only an external demand, but also a necessary step to establish home (see the discussion on agency in Chapter 8).

In the asylum process, an asylum-seeker's country of origin or nationality remains a primary identifier, and this designation was also used at Projekt DA-SEIN. Each day attendees were recorded on a list that tallied them under their country of origin. Long-term data compiled by Projekt DA-SEIN, as well as national statistics on asylum-seeking, also categorize people by country of origin. This focus on country of origin appeared within informal practices as well. When greeting people at the program, name introductions were often followed by a question about nationality or country of origin. Asylum-seekers as well as volunteers and staff often used

6 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, May 10, 2018: 20180510_14AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 4.

this language and introduced themselves by their country of origin. While this practice reflects normative assumptions about home, it may also reflect more personal factors such as pride in one's national or ethnic identity or a desire to find points of connection.

Yet the link between country of origin and home is not always linear. Where a person considers home is not always where they lived or grew up, or where their family resides. Many asylum-seekers have been migrants for years, even their whole lives, and have moved numerous times, often to different countries. During my research, I would discover that the place someone said they were from, or that they identified as home, was a place where they had never lived or where they had lived only briefly when they were young. One day, a man who said he was from Afghanistan explained that he had never lived in Afghanistan. He grew up in Iran and, starting when he was a teenager, had lived in various European countries and, for the last 3 years, had resided in Switzerland.[7] In at least four other conversations, I encountered asylum-seekers who identified themselves as being from Afghanistan, yet it was later revealed that they had lived in other countries for significant amounts of time, especially Iran and Pakistan.[8] Many asylum-seekers reported that they relocated from Afghanistan to Iran and worked as migrant laborers but had difficulty obtaining legal work or residency permits, so they continued on to Europe.

For others, ethnic or regional identities take precedence over a single geographic place, such as for those from groups that have experienced repeated forced displacement, for example, the Kurdish people. Several Kurdish asylum-seekers referred to Kurdish areas or towns, or the geographic region known as Kurdistan, as home. A man from Syria repeatedly referred to Kurdistan as his place of origin.[9] A man from Turkey spoke at length about the religious and cultural practices of his Kurdish community, which stood at odds with the dominant Muslim religious beliefs and practices in Turkey.[10] Even those who are not migrants frequently identify multiple places as home, whether due to geographic moves, family connections, or affective associations with places (see more on home as multiple place in 7.6). Home,

7 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, March 29, 2018: 20180329_31AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 3.

8 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, June 21, 2018: 20180621_DA-SEIN_v2_PO, Pos. 7; Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, June 27, 2018: 20180627_DA-SEIN_v1_PO, Pos. 6; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, June 13, 2018: 20180613_25AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 4; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 12, 2018: 20180712_28AS_DA-SEIN Wanderung Reigoldswil_II, Pos. 3.

9 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 29, 2018: 20180929_7AS_IN, Pos. 54, 229, 608.

10 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 10, 2018: 20180710_1AS_IN; 2018 0621_1AS_DA-SEIN_II.

citizenship, and country of origin are not necessarily the same thing and geographic designations are not always linear. For many people the connection of a single geographic place to home is often illusive, even as it remains compelling.

7.1.3 The Resources of Home

While official designations serve as one marker of home, another is the ability of a place to provide the basic resources necessary for life, such as food, water, employment, social and cultural connections, and education. These practical elements of home, including financial security and the meeting of basic needs, are part of defining home in a particular place. Yet, these basic needs were often unavailable to asylum-seekers in their countries of origin due to economic challenges or political instability. A lack of resources, financial and otherwise, in their countries of origin made it difficult to establish a sense of home and is one reason many migrants left. But a lack of resources is also a challenge to asylum-seekers' sense of home when they arrive in Switzerland.

For asylum-seekers in Switzerland, opportunities to meet basic needs were often closely tied to asylum and citizenship status, including assess to education, housing, and employment. The first step toward the possibility of remaining in Switzerland long-term is the acceptance of the asylum claim (or achieving provisional status). Receiving a permit to legally remain in Switzerland increases social, political, and financial opportunities, including opportunities for employment. As several asylum-seekers told me, work in Switzerland is good but it is hard to get work without official documents and training. "Life is hard," one asylum-seeker told me.[11] He had a job but his expenses, such as taxes and electricity, remained high. Another asylum-seeker expressed a similar sentiment and said that in Eritrea, there was no work or no payment for work. In Switzerland there is work, but there are so many hurdles to get to it.[12]

While this aspect of home is less discussed, especially for asylum-seekers, the level of financial resources available also impacts asylum-seekers' decisions to flee and about where to establish a new life. As Valentin Groebner writes, "From this point of view, home is a question of money. Strangely enough, nobody wants that. Because the term home as a sentimental concept is inviolable, indestructible and obviously indispensable."[13] Yet, without the ability to survive, other markers of home

11 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 29, 2018: 20180929_7AS_NO, Pos. 20.

12 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 17, 2018: 20180917_8AS_Rheinschwimm_II, Pos. 12.

13 Valentin Groebner, "Vorrecht: Über Die Geschichte und Den Preis Eine Scheins," in *Heimat: Eine Grenzerfahrung*, Stapferhaus Lenzburg, ed. (Neue Zürcher Zeitung NZZ Libro, 2017), 158.

are also illusive, and it is political, cultural, and financial capital that provides security and solidity to make a place home.

The connection between resources and home came up often when discussing home with asylum-seekers. Many asylum-seekers described the violence or lack of resources that motivated them to seek asylum, including persecution of themselves or other family members as well as a lack of safety to pursue education or employment. For example, in Afghanistan, I was often told, traveling between villages on open roads for work or school is especially dangerous, as kidnappings and bombings often occur on roadways.[14] Access to political stability and personal safety are also basic needs of home. As Young writes, "If anything is a basic need and a basic liberty, it is personal safety and a place to be safe."[15] Especially for those who flee due to political oppression, basic needs include the ability to have a life free of threats to physical safety. Indeed, may asylum-seekers leave their countries of origin due to a lack of safety or to the inability to create a life, which can include being unable to practice a religion, to express the fullness of one's identity, or to access social support.[16]

Despite the connection of home to safety and resources, many asylum-seekers still named as home places that could not provide the basics of life. As Joisten and other scholars illustrate, home is not only a place of security and comfort, it is also and equally a place of insecurity and unfamiliarity.[17] In this way, feminist scholars acknowledge that home is not only a place of security and comfort, paradoxically it can also be a place of violence and insecurity (see the discussion in section 2.1.3). This violence and insecurity can make a place that was once home no longer sustainable, but individuals don't always truncate affective associations with a place. It is this tension that complicates associations with home. Sometimes the conditions of home are not met in one place. This can create a loss of home, cause multiple places to be identified as home, or leave someone wondering where and what home actually is.

7.2 Possibilities of Home in Switzerland

My research results varied on whether access to basic resources and physical safety leads to a sense of home for asylum-seekers in Switzerland. One asylum-seeker told

14 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 19, 2018: 20180719_4AS_IN; 20180719_4AS_IN; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, December 12, 2018: 20181212_10AS_DA-SEIN_II.

15 Young, "House and Home," 162.

16 Young, "House and Home."

17 See, for example: Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration"; Friese, "The Limits of Hospitality"; Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*; Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*.

me he could imagine Switzerland being home one day because of the opportunities he could take advantage of, including education, and the help he had received from so many people. He also named the quiet and peace he experienced in Switzerland as a reason it could become home. "It is quiet in Switzerland. You know, you can sleep peacefully, do things in peace. No one says 'Why are you doing this? Why are you doing that?'"[18] Several men from Afghanistan said that before they left, they were not able to go to school or had to end their education early. Others had fathers and brothers killed or imprisoned, or they themselves had been imprisoned. The opportunity for greater safety was often a compelling reason for searching for a new home.

While asylum-seekers often longed for the home that what was lost, they did not always miss the home that was left. Some aspects of home were not available in the homes they left, such as the ability pursue having a family, education, and employment. Therefore, some asylum-seekers defined their sense of home in Switzerland by the ability to access specific resources and opportunities and by the safety and security they experience in Switzerland, despite their often-precarious status. Others told me that they could imagine Switzerland as home, but only once they were able to work, have a family, and achieve a more permanent residence permit. An asylum-seeker said he was glad to have options that were unavailable to him in the home he left, such as schooling and regular employment. Several other asylum-seekers named opportunities to learn languages and attend schools as things they appreciated that were unavailable to them in the homes they left. Others named specific qualities they liked about Switzerland, including the lack of active political and military conflict.[19] Another asylum-seeker told me he was so happy when he reached Italy and then Switzerland. He kept thinking how he could have died in the Mediterranean Sea, but a bigger Italian boat rescued them. He continued. "I like everything in Switzerland. I learned German, I learned math, I have learned so many things here." Affective feelings are generated by having basic needs met, including physical and emotional safety. The relief of having survived what was potentially unsurvivable can generate affective feelings for the place where life continues.

Migrants often identify with multiple homes due to the experience of living in-between countries and in border regions. For asylum-seekers who have not fully established their lives in Switzerland, home is not necessarily attached to one place. Instead, home is experienced as a multiplicity of places, most often Switzerland and the country of origin. Many asylum-seekers expressed both a desire for the home they left and an appreciation for being in Switzerland. Some asylum-seekers told me that they felt half at home in Switzerland. An asylum-seeker from Sudan said he missed his country of origin, "half, half." For him, access to resources such as doctors

18 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_IN, Pos. 337.

19 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, October 29, 2018: 20181029_8AS_IN, Pos. 175–78.

and schools were important markers of home that were found in Switzerland but not Sudan.[20] Another regular visitor to DA-SEIN, originally from Eritrea, who had been in Switzerland seven years, also said he felt about 50% Swiss. He said that in his country of origin he knows the cultural rules better. In addition, he said that not being able to express himself in Swiss German makes him feel less at home.[21] Another asylum-seeker missed the religious rituals in their country of origin but associated political freedoms of Switzerland with home.

Still others told me Switzerland would never be home because their familiarity with the language, social customs, and history would always be limited. Switzerland will never be associated with their family, religion, or language. Similarly, another reason given for why Switzerland did not always feel like home was because of the difficulty of navigating a new system and country. As an asylum-seeker told me, "It is really hard for a refugee to live here, to work here, to study here. I think Switzerland is one of the hardest countries in Europe, with the rules and everything."[22] This difficulty often led to feeling unsettled and unsure about what the future might hold.

7.3 Language and Home

Familiarity and fluency with a language often creates a strong connection to home. While language is a practical consideration for adapting to a new place, language is also connected to affective experiences of home, including connections to family and community. Some asylum-seekers directly named language as a part of home, using the German word for mother tongue (*Muttersprache*) and reflecting on the sense of familiarity that language provides. Both volunteers and asylum-seekers described language as providing a sense of home, especially their distinct dialects. For Swiss volunteers, their particular German dialect, which varied depending on the region where they grew up, was a strong marker of home. One volunteer explained that Standard German is not a first language, but a foreign language. The first language and their mother tongue, for Swiss people is usually the dialect they were raised with. This volunteer explained that the language with which a child is first spoken to by the mother, or other caregiver, is a familiar place that evokes home.[23] Another vol-

20 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, May 10, 2018: 20180510_20AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 5.

21 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 29, 2018: 20180929_JUNG-SEIN_v1_PO, Pos. 13.

22 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 29, 2018: 20180829_5AS_IN, Pos. 93.

23 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, October 25, 2018: 20181025_4FW_IN, Pos. 22–24.

unteer relayed how when his wife travels to the Swiss region where she grew up, she has a feeling of home, speaking and hearing the dialect that was her first language.[24]

For many asylum-seekers, language was also a marker of home. A man from Afghanistan, who had grown up in Iran, told me he felt most at home in Iran because he knows the landscape, the people, and the language. "If you don't know the language, you can't feel at home. You have to first know the language."[25] Language and dialect indicate familiarity with a region or group of people. This association of language with home varied based on characteristics of a person's country (or region) of origin. One asylum-seeker had grown up speaking multiple languages and identified home less with one language. Language was instead more of a skill that allowed him to interact with different people and negotiate different situations. In other instances, language had already been decoupled from experiences of home. A man from Pakistan explained that English and Urdu are Pakistan's national languages, a legacy of British colonization, and that his first language, Pashto, is not even taught in schools.[26] One way that colonizers took control of places was by imposing their ways of life and making colonized places more familiar and home-like. This included using their own languages and introducing transported customs into a new place.

For some asylum-seekers, language represented the familiarity of home that was lacking for them in Switzerland. During a conversation with an asylum-seeker who had received his "B" residency permit, he explained that feeling at home is about being able to be understood and to understand others. This understanding is not consistently available to him in Switzerland, as he does not always understand the language and dialects when people speak to him.[27] "Understanding" also applied to other social and cultural aspects of home, including a familiarity with a "way of life"[28] and "understanding the system."[29] At the governmental level in Basel, the importance of learning was reinforced, even at informal events. At the Projekt DA-SEIN summer festival, Renata Gäumann, Coordinator of Asylum and Refugee Work in Basel-Stadt (*Koordinatorin Asyl- und Flüchtlingswesen Basel-Stadt*), emphasized the importance of learning German and praised Projekt DA-SEIN for their efforts in sup-

24 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 13, 2018: 20180913_1FW_IN, Pos. 221.

25 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, June 13, 2018: 20180613_25AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 8.

26 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 29, 2018: 20180829_5AS_IN, Pos. 265.

27 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 29, 2018: 20180929_JUNG-SEIN_v1_PO, Pos. 13.

28 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über die Ausländerinnen und Ausländer*, 142.20.

29 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 13, 2018: 20180713_3AS_IN, Pos. 454.

porting language acquisition. Citing writer Christian Morgenstern, who wrote "My home is not where I live, but where I am understood," she went on to say, "And we know, of course, central to understanding is having a common language. To learn German, to speak German, and to improve German; to speak with one another, always with a deeper understanding."[30]

While many asylum-seekers agreed with the sentiment that language and communication facilitate connection and belonging, learning German did not necessarily provide a new sense of home in Basel. The singular focus on German stands in contrast to the multilingual landscape of Switzerland. Switzerland has four national languages and numerous regional dialects. Learning Standard German was useful for official interactions and finding work or schooling. Yet, in everyday interactions, the local dialect of Swiss German is usually spoken. While most people could switch easily and willingly to Standard German, it is still not the usual language of everyday life. Therefore, while learning Standard German facilitated official integration on the bureaucratic level, it did not necessarily facilitate social integration.

The ability to speak a language does not create home, yet language facilitates access and deepens connections. Language is often closely connected to place by generating affective associations and by creating access to social, political, and cultural systems. Yet, the affective and cultural aspects of home are often difficult to disentangle, as seen in associations of proficiency in a language with belonging. Speaking a language can be an act of resistance or compliance and it can also call up memories of past homes and distant family. Language straddles understandings of home shaped by the cultural and social practices of a place and understandings of home shaped by affective experiences. These tensions do not necessarily need to be resolved, but they illustrate the ways that home and belonging are not linear experiences, how markers of home can both include and exclude, and how home is not characterized by a single experience or by one definition.

7.4 Relationships and Home

The place of home is more than language, it is more than land, and it is more than resources; it is also connected to relationships to people and shared practices. This relational underpinning makes home a culturally determined and socially constructed place with social connections, relationships, and family as key defining features. Understanding place as socially constructed emphasizes the centrality of relationship in shaping place, and this is especially true for the place of home. Relationships

30 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 11, 2018: 20180811_Sommerfest_8EI, Pos. 20.

showed up in many different ways in the narratives of home shared by asylum-seekers as well as in interactions I observed at Projekt DA-SEIN, as seen in Chapter 6. Many asylum-seekers identified home with family, especially the mother, and with being part of a community as a neighbor, friend, or brother. An interviewee from Eritrea told me that home is about family and people, not a specific location. "Home is when I live with my family, anywhere. When they are all around me, that is home."[31] Many asylum-seekers, when asked what they miss about home, first named people, often their mothers, but also fathers, grandparents, sisters, brothers, cousins, aunts and uncles, friends, nieces, and nephews. During formal interviews I asked specifically about important people in asylum-seekers' lives, now and in the past. In addition, during my informal interviews and casual conversations at the program, I frequently heard stories about home and family and was shown photos of families and friends.

These photos and accompanying stories often expressed longing, concern for safety, and pride in their families. Asylum-seekers shared information about the kind of work, education, and activities that their family members engaged in as well as about their relationships with these family members. This centrality of family to home was frequently conveyed in my interviews in terms of the loss of the ability to be with family and the difficulty of remaining connected to them. These stories were connected to other losses, such as the loss of possibilities for education, safety, work, and starting a family. I noticed how often connections to place were tied to relationships with people and the activities they shared. An asylum-seeker from Afghanistan described his village to me not with a description of the physical layout, but by explaining what I would experience when I arrived there. "When you come into my village, you will have no chance of paying money for anything, you will be given food for free and they will be happy to see you […] my whole family, my father's family and my mother's family."[32] This answer focuses on my experience of the village as mediated by his family, not on the landscape, food, or architecture of the place. The people and the practices they engage in, such as the sharing of food, the expressions of welcome and joy, and the presence of important people, animate this description of home and reflect affective associations. These affective associations with place can become identifiers of home over and above the materiality of a place, as they foreground feelings, emotions, and moods.[33] Affective associations build a deeper sense of place, especially in instances of culturally and personally meaningful places, such as home.[34]

31 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 13, 2018: 20180713_3AS_IN, Pos. 304.

32 Interview by Katherine Kunz, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_IN, Pos. 75.

33 Fuchs, "The Phenomenology of Affectivity."

34 Low, *Spatializing Culture*.

7.4.1 Separation from Family

In answering the question about important places in their lives, many other asylum-seekers gave answers that were steeped in stories about people and relationships. For example, when I asked an asylum-seeker from Pakistan to tell me about an important place in his life, he described going to school for the first time with his brother. "The most important place to me was the first time I went to school; I think in 1990. I can still remember that day. I was playing outside with my cousins and my brother just called me, held my hand, and took me to the school."[35] This story focuses on who he was with and who accompanied him to school, namely his brother. This focus on relationships emerged in many stories told by asylum-seekers about home and place.

An asylum-seeker from Afghanistan spoke at length about his younger sister, who he was particularly close to and especially missed. He spoke with pride about her success in academics and her desire to be a doctor. He was sure she would succeed at this, and through her he felt a connection to his own academic career, which was cut short. He told me that he had always been at the top of his class, but after ninth grade had stopped going to school because it was too dangerous to travel on the local roads to the high school in another village. Instead, he worked in farming with his father.[36] His story revealed multiple aspects of home: pride in his family, some of his reasons for leaving, and the losses he and his family had experienced.

Most asylum-seekers stay connected with their families over the internet via messaging applications like WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. They do not generally have regular access to a computer or an email address. Some asylum-seekers told me that intermittent access to electricity or disruptions caused by bombings, which can take out satellite dishes, interfered with their ability to talk to their families. Many asylum-seekers told me that they long to see their families, but that this prospect is out of reach due to their status as asylum-seekers. A man from Pakistan told me he is unsure when he will be able to see his family.

> When I was talking to my mum she said, "I would just like see you once again." And I said, "Okay, wait, if I get some documents then maybe it's possible that you can visit me. Otherwise, I'm not coming there. Because I'm sure that in the coming few years, the situation will be exactly the same or maybe a bit worse."[37]

35 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 5, 2018: 20180905_6AS_IN, Pos. 23.

36 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, December 20, 2018: 20181220_10AS_DASEIN_II, Pos. 3.

37 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 5, 2018: 20180905_6AS_IN, Pos. 453.

Both bureaucratic hurdles and concerns about safety if they return to their countries of origin limit future possibilities of seeing family. A man from Afghanistan shared stories of his family, concerns for their safety, and his sadness that he could not visit them. He told me that when he talks to his mother, she is sad and cries, worried that he is all alone and asking if he has friends. He assures her that he has friends, but I noted a sadness and sense of loss in how he described the conversation with his mother.[38] Later he told me that, once he receives his "F" permit, he will bypass the schooling opportunities open to him in Switzerland in favor of getting a job to support himself as soon as possible, in order to be able to see his family again.[39] The pressure to succeed in creating a life in Switzerland was often in tension with the desire to stay connected to one's country of origin and to return to family.

7.4.2 Mother as Home

While asylum-seekers told me about many family members when discussing home, the most common relationships associated with home were with parents. Fathers often appeared in stories about circumstances and reasons for migrating. Some asylum-seekers I spoke with had lost their fathers to death, or they had suffered loss of employment or imprisonment. An asylum-seeker from Afghanistan shared that his father had been imprisoned for many years, and that as the oldest son, he took over responsibility for leading the family.[40] The father of another asylum-seeker had died, and it was only the son's auto repair shop and farming that supported the family. Fathers filled functional roles in stories about home, but it was mothers who most often represented a connection to the affective associations of home.

Mothers represented multiple aspects of home. In my interviews and conversations, mothers were described as a defining feature of home, a metaphor for home, or someone they missed, loved, and wanted to take care of. When I interviewed an asylum-seeker from Afghanistan, I asked him what he misses about home. His first response was, "I miss my mother," before naming other family members, and then his whole village.[41] A man from Eritrea told me during our interview that he misses places, family, and friends, but especially his mother. "I miss family and also the friends that were together there and, especially, my mom and two sisters, especially

38 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, February 15, 2018: 20180215_2AS_DA-SEIN_II.

39 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 18, 2019: 20190118_2AS_walk_II, Pos. 2. In order to receive a more permanent residence permit, which would allow him to travel outside of Switzerland, he needs to support himself for a certain number of years without social assistance.

40 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 4, 2018: 20180704_2AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 4.

41 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_IN, Pos. 184–85.

my mother. I always pray that I will have a chance to see her again, face to face."[42] He shared this with deep emotion that caused us to pause the interview and sit with his desire; I offered to pray for his wish to see his mother again.

A man from Pakistan discussed what home means to him and named the presence of his mother.

> When I went to college, I was living in a student hostel. When I come back home, my mom was not there, even though my sister was there. The first question I asked was, "Where is mom?" And she said: "Oh, she's somewhere else, she's coming back tonight or tomorrow." Then I feel like I'm not at home. Because, I mean, my mother was something to me and home, like giving me a home-feeling.[43]

In this example, the mother was associated with home through feelings of belonging. A man from Nigeria who was briefly a participant at Projekt DA-SEIN showed joy in meeting a volunteer's mother. He said that he had lost his mother and missed giving her gifts. He would like to adopt this mother so he can give her gifts.[44] An interview partner from Afghanistan described the feelings he has for home as the feelings a child has for their mother.

> If there is a baby, if you bring this baby to others, maybe this baby will still cry, and he wants his mother. If you bring this baby back to his mother he will be happy and he will smile and he will stop crying. He will feel relaxed because he found his real place. Home is something like that. Like we are in our mother's hug.[45]

In this way, the mother is often associated with feelings of security and familiarity.

This association of the mother with home was also used metaphorically, as seen in the previous excerpt. Another man from Afghanistan defined his country as a mother. He sighed deeply when I asked if he could imagine Switzerland as home. He said, "Foreign countries will never give you the feelings you have from your own country. For everyone, his country is like his mother."[46] I asked him to say more about what home means to him and he described a connection to family. "Home for me means my father or my mother and my soul. Even if we don't have anything in our country, still we feel that it's our mother and we should love our country, even if

42 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 13, 2018: 20180713_3AS_IN, 262–69.

43 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 5, 2018: 20180905_6AS_IN, Pos. 99.

44 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 27, 2018: 20180927_DA-SEIN_PO.

45 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 29, 2018: 20180829_5AS_IN, Pos. 146.

46 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 29, 2018: 20180829_5AS_IN, Pos. 138.

we don't have food to eat or maybe even a home for living. Still, it is home, home is home."[47] In his description, the mother, and therefore home, is based on birth, nationality, and kinship. He went on to describe home as like the blood that runs in one's veins.

Feminist scholars have described the challenges of associating home with the maternal body. As Young writes, "In the idea of 'home,' man projects onto woman the nostalgic longing for the lost wholeness of the original mother."[48] Despite this idealization, mothers are often subjected to a loss of autonomy and to unacknowledged and devalued physical and emotional labor. Yet, Young also points out that the preserving and caring work of mothers specifically, and women generally, in the home, while undervalued, provides a crucial value to humans in areas such as identity and safety.[49] Young locates these activities within Heidegger's framework of home as dwelling and building. Heidegger distinguishes two aspects in his definition of building, construction and preservation, but goes on to focus almost solely on the activity of construction. Young reclaims the aspect of preservation as typically the domain of women. "Preservation makes and remakes home as a support for personal identity without accumulation, certainty, or fixity. While preservation, a typically feminine activity, is traditionally devalued at least in Western conceptions of history and identity, it has crucial human value."[50] Preservation makes home something more than a commodity, a constructed place, or an imperialist artifact. Preservation builds continuity even amid changing circumstances, such as births and deaths or political and social changes. This quality of home has historically been the work of women and is reflected in the ways that asylum-seekers commented on mothers as connected to home.

7.4.3 Community as Home

The proximity to extended communities in asylum-seekers' countries of origin was often named as a marker of home. For example, extended families living together was a common practice in some asylum-seekers' countries of origin. The separation of generations in Switzerland and other Western countries was often seen in contrast. A man from Pakistan described the house where he grew up as quite different from housing in Switzerland.

47 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 29, 2018: 20180829_5AS_IN, Pos. 138–45.

48 Young, "House and Home," 135.

49 Young, "House and Home," 135–36.

50 Young, "House and Home," 135–36.

> We are living in a really different environment because there the family is so important, even the extended family. We were living in a separate house but with my uncles and their children. We were all together going to school and coming back and playing together. And we didn't feel alone at all.[51]

Here home is identified with a place, yet, even more important than this specific housing arrangement, there is the strong connection to people. The way relationships are arranged and engendered shapes home and generates affective feelings of connection.

The loss of proximity to community generated feelings of grief as well. Many asylum-seekers expressed sadness over the inability to care for aging parents due to geographic distance. This commitment to family was usually expressed as a cherished role more than a duty and was framed in contrast to Switzerland, where the elderly often reside in nursing homes. A man from Afghanistan described the importance of caring for one's parents: "When the mother and father are old, the sons and daughters help the mother. There are no old-persons homes at all. Not at all. Until the mother, or until the father dies, the son always helps. The son always helps."[52] Some asylum-seekers expressed disbelief at the practice of nursing homes in Switzerland, insisting that these would not exist in their countries of origin. A man from Pakistan reflected,

> What I found so interesting here in, in Europe, is these *Altersheim* or old-age-houses. We have no such concepts of these things. It would be so unacceptable in our culture if you sent your parents to an old-age-home and just visited once in a while. It would be respectless, if you did such things.[53]

The desire to care for aging parents was expressed as both an obligation and an honor and was often tied to a sense of home in the country of origin. An asylum-seeker from Eritrea connected caring for older family members with a sense of home that includes knowing one's role in the family. Knowing the "way of life"[54] of a place is having a familiarity with a place that is often experienced as a sense of belonging:

> I find that the way of life here is also different. For example, my parents, when they get older and older, then I must have the responsibility for them, I must care for

51 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 5, 2018: 20180905_6AS_IN, Pos. 57.

52 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 19, 2018: 20180719_4AS_IN, Pos. 398.

53 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 5, 2018: 20180905_6AS_IN, Pos. 285.

54 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über die Ausländerinnen und Ausländer*, 142.20.

> them, I must look after them, what they need, what they want. And until they die, they live with me, with my family and my children and with my wife. But here in Europe it is totally different, totally different. In Islam it says: "When you care for your mother and your father, you have a great reward, you are in a great position." You have to look after them because they raised you and looked after you.[55]

There is a reciprocal relationship of caring for children and caring for parents that is reflected in family roles, lineages, and traditions. Commitment and duty to family revealed relational aspects of home, and many asylum-seekers felt a distinct loss of home in the inability to care for parents. In this way, helping is seen as productive and a source of meaning, which includes meanings associated with home. As seen in the previous chapter, helping is a way to connect to something beyond the self and to make a contribution.[56] For asylum-seekers, many of these social connections and opportunities to be part of a larger community have been severed, and there was grief and loss in this experience.

In addition to relationships with family, community, and neighbors, other communal practices, such as games and sports, festivals, religious rituals, and food practices, helped to define home. Roles in these community practices signified experiences of home and were enacted through relationships. I heard many stories about the importance of sports and games in the communities that asylum-seekers had left.[57] Soccer and volleyball were games named by participants from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and these were often described as being played informally or with family and friends. More organized games, including kite races and horse competitions, brought villages and communities together. For one asylum-seeker, his involvement in sports was closely tied to his village community, which prayed for him to win horse competitions. "All the people from my village came and said, 'God, please help him. Please let him win.' They all say that, they all pray. These people love me." He went on to say, "the whole village is my family. They all say, you are my son."[58] He expressed pride in his role in the community, in being someone viewed as a son and someone who garnered the praise and encouragement of the entire community. Community practices were often described from the perspective of roles, such as being a son, brother, cousin, neighbor, or friend. Having a role indicates being part of something larger than the self and making a contribution, and it can designate experiences of home and belonging.

The emphasis on roles and helping in the community showed up in other ways. An asylum-seeker told me a lot of people will come to him if they need help, and he

55 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 13, 2018: 20180713_3AS_IN, Pos. 458.

56 Malkki, *The Need to Help*, 7.

57 Because most of my interview partners were young, single men (between the ages of 20–35), games may have appeared more frequently than they would have with an older population.

58 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_IN, Pos. 175–77.

gave an example of helping members of his community, especially those in need. He said that if a woman was living alone with her daughter who was of an age to marry, he would be someone the woman would call to help her organize a wedding. He felt that this role was important, because he was able to help her, but also because he was playing a role that allowed her to be viewed as less alone in the community.[59] Another asylum-seeker, though non-religious himself, described Islam's commitment to caring for the stranger and refugee. Back home, he told me, if someone came to the village they would be housed, cared for, and fed, without being charged money.[60] These examples of helping and of including outsiders in a community were in contrast to many experiences of seeking asylum.

Another man from Afghanistan described the community events that occurred around religious holidays, including visiting homes in his village (around 200 homes), as emblematic of his connection to the community. After these festivals he and his family would go to everyone's houses, and they would have huge spreads of food. He says he knows everyone and if he needed help, they would help him, and if he needed money, they would loan it to him. He finds this very different from Basel, where his community does not feel as secure and reliable.[61] Weddings were also frequently tied to experiences of home within communities. A man from Pakistan described the significance of weddings in his memory of home. "I mean the big memory I have is of the marriage and the way we celebrate. We, men, women, boys, girls, we are going together in a few cars and playing music and so much fun is going on."[62] In terms of experiences of home, the fun and playfulness of community appeared to be as equally important as caring and helping.

7.4.4 Complicated Relationships

It can be tempting to generalize asylum-seekers as highly attached to family. And certainly, their life-or-death situations often make family a pressing need. But like people everywhere, relationships with family are not always easy or one-dimensional. Some asylum-seekers chose to come to Switzerland, and not another European country, because they did not want to be with other family or community members. Speaking with a Kurdish man from Syria, I asked why he did not go to Germany like his brother. He said no, he did not want to go there, making a face. He said all the Kurds from his home village are going to Germany and he didn't want to

59 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 4, 2018: 20180704_2AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 4.

60 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 5, 2018: 20180905_6AS_IN, Pos. 215.

61 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 19, 2018: 20180719_4AS_NO, Pos. 16.

62 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 5, 2018: 20180905_6AS_IN, Pos. 105.

be there with them and all the problems and conflicts of home.[63] Another man from Pakistan told me his relative in England wanted him to come there and marry her daughter. But he said he didn't want to do that. He said he wanted his own life.[64]

This ability to forge one's one life and separate from home is part of the tension of "staying and going" that Joisten describes in her book *Philosophy of Home*.[65] Asylum-seekers are often denied this tension and other contradictory experiences of being human. Instead, they become identified exclusively through the lens of seeking asylum and viewed through the complicated political context of asylum. Yet, leaving home and family is also part of growing up and establishing one's own identity. Leaving can also solidify ties to family, as it allows a person to gain more perspective on their home, family, and place of origin. Asylum-seekers were not able to freely choose how and when to separate from home, yet this tension still exists within their more limited choices. Salman Akhtar has written that migration is a third individuation, which involves leaving the familiar, navigating new social and cultural challenges, and entering a new phase of life.[66]

In the period of uncertainty, as asylum-seekers wait for the results of their asylum applications, associations with home may become transient and influenced by current events in a person's life. Feelings and preferences change. A man from Afghanistan told me that before arriving in Switzerland he had visited his uncle in Austria, who wanted him to stay there. He told me he wished he had stayed in Austria because it is so hard in Switzerland, and he has waited so long for the results of his asylum application. But on another day, he said, no, Switzerland is better, and he is glad that he did not stay in Austria. At the end of the conversation, he said he received his "F" permit one week ago and his ability to stay in Switzerland and to access resources had increased.[67] As circumstances and relationships change, so do associations with place and home. Asylum-seekers are often denied the human experiences of separating from home, of changing one's mind, of wanting two different things at once, or of being uncertain about what is the best course of action.

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63 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, April 25, 2018: 20180425_19AS_DA-SEIN_Input_II, Pos. 4.

64 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 29, 2018: 20180829_5AS_IN, Pos. 38–39.

65 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*.

66 Salman Akhtar, "A Third Individuation: Immigration, Identity, and the Psychoanalytic Process," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytical Association* 43, no. 4 (1995), https://doi.org/10.1177/000306519504300406; Bieler and Kunz, "Responding to the Loss of Home."

67 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, December 6, 2018: 20181206_13AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 4.

7.5 The Absence of Home

Leaving home is a loss that generates feelings such homesickness and nostalgia. These feelings often indicate that a place is not home, but they may also bring home into greater focus. As many philosophies argue, there must be both staying and leaving for home to exist. For Joisten, home consists not only in being present, but also in leaving it and longing for it.[68] Thus, homesickness, nostalgia, and longing are not the opposites of home, but are experiences of home, where absence itself makes home visible. What is longed for, imagined, and lost is as much a part of home as what is concrete, solid, and present.

Asylum-seeking is an extreme form of loss, as familiar people, places, and one's own agency are taken away. Homesickness and loss can become preoccupying themes, making home, counterintuitively, even more present.[69] Schlink and Schüle write that home is known in homesickness and the longing for what is lost. Homesickness makes what is absent present, even if it no longer exists.[70] An asylum-seeker I spoke with reflected this sentiment, saying that he only recognized home when he had left it. Joisten's philosophy of home foregrounds this tension between absence and presence. While home is often associated with words such as living, security, and familiarity, Joisten argues that home is also, and equally, found in leaving, insecurity, and unfamiliarity.[71] She defines home with the phrase *Heimweg*, a play on the German words for home and away, arguing that there is no pure form of living because it is always tied to leaving.[72]

Human experience is defined by this tension of being grounded in a place while at the same time being defined by its absence or by leaving that place. Even when a home is lost, connections to the former home are still present in memories, longings, and narratives.[73] These connections continue, in new ways. For some asylum-seekers in Basel, they continue through the telling of stories, through the dreams of returning, and through embodied practices such as food, religious ritual, and music. These connections to familiar places and practices will be explore in greater depth in Chapter 8.

68 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*, 27.

69 Kaufmann, "Heimat als Präsenz im Entzug," 15–45.

70 Schlink, *Heimat als Utopie*; Schüle, *Heimat*.

71 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*, 51.

72 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*, 27.

73 Andrea Bieler, "Heimatlosigkeit Als Thema Der Interkulturellen Seelsorge," *Praktische Theologie* 53, no. 4 (2018), https://doi.org/10.14315/prth-2018-530408.

7.5.1 Affective Dimensions of Nostalgia and Pride

During my research, I was not able to visit the places that many asylum-seekers considered home. Instead, I was introduced to the homes that asylum-seekers left through verbal descriptions, photos, google maps, history lessons, and stories of people, as well as by sampling foods common to these areas. There was often pride in the home that was lost, as well as nostalgia, especially for the physical beauty and people. Sometimes this nostalgia and pride were conveyed through stories or by sharing memories of a place, such as descriptions of the geography, landscapes, architecture, and history. There was pride in sharing detailed descriptions of the places that they were from and that were unfamiliar to me, and this often included the political situations that had caused them to leave their countries.

A Kurdish man spoke at length about the discrimination he had experienced as a member of a minority group in his hometown in Turkey. Yet he also described the beauty of the village's mountains and wild flora. When he was young, his cousin would carry him on his back up the nearby mountain. He described how he would fall asleep and how when he woke up, he was overlooking a beautiful valley with a river that flowed down into the valley with peppermint growing everywhere along its banks. He associated this place with the memory of its beauty as well as with the peppermint tea he continues to drink and enjoy in Switzerland.[74] This nostalgic memory generated both pride and grief as he reflected on the loss of home.

During the fall 2018 Projekt DA-SEIN festival, I offered a workshop creating collages about home. One of my interview partners, a man from Syria, selected a photo of a green, windswept field dotted with bright orange flowers. When I asked why he selected this image for home, he said that this photo is what the countryside looks like in Syria in March, specifically the way the flowers bloom. He said that he was born in March and that when these flowers bloom it is also the Kurdish new year celebration.[75] These affective associations with place revealed familiarity, belonging, and nostalgia and are situated within places and specific communities.

Other times pride and nostalgia were expressed through descriptions of the history of a place. Stories that were shared with me included that Asmara, Eritrea, is known as "Little Rome" and that a Turkish village where an asylum-seeker grew up is home to one of the world's first churches.[76] Both of the men who told me about these places pulled out their phones to show me photos of the cities and important

74 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, December 9, 2018: 20181209_1AS_II, Pos. 8.

75 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, November 3, 2018: 20181103_Herbstfest_v2_PO, Pos. 19.

76 The man from Turkey further explained the history of his city, which was part of ancient Mesopotamia. The man from Eritrea further described Asmara, the capital, as a beautiful city that is called "Little Rome" due to the colonial architecture remaining from the Italian colonists.

landmarks on the internet. At first, they showed me internet pictures of these places, but then they showed me personal photos as well. I was shown photos of the militarization of the Turkish border, alongside photos of this asylum-seeker's grandfather, who still lived in Turkey. This juxtaposition of photos is perhaps a more accurate descriptor of home as something that includes both joy and grief, safety and danger. Home contains aspects that generate feelings of comfort and safety as well as aspects that may cause harm or do violence. This ambivalent nature of home echoes Joisten's definition of home as in-between. But beyond academic descriptions of home, there is often messiness within relationships to people and places, including home. Acknowledging these complex experiences helps to deconstruct notions of home that are exclusively tied to that which is comfortable and idyllic. Instead, place and home can more accurately reflect life's trials as well as its joys.

In this way, while asylum-seekers often shared about the challenges that forced them to leave their homes, they also wanted to share positive details about the places they had left. Several asylum-seekers described their country as a wonderful place that had become overshadowed by war or corruption. A man from Syria told me he was from Damascus and indicated that the ongoing war had caused great destruction there. In describing Damascus, he said pointedly, "It *was* a beautiful place."[77] A desire to show a more positive side of the home that was left may also have been motivated by experiences of discrimination. A man from Afghanistan was keenly aware of how others reacted to his being from Afghanistan.

> Right now, if I say, "I'm from Afghanistan," people will go back ten meters and say, "oh you're from Afghanistan." They think that in Afghanistan people are like animals or maybe they are terrorists. But honestly, it's not like that. I hope that if someone in Europe or in America asks, "Where are you from?" and I answer that I am from Afghanistan, I hope this person will come to hug me, not go back from me or be afraid from me.[78]

Negative imagery of a country of origin impacts how asylum-seekers are treated. The political and social repercussions of a being from a particular place often further cement the relationship to home with the country of origin. In addition, the desire to reframe negative imagery of countries of origin was often accompanied by a desire for the circumstances there to improve. The man quoted above also hoped for improved circumstances in Afghanistan, which would improve his country and the lives of the people there.

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77 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, March 1, 2018: 20180301_DASEIN_v2_PO, Pos. 6.

78 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 29, 2018: 20180829_5AS_IN, Pos. 286–89.

> For every Afghan, the most important thing is peace and security in Afghanistan. Our people should live in peace because I know the people of Afghanistan are tired of being killed, tired of war. I don't think I know a family who has not lost a member of his family in the war in Afghanistan.[79]

There is a desire for a better outcome for the countries and people that have been left behind. This deep care and attachment to the places of home continued, even if asylum-seekers were forced to flee.

While nostalgia and homesickness can be construed as a distraction or fantasy, they are also acts of remembering and reconstituting home. Nostalgia can be seen as a preservation of aspects of home that are important to an individual. As referenced earlier, Young argues that there is value in preservation, in remembering and re-membering. "[T]he narratives of the history of what brought us here are not fixed, and part of the creative and moral task of preservation is to reconstruct the connection of the past to the present in light of new events, relationships, and political understandings."[80] Nostalgia and pride can build a sense of self and of home even amid dislocation. Nostalgia also illustrates how home is not fixed. While a past version of home may be desired, home consists of frequent and ongoing renegotiations and reconfigurations.[81]

7.5.2 (Mis)remembering Home

Despite the value in remembering, there can also be pain in dwelling on the lost home. One response to the experience of homesickness is to create distance between the lost home and the current place. This can serve to avoid topics that bring up painful emotions and memories. In my research, asylum-seekers distanced themselves from the home that was lost in a variety of ways, including by declining requests for interviews, avoiding discussions of the topic of home, and focusing on Swiss migration requirements. One asylum-seeker told me that she did not want to do an interview because thinking about her homeland made her too sad.

One example of avoiding the remembrance of home came during an interview with a man from Syria. During the interview, I asked him what he missed from home. He said he could not remember anything from home, therefore there was nothing that he missed. He used a tone that was both humorous and serious when making this statement. He said that he left his home seven years ago, so he could not remember anything from home anymore. When I expressed my surprise that he

79 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 29, 2018: 20180829_5AS_IN, Pos. 286–89.

80 Young, "House and Home," 154.

81 Joisten, "Woher komme ich?," 41.

did not miss anything, he shared a story. He said that when talking to his mother the day before, she asked him when he would come home. But he answered to her:

> "Everything is different there now. Everyone has constructed a new, bigger house and the streets has been rebuilt and I would not recognize any of it." Just yesterday, I searched for my house on google street view and could not find the house. I went to my location, but I did not find anything, not my house.

He laughed and then continued, "Yes, I have forgotten everything."[82] In his absence from home, what was familiar to him and constituted his experience of home had changed and become unrecognizable. The new houses were not his home, even if the geographic place was the same. He had forgotten home because it had disappeared for him. Missing home in this statement can be interpreted as no longer recognizing the home that was left. The disappearance of home in this context occurred because places changed, and individuals changed. There is grief at this loss of recognition and a longing for the home that was left, which may no longer exist. In another sense, it is home that has forgotten him. The place of home has changed physically, through time and reconstruction, and emotional attachments have also shifted, perhaps in less describable ways. The continual evolution of places and the ways they are constructed by the people and practices that occur there mean that the place he once identified as home has been transformed since his departure. This is often a painful reality for migrants who return to homes they have left only to find that things are different and that they no longer feel at home there. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall writes about the complexity of returning home, "The link between these communities and their 'homeland' or the possibility of a return to the past are much more precarious than usually thought."[83]

Homesickness highlights what is imagined and desired about home, more than home's actual state. In the case of the asylum-seeker described above, he searched for a place on google maps that no longer existed and expressed feelings of loss and disorientation. Absence, in Joisten's definition, remains intrinsically part of the home concept.[84] Joisten's philosophy of home emphasizes that relationships with the world are always changing. She uses the analogy of standing in a river to describe how a single place is not static and instead changes in each moment.[85] Dwelling in the world is not fixed, but constantly in motion. Yet, for asylum-seekers, absence and change can also take on more active roles. Absence is often both a lived experience

82 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 29, 2018: 20180929_7AS_IN, Pos. 528.

83 Stuart Hall, "Culture, Community, Nation," *Cultural Studies* 7 (1993): 355, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502389300490251.

84 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*, 51.

85 Joisten, "Woher komme ich?," 36.

and a necessary step in order to create home, as the home that was left remains yet it just out of reach. Absence may be both a disappearance and a necessary separation in order to build a new home.

7.6 The Shifting Place of Home

Multiple aspects of home as place were reflected in my interviews and interactions with asylum-seekers. Home was experienced as being grounded in a place through citizenship and official paperwork, through access to safety and to resources necessary to sustain life, and through language and affective associations. Home as place was also tied to family and community relationships and to the social and cultural practices of these places, including expectations of caring for aging family members. In particular, mothers often occupy a specific role in understandings of home and serve as a metaphor for home. Absence, longing, and multiplicity often create complex constellations of home in the context of asylum-seeking in Basel.

When the diverse markers of home are not met in one geographic place, a singular notion of home is disrupted. Home shifts from a single geographic place to a dynamic experience located in multiple places and affective experiences. Feminist scholars argue that the ability to have a singular and stable notion of home is often connected to privileges of gender, citizenship, race, and class.[86] There are many examples of this privilege, and it is also seen in the differences between the lives of volunteers at Projekt DA-SEIN and the lives of asylum-seekers. Yet, even within a life that is lived in more stable political and bureaucratic circumstances, home is embedded in complex histories; individuals are mobile and can have multiple places of residence, work, or leisure, and feelings of home can be impacted by shifting affective associations.

In the experience of asylum-seeking, that which is unfamiliar and strange in definitions of home moves closer to the surface. Nausner describes this with the notion of the "uncanny." That which is strange or different is also part of home, yet it is often pushed away in favor of maintaining familiarity and similarity.[87] Yet, for asylum-seekers, the unfamiliar is often the dominant experience when the familiar home has been left behind. Asylum-seekers must learn to live and adapt in places that are unlike the homes they left. The new place may one day offer a home, but, especially while waiting for results of an asylum application, it is characterized by unfamiliarity and uncertainty. This period of waiting is marked by lack of access to education, work, and social engagement. It is a space of asylum-seekers being phys-

86 Young, "House and Home," 157.

87 Nausner, "Homeland as Borderland," 118–19; See also: Blickle, *Heimat*.

ically in Switzerland but not yet knowing if their asylum application will be accepted and if they will be able to remain in the country long-term.

Asylum-seekers who are waiting for responses to their asylum applications occupy a kind of "third space" while living between geographic locations and social contexts. Third space, according to Edward Soja, is a way of opening up other perspectives and options within binary systems.[88] It can refer to experiences of living in multiple cultures, of bridging racial and ethnic identities, or of operating between social spheres, such as the personal and the political.[89] It has a creative potential as it also navigates space amid power differentials and changes in social and cultural contexts.[90] For asylum-seekers, third spaces emerge from the multiplicity of places connected to their lives as well as the many ways of being required to move between social contexts, political systems, and cultures. Third space takes into account both absence and presence and the experience of straddling locations. In third space the tension between the home that was left and the potential for a new home is not discounted but is instead acknowledged as an experience of living in-between.

As noted in section 7.2, those who migrate often identify with multiple homes, have experienced instability in their ability to remain in one place, and have crossed many borders.[91] As Stock writes, "Both place of origin and destination influence migrants' routine practices and everyday lives, leading to their effective refusal to simply be located in just one place."[92] Aspects of home, whether social or geographic, may be attached to different places. Stock describes this "layeredness" of home in migration as comprising experiences of both the concrete and the symbolic.[93] Stock continues, "Rather than referring to one single home, in diasporic settings feelings of belonging can be directed towards both multiple physical places and remembered, imagined and/or symbolic spaces."[94] These multiple and shifting definitions of home draw on concrete and affective connections to people, places, and practices as well as on the ways that remembered associations are reflected in a new place. Ahmed similarly describes how multiple homes with different qualities exist for the migrant. In particular, she notices how the longed-for home is in contrast to where one lives. "The journey of migration involves a splitting of home as a place of origin and home as the sensory world of everyday experience."[95] This multiplicity

88 Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 5.

89 Soja, *Thirdspace*.

90 Soja, *Thirdspace*; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, new ed., Routledge Classics (Routledge, 2004).

91 Stock, "Home and Memory," 27.

92 Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration," 3.

93 Stock, "Home and Memory," 25.

94 Stock, "Home and Memory," 27.

95 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*.

becomes part of migrants' identities, as does traveling between and amid borders, an experience that does not end when a migrant crosses territorial lines.[96] This experience of being located neither fully in one place, nor fully in another, can be categorized as third space.

Living in multiple spaces is part of a migrant's experience that continues even after arriving at a destination. As Cruz describes, "To cross the border is to live on a border."[97] The continuing process of navigating borders and expectations as well as a focus on both the new and the old become part of asylum-seekers' definitions of home. As noted in section 7.1, even before arriving in Switzerland, many asylum-seekers had complicated connections to citizenship, country of origin, and home. Acknowledging the ways third spaces operate in the lives of asylum-seekers and within the structure of Projekt DA-SEIN creates opportunities to disentangle assumptions that link home primarily to citizenship and country of origin and to reveal more granular understandings of home.

For asylum-seekers, home cannot always be organized into bounded and knowable places. Instead, home is often a re-membering, a re-purposing, and a re-constructing. Because of the marginal location of many asylum-seekers, using peripheral spaces is necessary. It was often in these spaces that asylum-seekers found and (re)created the familiar. In these margins, I observed efforts to engage in activities of creating home, to define oneself in relation to current and past situations and communities, and to act even in the midst of waiting. This agency, as I have named it, will be explored as an aspect of home in the following chapter.

96 Kwok, "A Theology of Border Passage," 104.

97 Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration*, 122.