Katherine Kunz

CONTESTED HOME

Asylum-seeking in Switzerland and the Politics of Belonging, Place, and Religion

[transcript] RELIGION IN MOTION

Katherine Kunz
Contested Home

Editorial

Today, religious landscapes are in constant transformation due to migration movements and globalisation processes. In Europe and globally, communities of faith are going through the most varied pluralisation processes. Once rather homogeneous traditions become more differentiated, interreligious exchanges and conflict relations are reshaped.
This book series confronts such processes of change on local and transnational levels and examines changing theological concepts and religious practices in different contexts of migration. It addresses such transformations by foregrounding the agency of religious actors to open up new social contexts and to move within them in a way that is productive for religion and theology.
The series is edited by Andrea Bieler and Andreas Heuser.

Katherine Kunz is a visiting scholar at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. In 2018, she completed her doctorate in practical theology at Universität Basel and then worked as Director of the Fellowship in Public Scholarship and the Listening Lab at the Center for Religion and Cities at Morgan State University. Her research focuses on migration, religion, public scholarship, ethnography, and home.

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Dedicated to all asylum-seekers and refugees,
especially those at Projekt DA-SEIN in Basel, Switzerland from 2018 to 2019,
who engaged in conversations, shared their stories,
and brought both their grief and celebration to our time together.

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The level of effort, partnership, and support required to navigate the immigration system, as well as a willingness to reach beyond my comfort zone, came to define my work on this project. In the end, this book is so much more about relationships, surprising turns in the road, building trust, and a willingness to reflect, reevaluate, and sit with uncertainty, than it is about any final product. Yet, here, at least, is that final product, which would not have been possible without the creativity, humor, brilliance, and generosity of so many people.

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1. Introduction

As asylum-seeking to Europe surged in 2015 and the following years, scholars, politicians, churches, and individuals engaged in debate about appropriate responses. Media outlets directed attention towards the increase in migration, churches offered long-term and emergency outreach, and scholars debated the significance of the upswell of migration to Europe. Images of overcrowded boats crossing the Mediterranean Sea circulated worldwide and polarizing debates about a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border took center stage. As millions of people left their homes to seek the elements necessary to live and support themselves and their families, migration became a defining political and social issue.

The complexity of citizenship, borders, and social and political responses to migration reveal deeper impacts of migration. While migration is often contextualized in terms of access to resources, another thread runs deeper – migration brings questions of identity and belonging into the foreground. One way this belonging is concretized is through definitions of home. Home is a highly contextual topic that is relevant to the people, policies, and programs around asylum-seeking. Home is a word that often indicates a place where someone feels connected through emotions, memories, or longings. Migration is a lens to understand how people understand the word "home."

This book undertakes a critical examination of how home operates in the work of churches and the lives of those seeking asylum in Switzerland. It explores aspects of home within the experiences of asylum-seekers and in the practices of *Projekt DA-SEIN*, a church outreach program for refugees and asylum-seekers in Basel, Switzerland.[1] The surge in migration to Europe affected not only national policies and government, but also local communities. Towns absorbed newcomers; migration, citizenship, and borders became urgent topics in local municipalities; and non-governmental organizations, including churches, responded to the local social and physical needs of migrants. In Switzerland alone, 15,000 people applied for asylum

1 See also: Andrea Bieler and Katherine Kunz, "Responding to the Loss of Home: Perspectives and Practices of Refugees in the Context of Projekt DA-SEIN in Basel (Switzerland)," in *Religion and Migration: Negotiating Hospitality, Agency, and Vulnerability*, ed. Andrea Bieler et al. (Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2019).

in 2018.[2] As communities faced changes to their local demographics, churches were involved in responding to the concerns of the local population as well as to asylum-seekers.

The *Offene Kirche Elisabethen* (OKE), in Basel, Switzerland, is one local church that responded in a way particular to its mission and central location in the city. The OKE fills a unique role in the city of Basel. It is part of the two main, historical Christian denominations, the Evangelical-Reformed Church of Basel and the Roman Catholic Church in Basel. While these two churches support some of the costs of the building, its pastors, and its programs, the OKE does not have a traditional church structure or offerings. Founded in 1994 in response to changes in religious affiliation, church demographics, and theological priorities, the OKE was the first *City Church* in Switzerland.[3] Its mission is to be a spiritual, cultural, and social resource for all people in the city of Basel, regardless of their religious beliefs or affiliation. In 2015, the OKE launched Projekt DA-SEIN, an outreach program for asylum-seekers and refugees in Basel and the surrounding cantons.[4] The program roughly translates as

2 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Eidgenössisches Justiz- und Polizeidepartement (EJPD), *Migration Report 2018* (State Secretariat for Migration, SEM, 2018), https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/publiservice/berichte/migration/migrationsbericht-2018-e.pdf.

3 The City Church movement began in Europe in the 1990s to address declining religious affiliation and the increased diversity of people and social, cultural, and religious needs in the city. City Churches engaged more actively with social and political issues facing the city and with people who do not affiliate with religious organizations or churches; they also initiated cultural, ecumenical, and interfaith projects. See Chapter 4 for an in-depth history of the OKE. See also: Klaus Teschner, *City-Kirche Modelle, Erfahrungen, Ideen Vortrag von Landeskirchenrat, gehalten auf der Herbstsynode des Kirchenkreises Barmen am 6. November 1993*, Wechsel-Wirkungen Traktate zur praktischen Theologie und ihren Grundlagen (Hartmut Spenner, 1994); Benedict Schubert, "City Churches: Mission with a New Face in Transforming European Cultural Context? Reflections on the Example of the 'Offene Kirche Elisabethen' in Basel," in *Contextuality in Reformed Europe: The Mission of the Church in the Transformation of European Culture*, ed. Christine Lienemann-Perrin, Hendrik M. Vroom, and Michael Weinrich, Currents of Encounter: Studies on the Contact between Christianity and Other Religions, Beliefs, and Cultures (Rodopi, 2004).

4 The Offene Kirche Basel is historically part of the Evangelical-Reformed Church of Switzerland (*Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz* – EKS). In its current iteration as a City Church, it is a partnership between the EKS and the Roman Catholic Church of Basel. The EKS has addressed the increase of migration, especially asylum-seeking, both in the work of their congregations and as an ethical issue that should be addressed by regional and national governmental organizations. One area of particular focus for the EKS is pastoral care for asylum-seekers. The church partners with other religious denominations and organizations, including the Roman Catholic Church and the Association of Jewish Communities in Switzerland, to offer pastoral care through the State Secretariat for Migration (*Staatssekretariat für Migration* – SEM). For more details, see: Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz et al., *Seelsorge im Bundesasylzentrum* (Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz, 2019), https://www.evref.ch/themen/migration/asylseelsorge/.

"being there" and provides a place to gather, share a meal, and meet other refugees and Swiss volunteers while asylum-seekers navigate life in Switzerland and wait for results of their asylum applications. The program hopes to offer a "piece of home" to asylum-seekers and refugees in Basel by providing a place to gather, to connect with each other and Swiss volunteers, and to share a meal, play a game, or practice German.[5]

This book draws on ethnographic research conducted at Projekt DA-SEIN at the Offene Kirche Elisabethen in Basel, Switzerland, from February 2018 to January 2019. The primary participants in this study were recently arrived asylum-seekers still waiting for results of their asylum applications. In 2018, resolving asylum claims was usually a two- to three-year process. During my time at the program, I used ethnographic methods to record 55 participant observations, 67 informal interviews, and 16 formal interviews with asylum-seekers, volunteers, and staff members.

By identifying home as a significant locus of meaning-making and migration as a source of valuable experiences and insights, this book asks how the intersection of home and migration informs church responses to asylum-seekers, questions normative and assumed definitions of belonging, provides a lens for understanding migration as a critical event for individuals and communities, and situates home as a locus of meaning-making. These topics draw on three main scholarly threads: migration studies, sociology, and practical theology. The discourse on home includes contributions from philosophy, sociology, and theology as well as literature, feminist theory, and urban studies. Migration studies attends to migration trends, laws, issues of privilege and oppression, and empirical studies of migration experiences. Practical theology engages the practices of religious and social life to explore lived expressions of faith and theology. From the ethnographic data collected, I offer reflections on home as both personal and political, address possibilities and challenges for church outreach to asylum-seekers, and explore the impact of using relational ethnographic methods in a theological project. This book provides perspective on migration and home, adding to the literature on experiences of asylum-seeking and the work of local churches. This research generates practical theory about ethnographic research in migration, churches' engagement with migration, and social and religious theories of home.

5 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Geschichte: Kunstgeschichtliches," accessed May 17, 2019, https://www.offenekirche.ch/de/offenekirche/geschichte.html; Offene Kirche Elisabethen, "Die Offene Kirche Elisabethen (OKE)," accessed September 8, 2018, https://www.offenekirche.ch/de.html.

1.1 Overview and Context

Migration may describe people moving for education, career opportunities, and short-term relocations as well as those fleeing political persecution and violence, food shortages and climate chaos, and war and corruption. This book focuses on migration in Basel, Switzerland in 2018 through the experiences of asylum-seekers, many of whom were still waiting on the results of their asylum applications. This book considers understandings of home as both personal and political realities within this landscape of migration. It explores how one church, the Offene Kirche Elisabethen, in Basel, Switzerland, balanced its theological commitments and leveraged its social location, providing a compelling example of church engagement with the practical, social, and spiritual aspects of home and migration.

1.1.1 Migration

Even as this book nears completion, new migration flows emerge, including as a result of the war in Ukraine, beginning in February 2022. Many others flee regime change in Afghanistan; are displaced by national policies, such as those in Myanmar and Venezuela; or become subject to continued political upheaval, war, and corruption, such as those fleeing Syria, Eritrea, and South Sudan.[6] Even in wealthier countries, such as in the United States, people are increasingly displaced internally by wildfires, flooding, and other extreme weather patterns. The number of people on the move and the percentage of the world's population they represent is greater than at any other time in recent human history. According to the United Nations, in 2015 there were an estimated 244 million international migrants (3.3% of the world's population), including 19.5 million refugees and asylum-seekers.[7] This represents a 41% increase of migrants since 2000.[8] In 2020, international migration increased to 281

6 For more information about current refugee flows, see the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) at https://www.unhcr.com.

7 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *International Migration Report 2015: Highlights* (United Nations, 2015), https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3921645?ln=en&v=pdf.

8 International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2022* (UN Migration, 2023), https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2022. The report details the changes in migration flows as follows: "The estimated number of international migrants has increased over the past 50 years. In 2020, almost 281 million people lived in a country other than their country of birth, or about 128 million more than 30 years earlier, in 1990 (153 million), and over three times the estimated number in 1970 (84 million). The proportion of international migrants as a share of the total global population has also increased, but only incrementally."

million people (3.6% of the world's population), despite increased mobility restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.[9]

Yet, migration is not a new phenomenon. The planet was populated by human migration, emerging out of the African continent, and people have been motivated to leave their current home to work, explore, exploit, trade, and follow curiosity ever since. People have migrated to expand empires as well as to follow their desires to improve personal circumstances. Migration has also been an established way of life for nomadic communities who follow food, water, or weather. With the rise of the nation-state, migration met fixed barriers at delineated borders, that are sometimes real but are more often imagined or enforced by systems of power. Borders have existed for a long time, whether as the environmental borders of land, ocean, rivers, and ecosystems or as the linguistic and cultural borders between communities. Yet, the borders of nation-states brought bureaucratic organization and more centralized control.[10] This can be traced though histories of citizenship, immigration laws, and passports, which became standard only after the First World War, and will be explored in the Swiss context in greater detail in Chapter 3. In addition to the increase in border regimes, globalization and technological advances have improved the speed of movement of information, ideas, and goods, but not necessarily the equitable distribution of economic and cultural resources among people. The 2017 United Nations Migration report describes this phenomenon:

> In today's increasingly interconnected world, international migration has become a reality that touches nearly all corners of the globe. Modern transportation has made it easier, cheaper and faster for people to move in search of jobs, opportunity, education and quality of life. At the same time conflict, poverty, inequality and a lack of sustainable livelihoods compel people to leave their homes to seek a better future for themselves and their families abroad.[11]

The circumstances that spur migration are increasing, not decreasing. Yet many countries have responded with nationalist and protectionist policies.

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9 International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2022*; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Population Division, *International Migration 2019 Highlights* (ST/ESA/SER.A/439) (United Nations, 2019), https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Jan/un_2019_internationalmigration_highlights.pdf; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *International Migration Report 2017: Highlights* (ST/ESA/SER.A/404) (United Nations, 2017), https://www.unpopulation.org.

10 Regina Polak, *Migration, Flucht und Religion: Praktisch-Theologische Beiträge, Band 1: Grundlagen* (Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 2017), 31–32.

11 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *International Migration Report 2017*.

The increase in migration to European countries, beginning in 2015, has been called a "migration crisis," especially by countries forced to adapt and to increase their capacity to respond to an influx of new people. Yet, migration has always been here and will continue in the future. Marc Engelhardt, a news reporter who has covered migration extensively, challenges the term "migration crisis," used to describe current migration flows. Instead, he argues that we are living with a "migration revolution."[12] Continued conflicts, climate change, globalization, and other political and social factors will cause migration to continue. Even as distinct crises ebb and surge, migration will appear in new places and in new forms, impacting populations, economies, and politics in the places that migrants leave, travel through, and arrive at. One reason for the increased media and political focus on migration is the increase in migration to wealthier countries, such as those in North America and Europe. Yet, the majority of migrants move either internally (within their country of origin) or to neighboring countries.[13] In 2017, nearly half of all refugees and asylum-seekers resided in Northern Africa and Western Asia.[14] In 2018, there were 3.5 million people worldwide who were waiting on results of asylum applications.[15] Of these, just 15,000 people applied for asylum in Switzerland in 2018.[16]

The current response to refugee migration is rooted in the 1951 Refugee Convention. The 1951 Refugee Convention was a response to the mass dislocation of people after the Second World War. The Convention's protocols were revised in 1967 to expand its coverage beyond Europe and make the protections offered to World War II refugees universal.[17] Europe was significantly impacted by migration following the Second World War and many families were personally affected by the movement,

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12 Marc Engelhardt, ed., *Die Flüchtlingsrevolution: Wie Die Neue Völkerwanderung Die Ganze Welt Verändert*, 2. Auflage (Pantheon, 2016).

13 The category of "international migrants" includes two more specific sub-populations: immigrants (voluntary migration) and refugees (forced migration). Yet it is rarely simple to parse out the reasons why individuals migrate. Economic, environmental, political, and personal safety may all contribute to the choice to migrate.

14 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Population Division, *International Migration 2019 Highlights*.

15 UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018* (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2019), https://www.unhcr.org/5d08d7ee7.pdf.

16 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*.

17 UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees: Text of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees; Text of the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees; Resolution 2198 (XXI) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly; with an Introductory Note by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (United Nations, 2010), https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html. This revision to the 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion."

and loss, of people during this time. Today global demographics and migration flows have shifted and those seeking asylum are mostly non-European. Despite similar experiences and the guarantees of the Refugee Convention, the protection of current asylum-seekers is often contested. Judith Gruber argues that Europe has "an amnesia of migrational experiences."[18] Despite a history of migration, European countries often emphasize homogeneous identities. Such amnesia contributes to a backlash against migration and a rise of nationalist sentiments that fixate on difference among migrants while emphasizing similarities within established communities.

Considering migration as an enduring reality, instead of a short-term crisis, results in different approaches to addressing the people, places, and processes of migration. Instead of something to be fixed and eliminated, migration has a place within political, social, and economic frameworks. Instead of being marginal and in need of assimilation, migrants have their own authenticity and right to exist. Yet, current responses to migration have frequently led to situations that marginalize those migrating and center the needs of more settled populations.

The ways national governments have responded to recent migration can marginalize migrant perspectives and needs. Migration is often considered as a threat to national identities and to the policies designed to meet the needs of citizens or permanent residents (while others fall outside of these political structures). The impacts of asylum-seeking on nation-states are broad and include redirecting national budgets, changing demographics of local communities, and increasing contact between different beliefs and lifestyles. These challenges have led to a rise in exclusionary forms of nationalism and an increase in political movements that maintain a perceived status quo through xenophobia and "othering." These movements are often supported by rhetoric harkening back to definitions of national identity based on race, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, beliefs, language, or other characteristics of the dominant group. Fueled by such narratives, populist parties, such as those seen in both Europe and the United States, lay claim to essential and concrete definitions of what it means to belong. While migrants are often contrasted with national populations, the reality is much more complicated. National populations include citizens, legal residents, visitors, and diverse ethnicities, languages, and religions. Agreements like those that form the European Union further open borders (to some people). In Switzerland this diversity is seen in its four national languages, the many international residents (especially due to its banking and pharmaceutical sectors), and a history of immigration to and from other European countries.[19]

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18 Judith Gruber, "Remembering Borders: Notes Toward a Theology of Migration," in *Migration as a Sign of the Times: Towards a Theology of Migration*, ed. Judith Gruber and Sigrid Rettenbacher, Currents of Encounter, vol. 52 (Brill Rodopi, 2015), 81.

19 For more information on migration in Switzerland, see Chapter 3.

This project develops new frameworks with which to theorize, engage, and practice home in the context of migration. New intersections of home and migration emerge by considering political, social, and theological discourses on home, examining church practices in the context of migration, and centering the experiences of asylum-seekers.

1.1.2 Home

Home is often perceived as a neutral or innocent word associated with personal experiences of safety, belonging, and familiarity. Yet, home also has political implications. It delimits borders, defines membership, and describes acceptable practices. Home is something that is defended from outsiders, debated during cultural and generational shifts, and fortified through borders, both symbolic and physical. Concepts of home have been part of colonial projects, have served to reinforce ethnic and racial discrimination, and have been called upon to shore up borders against migration. A 2018 article in the German news magazine, *Der Spiegel*, asked "Is this my homeland?"[20] The article describes concern and fear about the influence of Islam on German identity and definitions of home, and in doing so it invites readers to define a German home through a certain language, a certain religion, and certain cultural practices. Home is not necessarily, or not only, the actual practices that occur there; home is formed through the feelings, memories, and affective associations generated by these practices.

Heimat is one of several words for home in German. *Heimat* is often translated as "homeland," yet its particular meaning and resonance are distinct from the English word for home. *Heimat's* complex relationship to German-speakers' sense of home and belonging, as well as to German and European history, will be discussed in Chapter 2. Yet, *Heimat* is more than just the place that is considered home. It often refers to nostalgic and affective associations with particular places, languages, and customs and designates an emotional connection to home.[21]

Building affective attachments across geographic areas is part of the project of nation-state building, which takes place by generating so-called "imagined communities" that connect otherwise unconnected people through the creation of shared histories, attitudes, and beliefs.[22] Since home is often understood through familiar

20 Matthias Bartsch et al., "Neue Heimat," *Der Spiegel*, April 14, 2018.

21 Peter Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland*, Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Camden House, 2011); Friederike U. Eigler, "Critical Approaches to 'Heimat' and the 'Spatial Turn,'" *New German Critique* 115 (2012), https://www.jstor.org/stable/23259389.

22 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, with the assistance of Richard O'Gorman, ACLS Humanities E-Book (Verso, 2006), 6. Anderson describes his definition of these communities and nations as having dual imagined qualities.

and affective associations, the unfamiliar can then serve to designate who does not belong. This sense of home can become a boundary marker that protects a sense of collective identity. Thus, conceptions of home operate in multiple directions, creating life-affirming attachments while also generating life-denying policies and practices.

How home is inserted in political, cultural, and religious discourses around border and migration politics is highly contested and ambivalent. Home is a political sentiment appearing directly in uses of words such as homeland or *Heimat*. The political use of the word home is seen in the German *Heimatministerium*[23] (Homeland Ministry) and the United States' Department of Homeland Security,[24] and indirectly in wording such as the Swiss citizenship requirement to "be familiar with the Swiss way of life."[25] *Heimat* and homeland have been reclaimed in these examples, often through the selective appropriation of history, to emphasize borders and determine criteria for belonging.[26] The word *Heimat* is often associated with idyllic and stereotypical foods, dress, and landscapes. Seemingly innocent, idealized renderings of home can project a false innocence that is often destructive.[27] In the United States, this is seen in rhetoric that defends "our country" from "outsiders," despite the legacy of settler colonialism, the decimation of the native population, and the history of slavery. Anxiety about home is often anxiety about belonging and identity and can fixate on people and practices that are different and threaten this sense of belonging.

"I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."

23 Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat, "Bundesministerium Des Innern und Für Heimat: Homepage," accessed January 28, 2024, last modified 2023, https://www.bmi.bund.de/; Ben Knight, "What Is Germany's New Heimat Ministry for?," *Deutsche Welle*, February 12, 2018, https://www.dw.com/en/a-deeper-look-at-germanys-new-interior-and-heimat-ministry/a-42554122.

24 The United States Department of Homeland Security was established in 2002 to unify efforts to support and protect domestic and civilian areas. It brought together 22 existing federal departments and agencies including the U.S. Customs Service and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. See: Department of Homeland Security, "History," accessed January 2, 2025, https://www.dhs.gov/history.

25 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über die Ausländerinnen und Ausländer und über die Integration (Ausländer- und Integrationsgesetz, AIG)*, 142.20 (Fedlex, 2005), https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20020232/index.html#a83; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Federal Department of Justice and Police, FDJP, *Swiss Citizenship / Naturalization* (Staatsekretariat für Migration, SEM, 2019), https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/themen/buergerrecht.html; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*.

26 Daniel Schreiber, "Heimatministerium: Deutschland Soll Werden, Wie Es Nie War," *Der Zeit*, February 10, 2018, https://www.zeit.de/kultur/2018-02/heimatministerium-heimat-rechtspopulismus-begriff-kulturgeschichte/komplettansicht.

27 Blickle, *Heimat*.

1.1.3 Research on Home

Knowledge of home is drawn from lived experience and theoretical inquiry and spans the theological, social, political, and personal. This work of defining home includes knowledge and interpretations from those often marginalized from discourses, including asylum-seekers. While all cultures and communities create knowledge, how widely that knowledge is shared, accepted, and valued varies. Some people and groups are subject to hermeneutical marginalization, which occurs when interpretive resources to understand their experiences are lacking.[28] People impacted by this may include those whose experiences are marginal or who belong to groups with less structural power. Hermeneutical marginalization is a form of epistemic injustice, as described by philosopher Miranda Fricker. Epistemic injustice is "a kind of injustice in which someone is wronged specifically in her capacity as a knower."[29] Epistemic injustice can perpetuate injustices and bolster systems that benefit those who have knowledge. As Fricker explains, hermeneutical marginalization is "a situation in which some social groups have less than a fair crack at contributing to the shared pool of concepts and interpretive tropes that we use to make generally shareable sense of our social experiences."[30] Because of this tendency, dismantling hermeneutical systems is critical to broadening knowledge on diverse subjects, including home.

Any research about a population that has less power, is marginal, or is subject to exploitation must contend with issues of power and privilege. One challenge is the tendency towards othering in any research that looks from a place of greater power towards the margins. This othering is the phenomenon that sets individuals or groups apart, often with negative attributes. Drawing on the works of previous theorists, including Jacques Lacan, the term othering was re-coined in 1985 within postcolonial studies by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.[31] In postcolonial studies othering occurs through stereotyping, through racializing, and through systems

28 José Medina, "Varieties of Hermeneutical Injustice," in *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, ed. Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus (Routledge, 2017), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315212043-4.

29 Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 20.

30 Miranda Fricker, "Epistemic Injustice and the Preservation of Ignorance," in *The Epistemic Dimensions of Ignorance*, ed. Rik Peels and Martijn Blaauw (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 163.

31 Gayatri C. Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives," *History and Theory* 24, no. 3 (1985); Oscar Thomas-Olalde and Astride Velho, "Othering and Its Effects – Exploring the Concept," in *Writing Postcolonial Histories of Intercultural Education*, ed. Heike Niedrig and Christian Ydesen, Interkulturelle Pädagogik und Postkoloniale Theorie, Bd. 2 (Peter Lang, 2011).

of power.[32] Othering sets up an "us versus them" dichotomy that can essentialize groups, ignore individual differences, and fail to acknowledge the ways difference exists in the dominant discourse. What is familiar and accepted becomes defined by that which it is not. This appears through the use of normative terms and assumed, stereotypical qualities. Because understandings of home are so often associated with what is familiar and comfortable, home is particularly subject to dichotomizing in terms of what does and does not belong.

Expanding hermeneutical possibilities means not only "including" other voices in the conversation but also challenging systems that silence and mishear. These systems can present monolithic interpretations of concepts while ignoring the multiplicity and diversity that exist in collective contexts.[33] In this way, home can become rigid, fixed, and ideological and associated with what is sentimental, comfortable, or safe. Individual or personal definitions of home can become conflated with what is established, pseudo-historical, and normative. In these configurations, home becomes the opposite of that which is different and not-home, or the "unhomely." As Michael Nausner writes, "the dominant sense of home seems to me to be achieved by purging it of the uncanny, the strange, the foreign – by projecting it outward, onto the other."[34] This projection serves not only to exclude those who are different but also to ascribe undesirable aspects of home exclusively to those outside of familiar systems and to exclude what is different and unfamiliar.[35] Instead, critical theorist Homi K. Bhabha advocates for starting from the perspective of impermanence and centering the "misfits," those who do not fit neatly into the dominant categories of home and belonging, such as refugees.[36] Feminist scholar Sara Ahmed goes on to describe the danger of home becoming too sentimental and rigid and excluding those on the margins. She writes, "Home is implicitly constructed as a purified space of belonging in which the subject is too comfortable to question the limits or borders of her or his experience, indeed, where the subject is so at ease that she or he does not think."[37] Asking questions and examining dis-ease in contexts of home are critical to

32 Sune Qvotrup Jensen, "Othering, Identity Formation, and Agency," *Qualitative Studies* 2, no. 2 (2011), https://doi.org/10.7146/qs.v2i2.5510. See also: The Othering and Belonging Institute, https://belonging.berkeley.edu/.

33 José Medina, "Varieties of Hermeneutical Injustice," 43.

34 Michael Nausner, "Homeland as Borderland: Territories of Christian Subjectivity," in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera (Chalice Press, 2004), 118–19.

35 Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (Routledge, 2000), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203349700.

36 Homi K. Bhabha and Klaus Stierstorfer, "Homi K. Bhabha in Interview with Klaus Stierstorfer on 'Diaspora and Home,'" in *Diasporic Constructions of Home and Belonging*, ed. Florian Kläger and Klaus Stierstorfer (De Gruyter, 2015), 11, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110408614-002.

37 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 87–88.

challenging comfortable responses to migration in personal, political, and religious spaces.

In theological language, broadening hermeneutical possibilities occurs by more broadly considering spaces where religion exists, and where theology might be produced. The field of lived religion considers how faith and religious practice occur in the everyday lives of people and puts these observations in conversation with theological knowledge. It considers both experiences and teachings as valid sources of knowledge and as critical to developing theological understandings. Catholic theology utilizes the concept of a *locus theologicus* – a site of theology – to be more inclusive of where and how theology might arise.[38] This term is found especially in liberation theology, to emphasize how contextual experiences become concrete places of generating knowledge.[39] Theology is found in lived experiences, and especially in the lived experiences of the marginalized and vulnerable. Theologian Regina Polak challenges scholars to consider migration as a *locus theologicus.* She writes, "Every theology dealing with migration must thus include the voices of people with a migration history; otherwise, it cannot do justice to presence, nor can theology understand its own migration tradition properly."[40] This approach to theology not only prioritizes other knowledge sources, it also challenges established and monolithic narratives about migration. Presence opens up spaces that can create room for multiple and disparate practices, possibilities, and knowledges. These efforts attempt to counter hermeneutical marginalization by engaging alternative perspectives and challenging assumed definitions. Philosopher José Medina writes:

> [W]e should all feel responsible to facilitate, in any way we can, the hermeneutical agency of eccentric voices and perspectives that resist established meanings and communicative dynamics, and work toward the formation of original meanings, alternative expressive styles, and new horizons of interpretation.[41]

By including the perspectives and experiences of asylum-seekers, this book hopes to expand the meaning of and interpretive frameworks for home, migration, and church. This book engages asylum-seeking as a site of knowledge production in theological, social, and political arenas by considering, through the experiences of asylum-seekers, the tenuous but also central relationship of home to migration.

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38 Regina Polak, "Migration as a Sign of the Times: Questions and Remarks from a Practical-Theological Perspective," in *Migration as a Sign of the Times: Towards a Theology of Migration*, ed. Judith Gruber and Sigrid Rettenbacher, Currents of Encounter, vol. 52 (Brill Rodopi, 2015).

39 Polak, "Migration as a Sign of the Times," 47–78. See also essays in this volume by: Judith Gruber, Gemma Tulud Cruz, and Hans-Joachim Sander.

40 Polak, "Migration as a Sign of the Times," 54. By presence, Polak means God's presence, which can create space in assumed and established definitions.

41 José Medina, "Varieties of Hermeneutical Injustice," 49.

1.1.4 Borders

Theologians Judith Gruber and Sigrid Rettenbacher describe migration as both a physical event and an experience of identity formation. "Migrations […] are contested sites of identity negotiations: they are not simply a process of border crossings but more so of border shiftings."[42] The shifting of borders, whether concrete or imagined, occurs for those who experience migration as well as for those who remain settled. As borders shift, identity, meaning, and belonging are suspended from their habitual frameworks and new understandings are both necessary and possible. In ecological language, an ecotone is a space between two types of terrains where, for example, a prairie meets a forest and the two blend, merge, and shift. One way that experiences of migration generate new perspectives and knowledge is by crossing and redefining borders between regions, cultures, and nations, thus creating new intersections at the personal, social, and political levels.

Migration necessitates understanding the border as something that must be crossed, breeched, and negotiated. Yet, the border is not a single entity and crossing it is not a one-time event. Theologian Kwok Pui-lan, writing about migration, says, "I prefer to use 'border passage' instead of 'border crossing' to indicate that it is a continuous journey and not a *fait accompli*."[43] The border remains present in migration stories, even after it is crossed. Migration means dwelling at the border where the established norms of life, whether on one or the other side of the border, do not fully apply. As theologian Gemma Tulud Cruz describes in her theology of migration, "To cross the border is to live on a border."[44] Dwelling at this in-between place makes everyday questions of belonging, identity, and home more complex. This complexity occurs at the physical level in terms of securing housing, material provisions, personal safety, and legal rights. There is also emotional and symbolic complexity in the negotiation of connections and commitments to family, country of origin, communities, and one's own self.

Borders add ambivalence and challenge the insistence on permeance. Home can include crossing and being located on the border as well as remaining in a place that is established and familiar. Chicana feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa describes her experience of borders in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera* – from the physical border of the U.S.-Mexico border to the borders of identity, emotion, and body. She writes,

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42 Judith Gruber and Sigrid Rettenbacher, "Preface," in *Migration as a Sign of the Times: Towards a Theology of Migration*, ed. Judith Gruber and Sigrid Rettenbacher, Currents of Encounter, vol. 52 (Brill Rodopi, 2015), 1.

43 Kwok Pui-lan, "A Theology of Border Passage," in *Border Crossings: Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics*, ed. Devadasan N. Premnath (Orbis, 2007), 104.

44 Gemma Tulud Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration: Pilgrims in the Wilderness*, Studies in Systematic Theology (Brill, 2010), 122.

"A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition."[45] These qualities of emotion and transition are not antithetical to home; they inform a deeper understanding of home for those who migrate as well as for those who remain in one place.

Migration has powerful and far-reaching impacts on nations and economies as well as communities and individuals. Viewing migration as an enduring reality foregrounds the perspectives of people seeking asylum and considers migration as a valid location for creating policies, generating meaning, and shaping social responses, not from a crisis mentality, but from a dynamic reality. From this place, this book seeks to build more flexible understandings of home and migration.

1.2 Migration and Churches

To build deeper understandings of home and migration, this book explores the role of churches and their religious, social, and political engagements with home and asylum-seeking. Increased migration to Europe caused churches and faith communities to join the political conversation about migration, reflect on theological engagement with migration, and offer practical aid to asylum-seekers and refugees.[46] As Frank Lorenz, pastor of the Offene Kirche Elisabethen, explained in my interview with him, "Because of the things that happen right now, because of the migration and refugee matter, we have to rethink our society structures and our approach towards religion in the public space, in church, religion, and society. Nobody can afford to not say something."[47] As migration to Europe increased in 2015, church bodies and individual congregations made both theological and political statements and appeals about the treatment of migrants.[48] These included local congregations and Swiss church bodies, including the mainline Protestant Church in Switzerland, the

45 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 4th ed. (Aunt Lute Books, 2012), 25.

46 Daniel G. Groody, "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), https://doi.org/10.1177/004056390907000306.

47 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1El_IN.

48 It is worth noting that these documents and church programs do not reflect the diversity of opinions about migration, either at the congregational or individual level. Denominations include churches in different geographic areas that represent distinct social, economic, and political milieus. In addition, congregants in these churches hold differing political opinions, are of different socio-economic status, and prioritize varied social issues and theological perspectives. Religion is not immune from the tendency to create purified spaces of belonging. Churches in many countries are explicitly or implicitly part of national identities, which in some cases skew toward an exclusive nationalism, curtailing friendliness or promoting aggression toward migrants.

Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche, and larger denominational bodies, such as the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (WCC).[49] Some churches responded with support for asylum-seekers based on commitments of hospitality and care for the stranger as well as theological teachings that emphasize Jesus' experience as a refugee, the gift of creation, and God's unconditional love.[50]

In its current iteration as a City Church, the OKE is a partnership between the Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz (EKS) and the Roman Catholic Church of Basel. The EKS has addressed the increase of migration, especially asylum-seeking, both in the work of their congregations and as an ethical issue that should be addressed by regional and national governmental organizations. One area of particular focus for the EKS is pastoral care for asylum-seekers. The church partners with other religious denominations and organizations, including the Roman Catholic Church and the Association of Jewish Communities in Switzerland, to offer pastoral care through the State Secretariat for Migration.[51] For example, in 2018 the EKS participated in the Interreligious Declaration on Refugee Issues (*Interreligiöse Erklärung zu Flüchtlingsfragen*), which brought together religious organizations and theological thinking from the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian traditions. It points out that each person is a creation of God, emphasizes hospitality, and underscores the human value and dignity of all people, including migrants.[52] Based on the outlined theologies, the document appeals to governments for the ethical treatment of asylum-seekers and a moral approach to migration policies.

Churches engage with migration through a range of programs. These include government contracts for providing resettlement services; social groups, such as sports and conversation groups; and activist movements, such as the Sanctuary Movement. In Switzerland, the federal and local governments partner with non-go-

49 The World Council of Churches is an international, ecumenical organization of 350 churches which promotes partnerships among churches, especially in the areas of mission, ecumenism, and *Diakonia* (social outreach). For more information see: https://www.oikoumene.org/.

50 For examples see: Andrea Fröchtling, *"The Other" is My Neighbour: Developing an Ecumenical Response to Migration* (World Council of Churches Publications, 2013), https://www.urc.org.uk/images/mission/at_home_strange/The_Other_Is_My_Neighbour_WCC.pdf; C. J. P. Niemandt, "Together Towards New Life for Missiology? Mission and Missiology in the Light of the World Council of Churches 2013 Policy Statement," *Acta Theologica* 35, no. 2 (2016), https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v35i2.6; World Council of Churches, *Christmas Statement* (World Council of Churches, 2018), https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/christmas-statement; Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz et al., *Seelsorge im Bundesasylzentrum*.

51 Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz et al., *Seelsorge im Bundesasylzentrum*.

52 UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, Schweiz und Schweizerischer Israelitischer Gemeindebund (SIG) et al., *Gegenüber ist immer ein Mensch: Interreligiöse Erklärung zu Flüchtlingsfragen* (Schweizerischer Rat der Religionen (SCR), 2018), https://www.ratderreligionen.ch/wp-content/uploads/Interreligi%C3%B6se-Erkl%C3%A4rung-zu-Fl%C3%BCchtlingsfragen_DE.pdf.

vernmental organizations (NGOs), including churches, to work with refugees and asylum-seekers. The work of NGOs includes implementing integration policies and systems, running language schools and vocational training programs, providing legal support, managing housing, and offering recreational, religious, and cultural programs.

Other secular and religious organizations in Basel provide services to asylum-seekers in areas ranging from legal aid to education to social programs. In 2018, two main secular organizations provided legal counsel to migrants: *GGG Basel* and *Beratungstelle für Asylsuchende der Region Basel* (BAS). GGG is an independent nonprofit organization (*Verein*). BAS is supported by the Swiss social service arms of the Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche and the Roman Catholic churches (HEKS-EPER and Caritas). These organizations assist in providing services to support asylum-seekers, and other migrants, in navigating the immigration process. In addition, national programs such as the Swiss Refugee Aid (*Schweizerische Flüchtlingshilfe*) and the GGG provide services, consultations, and classes to asylum-seekers. Churches in Basel, including Protestant, Catholic, and Evangelical churches, also offer their own outreach to asylum-seekers. These include the *Matthäuskirche*, an Evangelical-Reformed Church, which hosts a program, *Mitenand*, that every Sunday provides a place for migrants as well as other marginalized individuals to gather, share food, and participate in a religious service. An ecumenical program, *Seelsorge für Asylsuchende*, provides pastoral care opportunities for asylum-seekers. The program also offers childcare, clothing, counseling, and social support, and a drop-in café for conversation and language learning.[53]

In addition to Projekt DA-SEIN, the Offene Kirche Elisabethen serves as the host for an organization called Coordination Point for Volunteers with Refugees (*Koordinationsstelle Freiwillige für Flüchtlinge*), also known as KoFfF, which is sponsored by the canton of Basel-Stadt and the *Christoph Merian Stiftung*.[54] It is targeted towards Swiss citizens or residents who want to work with asylum-seekers and refugees and provides general information about volunteer work, opportunities to network across programs, and descriptions and contact information for a diversity of migration-

53 GGG Migration, "GGG Migration: Willkommen," accessed August 25, 2020, https://www.ggg-migration.ch/; Beratungsstelle für Asylsuchende BAS der Region Basel, *Jarhresbericht 2018* (HEKS-EPER, Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz; CARITAS, Caritas beider Basel, 2018), https://www.bas-basel.ch/media/BAS_Jahresbericht_2018.pdf; Matthäuskirche, Basel, "Sonntagszimmer – Mitenand," accessed August 20, 2019, http://rehovot.ch/mitenand/mitenand/; Oekumenischer Seelsorgedienst für Asylsuchende, "Willkommen beim OeSA," accessed July 20, 2019, https://www.oesa.ch/; Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz, Kanton Basel-Stadt, "Koordinationsstelle Freiwillige für Flüchtlinge Basel (KOFFF)," accessed September 29, 2020, https://www.srk-basel.ch/jugendrotkreuz/kofff.

54 Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz, Kanton Basel-Stadt, "Koordinationsstelle Freiwillige für Flüchtlinge Basel (KOFFF)."

focused non-governmental organizations. It lists opportunities offered by over 100 religious and secular organizations in areas ranging from education, to recreation, to health.

Some churches, such as the OKE, engage in outreach and direct services to migrants. These programs arise from the organizations' commitments to work with refugees and asylum-seekers. Through these engagements churches fulfill a theological and spiritual role while also occupying social and political spaces within civil society.

1.3 Overview of Chapters

This book weaves together research on home and asylum-seeking with the specific context of Basel, Switzerland, and the work of Projekt DA-SEIN at Offene Kirche Elisabethen. Chapter 2 explores scholarly perspectives on home from the disciplines of sociology, philosophy, and theology. The chapter begins by examining a common association of home with place. Instead of viewing home as a static location, the spatial turn in the social sciences provides tools to view place as a more relational and dynamic experience. Home is also characterized by affective associations such as feelings, moods, and memories. These affective experiences create meanings that transcend the basic elements of place. Narratives, longings, and absence are related to affective associations that also characterize experiences of home. Staying and leaving are both part of home.[55] The chapter further explores home in specific contexts of migration, culture and politics, and religion.

Chapters 3 to 5 elaborate on the context and background material of the research project. Chapter 3 provides context for the political and social realities of migration in Basel, Switzerland. It covers basic migration data and the process of seeking asylum, in Basel specifically and Switzerland broadly. The chapter also explores how Swiss requirements for citizenship and integration impact the experiences and possibilities of seeking asylum in Basel. I highlight a requirement for newcomers to Switzerland to "be familiar with the Swiss way of life."[56] This requirement, which is found in Swiss laws on citizenship, colors the approach Switzerland takes to asylum-seekers and reveals an emphasis on integration at all levels of the migration process.

Chapter 4 delves into the history of the Offene Kirche Elisabethen and the establishment of Projekt DA-SEIN by the church in 2015. This chapter traces the the-

55 Karen Joisten, *Philosophie Der Heimat – Heimat Der Philosophie* (Akademie Verlag, 2003).

56 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Federal Department of Justice and Police, FDJP, *Foreign Population and Asylum Statistics 2018* (Staatsekretariat für Migration, SEM, 2019), https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/publiservice/statistik/bestellung/auslaender-asylstatistik-2018-e.pdf.

ological and social threads that led to the creation of the OKE as an ecumenical City Church in Basel in 1994. The church's mission is rooted in a commitment to openness and to meeting the shifting social, cultural, and spiritual needs of all people in the city of Basel. Theological values of openness, ambivalence, and convivence shape the church's theology and outreach, including the establishment of Projekt DA-SEIN. Convivence is a practice of creating community with others instead of for others.[57] The term, which was used contemporarily in liberation theology, means "living with others"[58] and emphasizes communities of learning, helping, and celebrating that engage in ordinary activities of living together. The chapter ends with an overview of the motivations for founding Projekt DA-SEIN and the goals, structures, and programs that characterize the project.

Chapter 5 presents considerations on research with asylum-seekers and explores the book's ethnographic approach to researching home and migration at Projekt DA-SEIN. In this chapter I explore specific challenges of doing research with asylum-seekers, including securing interviews, scheduling and finding interview locations, and language and translation. The chapter concludes by advocating for a more relational, and even theological, approach to ethnographic research, one that takes seriously the co-production of knowledge and the necessity for the researcher to relinquish some control over research processes and outcomes.

The following sections, Chapters 6 to 8, present findings from my data that address home, migration, and ecclesiology. Chapter 6 explores how the Offene Kirche Elisabethen responds to those who have left their homes and considers how Projekt DA-SEIN creates "a piece of home" for asylum-seekers who have arrived in Basel. Home is not explicitly defined at Projekt DA-SEIN yet it is shaped in a particular social and theological context. From these contexts, aspects of home at the program are centered in welcome, helping, and "being there" together. I draw interpretations from my data that reveal how the program understands the kind of home that it hopes to offer to asylum-seekers through the engagement of its volunteers, its social location, and its theological commitments.

Chapter 7 draws on my ethnographic data that was gathered in my time with asylum-seekers in order to explore a particular aspect of home, namely home as place. This chapter, which draws from formal and informal interviews as well as conversations with asylum-seekers, addresses their perspectives on the home they left, the

57 Theo Sundermeier and Volker Küster, *Konvivenz und Differenz: Studien zu einer Verstehenden Missionswissenschaft Anlässlich Seines 60. Geburtstages*, Missionswissenschaftliche Forschungen n.F., Bd. 3 (Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission, 1995).

58 Richard H. Bliese, "Convivenz and Globalization: The Church's Mission within North America's Religious Pluralism," in *Mit dem Fremden leben: Perspektiven einer Theologie der Konvivenz; Theo Sundermeier zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Dieter Becker, Missionswissenschaftliche Forschungen Neue Folge (Erlanger Verlag für Mission und Ökumene, 2000), 235.

experience of seeking asylum, and their attempts to find a new home. Place was often revealed as an important marker of home through geographic location, language, citizenship, and the meeting of basic needs, as well as through associations with family, especially mothers, and community roles. The experience of seeking asylum, because it is shaped by living between places and amid uncertainty, means that dislocation, absence, and multiplicity are also part of creating home and serve to organize places in new ways.

Chapter 8 explores home as connected to agency. This chapter also draws from formal and informal interviews with asylum-seekers and from participant observations at Projekt DA-SEIN to develop an understanding of relational agency and home. For asylum-seekers in Basel, agency included making places familiar by engaging in practices from their countries of origin as well as by utilizing public spaces and cultivating community. Agency took the form of taking responsibility for meeting migration requirements and finding new ways to engage in meaningful activities. Relational agency also appears in the conviviality, openness, and interdependence of Projekt DA-SEIN and serves to shape home for asylum-seekers in the context of Basel.

Chapter 9 concludes by reflecting on how the Offene Kirche Elisabethen attends to the public sphere by engaging asylum-seeking and home in the specific context of Basel and how migration creates new possibilities and challenges for churches. Drawing on the example of Projekt DA-SEIN, this chapter considers a theological engagement with a contested home through practices such as providing alternatives to isolation and creating rituals of grief and remembrance. Finally, I consider the role of vulnerability in understandings of home and I suggest "de-heimatizing"[59] belonging as a means of decoupling fixed definitions of home and place and engaging home as something located and informed by border spaces.

59 This phrase is adapted from: Bilgin Ayata, "Prologue: Keynote De-Heimatize Belonging" ("De-Heimatize Belonging" Conference, Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin, Germany, October 25, 2019), accessed April 17, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtQkdQT4IgE.

2. Explorations of Home

Home can define local and specific places as well as feelings of belonging, memories, family, and relationships. Many experiences of home transcend time and space, even as they occur in specific moments and locations. To begin to parse what we mean when we talk about, engage with, and imagine home, this chapter weaves together literature about home as place and home as affective feelings, including belonging. As an affective experience, home can also include absences, be defined through narrative, and be subject to longing and vulnerability. Later in the chapter, I address home specifically in political, religious, and migratory contexts. Home can provide a sense of identity, yet it can also become tied to systems of power and belonging. I hope this survey unpacks hegemonic and idealistic notions of home, which can come to dominate both dialogue and research. Particularly in the context of migration, or when considering other marginalized experiences, creating this distance between dominant definitions makes room for alternative perspectives and experiences about home.

Home is a complex, powerful, and arguably universal concept in human experience. Even as migration and globalization blur borders and render the world increasingly "placeless," the concept of home remains a powerful signifier. While home is multi-faceted and difficult to pin to any one definition, it is often related to meaningful life experiences, identity, belonging, and security.[1] These diverse associations with home are often generalized and assumed, making it a difficult concept to grasp. As Beate Beckmann-Zöller and René Kaufmann write, home can be understood as the place where one was born, it can be a geographical area with historical connections, it can be a metaphor for safety, it can be a place of stability, and it can indicate family, friends, and important social connections.[2] Home might be defined as

1 On the other hand, home can also be a place of danger, violence, and grief, as will be addressed later in this chapter.

2 René Kaufmann, "Heimat als Präsenz im Entzug. Betrachtungen zum Spannungsfeld von Heimat und Fremde," in *Heimat und Fremde: Präsenz im Entzug: Festschrift für Prof. Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz*, with the assistance of Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, ed. Beate Beckmann-Zöller and René Kaufmann, 2. überarb. Auflage (Verlag Text et Dialog, 2016), 21–25.

a physical location, a mythic or desired place, or as a sense of identity and belonging.[3]

Home is influenced by multiple forces, making it a slippery concept, particularly for those who have lost home. Rowan Hisayo Buchanan, author and editor of the anthology *Go Home!* and a former refugee, writes:

> My idea of home is a verb. Home is a straining toward belonging. For me the feeling of wanting to go home is home. For others, home is a place they want to escape, a place that doesn't exist, a place that exists only in time, a place that exists in the breath of a parent, or the mouth of a lover. For some, home is geographical, but they cannot return because of political, financial, or personal reasons. Others are seen as foreigners in their chosen homes.[4]

This complexity makes even the word *home* a nebulous concept that can be used to mean a mix of places, states, feelings, and desires and to refer to a range of meanings – from a particular house, to a group of people, to a nation-state. In this exploration, home is considered an empirical category, one that is defined and designated by those who experience it. At the same time, there are parameters that make home more recognizable across the landscape of experiences. Home is a powerful connection to place, people, and practices, and yet it can be ambiguous in meaning.[5] Home as a particular town or mountain lends specificity to home as a particular location, yet home as tastes and smells means home is more mobile and potentially transitory, even as it is rooted in embodied experiences.

The ubiquity of home in discourses speaks to its importance in human life. Home might serve a diversity of purposes. It may indicate membership, serve as a social, religious, or political characteristic, or designate important people, places, and experiences. When talking about home it often isn't clear what is meant: a feeling, a loyalty, a place, an idea, or a hoped-for future. In fact, home is used to indicate a variety of places, feelings, and experiences, from a childhood home, to a piece of music, to a group of people one has never met. Amélé Adamavi-Aho Ekué, a theologian, writes that there is a semantic continuum between words for home that includes the terms "home/homeland/belongings," each of which can produce innumerable contextual arrangements.[6] This book's exploration of home takes this continuum as a starting point to explore personal, cultural, and religious perspectives on home.

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3 Femke Stock, "Home and Memory," in *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections, Identities*, ed. Kim Knott and Seán McLoughlin (Zed, 2010), 25, https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350219595.ch-002.

4 Rowan H. Buchanan, ed., *Go Home! Twenty-Four Journeys from the Asian American Writers' Workshop and the Feminist Press* (Feminist Press, 2018), 2.

5 Stock, "Home and Memory," 25.

6 Amélé Adamavi-Aho Ekué, "Heimat suchen: Interkulturell-theologische Suchbewegungen zu Heimat und Migration," in *Heimat(en)?, Beiträge zu einer Theologie der Migration*, ed. Amélé

Notions of home are also subject to idealization, and home in some contexts can become reflexively associated with certain characteristics, beliefs, or circumstances. This tendency toward idealization can also occur in academic inquiries into home, as Kim Knott, a scholar of religious studies, summarizes: "both phenomenologists of place and phenomenologists of religion have fallen prey to processes of idealisation and essentialisation in their accounts of home and place as sacred."[7] Similarly, Joachim Klose, a theologian, cautions that with any research into home, there is both an opportunity and a challenge to distance home from ideological associations.[8] Especially in the context of migration, research into home benefits from moving away from essentialized definitions and instead exploring how home is lived and practiced.[9]

Assumptions about home can provide a unifying narrative that generates feelings of belonging through shared language and experiences. Yet, ideals about home can become unquestioned parts of cultural norms and identities that can reinforce sexism, racism, and hierarchical systems. When someone hears the word home, many different feelings, images, or memories may occur for the person. Assuming home means one thing misses the diversity of experiences and associations it encapsulates. A first step in creating a broader, but still useful, concept of home is to acknowledge the multiple nature of home.

To guide this exploration of home and challenge idealized and ideological associations, I will start by unpacking two assumptions about home: that home is a place and that home is an experience of belonging. I will examine how each of these has shaped and is shaped by the discourse on home. Place is often assumed to be a marker of home. Common questions such as "Where are you from?" and "Where is your home?" reflect the assumption that home is located in a particular place. A common definition of home is the house and place where one lives. Yet, as Brain K. Pennington and Amy L. Allocco, professors of religious studies, ask in the forward

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Adamavi-Aho Ekué, Frank Mathwig, and Matthias Zeindler (TVZ Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2017), 43.

7 Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis* (Acumen Publishing Ltd, 2013), 97–98.

8 Joachim Klose, "An Den Rändern Von Heimat," in *Heimat und Fremde: Präsenz im Entzug: Festschrift für Prof. Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, with the assistance of Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz*, ed. Beate Beckmann-Zöller and René Kaufmann, 2. überarb. Auflage (Verlag Text et Dialog, 2016), 98.

9 Paolo Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home: Mapping Domestic Space in Migrants' Everyday Lives*, Mobility & Politics (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 2, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58802-9. Boccagni explains his research on home as necessarily experientially and exploratory, versus essentialist. "My aim here, then, is not to assert what home is – a dubious and unnecessarily 'essentialistic' effort, given the variety of stances on the question. Rather, it is to dynamically trace out the prevalent meanings of home, the ways in which it works out as a social experience and its societal consequences, in practice."

to the book *Culture, Religion, and Home-Making in and Beyond South Asia*, what makes one particular place, and not another, home? "How does a particular site, whether it is a built structure, a network of dwellings, a region, or a nation, come to evoke the memories, emotions, persons, and physical features that we associate with the richly evocative but perhaps undefinable idea of 'home'?"[10] Home is a local, embodied experienced as well as one that resides in ideas, longings, memories, and imagination. Femke Stock describes these parallel aspects of home as "a realm of concrete locality and everyday experience on the one hand and a more ideational, symbolic or discursive realm on the other."[11] Thus, home is both a located place and an attachment to feelings, ideas, and longings.

One feeling that is often associated with home is the feeling of belonging. Belonging is an affective feeling that can be both internally and externally defined. One may be considered part of a group yet have no affective attachment to it. Or one may feel connected to a place or experience that one has only read about or imagined. Belonging, as attached to home, is ambivalent and contextual and is only one of many feelings associated with home. Many people know when they "feel at home" but have a harder time describing the qualities, circumstances, people, or places that create an experience of home. The organizers of the Swiss exhibit, *Heimat als Grenzerfahrung*, discovered, when they asked 1001 people "What is home to you?,"[12] that there were as many different answers as there were people.[13] While home as place figured prominently in their answers, and included landscapes, towns, and villages, other associations also emerged, including tastes, sounds, and smells, as well as significant experiences, relationships, and social practices.

While unpacking the concept of home, I will wander through many aspects, theories, and uses of the word home in order to create some theoretical sensitivity with which explore alternative aspects of home. Strauss and Corbin, the founders of grounded theory, recommend developing theoretical sensitivity to topics and con-

10 Brain K. Pennington and Amy L. Allocco, "Forward," In *Culture, Religion, and Home-Making in and Beyond South Asia*, ed. James Ponniah (Fortress Press, 2020), xiii, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvr0qv4n.5.

11 Stock, "Home and Memory," 26.

12 Stapferhaus Lenzburg, ed., *Heimat: Eine Grenzerfahrung* (Neue Zürcher Zeitung NZZ Libro, 2017), 102–11.

13 Stapferhaus Lenzburg, *Heimat*, 81.

cepts in order to develop points of comparison.[14] This development of a "sensitizing concept" serves this research project by sketching out the many angles and approaches to theories of home. Sociologist Kathy Charmaz has described sensitizing concepts as "those background ideas that inform the overall research problem."[15] They are distinct from "definitive concepts" in that they resist fixed attributes and instead aim to provide reference points to guide empirical inquiry.[16] I explore concepts, approaches, and complexities related to home by taking a meandering path through studies of space and place, theories of affectivity, relationships to place that are shaped by absence and loss, accounts of home in political and cultural arenas, and the roles played by migration and home in religious narratives. This exploration of home reveals the tendency of definitions of home to become hegemonic and rigid as well as the diversity of experiences to which home is ascribed. It is my hope that the shape of home that emerges is broad but not fixed, instead offering boundaries and perspectives for reflection to create points of engagement with home in the context of asylum-seeking in Basel, Switzerland.

2.1 Home as Place

Home is often understood in terms of geographic roots, where a person grew up or spent significant time, or where their family originates from or identifies with ethnically, culturally, or religiously. Because place holds so much potential information about a person, the question "Where are you from?" is frequently asked, especially when first meeting someone. The question seeks to locate a person spatially, socially, and politically and to understand more about them. It also aims to generate social connection, establish mutuality, and uncover identifying characteristics. The simplicity of the question and its goal, to understand more about a person, belie the complex meaning assigned to someone's geographic attachments. Answers to the

14 For a discussion of grounded theory, see, among others: Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 4th ed. (SAGE Publications, 2015); Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (Sage Publications, 2006); Glenn A. Bowen, "Grounded Theory and Sensitizing Concepts," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 3, no. 5 (2006), https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500304; Herbert Blumer, "What Is Wrong with Social Theory?," *American Sociological Review* 19, no. 1 (1954), https://doi.org/10.2307/2088165.

15 Kathy Charmaz, "Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods," in *Strategies for Qualitative Inquiry*, ed. N. K. Denzin, 2nd ed. (SAGE Publications, 2003), 259.

16 Blumer, "What is Wrong with Social Theory?"; Glenn A. Bowen, "Sensitizing Concepts," in *SAGE Research Methods Foundations*, ed. Paul Atkinson et al. (SAGE Publications, 2019), http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036; Bowen, "Grounded Theory and Sensitizing Concepts."

question "Where are you from?" reveal not only geography but also climates, activities, language, politics, food, arts, family history, cultural affiliations, and religion.

Place acts as a fulcrum when discussing home, it is the center around which other connections and characteristics revolve. As theologian Jan Holton writes, "We are embodied and thus emplaced creatures; the place we call home and our relationship to it can have a remarkable impact on us."[17] The nuances of the smell of bread, a view from a window, the tempo of language, and the company of people shape specific places into meaningful locations, such as home. Definitions of home, and the sense of identity they provide, are often embedded in geographic attachments such as "*my* home or house, *my* neighbourhood, *my* city, *my* region, *my* homeland."[18] Identification with place embeds a person in a geographic location through social and emotional connections, sensations, and emotions. Understanding how place is both geographically and socially constructed offers insights into individual and collective experiences of home as well as into how it can serve as a placeholder for family, identity, and meaning.

2.1.1 The Spatial Turn

With the "spatial turn" in the late 20th century, the focus of social science research turned to the category of space. This "turn" considers new theoretical frameworks and perspectives through space and human relationships to space.[19] The consideration of space has impacted academic disciplines from geography, to sociology, to history. The spatial turn looks at how space is organized, utilized, and controlled. Theorists such as Michel de Certeau and Michel Foucault explored dynamics of power within space, raising issues of interpretation and representation.

With the spatial turn, concepts of place and space evolved beyond considerations of static geographic location. Space instead becomes constituted in particular ways at a particular time through relationships between people, practices, and geography. Social geographer Doreen Massey writes that place is created through a particular confluence of time and space and is not necessarily a concrete geographic location.[20] This overarching theoretical shift moves away from the Cartesian separation of mind and body, and instead focuses on how space is produced in social and relational processes.

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17 M. Jan Holton, *Longing for Home: Forced Displacement and Postures of Hospitality* (Yale University Press, 2016), 31, https://doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300207620.001.0001.

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

19 Beat Kümin and Cornelie Usborne, "At Home and in the Workplace: A Historical Introduction to the 'Spatial Turn,'" *History and Theory* 52 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.10671; Angelo Torre, "A 'Spatial Turn' in History? Landscapes, Visions, Resources," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 63, no. 5 (2008): 1127–44.

20 Doreen B. Massey, *For Space* (SAGE Publications, 2005).

Before the spatial turn, static notions of space and place dominated scholarly discourse. Cartesian and Newtonian conceptions of space as absolute and fixed began to shift with 17th century philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who conceived of space as having a relational dimension.[21] For Leibniz, relational processes impacted the content and meaning of space, in contrast to the static and unchanging qualities of Cartesian notions of space. Thus, relationships among objects, especially social relationships, are just as critical to spatial meanings as the locations themselves. Henri Lefebvre, in his book *The Production of Space*, argued that space is not inert or fixed, but relational and social, and thus that space happens through processes, that it is *produced*.[22] It is how space is used, not the fact of its existence, that gives space meaning. Space and place are not static but evolve and change with time and circumstance. In this reconceptualization, offered by the spatial turn, the place of home is more than land, location, and geography.[23]

Relationships among people, practices, experiences, and objects create meaning and organize space into a more bounded and knowable subset, making it a malleable concept for meaning-making. Places are grounded in human embeddedness and interaction with the physical and social world and are always being created through relationships. Because of this social dimension of space, the spatial turn resulted in an increased focus on dynamics of power, social issues, politics of representation, and environmental impacts. As Knott writes, "This spatial turn challenged earlier Cartesian approaches, focusing attention on social as well as physical space, foregrounding spatial practice and representations, and stressing the importance of power and the production of space."[24] This is particularly true for places such as home, which hold significant personal as well as cultural and political meaning.[25]

2.1.1.1 Space, Place, and Location

Before delving deeper, I will discuss the terms space, place, and location and clarify their uses. Since my research languages are both German and English, I will introduce terms in both languages. The terms space (*Raum*), place (*Ort*), and location (*Stelle*) are distinct terms, yet they are often used fluidly and interchangeably.[26] In

21 Setha M. Low, *Spatializing Culture: The Ethnography of Space and Place* (Routledge, 2016).

22 Rob Shields, "Henri Lefebvre," in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, ed. Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin, 2nd ed. (SAGE Publications, 2011), 281.

23 See: Shields, "Henri Lefebvre"; Low, *Spatializing Culture*; Massey, *For Space*.

24 Kim Knott, "Religion, Space, and Place: The Spatial Turn in Research on Religion," *Religion and Society* 1, no. 1 (2010): 29, https://doi.org/10.3167/arrs.2010.010103.

25 Low, *Spatializing Culture*, 12.

26 While these terms were encountered in the works of numerous theorists, I draw my choices of English terms from the work of the geographer Doreen Massey and her extensive work on space and place: Massey, *For Space*; and from the sociologist Setha Low's chapter "Genealogies: The Concepts of Space and Place," in her book *Spatializing Culture* (2016). I draw my

the end, these terms and definitions must be treated with some degree of translation and fluidity both in this book and among scholars.[27] Yet, to begin it is helpful to distinguish their definitions and highlight the ways their meanings overlap and intersect. Location distinguishes itself more readily from space and place and is defined by its specificity, often referring to a particular position in relation to other positions.[28] It might be used in the task of locating specific boundaries or as a fixed point of reference. Space is a more abstract and undefined term, as reflected in its use in the phrase "outer space."[29] Place contains qualities of both previous words by creating relationships between locations in space. Many social scientists consider place a more specific subset of space. Anthropologist Setha Low writes, "space is the more encompassing construct, while place retains its relevance and meaning but only as a subset of space."[30] Even ancient Greek thought understood place as a specific and relational part of space. For the Greeks, *chora* denoted more abstract space while *topos* denoted more specific place. Plato imagined *chora* as pre-existent, the material that was necessary for human and divine activity. *Topos*, in contrast, was considered a vessel or container that gives more specific shape to *chora*. Thus, place is a vessel or container that leads to greater specificity of meaning. It is a bounded but flexible concept created through relational activity.[31]

Knott refers to place as "a moment in space" created through the specific relationship of people, practices, and environment in a certain time. Knott writes, "The particularity of a place arises from the complexity of its social relations and the sum of the stories told about it. Being a progressive part of space, or a moment in space, it is open to a spatial analysis."[32] This relational understanding locates place, including home, in a web of social relations and lived experiences. In Lefebvre's examination of space, as well as for subsequent theorists, social activities produce the specificity of place.[33] Lefebvre argued that geographic space is inherently social and created through lived experiences.[34] This social configuration means that when considering questions about what a home is, geographical place is not enough from which to

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German terms from my own translations and from Karen Joisten's book *Philosophie der Heimat – Heimat der Philosophie* (2003).

27 John Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place, Explorations in Practical, Pastoral, and Empirical Theology* (Ashgate, 2003).

28 Knott, *The Location of Religion*.

29 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 1.

30 Low, *Spatializing Culture*, 12.

31 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 3–5.

32 Knott, *The Location of Religion*, 33.

33 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 23.

34 Shields, "Henri Lefebvre," 281. Shields explains this social basis of experience as critical to Lefebvre's understanding of space. "Lefebvre attempted to establish the importance of 'lived' grassroots experiences and argued that geographical space is fundamentally social."

theorize. Instead, place, practices, and people and the relationships between them must be considered. A cornerstone of the notion of the social construction of space is the importance of relationality. As Convery, Corsane, and Davis, in their book *Making Sense of Place,* write, "Place is thus bound up in people's sources of meaning and experience; people and their environments, places and identities are mutually constructed and constituted."[35] Relationality as the interaction of people, practices, and locations occurs throughout time and space.

Knott also argues for a more fluid understanding of place, which she defines as "gathered, produced and reproduced by spatial practice, configured and also openly extended by social relations, constrained by the dominant order, but the living expression of everyday practices and dynamic local interpretations (local knowledge) of that place."[36] The practices of groups and individuals can be viewed, formally or informally, as place-making activities. *Place-making* is often used in urban planning to consider the deeper purpose of place beyond its utility. Urban places are not just zones for commerce, transportation, or housing. They are dynamic sites of human interaction; they are where life occurs. Place-making acknowledges the dynamic impact of local activities, the interactions of people, and the open-ended possibilities for spaces. It speaks to the power of human activity to shape and define a place. Place-making asserts that place does not have limited meaning or utility, that places can be reimagined and re-engineered to serve broader needs. This is often achieved by creating more community spaces and increasing accessibility in urban areas. Architects, community groups, local governments, churches, and civic organizations contribute to reimaging space in these ways.

This book uses the word *place* to refer to geographic space that is socially shaped. Place as social has a particular resonance when attempting to name and describe home. Convery, Corsane, and Davis continue, "Place, as distinct from space, provides a profound centre of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties and is part of the complex processes through which individuals and groups define themselves."[37] The embodied experiences, emotions, and processes that build home are shaped through relationships and affectivity, as will be explored in the following sections. Understanding home as a socially produced place also reveals why home is a slippery concept – it is shaped and impacted by diverse forces and experiences. As Pennington and Allocco write, "By reflecting on the process of home-making, it reminds us that homes are not naturally occurring entities, but rather they must be fashioned through human processes and that they are produced

35 Ian Convery, Gerard Corsane, and Peter Davis, eds., *Making Sense of Place: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, Heritage Matters, vol. 7 (Boydell Press, 2012), 1.

36 Knott, *The Location of Religion*, 33.

37 Convery, Corsane, and Davis, *Making Sense of Place*, 1.

and reproduced within political contexts, social systems, and economic flows."[38] The argument that home is not "naturally occurring" challenges essentialist and idealistic notions of home. Home is not a neutral, natural place or experience. It is a place that is produced through the many experiences of living that coalesce in distinct, and often individual, ways.

2.1.1.2 Place as Being in the World

Philosopher Edward Casey writes, "To be at all – to exist in any way – is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place."[39] Humans are emplaced in the world – they exist not in abstract space, but in specific places. The social production of space is based on this human embeddedness in place. Philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty have foregrounded the impact of this embeddedness on human experience in the world. Martin Heidegger's concepts of dwelling and being-in-the-world (*Dasein*) emphasize human activity in the world. Dwelling is a reclamation of the German word *bauen*, meaning to build. Heidegger draws on an analogous meaning – to build means that one dwells in a place, builds community, and sets down roots.[40] As Low explains, "Dwelling is the basis of place-making activity and reflects the entanglement of human beings' relationship with the world."[41] In *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes human existence as "being-in-the-world,"[42] *Dasein*, which situates human experience in a specific place in the world. This "placedness" is critical to defining humanness and human activity in the world.[43] Heidegger argues that we are beings who *are* insofar as we dwell, that is, insofar as we are making a place for ourselves.[44] The primacy of human interaction with, and impact on, place means that human experience and meaning-making cannot be separated from human placed-ness in, and connection to, the world.

Being situated in the world informs other phenomenologies. Pierre Bourdieu posits that social systems become embedded in everyday practices in the form of embodied practice, which he calls *habitus*. *Habitus* is knowledge that is contained in the body, which shapes everyday actions and places. "It is the idea that ongoing, practical everyday activities – articulated through bodies – contain prior cultural

38 Pennington and Allocco, "Forward," xiii.

39 Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (University of California Press, 1997), 93.

40 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 19.

41 Low, *Spatializing Culture*, 17.

42 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, neunte unveränderte Auflage (Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1960).

43 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 18. Inge further explains Heidegger's understanding of dasein as necessitating place. "For Heidegger, the human person is a dasein, literally a 'being-in-the-world' – so that placedness is of the essence."

44 Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*.

dispositions that weigh upon, but not definitively so, ongoing actions."[45] *Habitus* describes activities that generate culturally meaningful spaces, including home. In his original development of the concept of *habitus*, Bourdieu researched home among Algerian Berbers. Bourdieu determined that, as described by to Low, "it is through the experience of living in the spatial symbolism of the home that social structure becomes embodied and naturalized in everyday practice."[46] Places generate meaning due to the interaction of people with their lived environment, with other people, and with social systems. De Certeau sums up this interaction by defining place as shaped by practices and reconfigured through narrative.[47] It is everyday tactics, how geographies are used and engaged with, that shape and give meaning to a place.[48]

2.1.1.3 Home as Process

Reconceptualizing place as socially constructed challenges fixed ideas of place. While many places hold meaningful associations, these associations may change with time and circumstance. As relationships and practices change, how a place is experienced and perceived also changes. These places may be re-shaped through new relationships and experiences. For a meaningfully dense place such as home, there is a tendency to attach concrete meaning at individual and communal levels. Fixed definitions of home provide boundaries that determine what exactly makes something home, including what belongs and what does not. These boundaries are necessary, yet so are flexibility and openness. As social anthropologist Mary Douglas writes, "Home is located in space, but it is not necessarily a fixed space."[49] A nation-state may have fixed definitions, yet if it does not account for new people, cultural shifts, or political and social developments, it risks becoming irrelevant or authoritarian. In the same way, if the childhood house represents home, when the house is sold or as relationships with parents change, understandings of home must also change. Geographers David Ralph and Lynn A. Staeheli write that home "is a process, an achievement involving both the people we share home with but also the material objects therein."[50] Home, like other meaningful places, is an evolving relationship between physical place, people, and experiences. Because relationships evolve, definitions of place and home also evolve.

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45 Gary Bridge, "Pierre Bourdieu," in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, ed. Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin, 2nd ed. (SAGE Publication, 2011), 77.

46 Low, *Spatializing Culture*, 18.

47 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 1984), 117.

48 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 35–36.

49 Mary Douglas, "The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space," *Social Research* 58, no. 1 (1991): 289, https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2023.2170118.

50 David Ralph and Lynn A. Staeheli, "Home and Migration: Mobilities, Belongings, and Identities," *Geography Compass* 5, no. 7 (2011): 521, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2011.00434.x.

Home is a dynamic, evolving, and created process. Meanings and experiences of home can and do shift over time. As philosopher Karen Joisten explains in her exploration of home, human life occurs in a specific space, time, and location (*Raum-Zeit-Stelle*) with specific people, in a specific language, within certain traditions and histories, and with particular values and rules.[51] Home is unique to a certain time and place and a certain configuration of relationships, memories, and places. As Joisten writes, home is not a rigid, fixed "*Etwas*" (something), it is a life-long process that is constantly realized through new ways of being at home.[52] This fluidity leads to ongoing renegotiations and reconfigurations of home. It can be argued that there is no single concept of home, even at the individual level, and that home changes shape. Dwelling in the world is not fixed, but constantly in motion. This fluidity reconstellates relationships and is a dynamic process whereby place is continually created. Joisten's philosophy of home is grounded in this concreteness of being-in-the world while also emphasizing that relationships within the world are always changing. Joisten uses the analogy of standing in a river to illustrate that the same place is not static, it changes in each moment.[53] The specific constellation of time, place, and experience means that new relationships to place are created in each moment.

This continual moving towards home means that home is more of a verb than a noun. Sociologist Paolo Boccagni defines home as a dynamic and created process, which he calls *homing*.[54] "Homing is ultimately an invitation to reframe and approach home as becoming, rather than only as being, feeling, or making."[55] Humans are embedded in the world and constantly creating meaning through relationships between people, practices, and environment. *Homing* is a product of these relationships and includes both real and desired experiences.[56] The process of creating and becoming home is ongoing. As sociologist Karen Jacobson writes, "there is no escaping the fact that we are beings who are always making ourselves at home and always such that we are never completely at home. We are forever becoming at home."[57] There is often a strong desire to establish a clear definition of home, especially when

51 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*, 38.

52 Karen Joisten, "Woher komme ich? Wohin gehe ich?," in *Zukunft Heimat*, ed. Joachim Klose and Ralph Linder (Thelem, 2012), 41.

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

54 Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*, 24–25.

55 Paolo Boccagni, "Homing: A Category for Research on Space Appropriation and 'Home-Oriented' Mobilities," *Mobilities* 17, no. 4 (2022): 585, https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2022.2046977.

56 Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*, 24–25.

57 Kirsten Jacobson, "Philosophical Perspectives on Home," in *International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home*, ed. Susan J. Smith, Marja Elsinga, Lorna Fox O'Mahony, Ong Seow Eng, Susan Wachter, and Robyn Dowling (Elsevier, 2012), 181, https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-08-047163-1.00321-0.

home facilities feelings of security and belonging. Yet, home is not a single place, event, or feeling.

2.1.2 Home as Affective Associations

Identifying home with place provides some description of what and where home might be. Yet, for many, home is captured more through feelings or senses and described through memories, affective associations, and stories. As Novuyo Rosa Tshuma, a Zimbabwean writer and refugee, writes in her essay "New Lands, New Selves," home is a feeling and a place of longing. "Though I still yearn for "home," I no longer think of it as a place out there, to go to. It now resides in me, a "feeling at home" inside of me that I try to cultivate every day, that I can take with me wherever I need to go."[58] Affective dimensions of home are portable. While they may be generated by experiences in specific locations, these feelings are not confined to specific places.

Affective experiences produce associations and interpretations of place, including home. Experiences of home are defined not only by where they occur and who they occur with but also by the emotions and feelings associated with these interactions. Ralph and Staehli, in their book *Home and Migration*, write that "home is experienced both as a location and as a set of relationships that shape identities and feelings of belonging."[59] Relationships and places generate feelings, emotions, and moods to create a sense of a particular place at a specific time.[60] These interactions are modulated on an emotional-affective level and are interpreted by describing them through feelings, moods, and emotions or attaching them to memories and longings. Interactions with and in places and experiences may generate positive or negative emotions, become associated with certain memories, or call up states of being.

While difficult to describe or categorize, affective experiences give shape to nuanced experiences of living and are closely linked to the physical and embodied world. The philosopher and psychiatrist Thomas Fuchs explains affective associations, which he calls *affectivity*:

> They vary between short-lived, intense, object-related states and longer lasting, objectless states remaining in the background of awareness. This is mirrored in

58 Novuyo R. Tshuma, "New Lands, New Selves," in *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*, ed. Viet Thanh Nguyen (Abrams, 2018), 90.

59 Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration," 518.

60 Andrea Bieler, "Exploring Affectivity: An Unfinished Conversation with Pamela Sue Anderson," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 25, no. 1–2 (2020): 247–49, https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2020.1717810.

> the host of terms such as mood, affect, feeling, emotion, passion, or sentiment that have been variously used and defined, but still may not be neatly separated.[61]

Affective associations are difficult to describe because they include complex states and feelings that often exist below the surface of awareness. Theologian Andrea Bieler writes that the human experience of affectivity is often difficult to articulate or even recognize. "The embodied sense of aliveness exists as the backdrop of our cognitive reflections, our actions, and our directed, intentional feelings. Most of the time this sense is unnoticed and unvoiced."[62] Yet this background experience adds resonance to life experiences and creates associations with particular times and places. Affective associations generate attachments and aversions that become associated with people and places. For this reason, Vanessa Machado de Oliveira, a professor of education, argues for the inclusion of affectivity as an important vehicle of engagement with the world.[63] Affectivity serves to reinterpret experiences, especially when the feelings are particularly intense, either positively or negatively. While emotions are often categorized as good or bad, welcome or unwelcome, emotions are embodied responses to lived experiences just as physical and mental responses are reactions to the lived environment. These "affective responses," as de Oliveira calls them, are ways of engaging with, learning from, and being in the world.[64]

The body and emotions are not separate entities but instead inform and build on one another. Affectivity is both a physical and a social response. As Fuchs writes, "In contrast to current opinion which locates mental states including moods and emotions within our head, phenomenology regards affect as encompassing phenomena that connect body, self, and world."[65] Fuchs further describes how affectivity becomes attached to particular positionalities through "social existential feelings."[66] It is both individual and collective affective responses that shape engagement with the world. These feelings generate an orientation toward places in the world. In this way, knowledge of a place is made up of a dense network of reactions, feelings, and affective associations.[67] As theologian Mark Wynn writes, "Knowledge of place consists,

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61 Thomas Fuchs, "The Phenomenology of Affectivity," in *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychiatry*, ed. K. W. M. Fulford et al. (Oxford University Press, 2013): 613, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/293769263_The_Phenomenology_of_Affectivity.

62 Bieler, "Exploring Affectivity," 247.

63 Vanessa Machado de Oliveira, *Hospicing Modernity: Facing Humanity's Wrongs and the Implications for Social Activism* (North Atlantic Books, 2021).

64 Machado de Oliveira, *Hospicing Modernity*, 48–49.

65 Fuchs, "The Phenomenology of Affectivity," 612.

66 Fuchs, "The Phenomenology of Affectivity," 612.

67 Mark Wynn, *Faith and Place: An Essay in Embodied Religious Epistemology* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 45, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199560387.001.0001.

at least in part, in an embodied, practical and, very often, theoretically inarticulate responsiveness to a given region of space."[68] These affective responses means that a place is never entirely knowable or definable in an objective sense and is more than its constituent parts.[69] Instead, affective associations generate a "sense of place" that constitutes a source of meaningful experience.[70] Home is often described through these senses and qualities, even when also described as a specific place.

Affective response can include feelings of connection and disconnection that help shape feelings of home. As Ahmed writes, "being-at-home is a matter of *how one feels or how one might fail to feel*."[71] These may include strong feelings of belonging or not belonging that have multiple sources, including experiences with other people. Feelings of home are generated as much by communal as by individual experiences of belonging. As Fuchs continues, "Social existential feelings refer to states such as feeling at home in the world and with others, feeling welcome, familiar, connected – or feeling like a stranger, distant, disconnected, rejected, or isolated."[72] Social feelings about home may also include love, or hate, and become attached not only to specific experiences but also to specific places. Boccagni defines home as a social relationship comprised of security, familiarity, and control of one's environment.[73] These associations are often connected with childhood experiences of innocence, safety, and close relationships with caregivers.[74] Feelings of familiarity are also associated with home, including familiarity with one's first language, sometimes referred to as the "mother tongue," as well as familiar smells, sounds, climates, and landscapes.

Many philosophers have tried to capture the affective qualities that makes a place home. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan coined the term *topophilia* to mean love of place. *Topophilia* refers to "human being's affective ties with the material environment."[75] These affective ties can create attachments to place associated with feelings like love and commitment. Place-identity theory, which was developed by environmental psychologists, similarly explores the deep feelings that are associated with place. These associations serve to make sense of the world and one's place in it and can facilitate identity formation. As Holton writes, how people identify with a place is

68 Wynn, *Faith and Place*, 8.

69 Wynn, *Faith and Place*, 8.

70 Convery, Corsane, and Davis, *Making Sense of Place*, 2.

71 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 89.

72 Fuchs, "The Phenomenology of Affectivity," 616.

73 Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*, 9.

74 Holton, *Longing for Home*; Christoph Türcke, *Heimat: Eine Rehabilitierung* (Zu Klampen Verlag, 2006); Christoph Türcke, "Sehnsucht: Heimat Ist Immer Auch Utopie," in *Heimat: Eine Grenzerfahrung*, ed. Stapferhaus Lenzburg (Neue Zürcher Zeitung NZZ Libro, 2017).

75 Yi-Fu Tuan, "Place: An Experiential Perspective," *Geographical Review* 65, no. 2 (1975): 93, https://doi.org/10.2307/213970.

often connected to how people identify and describe themselves. "[P]lace-identity is very relevant to how the home place contributes to the creation of who we become particularly in relation to meaning-making, identifying the places that are safe and creating a sense of place belongingness."[76] Thus, affective associations connected to home often include feelings of security, familiarity, and belonging.

Yet, these are not the only affective associations that become connected with home. As feminist scholars have pointed out, idealizing home as a place of security and safety can obscure the ways home controls and excludes.[77] Often the safety of home is predicated on the subjugation of other populations, as in the case of settler colonialism, or on allegiance to social hierarchies and expectations that rely on the unacknowledged work of women and other groups.[78] Thus, home can be defined by a diversity of affective experiences, including loss, violence, discord, and exclusion. Experiences that disrupt home, such as migration, can also reveal nuanced understandings of the affective qualities of home.

2.1.2.1 Home as Absence

There are many sayings about home, including losing home. One adage says that you don't really know what home is until it is lost, and a second one stresses that absence makes the heart grow fonder. Several theologians and philosophers echo these sentiments, asserting that leaving and separating from home bring important relationships to place into focus. Philosopher Christoph Türcke writes that the moment when home is lost is the moment when one learns to value home.[79] And Kaufmann writes that when home is close and familiar, we lack the necessary distance in order to view and recognize it. The familiar home can become so closely tied to the self-evident aspects of life that it is hidden from direct view. Only when it is gone or viewed from a distance does it come into focus.[80] Only when it is lost does it paradoxically become present.[81] Theologian Joachim Klose describes a similar experience, saying that it is only on the edges, from an external perspective, that home is visible.[82] Paradoxically, home can become more present, and its shape can come into view, through the experience of its loss and distance. Often home is only understood when it is left, lost, or seen from a distance. At these moments homesickness and longing also characterize the relationship to home.

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76 Holton, *Longing for Home*, 17.

77 Allison Weir, "Home and Identity: In Memory of Iris Marion Young," *Hypatia* 23, no. 3 (2008): 5, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2008.tb01202.x.

78 Weir, "Home and Identity," 7.

79 Türcke, "Sehnsucht," 31.

80 Kaufmann, "Heimat Als Präsenz im Entzug," 15–24.

81 Kaufmann, "Heimat als Präsenz im Entzug," 32.

82 Klose, "An den Rändern von Heimat," 111.

The longing for a lost home can be experienced as a physical or affective pain, often described as an experience of homesickness. The German word for homesickness, *Heimweh*, translates as home-pain. In Switzerland, homesickness was once considered a physical illness and often afflicted mercenaries serving foreign armies far from home.[83] Christian Schüle describes this experience of missing home as a "phantom pain" or a longing for that which is lost.[84] The absences caused by losing home generate feelings that become attached to the place of home.

Joisten includes absence as a key element in her philosophy of home. She argues that homesickness, loss, and longing are not the opposite of home, but experiences of home, where absence itself makes home visible. More specifically, she says that home is found in the tension between absence and presence. The importance of home is not only in being there, but also in leaving it. Joisten argues that there is no pure form of living (*wohnen*) because it is always tied to leaving.[85] In fact, human life would not be possible if home only meant staying; the tension of leaving is necessary for life, and the importance of place is not only in being there, but in leaving it.[86] Human experience is defined by this tension of being grounded in a place while also experiencing its absence. 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. Other theorists describe similar tensions in home, including home being found in the interplay of staying-going; mobility-stability; closeness-distance; imagination-reality; close-far; longing-memory.[87]

Migration highlights the loss of home as one of its defining aspects. This experience transcends forced migration or other radical experiences of losing or leaving home. Loss may occur through migration, natural disaster, or the loss of parent or life partner and is a fundamental human experience found across cultures and personal experiences. Even for those who never change geographic location, loss of home occurs through loss of relationships; changes to local economies, cultural values, and landscapes; the cycles of birth and death; and ultimately one's own death. Those who do not leave home also experience longing and absence as parts of home. Loss of home is caused by geographic moves, whether related to work, family, or adventure. It also occurs through other losses, such as losing family or friends or

83 Alexander Rechsteiner, "Homesick for the Mountains," Schweizerisches National Museum, accessed July 2, 2023, last modified January 30, 2023, https://blog.nationalmuseum.ch/en/2019/09/homesick-for-the-mountains/.

84 Christian Schüle, *Heimat: Ein Phantomschmerz* (Droemer, 2017), 13.

85 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*, 33.

86 Bhabha and Stierstorfer, "Homi K. Bhabha in Interview with Klaus Stierstorfer," 14.

87 See, for example: Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration"; Heidrun Friese, "The Limits of Hospitality," in *Extending Hospitality: Giving Space, Taking Time*, ed. Mustafa Dikeç, Nigel Clark, and Clive Barnett, Paragraph Special Issue, vol. 32, no. 1 (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), https://doi.org/10.3366/e0264833409000406; Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*.

previous work that created meaning. Memories of these previous times may arise through sensory experiences, including sights, sounds, and smells that are associated with home.[88] Losses, including experiences of homelessness, exile, and absence, are important to definitions of home and shape hopes and desires associated with home.

In Joisten's philosophy, home is found not in a static place, but at the confluences of staying and going, of distance and closeness, of stability and mobility.[89] It is the interaction of these seemingly contradictory human experiences that defines home. Joisten describes home with the phrase *Heim-weg*, a play on the German words for home and away.[90] This definition recalls home as a process, one that is continually shaped by small and large changes, including those precipitated by loss and leaving. While these changes are more visible in migration, staying and leaving are embedded in any home experience. Ralph and Staeheli describe the changing nature of home as an experience that transcends international migration. "Even people who do not cross such borders live in homes experienced in many of the same ways – as locations, as relationships, as simultaneously fixed and fluid."[91] Staying informs leaving and leaving informs staying. Sara Ahmed's work highlights the interactions between those who leave and those who stay and how strangeness and alterity are present in home.

> There is already strangeness and movement within the home itself. It is not simply a question then of those who stay at home, and those who leave: as if these two different trajectories simply lead people to different places. Rather "homes" always involve encounters between those who stay, those who arrive, and those who leave.[92]

There is movement and exchange in leaving, and arriving, making home both familiar and unfamiliar.[93] Ralph and Staeheli also define home as occurring in the interaction between the sedentary and the mobile. "Home must be conceptualised as both dynamic and as moored in order to reflect the complexity and ambivalence that makes it such a tricky and slippery concept."[94] This ambivalence is part of the pull of home. Steeped in deep emotion and longing, the search for home is constituted by memories and associations that may not exist in their former ways. De Certeau

88 Bernhard Schlink, *Heimat Als Utopie*, Edition Suhrkamp, Sonderdruck (Suhrkamp, 2000), 24–25; Bieler and Kunz, "Responding to the Loss of Home."

89 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*, 27.

90 Heimweg also means the path home, usually one taken frequently from home or work.

91 Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration," 518.

92 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 88.

93 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 88.

94 Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration," 518.

writes, "The places people live in are like the presences of diverse absences."[95] The memory of people and places that once were continues to influence current understandings of home. De Certeau describes this as the way memories "haunt" a place.[96] Home as haunting speaks to the presence of loss and longing in even the most established notions of home. Haunting can also be understood as the presence of the "uncanny," as described by Nausner. That which is strange or alien also constitutes home but these traits are often obscured in favor of unifying notions of home such as familiarity, stability, and continuity.[97] Yet longing, memory, and nostalgia often surface what is lost or missing.

Homi Bhabha describes home as a tension between "hereness and thereness," a tension between the particularity of the place and the returning, imagining, and longing of place.[98] Longing for the lost home is seen in the ways home is imagined from a distance. Tshuma describes her mother's relationship to home as characterized by imagination and memory. "She is always dreaming of home, not the home of Grandfather's imagining and design, but another home, probably the home our countrymen dreamed of when we attained independence from Britain in 1980."[99] Losing home combines memory and longing to create imagined visions of home. Dreaming of home is a powerful metaphor for individuals as well as in literature and psychology. Longing for home can take the shape of story and myth, including fairy tales, heroes' journeys, and religious narratives, which call out affective, ideal, or desired qualities of home, often in the context of loss.

2.1.2.2 Home as Narrative

Memories, mythologies, and imagination help to define affective associations with home and to link past experiences and future hopes. Theologian Hans-Joachim Sander argues that home is always a combination of imagined and remembered states and that home can carry symbolic power related to belonging, identity, and purpose.[100] Remembered and desired states can create symbolic and imagined associations with home. Casey writes that "places are not only spatial, as we often presume; they also bear history and narrative."[101] Many people search for a place

95 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 108.

96 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 108.

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

98 Bhabha and Stierstorfer, "Homi K. Bhabha in Interview with Klaus Stierstorfer," 14.

99 Tshuma, "New Lands, New Selves."

100 Hans-Joachim Sander, "Religion am Third Space von Beheimatung: Eine heterotope Herausforderung," in *Heimatschichten: Anthropologische Grundlegung eines Weltverhältnisses*, ed. Joachim Klose (Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2013).

101 Edward S. Casey, "How the Place of Landscape Ends in Edges," in *Heimatschichten: Anthropologische Grundlegung eines Weltverhältnisses*, ed. Joachim Klose (Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2013), 89, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-04740-5_4.

where they feel at home, where qualities of home-ness exist for them. Feeling at home is often connected to a sense of being oneself, being seen, and being safe and may be connected to a place, may exist partially in some places, or may be a felt sense that does not yet exist. Home often contains deep desires that are ascribed to both lived and imagined states of home. These affective associations with home are also generated by memory and longing and are better captured through stories. Stories, narratives, and mythologies can capture the fluidity of home's location.[102]

Narratives describe both embodied and affective associations, link desired and actual states of home, and connect disparate people and places that might be associated with home. De Certeau bases much of his philosophy of space and place on the narrative agency of individuals whose actions delimitate and describe place. He writes that the "sayings and stories that organize places" create geographies and convey information and meaning that give unique shape to a place.[103] Narrative can capture disparate aspects of a place or experience and bring them into relationship. In addition to geography, narrative weaves in affect and imagination to describe multiple influences on a place. Narratives challenge concrete and hegemonic definitions of home and can become potent representations of home, apart from any geographically located reality.[104] In addition to the spatial reality of place and the everyday activities that give it shape, home is also an expression of something more than the activities of living.[105] Longings, desires, hopes, identities, and cultural and social expectations add density to the idea of home that is sometimes just beyond description. Home might be a place where one lives, but it is also often something much deeper. Narratives can help to capture some of the density and desire that is located in home.[106]

Especially in the context of migration, or when home is at a distance, home is frequently captured through narratives. These narratives might include moments such as meals that are missed and memories of family members, or they might describe idealized memories of home or a longing to return to a certain place. Memories and narratives are often embedded in homesickness, and the longing to return home brings back the former home.[107] Narratives include more than the sum of life events, and they are generated through the community's stories and experiences. In this way, narratives of home accumulate before any individual life begins.

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102 Karen Joisten, "Woher komme ich?," 17–25. The narrative quality of life is understood across many disciplines as a critical aspect of meaning-making, including in the work of the theorists and philosophers such as Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, Paul Ricoeur, and Alasdair MacIntyre.

103 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 118.

104 Sander, "Religion am Third Space von Beheimatung," 369.

105 Sander, "Religion am Third Space von Beheimatung," 367.

106 Sander, "Religion am Third Space von Beheimatung," 367.

107 Kaufmann, "Heimat als Präsenz im Entzug."

Joisten writes that human experience is always embedded in narrative, from the moment of birth. Joisten locates narratives of home in two fundamental human questions: "Where am I from? Where am I going?"[108] These questions bring memories and affective associations of the past together with imagined and desired possible futures. Joisten situates home in this tension between the past and the future, giving it a dynamic quality. At this intersection of past and future, home is rooted in the current place while being impacted by both memory and desire.[109] Matthew Croasmun and Mirsoslav Volf describe the longing for home as "'back' to a past yet to be realized, 'forward' to become what we've always been intended to be from the beginning."[110] It is through the tension of staying and going, which is a dialectic that begins at birth, that an individual enters a larger human narrative, already steeped in story and contextually situated, that continues throughout the life span.[111] These home narratives are found in religious traditions about creation, in cultural myths of national origin, in community stories of migration and settlement, and in family stories of births and deaths.

Narratives of home capture the felt and lived experience of home over time and space, through relationships and life stages, and they are also found in individual stories of identity formation and feeling at home in oneself. Narratives are sometimes the vehicles that create home from disparate pieces. Home is itself a story, one that lives somewhere between myth and biography. Based on true events, it at the same time strives to capture deeper longings and connections. As Türcke writes, from birth humans are trying to find their place in the human story, they are trying to create a home.[112]

2.1.2.3 Home as Utopia

One genre of narratives about home is found in utopian visions. For some, home is a place that cannot be reached, whether because it is lost or because it is an imagined or ideal place. In his book *Heimat als Utopie,* German writer Bernhard Schlink defines home as an ideal, yet imagined, place, a utopia. First coined by Thomas More, the concept of utopia means no-place, usually one with idealized qualities that does not or could not exist in current society.[113] In Schlink's theory of home as utopia, absence and longing are two important elements of home. Home, in any form, contains some element of loss, something unfulfilled, and therefore something of home remains

108 Joisten, "Woher komme ich?," 25.

109 Joisten, "Woher komme ich?," 25–29.

110 Matthew Croasmun and Miroslav Volf, *The Hunger for Home: Food and Meals in the Gospel of Luke* (Baylor University Press, 2022), 1.

111 Joisten, "Woher komme ich?," 17–25.

112 Türcke, "Sehnsucht," 25.

113 Schlink, *Heimat als Utopie*.

just outside a person's grasp.[114] Home is partly an imagined state and cannot be fully realized. Ernst Bloch, a Marxist philosopher, used the concept of utopia in his book, *The Principle of Hope*, to engage a desired vision with the imagination to call forth a more ideal future. This future is not attainable, at least "not yet," as Bloch posits, but it is instead having hope in the possibility that gives utopia its powerful role. A utopian vision, such as Bloch's, is grounded in the current world yet open to future, imagined possibilities.[115]

Home is both a forward and a backward motion, grasping at that which is remembered and longing for that which might be. In fact, Schlink argues that when home moves into concrete space, it is denatured and morphs from the imagined ideal.[116] Even as the ideal home becomes concrete, it never completely matches the former vision. This is because the imagined home can never be fully reached; longing and absence are always part of its definition.[117] Home as utopia combines the memory of a past place with the longing for a future place.

Home as utopic, mythic, or imagined often figures into migrant narratives of the place that was left. Vu Tran, an author and former refugee, writes, "And that space between what is real and imaginary is ultimately where the refugee resides."[118] Many who experience migration and long to return home remember home as an imagined place that cannot be reached even by returning. Often returning home leads to disappointment, disorientation, or alienation when confronted with what was once familiar, but is no longer experienced in the same way.[119] During the time away, the physical, political, and social constructions of place continue to shift. For both those who left and those who stayed, new experiences have reshaped place, and in the interim people and landscapes, as well as political and cultural conditions, have shifted. A new place has been created while the old place becomes remembered and imagined. This disconnect can occur even when home is left for short periods of time, especially when a person encounters very different experiences outside of the home. Home is an interplay of real and imagined characteristics and is conditioned by new perspectives.

114 Schlink, *Heimat als Utopie*, 36.

115 Ernst Bloch, *Prinzip Hoffnung / The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (MIT Press, 1986).

116 Schlink, *Heimat als Utopie*, 36.

117 Sara Ahmed et al., eds., *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration* (Berg, 2003), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003087298.

118 Vu Tran, "A Refugee Again," in *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*, ed. Viet Thanh Nguyen (Abrams, 2018), 155.

119 Bieler and Kunz, "Responding to the Loss of Home," 143–44.

2.1.3 Home as Personal and Political

Idealized visions of home include important characteristics of home that may otherwise be lost or missing. Yet, utopias can also rest on harmful and unjust systems. Feminist scholars have criticized the ways that the comfort and security of home often come at the expense of women's bodies. Scholars such as Judy Tobler and bell hooks challenge idealized notions of home that center femininity and burden the female body.[120] In her essay "Home is Where the Heart Is," Tobler argues that idealized notions of home rest on the idealization of women. "At the core of idealised notions of 'home' reside equally idealised images of woman, or more specifically, the maternal body."[121] This idealization ignores the experiences of many women who are burdened with domestic, unpaid labor and denied opportunities for physical, economic, and social support.[122]

Idealized notions of home can serve to obscure the ways that home is also a site of violence, estrangement, and ambivalence. At the extreme, violence against women is most likely to happen within the home or from an intimate partner.[123] Yet even everyday tasks of making and caring for home fall disproportionately on women, and this labor often benefits others, while women are denied opportunities themselves. Notions of home can valorize the female body as mother, nurturer, and provider without acknowledging the ways women are burdened by the expectations of these roles. Philosopher Marion Iris Young builds on feminist scholar Luce Irigaray's argument to critique Heidegger's philosophy of dwelling as resting on women's bodies.[124] Heidegger's original description of building has two components: construction and preservation, yet preservation fades in his development of the theory of dwelling.[125] Construction is largely ascribed to the work of men, yet it is the – often invisible – labor of women, through preservation, that creates and cares for home.

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120 Judy Tobler, "'Home Is Where the Heart Is?': Gendered Sacred Space in South Africa," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 13, no. 1–2 (2000), https://www.jstor.org/stable/24764042; bell hooks, "Marginality as Site of Resistance," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson, Documentary Sources in Contemporary Art (MIT Press, 1990); Katherine McKittrick, "bell hooks," in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, ed. Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin, 2nd ed. (SAGE Publications, 2011), 244–45.

121 Tobler, "'Home is Where the Heart Is?,'" 77.

122 Tobler, "'Home is Where the Heart Is?,'" 77.

123 UN Women, "Facts and Figures: Ending Violence Against Women," accessed February 2023, https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures.

124 Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Cornell University Press, 1993), 103–7.

125 Iris Marion Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme," in *Motherhood and Space: Configurations of the Maternal Through Politics, Home, and the Body*, ed. Caroline Wiedmer and Sarah Hardy (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2006), 136, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-12103-5_8.

The philosophy of dwelling can reinforce patriarchal systems that rely on the work of women.[126] As Young writes, "In the idea of 'home,' man projects onto woman the nostalgic longing for the lost wholeness of the original mother."[127] The theory of building and dwelling subsumes this lost wholeness of home without fully acknowledging it.

Home has often been considered part of the private sphere and associated with domesticity and women. "The home," writes James Ponniah, professor of religious studies, "has long walked hand in hand with the spatial politics of preserving the division of the home from the world such that the performativity of female and male identities is assigned space to the one and the other respectively and irrevocably."[128] This idealization, especially of safety and security, can mask the complex realities of home. Affective associations with home are not confined to feelings of belonging and connection but span the spectrum of emotions, moods, and embodied responses. It can be argued that home is where more negative experiences occur in comparison to other places.[129] This is partly because home is a place where people spend significant periods of time as well as a where meaningful and complex relationships are found. Despite this, the idea of home remains tinged with "*heimatlichen*" or rose-colored glasses and positive emotions.[130] Many sayings associated with home reflect this nostalgia, including "Home is where the heart is"[131] and "Home is where you don't have to explain yourself."[132] These idealized reflections of home obscure the complexity of home and the ways that individuals may or may not experience the safety, physically or emotionally, that home promises.

Home can also be stifling, and a desire to leave home is a powerful catalyst in many lives. Young adults often leave home to discover themselves apart from their family and culture of origin. Those who experience themselves as different or "other" than the norms established by their home often feel they must leave to fully be themselves. Douglas describes this as "the tyranny of home." This often-thwarted desire

126 Young, "House and Home," 135.

127 Young, "House and Home," 135, 140. Young further develops this idea by linking this nostalgia to a fixation on building and dwelling: "Man seeks nostalgically to return to the lost home by making buildings and putting things in them that will substitute for that original home."

128 James Ponniah and Amitha Santiago, "Introduction: Homes and Spaces under Transformation," in *Culture, Religion, and Home-Making in and Beyond South Asia*, ed. James Ponniah (Fortress Press, 2020), 2, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvr0qv4n.6.

129 Frank Mathwig, "Heimat entdecken: Ein ethisch-theologischer Versuch über Heimat," in *Heimat(en)? Beiträge zu einer Theologie der Migration*, ed. Amélé Adamavi-Aho, Frank Mathwig, and Matthias Zeindler (TVZ Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2017).

130 Mathwig, "Heimat entdecken," 183.

131 Tobler, "'Home is Where the Heart Is?,'" 77.

132 Mathwig, "Heimat entdecken," 168.

to leave home can dominate, determine, and control.[133] This ambivalence of home is also situated within definitions of individual and group identities.

While home is often theorized from the perspective of personal associations with home, home is shaped by the interplay between the individual and the social, the private and the public.[134] Humans are immersed in a world that is shaped by individual relationships as much as by social and political systems. As Jacobson writes, home is political even though we begin by making home in the family.

> We make our homes with our families in the *oikos* – the household. We begin, Aristotle argues, in the situation of an immediate family. Although the family is the necessary condition for our being in the first place, it is not, Aristotle argues, a sufficient sphere in which to live if we are to fulfill our proper human nature, because we are by nature *political*.[135]

Thus, both the private, the *oikos,* and the political, the *polis*, reflect culturally imbued understandings of home and of belonging. The social production of place is impacted by political systems, cultural norms, and social contracts. Place is shaped not only by personal and affective associations but also by political systems, religious and social groups, and economic factors. These forces can include structures such as patriarchy, capitalism, and white hegemony.[136] Individual social locations in these systems also impact the experience of home. As Boccagni writes, "What is felt, understood, and enacted as home is affected by variables such as social class, gender, age and ethno-cultural background."[137] Home is shaped by how people show up in the world, often by the lottery of birth. Characteristics such as gender, race, and health impact connections to home and social, religious, and political systems impact people differently.

Home crosses between the personal and the political and as such has the capacity to define boundaries of safety and belonging within home, but it can also create situations of violence and exclusion. As a powerful and far-reaching concept, home can easily become a subject of idealization, and hegemonic concepts can come to dominate and circumscribe its definition. The metaphorical and imaginative power of home functions as a social and political space as well. Ahmed describes nation-states as "simultaneously imaginary and real."[138] They are real places, but their defining characteristics are often narratives that are shaped by the systems and people in

133 Douglas, "The Idea of a Home," 303.

134 Michael Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression, and Intersubjectivity*, Critical Anthropology (Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002), 12.

135 Jacobson, "Philosophical Perspectives on Home," 178.

136 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 21.

137 Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*, xxiii.

138 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 98.

power. Benedict Anderson coined the term "imagined community" to describe how nation-building relies on generating affective attachments and shared concepts and beliefs to connect otherwise unconnected people.[139] Imagination is a powerful force to conceptualize a home that is unifying to diverse people.

The political shape of home interactions is given further meaning through affective associations, including feelings, emotions, and moods.[140] As described, affective associations build a deeper sense of place, especially in culturally and personally meaningful places, such as home.[141] These affective attachments make home a salient cultural and political concept and a place that holds feelings of belonging and shared values. As Holton writes, "The home place is as much a cultural creation as anything else – and a powerful one."[142] Cultural creations are embedded in narratives that describe the history, characteristics, and hopes for a group of people. Home is often defined in contrast to what is other, different, or strange.[143] Yet, as seen in exploring home as absence, leaving and staying, belonging and not-belonging are all critical in defining home. Sara Ahmed's work on the figure of the stranger stresses that alterity and "otherness" are already part of home.[144] By trying to remove strangeness from home, home itself starts to lose its shape.

2.1.4 Vulnerability and Hospitality

Many philosophers and theologians argue that exile, not belonging, is the original human experience. "The first condition of humanity is exile," writes philosopher Anne Dufourmantelle.[145] According to Dufourmantelle, these exiles include losses, illness, confusions, doubts, and eventually death – the final exile. "There are more than enough estrangements that can be visited upon an embodied self, then, without one ever needing to mobilize this body across the earth's surface."[146] As explored earlier in this chapter, losing and seeking home transcend cultures and personal

139 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

140 Fuchs, "The Phenomenology of Affectivity."

141 Low, *Spatializing Culture*.

142 Holton, *Longing for Home*, 27.

143 See, among others: Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*; Nausner, "Homeland as Borderland"; Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*; Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*.

144 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*.

145 Anne Dufourmantelle, "Hospitality – Under Compassion and Violence," in *The Conditions of Hospitality: Ethics, Politics, and Aesthetics on the Threshold of the Possible*, ed. Thomas Claviez, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy (Fordham University Press, 2013), 14, https://doi.org/10.1515/9780823292806-002.

146 Mustafa Dikeç, Nigel Clark, and Clive Barnett, "Extending Hospitality: Giving Space, Taking Time," in *Extending Hospitality: Giving Space, Taking Time*, ed. Mustafa Dikeç, Nigel Clark, and Clive Barnett, Paragraph Special Issue, vol. 32, no. 1 (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 11, https://doi.org/10.3366/e0264833409000376.

experiences. Exile might be temporary; it might be developmental, such as youth leaving the parental home; or it might be more permanent, through geographic moves, cultural and social changes, loss of community, and finally death.[147]

Many philosophers and theologians focus on the fragility of human life as a starting point for thinking about home. Joisten's philosophy foregrounds this human vulnerability by emphasizing loss and leaving as inherent and essential parts of human existence.[148] In fact, every human is born vulnerable. Bieler calls this fundamental vulnerability, in contrast to situational vulnerability. Bieler offers an alternate understanding of vulnerability, beyond fragility and woundedness. She suggests describing vulnerability "as a fundamental openness," with the potential to be touched and to touch others.[149] Vulnerability is based on the embodied reality of human experience and its potential for affectivity. This fundamental vulnerability characterizes the human condition of having a body in the world, what Bieler names "Being-Body-to-World" (*Leib-Seins-zur-Welt*).[150] This embeddedness echoes phenomenological arguments for human influence on and by the world. As Dufourmantelle writes, humans are fundamentally open to being affected by the circumstances of embodied life.[151] Alternately, situational vulnerability is based on circumstances, whether personal, social, or structural, that create vulnerable conditions. This might include migration, illness, or discrimination.[152]

The human experience of fundamental vulnerability is related to hospitality. Without the hospitality of the earth and caretakers, human life would not survive. Thus, hospitality is "the precondition to life," as Dufourmantelle writes.[153] Life relies from the beginning on hospitality: from the earth, from the bodies of mothers, and from those who care for a new life. Hospitality acknowledges the shared vulnerability of the human condition. Greek, Roman, and Hebrew cultures all valued hospitality. In Greek thought, strangers were to be welcomed because they might be gods or have the special protection of God. In Roman culture, hospitality was seen as a mark of civilization and a sacred duty.

The root words for hospitality, *hospes*, in Latin, and *xenos*, in Greek, can apply to both host and guest. In Latin, *hospes*, a noun, can mean either guest, stranger, or host. In Greek, *xenos* is most commonly translated as "stranger," but the meaning varies by context and can range from enemy to guest to friendship to host. In-

147 Schlink, *Heimat als Utopie*, 19.

148 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*; Joisten, "Woher komme ich?"

149 Andrea Bieler, "Verletzlichkeit: Leibphänomenologische Erkundungen Im Praktisch-Theologischen Interesse," *Evangelische Theologie* 77, no. 3 (2017): 169, https://doi.org/10.14315/evth-2017-0304.

150 Bieler, "Verletzlichkeit."

151 Anne Dufourmantelle, "Hospitality," 22.

152 Andrea Bieler, "Verletzlichkeit," 169–70.

153 Dufourmantelle, "Hospitality," 17.

stead of setting up a strict guest-host dichotomy, these words play on the reality that all can and will likely be both guest and host. Theologian Letty Russell explains it as follows: "Both philoxenia and Latin *hostes* imply a reciprocal relationship of give-and-take, meaning host and guest sometimes exchange roles."[154] This give-and-take grows out of the mutuality of fundamental vulnerability. The possibility of being affected by others and affecting others means that an individual moves between the poles of giving and receiving. In this vein, philosopher Mathias Risse similarly argues that common ownership of the earth and access to resources necessary for survival are moral rights.[155] It is unjust when people are not allowed access to land that could support their lives.[156] He writes, "Hospitality is not a 'virtue of sociability,' a benevolence one shows to strangers coming to visit one's land, but it is a right 'which belongs to all human beings insofar as we view them as potential participants in a world republic.'"[157] Participation by all people in life on earth, beginning with individual safety and survival, is a way of restoring right relationships, to the earth and to one another.

The tension between human exile and hospitality can also be understood as the tension between mobility and stability.[158] Being a host or guest is not a permanent state, as these roles can and do shift throughout a lifetime and within specific contexts. Someone may be a host at their place of residence, but while traveling they are a guest. This tension is apparent in diverse philosophical and religious traditions. In the Bible God commands the Jewish people to welcome strangers and refugees because they were once refugees (and could be again). Situational vulnerability also impacts hospitality. It is a matter of circumstance that a person is born in a certain place and time, with certain political rights and economic opportunities, and amid family and personal circumstances. The host/guest tension can also change due to natural events, political changes, or personal circumstances. The reality of this host-guest tension means that the condition of being host is tenuous – one could easily revert to exile and the experience of being a guest. Peter Admirand writes, "As displaced persons and irregular migrants know, their perceived status by the dominant

154 Letty M. Russell, J. Shannon Clarkson, and Kate M. Ott, *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 84.

155 Mathias Risse, "On the Morality of Immigration," *Ethics and International Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2008): 25–33, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7093.2008.00127.x.

156 Peter Admirand, "The Ethics of Displacement and Migration in the Abrahamic Faiths: Enlightening Believers and Aiding Public Policy," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 4 (2014): 682, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.84736.

157 Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens*, John Robert Seeley Lectures, vol. 5 (Cambridge University Press, 2004), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511790799.

158 Dufourmantelle, "Hospitality."

group in a society can literally change overnight."[159] There is no guarantee that those who have the power to host will remain so.

In fact, philosopher Jacques Derrida argues that this tension is a requirement for hospitality. Derrida argues that to be hospitable one must have the power and resources to be a host. The host must have control of the situation, otherwise they cannot engage in "hosting" behaviors.[160] The host sets the rules, owns the implements of hospitality, such as space and food, and sets the terms for the engagement even in the most generous examples of hospitality. In other words, a host is able to invite another into their home because they have resources available that the other does not. There must be a power dynamic, there must be ownership, and there must be the tension of withholding. Therefore, hospitality and hostility are not opposites, he argues, but are two sides of the same coin. Hospitality and hostility also share the same Latin root. Derrida coins the neologism "hostipitality" to show the ambivalence of the relationship of hospitality and hostility.[161] Derrida argues that hospitality requires hostility, that one cannot exist without the other.[162] By failing to acknowledge this, hospitality often ignores power dynamics inherent in the host-guest relationship. In the same way, explorations of home can ignore power dynamics and imbalances.

From this tension, Derrida develops the definition of unconditional or unlimited hospitality.[163] Unconditional hospitality is the moment when there is no hostility, when the guest is fully welcomed, without limitations based on who they are or what they need. The door is fully open – in fact, there is no door. There is no ownership or control, just pure and unlimited hospitality and welcome. Yet, in Derrida's philosophy, this kind of welcome is impossible, and therefore, unconditional hospitality is also effectively impossible – "the possible impossible."[164] Unconditional hospitality requires that there is no ownership, no control, and no hostility, thereby making the conditions of hospitality impossible. Derrida considers unconditional hospitality as a moment in hospitality, not the totality of hospitality. This "yet, but not yet" definition echoes utopian ideals of longing and home as well as Christian eschatological themes of a future, redeemed home with God. Unconditional hospitality highlights

159 Admirand, "The Ethics of Displacement and Migration in the Abrahamic Faiths," 676.

160 Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford University Press, 2000); Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch, eds., *Phenomenologies of the Stranger: Between Hostility and Hospitality*, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy (Fordham University Press, 2011).

161 Richard Kearney, "Double Hospitality," *Journal for Continental Philosophy of Religion* 1, no. 1 (2019): 76, https://doi.org/10.1163/25889613-00101005; Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 75–77.

162 Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 75–77.

163 Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 77.

164 Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 75, 119.

the ambivalent nature of home. It is at once personal and private yet also located in political systems and economies and shaped by cultural values. Home is something that is communal even though it is unique to each person. Home is a deep need that arises from human vulnerability, and many seek to protect its parameters from further vulnerability.

2.2 Home in Cultural and Political Contexts

Home as an ideal, imagined place allows it to be used for ideological and political purposes by groups and political systems, for instance, to define characteristics that unify national and ethnic groups. This unifying potential can elicit social cohesion that builds stronger communities, yet it can also reinforce boundaries that designate belonging and protect a collective identity that denies the otherness that is already part of home. The latter was evident under National Socialism in Germany as well as in more recent populist political movements. In the next section I will delve into several examples of how idealized and hegemonic definitions of home impact national identity politics and policies related to migration.

2.2.1 *Heimat*

The German notion of *Heimat* is one example of the ideological and political associations of home. At its root, *Heimat* calls up the affective feelings of home, generating a "sense of place" more than the specifics of place. There are several German words for home: *Heim*, *zuhause*, and *Heimat*. *Heim* more often refers to the specific location or building where one lives or resides. *Zuhause* translates as "at home" and can mean a specific location, a physical space, or a more general sense of being at home. *Heimat*, often translated as homeland, connotes more affective qualities of belonging, and is often associated with a particular region and the foods, dialects, and practices of that place.[165] As Friederike Eigler, a professor of German, writes, "Heimat carries a rich set of cultural and ideological connotations that usually combine notions of belonging and identity with affective attachment to a specific place or region."[166] These connotations have shifted in different historical eras, yet *Heimat* continues to embody the connection of place with identity.

165 For an etymology of *Heimat*, see: Svenja Kück, *Heimat und Migration: Ein Transdisziplinärer Ansatz Anhand Biographischer Interviews Mit Geflüchteten Menschen in Deutschland*, Sozial- und Kulturgeographie, Bd. 43 (transcript Verlag, 2021), 28–29.

166 Friederike Ursula Eigler, *Heimat, Space, Narrative: Toward a Transnational Approach to Flight and Expulsion*, Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture, vol. 147 (Camden House, 2014), 13, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781571138927.

Some argue that *Heimat* is not translatable, but several scholars disagree. Peter Blickle,[167] a professor of German, identifies *rodina* in Russian and Bilgin Ayata,[168] a political sociologist, names *patria* in Spanish as having similar meanings to *Heimat*, with cultural nuances.[169] *Heimat* is used in both Switzerland and Germany. In this section, I will trace the roots of the *Heimat* discourse primarily through German history as a larger backdrop against which to reflect on its development.[170] *Heimat* fell out of favor following National Socialism, due to its association with the "fatherland" and the ethnic and racial violence that fueled the Holocaust. More recently, *Heimat* has experienced a resurgence on two fronts. This is seen, first, in the rise of romantic and nostalgic feelings toward German culture, which is evident in the idealization of traditional lifestyles, picturesque landscapes, and typical German food and dress. Second, political and cultural identifications with security and belonging have increased, as seen in the establishment of the German *Heimatministerium*, which is concerned with immigration and border control.[171] There is a debate over the role of *Heimat* in current German society. Some argue for a reclamation of the word apart from political overtones, arguing that *Heimat* can refer to an important sense of belonging and a connection to significant people and traditions. Others argue that the word *Heimat* has too much historic baggage to be reclaimed, arguing for the use of other words to denote home-feelings, such as *Zuhause*.[172]

In this second category, scholars such as Bilgin Ayata argue that *Heimat* is not a neutral term and cannot be neutrally reclaimed.[173] Instead, *Heimat* is rooted in a

167 Blickle, *Heimat*, 2–3.

168 Ayata, "Prologue."

169 On the other hand, the English word home has more fluid and multiple uses – to refer to the building or region where one lives, to a sense of home, or to larger concepts such as homeland or place of belonging.

170 For a more detailed discussion of the social, religious, and political aspects of *Heimat*, see, among others: Kück, *Heimat und Migration*; Jessica Andel, *Sense(s) Of Heimat: Plurilocal Self-Location and Emotional Geographies Through the Lens of International Migration*, BestMasters (Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2022), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-38985-7; Eigler, *Heimat, Space, Narrative*; Eigler, "Critical Approaches to 'Heimat' and the 'Spatial Turn'"; Edoardo Costadura, Klaus Ries, and Christiane Wiesenfeldt, eds., *Heimat global: Modelle, Praxen und Medien der Heimatkonstruktion*, Edition Kulturwissenschaft, Bd. 188 (transcript Verlag, 2019); Blickle, *Heimat*.

171 The politicization of the word home to determine belonging and security is also seen in other countries, including the United States' Department of Homeland Security or in populist slogans such as "Make America Great Again."

172 Schreiber, "Heimatministerium."

173 Bilgin Ayata, "Der Siegeszug Des Heimatbegriffs Gefährdet Die Europäische Demokratie: Geht Es Um Grundwerte? Oder Rassismus?," *Der Tagesspiegel*, October 25, 2019, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/geht-es-um-grundwerte-oder-rassismus-der-siegeszug-des-heimatbegriffs-gefaehrdet-die-europaeische-demokratie/25152490.html; Ayata, "Prologue."

history of power relations, racialization, and violence. The word *Heimat* emerged the 18th century, when it originally referred to physical property and place of birth. Its legal parameters designated inheritance as well as rights of belonging within designated communities.[174] The use of the word *Heimat* grew in usage in the 19th century as a more centralized nation-state emerged and local rights were ceded to national standards. The nation-state replaced local political, social, and economic organizations and *Heimat* provided a more local sense of connection and security amid the changes of modernization (at least for white, male property owners).[175] Affective associations and the feeling of being connected to *Heimat* appealed to a population experiencing a shift in national and global systems, which personally impacted their lives and homes. In this way, *Heimat* offers "a sense of ontological security in the alienation and individualization of modern life."[176] This time of increased centralization also correlates to the height of German colonialism, including the Berlin Africa conference (1884–1885). The colonial project used tropes of *Heimat*, especially images of landscape and nature, to connect Germans affectively to the colonies while downplaying violence and de-humanization. Ayata explains, "To make colonial projects readable for Germans – the trope of Heimat was employed as a core affective bond […] to distract from the violence of colonialism."[177] *Heimat* served to make colonial landscapes more familiar and the violence more palatable.

Broadly speaking, *Heimat* denotes an association with home and homeland characterized by affective attachments, including innocence and safety, nature, and a longing for comfort without conflict.[178] As Ayata explains, "Heimat received new meaning for an affective container of nostalgia of a world free of conflicts."[179] Blickle further links *Heimat* to romantic concepts of innocence, including religious imagery. The affective associations with familiar cultures and religions serve to provide a sense of belonging that is perceived as natural and without demanding a personal sacrifice.[180] Blickle writes, "Heimat, like nature, religion, language, and the mother, is for German-speaking middle-class citizens something larger than oneself, something worth caring for, but also something in the face of which one feels essentially innocent and taken care of."[181] In this way, *Heimat* acts as a protective agent against change. It serves to link ethnic and social identities with place through identity- and place-based narratives.[182] This is one reason that *Heimat*

174 Kück, *Heimat und Migration*, 29–30.
175 Ayata, "Prologue."
176 Ayata, "Prologue."
177 Ayata, "Prologue," 42.
178 Blickle, *Heimat*, 6; Ayata, "Prologue," 4.
179 Ayata, "Prologue."
180 Blickle, *Heimat*, 6.
181 Blickle, *Heimat*, 149.
182 Eigler, "Critical Approaches to 'Heimat' and the 'Spatial Turn,'" 42.

was so effectively harnessed during National Socialism. Following the First World War, *Heimat* was employed to solidify a common understanding of land, belonging, and identity and to act as a protective shield against perceived threats from the outside.[183] By creating a sense of safety rooted in nostalgic and normative ideals of belonging, *Heimat* demarcates belonging based on heritage, language, and shared understandings. These unifying features can create lines of division between those who are included and those who are considered other. Sometimes these lines are rigid and other times they are murky. Language ability, ancestry, and familiarity with cultural practices may indicate clearly designated parameters of belonging. Yet, at the same time, the concept of a stable and historic *Heimat* is challenged by the shifting of German borders. These include the redrawing of the border with Eastern Europe following the Second World War and the partition of Germany from 1949 to 1990.[184] The discourse on *Heimat* reveals that affective attachments are not necessarily neutral, but rather political associations that provide important frameworks for interpreting the world and that reach beyond personal and nostalgic definitions of home. As geographer Jessica Andel describes, *Heimat* is located in the emotional-geographic space of place relations.[185] These spatial relations can unify, but they can also perpetuate geographies of exclusion.[186]

2.2.2 Swiss Migration Policy and Home

Echoes of the exclusionary tendencies of *Heimat* appear in current European migration policies.[187] In the last decade, departments such as the German *Heimatministerium* have been formed, directly utilizing the cultural power of *Heimat*. Other initiatives have used more coded language to identify and protect normative manifestations of home. For example, the Commission on Migration was renamed: "Protecting our European Way of Life," implying that migration threatens an established way of life that needs to be protected.[188] In a similar way, Swiss laws that require immigrants to "be familiar with the Swiss way of life" also function to encode normative definitions of being Swiss.[189] In these examples, *Heimat*, and related concepts, can

183 Kück, *Heimat und Migration*, 35.

184 For a deeper exploration see: Eigler, *Heimat, Space, Narrative*.

185 Andel, *Sense(s) of Heimat*.

186 Eigler, "Critical Approaches to 'Heimat' and the 'Spatial Turn,'" 38–39.

187 For a more complete exploration of *Heimat* and migration, see: Josef S. L. Cagle, Thomas Herold, and Gabriele Maier, eds., *Heimat and Migration: Reimagining the Regional and the Global in the Twenty-First Century*, Interdisciplinary German Cultural Studies, vol. 34 (De Gruyter, 2023), https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110733150.

188 Ayata, "Prologue."

189 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über die Ausländerinnen und Ausländer*, 142.20; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über das Schweizer Bürgerrecht*

designate or imply who belongs to a nation, group, or identity group. Affective attachments cultivated by words such as *Heimat* and the attendant nostalgia of landscapes, traditions, and cultural heritage have power in defining citizenship and belonging. For example, political scientists Michael Di Gregorio and Jessica Merolli argue that citizenship is not, "a purely rational and administrative exercise of state authority."[190] Instead, they and others, also note "the role of affect in production of regimes of inclusion and exclusion."[191] As Anderson theorized, affective attachments are cultivated amid disparate groups of people, such as citizens or residents of a nation-state, to create shared history, attitudes, and beliefs.[192] Yet, these attachments are often predicated on excluding alterity and otherness, while ignoring the ways national groups already contain diversity. This is especially apparent in a country like Switzerland, which is a federation of distinct cantons, with many different dialects, political systems, religions, and economic models.

As with utopian or imagined ideas of home, nations can become associated with larger meanings and identities. In the case of *Heimat*, these go beyond individual associations with home and encompass projects to protect certain traditions and lifestyles. Often these national identities become codified in laws designed to protect normative ideas of home and homeland and exclude anything viewed as antithetical. These national identities might be based on privileged definitions of race, religion, language, or cultural norms. One example of this is the recent "Islamification" of the debate around migration in Europe, even though Islamic migration to western Europe is not new. In the 1990s, refugees from the former Yugoslavia settled in Switzerland and other countries. While many of these immigrants were Muslim, they were also European, creating a shared identity. When the next wave of Muslim immigrants arrived, starting in 2014, from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Eritrea, the debate about Muslim immigrants and Islam in Europe increased. In many countries Muslim immigrants were seen as a threat to the Christian majority. This perceived threat led to reactions, including a reemphasis on Christian heritage and laws targeting religiously associated dress and practices.

For example, in Switzerland, in 2009, a law was adopted by popular vote that banned the building of minarets. The ban was couched as a debate about building codes and preserving the "Swiss-ness" of towns and villages. Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, a Swiss professor of religious studies, describes the arguments in favor of

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(Bürgerrechtsgesetz, BüG), 141.0 (Fedlex, 2014), https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20092990/index.html; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, FDJP, *Swiss Citizenship / Naturalization*.

190 Michael Di Gregorio and Jessica L. Merolli, "Introduction: Affective Citizenship and the Politics of Identity, Control, Resistance," *Citizenship Studies* 20, no. 8 (2016): 934, https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2016.1229193.

191 Di Gregorio and Merolli, "Introduction," 934.

192 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

the ban as serving to strengthen Swiss definitions of culture and identity.[193] The law does this by making a sharp contrast with perceived non-Swiss symbols and practices, especially in religious contexts. He writes that proponents of the law employed images of the minaret as a "religiopolitical symbol" that makes an ideological claim on Swiss society, and that "forbidding minarets thus would send a strong signal that Swiss society does not accept such claims and that foreigners have to assimilate."[194] This argument, connoting Islam as embodying both religious beliefs and political systems, was used to create a dichotomy between Islamic and Swiss values. It made a clear separation between what/who does and does not belong in Switzerland by building on affective attachments to Swiss architecture, landscapes, and religious spaces, even in an increasingly secular country. Samuel Behloul, a Swiss professor of religious studies, writes:

> Once the causal link between minarets and Islam's "claim to power" is accepted along with the latter's social and political consequences, one must conclude according to the minaret opponents, that not supporting a minaret ban means acting irresponsibly towards one's own country's concerns.[195]

Here, migration is framed as a threat to the Swiss idea of home. Building on seemingly benign affective attachments to architecture, religious expression, and landscapes, an ideological definition of home emerges that serves to exclude some communities based on race and ethnicity.

Home is often associated with country of origin or a homeland and these associations appear even more clearly in the context of migration. Migrants are regularly categorized and referred to by the country from which they migrate. This association of home with the nation-state emerged more strongly with the rise of nationalism and the creation of national myths and origin stories.[196] Previously regional identities, ethnic and religious groups, and other language indicated belonging. Yet, the concept of homeland, taken up by the nation-state, is not new and also appears in religious discourse.

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193 Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, "'Against Islam, but Not Against Muslims': Actors and Attitudes in the Swiss Minaret Vote," in *Debating Islam: Negotiating Religion, Europe, and the Self*, ed. Samuel H. Behloul, Susanne Leuenberger, and Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, Global Local Islam (transcript Verlag, 2013), https://doi.org/10.14361/transcript.9783839422496.285.

194 Tunger-Zanetti, "'Against Islam, but Not Against Muslims,'" 295.

195 Samuel M. Behloul, "Introduction," in *Debating Islam: Negotiating Religion, Europe, and the Self*, ed. Samuel H. Behloul, Susanne Leuenberger, and Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, Global Local Islam (transcript Verlag, 2013), 26, https://doi.org/10.1515/transcript.9783839422496.intro.

196 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

2.3 Religious Threads of Home and Migration

While home is not typically discussed as an explicit theological concept, it is deeply connected to the meaning, relationships, and identity of many religions. Religion can itself be a kind of home, where an individual understands oneself within a larger context. To belong to a people, to God, and to a tradition often motivates and animates religious identity. Wynn, in his book *Faith and Place*, also asserts that God is a kind of place that can be sought and known by weaving together histories, stories, and experiences.[197] This "narratively mediated agency," as Wynn terms it, is where identity and meaning emerge.[198] Finding a place to rest, to be known, and to be safe are qualities associated with God, as well as home.

The Judeo-Christian tradition understands home in both religious and secular terms. Home is an eternal home with God, while at the same time believers create a temporary home on earth.[199] Place figures prominently into Judeo-Christian understandings of home, yet the concept is larger than physical place. In addition to the social and affective dimensions of place explored earlier, place also holds religious meaning, often as the place where God or God's work is encountered. Land is not seen as a static entity, but as a space imbued with relationships and religious meaning. For this reason, Cruz argues that "'land' is no longer a sufficient category from which to theologize about 'home' and 'identity.'"[200] Cruz suggests that home is not simply a physical location but a quality of relationships and a responsibility for the world. These relationships and responsibilities orient religious and moral commitments. Below is a brief overview of some of the themes of home in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. This is not meant to be an exhaustive survey, but it touches on some relevant themes for understanding religious influences on home and migration. Themes of loss, longing, exile, hospitality, and vulnerability will be explored as religious threads that echo the previous philosophical and sociological inquiry into home.

2.3.1 Home and Judaism

In the Judeo-Christian tradition home and migration are closely linked, having developed amid the history of the Israelites, a nomadic, agrarian, and often-conquered people. The experience of migration is found throughout the Jewish scriptures as the Jewish people search for a place, both on earth and with God, to call their own. In particular, their exodus from enslavement in Egypt and subsequent years searching for

197 Wynn, *Faith and Place*.

198 Wynn, *Faith and Place*, 45.

199 Kaufmann, "Heimat als Präsenz im Entzug," 38.

200 Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration*, 123.

a home shaped the identity and faith tradition of the Jewish people. The authors of the Jewish scriptures wrote from a migration perspective, which shaped their teachings, practices, and perspectives and even their interaction with God.[201] It is in seeking a home promised by God that the Israelites develop their understanding as a community chosen by God. Like many who have lost home, the Israelites came to understand longing and imagination as significant parts of home.

Theologians Peter M. Scott and Elaine Graham reflect on the specificity of place as well as the mobility of groups in negotiating a relationship with God. "Israel came to its understandings of polity and places as a nomadic people, that YHWH posed the question of Israel's understanding of its identity not by reference to the fixity of place but by reference to the uncertainty of a future in pilgrimage."[202] Their identity as a people seeking a home is not divorced from identification with a place or from uncertainty about that place. It is searching and often living in places that are temporary and far from home, that gives the Israelites' pilgrimage meaning and direction as they seek both home and God. The exilic and migration histories of the Judeo-Christian tradition are steeped in loss, absence, and seeking.

For the Israelites, separation from the promised land shifted home from something that was purely territorial to something that included affective associations, memories, and imagined states. Adamavi-Aho Ekué writes,

> Exile, as a decisive experience of the loss of state sovereignty and geographic roots, led to a reinterpretation of the concept of home in ancient Israel. Especially in the prophetic literature the line of development of an understanding of home is shown, which is no longer exclusively geographically, territorially and culturally shaped, but home now keeps the memory of the experience of the Exodus and the liberation of the slaves by God alive.[203]

Home is the memory of the experiences of exile and how they shape a relationship to God, even when home becomes more stable and permanent. Home is found within both alienation and homelessness, while it also arises from localized places and memory.[204] The memory of longing and seeking echoes within practices such as celebrating the Passover or acknowledging a shared humanity with strangers and migrants.

Perhaps the most enduring religious aspect of the interplay between home and migration is that of the diaspora. Historically, diaspora was associated exclusively

201 Polak, "Migration as a Sign of the Times," 291.

202 Peter M. Scott and Elaine Graham, "Special Issue – Public Theology and the City: Urban Theology as Public Theology," *International Journal of Public Theology* 2, no. 1 (2008), https://doi.org/10.1163/156973208x256411.

203 Adamavi-Aho Ekué, "Heimat suchen," 59–60.

204 Mathwig, "Heimat entdecken," 165–66.

with the Jewish people's exile from Israel and dispersal in other lands. In the 20th century, diaspora becomes a more generalized term to refer to any group living away from their traditional homelands. As religious studies scholar Martin Baumann writes,

> [T]he ancient notion of "diaspora" has become a fashionable term. Once exclusively used in a context-bound way, that of Jewish history and the plight of Jewish people being dispersed "among the nations," in the late 20th century the folk term became generalized on a grand scale. Since the 1970s, "diaspora" was increasingly used to denote almost every people living far away from their ancestral or former homeland.[205]

Diaspora refers to a group of people dispersed or exiled from their traditional homeland. Originally used to refer to those living in colonies, the Greek root of the word diaspora is formed by "drawing on words that mean 'to scatter,' 'to spread' or 'to disperse.'"[206] As seen in its etymology, diaspora maintains a strong link to spatial concepts of place and territory as well as relational and affective associations with place and people. Sarah Albrecht, a scholar of Islam, argues that diaspora maintains a "deep entrenchment in physical, imaginative and social space."[207] Diaspora is connected to a sense of home and place as well as experiences of longing and absence. Diaspora can reinforce the connection between home and place, or home and ethnic and national identities, while diasporic groups also generate a unique identity apart from those who did not leave. Many who migrate to seek asylum or to pursue a better life are considered to live in the diaspora when residing away from their country of origin.[208]

2.3.2 Home in Islam

As diaspora is applied to more groups, it raises the question of how diaspora is understood for those without an identifiable homeland, as Israel is for the Jewish people. Specifically, for Muslims there is no distinct homeland from which diaspora occurs. Instead, diaspora in Islam refers to a separation of Islamic groups from the

205 Martin Baumann, "Diaspora: Genealogies of Semantics and Transcultural Comparison," *Numen* 47, no. 3 (2000): 313, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1299150174?pq-origsite=summon&imgSeq=1.

206 Baumann, "Diaspora."

207 Sarah Albrecht, "Searching for the 'Homeland' of Islam: Concepts of Diaspora in Contemporary Islamic Discourse on Muslims in the West," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 5, no. 1 (2016): 108, https://doi.org/10.1163/22117954-12341321.

208 The term does not usually apply to those from wealthier countries who seek employment abroad, who instead are often referred to as ex-pats.

territorial, relational, and social aspects of their faith communities.[209] These connections are rooted in specific places but are more strongly reflected in affective associations with communities, practices, and religious beliefs. Albrecht argues that Muslim diaspora is more connected to a "symbolic place of origin, a religious and psycho-cultural estrangement."[210] The idea of an Islamic homeland relies on a collective memory and a common community, sometimes referred to as the *umma*.[211] Yet, even the *umma* is disconnected from specific locations, apart from the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.[212] Thus, in Islam, diaspora, community, and homeland are not primarily bound by territory but rely on affective associations and a community of fellow believers. Diaspora is not only or primarily a physical dislocation, but also one that is often embedded in imagined and symbolic frameworks, both social and religious. The Muslim diaspora is rooted in a shared history. Sociologist Chantal Saint-Blancat describes the necessity of shared narratives and memories for the Islamic diaspora. "Faced with the fragmentation of the fates of individuals and families, with a multiplicity of lands of origin and with spatial dispersion, the construction of a collective memory is essential to the emergence of a Muslim diaspora consciousness."[213] This memory is shared across geographic locations. In addition, in Islam, welcoming the stranger and hospitality are important teachings. God is often seen as a guest and believers must always prepare for God's arrival. The Qur'an and numerous hadiths contain specific obligations and directives for believers to care for refugees, regardless of religious affiliation.[214]

In Islam, home is both a religious and secular concept. The true home is with God while there is also the temporary home of earth. The Qur'an does not mention homeland, though it does appear in the hadiths and the Prophet Muhammad talks about the love of country. Instead, Islamic homeland was defined by Islamic jurists in the

209 Albrecht, "Searching for the 'Homeland' of Islam."

210 Albrecht, "Searching for the 'Homeland' of Islam," 108.

211 Albrecht, "Searching for the 'Homeland' of Islam," 108.

212 Albrecht, "Searching for the 'Homeland' of Islam," 109.

213 Chantal Saint-Blancat, "Islam in Diaspora: Between Reterritorialization and Extraterritoriality," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 26, no. 1 (2002): 141, 144, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00368.

214 Admirand, "The Ethics of Displacement and Migration in the Abrahamic Faiths," 682; Salih Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland? The Notion of Watan Al-Asli and Watan Al-Sukna in Islam," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 35, no. 2 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2015.1039813. Salih Yucel, an Australian scholar of religion, makes a case for including the experiences of Muslims more directly in discourses on migration. Compared to medieval times, Muslims have not yet repeated their previous successful immigrations and subsequent contributions to adopted nations. Often Muslims' current contributions are not sufficiently seen or acknowledged. Furthermore, the voices of Muslims themselves are largely absent in the public discourse about Muslim settlement and integration in Western nations.

eighth century based on teachings of the Qur'an. This interpretation led to three categories of homeland: "watan al-asli, the country of birth, the country of one's spouse or the place of permanent residence; watan al-sukna, the country of temporary residence and employment; and watan al-safari, the country that is traveled to."[215] Each of these terms applies to location and its social relevance, but does not discriminate based in racial, cultural, or ethnic identities.

For Muslims, the only true *watan al-asli* is the eternal home with God in paradise.[216] Because of this, wherever one is living on earth is the current home. Inevitably, the earthly home is left through death, making Paradise the only permanent home. While the true home is with God in paradise, a temporary home on earth is where basic needs of health, education, and safety are met. Yucel continues, "According to Islamic jurists, if a person leaves his or her country, immigrates to another country and finds a source of income, livelihood or marries there, and/or intends to live there permanently, then the new country becomes watan al-asli, the country of origin."[217] Yucel quotes a Muslim woman from Somalia who lives in Australia. She explains her concept of where she is from: "'The whole earth belongs to God. Wherever I earn my sustenance, feel safe, and can practice my religion that is my country.'"[218] Because of this spiritual understanding of home, leaving one's country or homeland does not necessarily mean separation from home. This definition allows for greater flexibility about where a national home is located. If certain criteria for life are met, such as having a livelihood, family, work, housing, and education, a new country can become a new home.[219] Conversely, if the original country of origin is not able to provide basic criteria for living, it does not necessarily meet the criteria of a homeland. In many circumstances, non-majority Muslim countries, where Muslims migrate, are more able meet the criteria of providing for basic needs. It is often the fulfillment of these rights that make a place more desirable as a homeland.[220] An important aspect of diaspora is the ability to tell one's own story about home, even in contexts of asylum-seeking and arriving in a new country.[221]

215 Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?," 191.

216 Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?," 194.

217 Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?," 194.

218 Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?," 200.

219 Tariq Ramadan, *Islam, the West, and the Challenges of Modernity* (Islamic Foundation, 2004); Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?".

220 Ramadan, *Islam, the West, and the Challenges of Modernity*; Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?," 196.

221 Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?," 191.

2.3.3 Home in Christianity

Christians await a redeemed future with God and the physical place of earth is considered a temporary home until it is possible to fully join God in the promised heavenly home.[222] Home and belonging are associated with God, including through imagined and idealized homes such as the promised land, heaven, paradise, the New Jerusalem, and the Garden of Eden. At the same time, Christians are rooted in the realities of the world through the work of the church in areas such liturgy, community, social outreach, and mission.[223] Life on earth is sometimes referred to as a pilgrimage to God, not a fixed place of belonging. While the earthly home is secondary to the heavenly home, it is also a theologically important concept. Christian theologies view meeting basic needs and living a full life as important aspects of home on earth. At the same time, earth is a place of pilgrimage on the way to home with God.[224] This pilgrimage includes numerous encounters with God and the salvation narrative. The Christian tradition identifies salvation with specific places. From the Garden of Eden to the Israelites' enslavement and exodus, to Egypt to Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai, to Jesus' ministry in Nazareth, to the many biblical events that occur in and around Jerusalem, God's work of salvation is intimately tied to specific locations where God creates, moves, and acts. As John Inge explains, "[T]he Christian religion is not the religion of salvation from places, it is the religion of salvation in and through places."[225] The story of God's people occurs in places, many of which become holy or are regarded as sacred because of this human interaction with God.[226]

Theologian John Inge and others argue for a relational view of place in biblical theology because the saving action between God and humanity takes place in specific places.[227] These place-based narratives are a source of connection that builds a relationship between people and God. A relational focus on place reflects understandings of the social production of place and could be termed the "sacred production of space" in religious contexts. Places become significant sources of meaning through affective associations generated by social and religious experiences.

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222 Marion Grau, "Circumambulating Exodus-Migration-Conquest: A Theological Hermeneutics of Migratory Narrativity," in *Contemporary Issues of Migration and Theology*, ed. Elaine Padilla and Peter C. Phan, Christianities of the World (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 13.

223 See, for example, the four traditional areas of church in Roman Catholic theology: Martyria, Diakonia, Leitourgia, and Koinonia.

224 Eduard Berger, "Heimat und Religion," in *Heimatschichten: Anthropologische Grundlegung eines Weltverhältnisses*, ed. Joachim Klose (Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2013), 429–30, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-04740-5_25.

225 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 1.

226 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 33, 139.

227 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 46.

There is a tension in being residents of a place while also being without a home on earth.[228] Adamavi-Aho Ekué describes this aspect of Christian existence as located between "the necessary rootedness in place and the simultaneous search for a home with God."[229] Adamavi-Aho Ekué is referring to the tension between a life of faith while creating a home on earth and a longing and expectation of a home in heaven. Home is found in both the current material reality and the longing for something beyond the here and now.[230] This orientation understands home (in both the physical and spiritual realm) as something that has occurred but is yet to be fully realized, a "yet, but not yet" moment. Thus, home is not a place that can be fully experienced in this world or lifetime. The phrase "yet, but not yet" mirrors Bloch's utopic language of "not yet" to describe a future that is not attainable, but desired. Bloch's utopic philosophy points towards an ideal future, one that bridges the gap between the current reality and the hoped-for future.[231] Similarly, Christian eschatology promises a redeemed home that is both grounded in the current reality and still to be fully realized in the future. Theologian Frank Mathwig describes this as a tension between the "lost home" and the "hoped-for-home" promised through salvation.[232] Thus, Christian theology maintains a connection to and concern for the world as home while also orienting itself towards a redeemed home that is not yet fully here.[233] In Christianity, a yearning for this ideal home is a yearning for God and for salvation. Home is a life-giving place and a place of salvation.[234] Living between these worlds creates tensions and challenges that are central to the Christian faith.[235]

Absence, longing, and distance are important characteristics of home, not its opposites. As Joisten and others explore, leaving, distance, insecurity, and unfamiliarity are necessary elements of home.[236] For Mathwig, home in Christianity is found

228 Amélé Adamavi-Aho Ekué, Frank Mathwig, and Matthias Zeindler, "Heimat zwischen Sehnsucht und Gefährdung," in *Heimat(en)? Beiträge zu einer Theologie der Migration*, ed. Amélé Adamavi-Aho Ekué, Frank Mathwig, and Matthias Zeindler (TVZ Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2017), 13–14.

229 Adamavi-Aho Ekué, "Heimat suchen," 58.

230 Mathwig, "Heimat entdecken."

231 Bloch, *Prinzip Hoffnung / The Principle of Hope*.

232 Mathwig, "Heimat entdecken," 153–54.

233 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 1.

234 Regina Polak, *Migration, Flucht und Religion: Praktisch-Theologische Beiträge, Band 2: Durchführungen und Konsequenzen* (Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 2017), 312.

235 This metaphor of living between experiences, neither fully in one place nor in the other, is a "border theology," which concerns ambivalent places that offer possibility as well as danger. For explorations of border theologies, see: Kwok Pui-lan, "A Theology of Border Passage"; Gruber, "Remembering Borders"; Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration*, 122.

236 See, for example: Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration"; Friese, "The Limits of Hospitality"; Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*.

in the tension of comfort and discomfort, of staying and leaving.[237] Comfort may be understood as staying in a place that is familiar, while discomfort may be understood as leaving and seeking. In fact, the Christian story begins with the loss of a specific home on earth, namely the expulsion from the Garden of Eden.[238] The loss of this first home is a model for the final, restored home promised at the conclusion of the Christian salvation narrative. The new kingdom is a state of union with God, a longed-for and imagined place of salvation. For Christians, true home is possible through God's saving work, a work that has been completed, but not fully realized.

Christianity is located between situatedness in the world and a migration-orientation, seeking a true home with God. This identification with migration is both a concrete experience and a metaphor for the Christian path. The biblical motifs of exile, wandering, and migration begin with Abraham following God's commandment to leave his home for a new homeland and continue with the exodus from Egypt and the Israelites' journey through the desert to a promised home. The Jewish people searched for a home for generations, from Egypt to Canaan to Babylon. In the Christian tradition, Jesus fled to Egypt as a child, lived and died under Roman imperial rule, and left home to teach and preach. Jesus' ministry is enacted through traveling and homelessness and Paul's journeys take him throughout the Roman kingdom.[239] Spiritual themes of migration and marginalization characterize religious teachings, including Jesus' welcome of the outcast, his teachings to care for the stranger and those who are "least among us," and the metaphor of searching for God as a path, often through the wilderness. Whether seeking a promised home on earth or waiting for true home with God, home is characterized by waiting, longing, and seeking, often while living in less-than-ideal circumstances.

Theologians Adamavi-Aho Ekué, Zeindler, and Mathwig emphasize Christianity's embeddedness in a migration-history that shapes a current migration-existence.[240] Cruz identifies being the outsider as a defining characteristic of Christian people. In this logic, not only should the stranger and outsider be welcomed, but the spiritual seekers themselves are strangers and wanderers, seeking the fullness of life with God. Cruz writes, "Being a stranger is the primary condition of the people of God."[241] Being outside of the definitions, laws, and values of the secular world is an identification held by many Christians. Christians are also strangers in the ways they stand outside of normative systems. Christian teachings also address experiences of migration and dislocation, including practices of hospitality and welcoming the

237 Mathwig, "Heimat entdecken," 165–66.

238 Berger, "Heimat und Religion," 427.

239 Adamavi-Aho Ekué, "Heimat suchen."

240 Adamavi-Aho Ekué, Mathwig, and Zeindler, "Heimat zwischen Sehnsucht und Gefährdung," 13.

241 Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration*, 124.

stranger; themes of wilderness, darkness, and being lost; and an emphasis on care for the vulnerable.

Many philosophers acknowledge that exile is the foundation of human experience. This exile, and attendant vulnerability, necessitate hospitality for survival and for understanding home. In the Jewish scriptures, the Jewish people are commanded to welcome the orphan, stranger, and outcast because they also experienced exile. While in the desert, God instructs the Jewish people, "You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."[242] This value of hospitality is rooted in the Jewish scriptures' exilic narratives and Jesus' teachings and practices of welcoming the stranger, outcast, and foreigner. Stories such as the Good Samaritan, the woman at the well, and the loaves and fishes build out this ethic of hospitality. In one of his teachings, Jesus extols the disciples to care for the least of the people and tells them that in doing so they will care for him. "Anything you did for even the least of the my people here, you also did for me."[243] Jesus often blurred the lines between those deserving of hospitality and those who were able to fill the role of host. In the Greek scriptures, the word *philoxenia* is used to call out this friendship aspect of hospitality, denoting a delight in the guest-host relationship. It is also used to describe Jesus as both host and guest.[244] Hospitality is located in a two-way relationship, as scholar of church history and spirituality, Amy Oden, describes: "Early Christian voices tell us again and again that whether we are guest or host we must be ready, ready to welcome, ready to enter another's world, ready to be vulnerable."[245] Both the guest and host are impacted by the experience of hospitality. Being a guest and being a host are shared human experiences, and at any given time these roles can change. Jesus' teachings to welcome the stranger and outcast reflect this blurring of the guest-host divide.[246]

Many Christian theologies emphasize serving the poor and vulnerable. In situations of migration, this is extended to welcoming the migrant. Many Christian teachings identify Jesus with migrants and those who are forced to leave their homes. The World Council of Churches' 2018 Christmas letter identifies Jesus as homeless and vulnerable. "Jesus is born homeless and experiences tyranny and suffering. He identifies with the refugee and the oppressed and calls on us to similarly identify compassionately with the vulnerable."[247] The call to care for migrants and

242 Deuteronomy 10:19, The Contemporary Torah.

243 Matthew 25:40, New Century Version.

244 Cathy Ross and Stephen B. Bevans, eds., *Mission on the Road to Emmaus: Constants, Context, and Prophetic Dialogue* (Orbis Books, 2015), 69.

245 Amy Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Abingdon Press, 2001), 15.

246 For more on the concepts of vulnerability and hospitality, see section 2.1.4.

247 World Council of Churches, *Christmas Statement*.

others in need is rooted in the biblical understanding that Jesus paid special attention to the stranger and the outcast in his teaching, relationships, and interactions. Jesus' commandment to welcome the stranger and an understanding that life comes from God are foundational to the teaching of hospitality and of serving those with less privilege and fewer resources.

From a Christian perspective, the earth, and home on earth, are, first, gifts from God and, second, part of a co-creative existence on earth.[248] Theologians also point to the incarnation as a reason that borders, nation-states, and citizenship do not limit who deserves access to work, health, and basic rights that sustain life. Theologian Matthias Zeindler calls on human responsibility when considering home as a gift from God. God chose humans as co-creators, thus human agency plays a role in how creation unfolds and is experienced. The incarnation reflects a relationship between God and humans that is a model for relationships among humans.[249] Life itself relies on God and thus, the right to life is not earned, it is a gift, and the right to sustenance extends to all people. This means that all humans are children of God, that creation is a gift, and that God extends the promise of life to everyone, regardless of place of birth or citizenship.

2.4 Engaging Home and Migration

Home is a topic that encompasses the depth and breadth of human experiences. I have attempted to tease out patterns, nuances, and complications of home, yet this task is inherently incomplete. By exploring the ambiguity and complexity of home, this project takes a step back and resists idealizations and ideological understandings of home, especially the idea that home has fixed and unchanging boundaries. As Ralph and Staeheli write, "[M]any commentators challenge the way home is often imagined as bounded, and instead offer a conceptualisation of home as messy, mobile, blurred and confused."[250] The messiness of home is seen by exploring home in a variety of contexts and distancing it from normative idealizations in order to draw out the diverse ways home is experienced. Idealization often defines a tension between belonging and exclusion, without a nuanced understanding of what home can mean, how it can change, and the power it can exert. This is particularly true in the context of migration, where leaving home brings new understandings home.

248 Matthias Zeindler, "Zwischen verlorener und erhoffter Heimat: Beheimatung im Kontext von Schöpfung, Versöhnung und Erlösung," in *Heimat(en)? Beiträge zu einer Theologie der Migration*, ed. Amélé Adamavi-Aho, Frank Mathwig, and Matthias Zeindler (TVZ Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2017), 88. In his article, the theologian Matthias Zeindler identifies four characteristics of home from a theological perspective.

249 Zeindler, "Zwischen verlorener und erhoffter Heimat."

250 Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration," 519.

Establishing characteristics of home is a starting point for seeing how migration affirms or challenges these parameters. In creating a sensitizing concept, I have described home as influenced by place, affectivity, loss and longing, and cultural and religious narratives. Home is as much connected to presence as it is to absence. Home takes on cultural and political meaning, defines belonging and exclusion, and is often sought more than it is realized. Religion grapples with home through experiences of exile, through the tension between home on earth and home with God, and through teachings on vulnerability and hospitality.

Home lends concrete location and language to personal and group identity. Despite common associations across diverse groups, home is a social construct that offers both individual and collective identity markers. As a marker of these identities, home generates social cohesion, but it can also become rigid and nostalgic. Home can be both rigid and flexible, and access to power and resources can impact how it shapes individual and collective lives. These qualities of home, including relationships, time, practices, narrative, and loss constitute a *homeness*, an affective experience of place. In this way, Young describes home as both an emotional and geographic space.[251] *Homeness* captures qualities of home that are specific, yet portable; individual, yet collective; emotional, yet also concrete. Home is symbolic, containing a density of meanings that hold individual and corporate purpose and identity. This exploration of home provides a starting point for thinking about home within asylum-seeking and church practices. Even though loss is endemic to home, it is more difficult to pin down a definition of home in the context of loss, such as migration. Even more challenging is when home is detached from a single, concrete location. As a final note on migration and home in the Christian tradition, it is important to recognize that the Christian tradition is not *only* associated with migration. Ever since Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, it has also been associated with nation-states and established, settled, and institutional contexts. "Christianity and other institutionalized religions have been in tension with a nomadic lifestyle, because institutionalized religion relies on sedentary culture."[252] This complexity of being associated with ruling institutions, while also privileging the vulnerable and marginal, is an important lens for viewing religious responses to migration.[253]

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251 Young, "House and Home."

252 Nausner, "Homeland as Borderland," 138.

253 Kwok, "A Theology of Border Passage," 115. Kwok Pui-lan further articulates this complexity as found between the political power of the church and the church that stands against the dominant powers. "The true indivisible church is always at odds with the church that wields so much power and cooperates with the crown. Throughout the ages, the pilgrims and monks who have gone out to the desert to form communities on the border and other alternative base communities have created important sites of resistance and renewal."

Marion Grau explores this tension in her article, *Circumambulating the Exodus-Migration-Conquest.* Grau challenges Christians not to stay with the exodus, but to take seriously the stories of settlement. These include the biblical stories of Israel's eras of settlement, establishing kingdoms, and holding slaves.[254] It also includes modern Christianity's participation in colonialism and association with nation-states. Theologies from non-dominant perspectives can help to illuminate the tensions between migration and settled theologies and can offer different readings and perspectives from these narratives. Grau asks several questions in her article that encourage us to acknowledge this tension without looking for simplistic solutions.

> How do we reroot ourselves and become people of the land wherever we are? How do we understand land and home on a planet where a changing climate is forcing many to migrate? What in the narrated changes and shifts of population allows the preservation of important cultural elements, while being open to other cultural practices? What would be a viable theological engagement with land, community, and livelihood seen under the aspect of migration?[255]

This book holds these questions as motivations for exploring what a just and sustainable approach to migration might be, particularly in the context of home, and how churches can engage authentically with migration. If scholarship does not take seriously Christianity's relationship to settlement, colonialism, and systems of power, then it becomes tempting to develop a simplistic theology of migration that essentializes or excludes the perspectives of those who experience marginalization. In the context of migration and home, the questions of who belongs and who doesn't, what forms of belief and self-expression are acceptable or not, and precisely what borders and walls serve to protect has become increasingly charged. This book will build on concepts of home, in conversation with experiences of asylum-seeking in Basel, Switzerland, to explore the intersections of church practice with home and migration.

254 Grau, "Circumambulating Exodus-Migration-Conquest."

255 Grau, "Circumambulating Exodus-Migration-Conquest," 12.

3. Migration and Asylum-Seeking in Switzerland

In addition to affective qualities, home is also defined by legal and political structures and the social frameworks, including cultural and religious values, embedded in these systems. Many definitions of home take shape through national and local laws, policies, and bureaucratic systems related to citizenship, migration, and borders. Sometimes these systems explicitly reflect the home discourse, using language such as *Heimat* or *homeland* in policies about security, economy, and citizenship. These are seen in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Germany's *Heimatministerium*. These policies and systems also address home in more implicit ways, establishing systems of inclusion and exclusion, regulating rights and obligations, and defining parameters of belonging and difference.[1] "First of all, integration or citizenship regimes are more than just legal regulations, as they embody collective concepts of inclusion by defining who belongs to a specific community and who does not."[2] Behind many of the explicit structures are less identifiable values, social expectations, and normative ideas of belonging. Many legal and political discourses about home are rooted in definitions of citizenship, the ultimate legal arbitrator of belonging. Citizenship laws and policies filter down to migration systems, which often include policies that are intended to shape migrants through local normative systems and value structures.

For asylum-seekers in Basel, these systems are rooted in the specific geographic and historical contexts of Switzerland and its specific cantons and municipalities. In Switzerland, citizenship entails meeting specific obligations to integrate into Swiss legal, political, economic, and social systems. Yet not all aspects of citizenship are legal or political. Citizenship often indicates a home country, sometimes only as a formal or legal designation, but often it is connected to real or imaged feelings

1 Anita Manatschal and Isabelle Stadelmann-Steffen, "Cantonal Variations of Integration Policy and Their Impact on Immigrant Educational Inequality," *Comparative European Politics* 11, no. 5 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1057/cep.2013.16.

2 Manatschal and Stadelmann-Steffen, "Cantonal Variations," 673.

of belonging and affective associations.[3] Yet belonging also often involves exclusion and border-making and defines group dimensions. Integration requirements in Switzerland include meeting requirements for language acquisition and for economic and political participation, as well as being "familiar with the Swiss way of life."[4] This emphasis on the "Swiss way of life" is an expectation to adopt values and lifestyles considered normative in Swiss society.

Each of these systems, political and social, becomes inscribed on specific bodies based on legal status, gender, ethnicity, employment, and other characteristics.[5] Those who arrive in Switzerland seeking asylum apply based on circumstances that put them in danger in their country of origin. Yet, they also become part of a complex legal system based on definitions of citizenship and concepts of belonging, which are embedded in the historical context of Switzerland. Like other migrants who are ethnic and religious minorities in Switzerland, especially those who arrive from less democratic and wealthy countries, asylum-seekers are particularly impacted by the legal and bureaucratic dimensions of citizenship and migration systems.[6]

Migrants occupy a liminal space of having left one context of home and arrived in a new place where it is often uncertain if they can remain. This uncertainty can last for an extended period of time. Most of the asylum-seekers and refugees I met at Projekt DA-SEIN had arrived in 2015 or 2016 and were still waiting on decisions on their asylum cases in 2018. The asylum process, as it functioned in 2018, generally lasted three years, from arrival until the time a decision was rendered.[7] Much of this time is spent by asylum-seekers waiting for the next steps and decisions while navigating the legal and political systems and social expectations that structure the asylum process. Many of those I spoke with learned quickly that their hopes for success in their asylum claims and beyond rested in large measure on their ability to know the system and not deviate from its parameters. Their lives are highly regulated by these laws, while at the same time they are removed from many parts of

3 Irene Bloemraad, Anna Korteweg, and Gökçe Yurdakul, "Citizenship and Immigration: Multiculturalism, Assimilation, and Challenges to the Nation-State," *Annual Review of Sociology* 34, no. 1 (2008).

4 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über die Ausländerinnen und Ausländer*, 142.20; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über das Schweizer Bürgerrecht*, 141.0; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, FDJP, *Swiss Citizenship / Naturalization*.

5 Michel *Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 2nd ed. (Vintage Books, 1995).

6 Irene Bloemraad and Alicia Sheares, "Understanding Membership in a World of Global Migration: (How) Does Citizenship Matter?," *International Migration Review* 51, no. 4 (2017): 823–67, https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12354.

7 In 2019, the asylum process was refined with the hope of creating a more streamlined process and reducing its duration, as well as of providing clearer information and more support to asylum-seekers. The new system contracts with non-governmental organizations to work directly with migrants to help them navigate the system.

society, such as employment, family relationships, and social networks. During the two to three years that they are waiting for results of their asylum claim, they are separated from their previous homes, expected to adapt to Swiss lifestyles and values, and made reliant on the government's asylum and migration system. This section explores the context of Basel as well as how legal and social systems related to citizenship, migration, and integration become intertwined with discourses about home and impact the lived experiences of asylum-seekers.

3.1 The Context of Basel

Basel is a city of 170,000 residents in northwest Switzerland and is the third-largest city in Switzerland, after Zürich and Geneva. Switzerland has a population of 8 million people and comprises 26 cantons under a federalist model. Switzerland is culturally diverse and has four national languages (German, French, Italian, and Romansh). In German-speaking cantons, each city or region also has its own dialect of Swiss German. Basel is bisected by the Rhine River and directly borders both France and Germany. Basel is also a canton, called Basel-Stadt, one of only two city cantons in Switzerland, with Zurich being the other. Government in Switzerland is highly decentralized, thus governments of the cantons have a large influence in their own jurisdictions. In addition, cantons often have distinct cultures, languages, dialects, and traditions.

Basel has historically connected people and served as a hub of commerce, industry, and government. Occupying a significant location on the Rhine River, Basel traces its roots to settlements that appeared as early as the fifth century BCE and that became more permanent starting in the first century CE. It has historically served as a center of political, religious, economic, social, and intellectual power. Industrialization during the nineteenth century, especially in the textile industry, caused rural populations to move to the city of Basel.[8]

Today, the economy is dominated by the chemical and pharmaceutical industries. Several large pharmaceutical companies are headquartered in Basel, including Roche, Novartis, and Basilea Pharmaceutica. Though Basel is small by international city standards, many aspects of modern urbanization and the development of global cities are relevant for situating Basel in its larger context. As manufacturing declined after the Second World War, production shifted to economic, intellectual, and social

8 Kanton Basel-Stadt, "Basel Geschichte / Basel History: Von der Altsteinzeit bis zu den Life Sciences," accessed March 28, 2019, https://www.bs.ch/Portrait/einleitung-weltstadt/Geschichte-von-Basel.html.

capital.[9] New "global cities" concentrated power in industries of finance, business, and production.[10] These cities became centers of innovation, key marketplaces, and powerful actors of economic organization.[11]

Over time, populations have become more concentrated in cities. In 1950 less than 30% of the world's population lived in cities, but in the 1960s this number rose to 36%, and by 1990 50% of the population lived in cities.[12] In Switzerland, it is estimated that over 73% of the population lives in urban centers.[13] Despite new technologies that allow people to be connected across space, a "geography of centrality" continues to concentrate power in key cities.[14] In global cities, employment is highly stratified according to education levels, and employment is concentrated into low-wage and high-wage sectors.[15]

Basel exhibits characteristics of a global city. Centralization of production is seen in the pharmaceutical industry as well as the banking and finance industries, which are dominant within Switzerland. The University of Basel, Switzerland's oldest university, was founded in 1490; the city boasts numerous cultural resources, including art museums and theaters; and its position on two borders makes it a central confluence of people and commerce between Germany, France, and Switzerland.

3.2 Migration Data

Due to its international industries, university, and location on two international borders, Basel has a particularly high percentage of non-Swiss residents. In 2018, 40% of Basel residents did not hold a Swiss passport.[16] This diversity of residents reflects the international draw of Basel. Yet, not all of those who migrate to Basel interact with

9 Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, Princeton Paperbacks (Princeton University Press, 1991), 3–4.

10 Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New Press, 1998), xxv.

11 Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, Sociology for a New Century (Pine Forge Press, 1994), 2–4.

12 Philip Sheldrake, *The Spiritual City: Theology, Spirituality, and the Urban* (John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 2.

13 Trading Economics, "Switzerland – Urban Population (% of Total)," accessed February 3, 2021, last modified July 20, 2020, https://tradingeconomics.com/switzerland/urban-population-percent-of-total-wb-data.html.

14 Sassen, *Globalization and its Discontents*.

15 Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, 5–8.

16 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Total Bestand Ausländische Wohnbevölkerung Nach Ausländergruppe (Ausländerstatistik Januar 2018)*, (State Secretariat for Migration, SEM, 2018), https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/publiservice/statistik/auslaenderstatistik/archiv/2018/01.html.

or are impacted by the global city in the same way. Non-citizens are subject to laws, requirements, and policies of the Secretary of Migration (*Staatsekretariat für Migration*) based on their country of origin and their reasons for relocating to Switzerland. Many non-citizens live in Basel on a short-term or long-term basis due to employment, education, or family relationships.

The Swiss migration system is divided into two categories: EU/EFTA state citizens and everyone else, from "third states." This division, in effect since 1998, is a refinement over the previous three-category system (introduced in 1991), which divided migrants to Switzerland into EU/EFTA citizens; other western, economically similar countries, such as the US, Canada, and Japan; and, finally, all other "third states."[17] These earlier divisions can still be seen in the ways policies are enforced. For example, many laws related to integration do not apply to EU/EFTA citizens and highly qualified, economically prosperous "third state" citizens. This varied implementation means highly-qualified, financially stable migrants from EU/EFTA or other wealthy countries are not the focus of many migration and integration policies. Instead, these systems focus on a third category of poorly qualified migrants from "third" countries, whose backgrounds arguably vary the most from Switzerland's values and systems.[18] While still subject to a battery of immigration laws, they face different expectations and norms than those who arrive in search of asylum.

The asylum process is regulated by the Swiss Asylum Act, originally adopted in 1998.[19] At the same time, in keeping with the federalist model of Swiss government, individual cantons manage many details of the asylum process. For refugees and asylum-seekers, a highly regulated bureaucracy, some of which is specific to the cantonal and municipal levels, shapes their experiences with the city.

Basel-Stadt is bordered by the canton of Basel-Land, and two other cantons are in close proximity to Basel-Stadt: Aargau and Solothurn. These four cantons, Basel-Stadt, Basel-Land, Aargau, and Solothurn, make up the northwest region of Switzerland and also comprise one of six asylum regions in Switzerland under the new asylum system, which was rolled out in 2019.[20] But even before the new asylum

17 Susanne Bachmann, *Diskurse über MigrantInnen in Schweizer Integrationsprojekten: Zwischen Normalisierung von Prekarität und Konditionierung zur Markttauglichkeit*, Beiträge zur Regional- und Migrationsforschung (Springer VS, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-13922-3; Die Bundesbehörden der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft, *Ausländerregelung 1998/99: Drei-Kreise-Modell Wird Abgelöst: Pressemitteilung* (Eidgenössisches Justiz- und Polizeidepartement Informations- und Pressedienst, 1998), 26, https://www.admin.ch/cp/d/357BEA79.BA8@mbox.gsejpd.admin.ch.html.

18 Bachmann, *Diskurse über MigrantInnen in Schweizer Integrationsprojekten*.

19 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Asylgesetz AsylG* (*Asylum Act, AsylA*), CC 142.31 (Fedlex, 1998), https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19995092/index.html.

20 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Asylverordnung 1 über Verfahrensfragen (Asylverordnung 1, AsylV 1)*, 142.311 (Fedlex 1999), https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/1999

law, the asylum-seekers of this region were connected. Basel is the largest city in the region and is easily reachable from many areas within neighboring cantons via public transportation and the railway system. All of the refugees who attended Projekt DA-SEIN and who I got to know during my time in Switzerland lived in one of these four cantons.[21]

Of the 40% of non-Swiss citizens in Basel-Stadt, less than 2% are refugees or asylum-seekers in some stage of the process.[22] All cantons are required to take asylum-seekers, and Basel-Stadt is assigned 2.3% of all asylum-seekers in Switzerland.[23] Basel-Land, Aargau, and Solothurn are assigned an additional 14.9% of asylum-seekers. Thus, of all asylum-seekers who arrive in Switzerland, 17.2% live in northwest Switzerland, in close proximity to Basel. When I arrived in Basel at the end of January 2018, 1,184 people who were in some stage of the asylum process lived in the canton of Basel-Stadt.[24] In the four cantons of northwest Switzerland, there were 9,990 people in the asylum process in January 2018.[25] When I left at the end of January 2019, 1,123 people who were in some stage of the asylum process lived in the canton of Basel-Stadt.[26] In the four cantons of northwest Switzerland, there were 9,332 people in the asylum process in January 2019.[27]

These numbers indicate a decrease in asylum applications over the previous three years.[28] In 2018, a total of around 15,000 people applied for asylum in Switzerland.[29] In comparison, in 2015, when a surge of asylum-seekers arrived in Europe, nearly 40,000 people applied for asylum.[30] This decrease is due to a confluence

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4776/201703010000/142.311.pdf; Schweizerische Eidgenossen-schaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*.

21 Nicole Schwarz, Projektmanagerin DA-SEIN, *Evaluation Projekt DA-SEIN* (Offene Kirche Elisabethen, 2017).

22 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Total Bestand Ausländische Wohnbevölkerung Nach Ausländergruppe*.

23 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Asylverordnung 1 über Verfahrensfragen*, 142.311.

24 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Federal Department of Justice and Police, FDJP, *Asylstatistik Januar 2018: Bestand im Asylprozess in der Schweiz nach Unterprozess* (Staatsekretariat für Migration, SEM, 2018), https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/publiservice/statistik/asylstatistik/archiv/2018/01.html.

25 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, FDJP, *Asylstatistik Januar 2018*.

26 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Federal Department of Justice and Police, FDJP, *Asylstatistik Januar 2019: Bestand im Asylprozess in der Schweiz nach Unterprozess* (Staatsekretariat für Migration, SEM, 2019), https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/publiservice/statistik/asylstatistik/archiv/2019/01.html.

27 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, FDJP, *Asylstatistik Januar 2019*.

28 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, FDJP, *Foreign Population and Asylum Statistics 2018*.

29 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*, 3.

30 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Eidgenössisches Justiz- und Polizeidepartement, EJPD, *Migration Report 2015* (State Secretariat for Migration, SEM, 2015), https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/publiservice/berichte/migration/migrationsbericht-2015-e.pdf.

of circumstances, including shifting policies in Europe and changing patterns of migration. These include changes in migration routes, agreements between Europe and other countries (including Libya and Turkey) to curb migration before departure, and countermeasures both in sending locales and in Europe, such as Italy's restrictions on the rescue of migration ships by private groups.[31] In 2015, 45% of asylum applicants arrived from either Afghanistan or Eritrea.[32] In 2018, Eritreans, Afghans, and Syrians remained the largest groups of asylum-seekers.[33] This was also reflected in the demographics of those who attended Projekt DA-SEIN. Those from Afghanistan and Eritrea were consistently the largest groups, with other attendees coming from a wide variety of other countries.[34]

3.3 Seeking Asylum in Switzerland

Those who arrive in Switzerland to seek asylum must first have their claim processed at an *Empfangs- und Verfahrenszentrum* (EVZ), a federal asylum reception and processing center, where the applicant's identity is established, a survey is conducted, finger prints are made, a health screening is completed, and an initial interview is conducted.[35] Through the Dublin process and Eurodac system, it is established whether Switzerland is responsible for the applicant's asylum case.[36] There are six EVZ (five

31 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*.

32 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2015*. These categories are not static, as conditions that influence asylum applications change. For instance, in 2019, Eritrea was deemed a "safe" country by Switzerland and Eritrean nationals are often repatriated.

33 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, FDJP, *Foreign Population and Asylum Statistics 2018*.

34 Schwarz, *Evaluation Projekt DA-SEIN*.

35 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Federal Department of Justice and Police, FDJP, *Asylum / Protection from Persecution: Reception and Preparatory Phase* (Staatsekretariat für Migration, SEM, 2019), https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/asyl/asylverfahren/empfang.html.

36 While Switzerland is not a member of the European Union, it is a member of several significant agreements with the European Union, especially in regard to movement of people. These include participation in the Schengen Borders Code, the Dublin III Agreement, and the Eurodac Regulation. The Schengen Borders Code allows for open borders between member states. The Dublin III Agreement and the Eurodac Regulation (both adopted in their newest forms 2013) establish which country holds responsibility for an asylum claim. The original Dublin agreement was adopted in 2008 by 32 states, four of which are not in the European Union. When asylum-seekers arrive and apply for asylum, they are fingerprinted, and these prints are uploaded to a central Eurodac database to compare across participating countries. An asylum-seeker must apply for asylum in the country they first enter and where they are fingerprinted. If it is determined that they were already fingerprinted in another country, they are required to return there to lodge their asylum claim. The system is designed to prevent asylum-seekers from lodging asylum claims in more than one country. If a person is denied asylum in one country, they may not apply in another country that is part of the Dub-

before the 2019 revisions), including one in Basel-Stadt, located at the Offenbach border crossing.

During this initial process the asylum applicant is housed at the *Verfahrenszentrum* for a maximum of 140 days.[37] During this time asylum-seekers are given a small per diem and are allowed to leave the center during certain hours (in Basel, from 8 AM to 5 PM).[38] Many asylum-seekers told me that leaving during the day was essential. The cramped quarters and limited options give the center the feel of a prison. Once it is established that a person has presented a legitimate claim to apply for asylum and that Switzerland is responsible for the claim (because Switzerland, and not another country in the Dublin agreement, is the first country of entry), the person is given identity papers and an "N" permit, indicating that they are an asylum-seeker and can remain in the country until their case is decided.

In most cases, the asylum-seeker is then assigned to one of the cantons for the duration of the asylum process.[39] They must remain living in that canton until a decision is reached on their case and, depending on the decision, they may have to remain in that canton for a longer period of time. While they have an "N" permit they are assigned to an asylum home (*Asylheim*) in the canton where they are assigned. These are often converted single-family homes and are run by a non-profit, which is contracted by the canton. Rooms are shared, depending on the number of asylum-seekers currently in the canton, and house rules are in effect (often delineating chores and quiet hours and prohibiting overnight guests).[40] While staff does not usually live at the home, there is someone who is responsible for running the home

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lin agreement. According to SEM, since the Dublin accord went into effect in 2008, 40% of asylum claims lodged in Switzerland were transferred to another state. See: Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Federal Department of Justice and Police, FDJP, *Asylum / Protection from Persecution: Dublin Regulation* (Staatsekretariat für Migration, SEM, 2019), https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/asyl/dublin.html; Schweizerische Flüchtlingshilfe SFH, "Asylum Law – Legal Basis: Schengen/Dublin and Switzerland," accessed October 26, 2019, https://www.refugeecouncil.ch/asylum-law/legal-basis/schengendublin-and-switzerland.html; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*, 25.

37 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Federal Department of Justice and Police, FDJP, *Asylum / Protection from Persecution – Asylum Procedure: National Asylum Procedures* (Staatsekretariat für Migration, SEM, 2019), https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/asyl/asylverfahren/nationale-verfahren.html; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Asylverordnung 1 über Verfahrensfragen*, 142.311.

38 Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk, "Weiterbildungskurs zum Thema Asylverfahren: Asylparcours Basel-Stadt," accessed October 10, 2018, https://www.sah-bs.ch/projekte.

39 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Eidgenössisches Justiz- und Polizeidepartement, EJPD, *Brief Overview: Recognised Refugees – B Permit Temporarily Admitted Refugees – F Permit Temporarily Admitted Persons – F Permit* (State Secretariat for Migration, SEM, 2019), https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/publiservice/publikationen/info-flue-va/info-flue-va-en.pdf.

40 Convalere, *Asylheim Hausordnung* (Convalere, 2018), http://www.convalere.ch/.

and is often there on a daily basis. This person was consistently referred to as "boss" (*Chef*) by the refugees. Especially when asylum-seekers first arrived, many daily decisions had to first be approved by the *Chef* . These houses are places of dwelling, but also state-run institutions.

In addition to housing, asylum-seekers are provided with social support equal to around 65% of the social support provided to permanent Swiss residents or citizens.[41] In 2018 this was approximately 360 CHF per month. Switzerland has one of the highest costs of living in the world, even when compared to other European countries, especially for food and transportation. The free meal provided by Projekt DA-SEIN was one reason refugees reported that they attended the program.[42] Asylum-seekers sometimes have the opportunity to work in non-profit employment services (such as city clean-up, free-time activities for disabled persons, or textile workshops) in exchange for payment or benefits and privileges, such as a local transportation pass.[43] After three months asylum-seekers are allowed to work, but due the structured nature of Swiss employment and education systems as well as their limited skills in the local language, most who have an "N" permit do not work, or work sporadically and intermittently.[44] In most cantons, asylum-seekers receive an initial language course upon arrival, which includes practical information about life in their local region and in Switzerland as well as education about cultural norms and expectations.[45] In Basel-Stadt, additional language courses are offered and funded for refugees and asylum-seekers beyond the initial course. Yet, the neighboring canton of Aargau offers only the initial course. If asylum-seekers want to continue learning German, they must pay for the courses themselves, something that is financially inaccessible to most asylum-seekers.

The asylum-seekers I spoke with from cantons that offered fewer language programs often expressed jealousy or sadness that their opportunities were limited in this area.[46] They know the migration system requires language proficiency and that delaying this skill was a disadvantage. Many of them took advantage of as many free language courses, conversation groups, and opportunities to work with German speakers on language skills as possible. Learning and improving their German

41 Sozialhilfe, "Asyl: Asyl in Kürze," Department für Wirtschaft, Soziales und Umwelt des Kantons Basel-Stadt, accessed September 24, 2020, https://www.sozialhilfe.bs.ch/asyl/in-kuerze.html.

42 Projekt DA-SEIN, "Ergebnisse Umfrage" (Offene Kirche Elisabethen, 2018).

43 Sozialhilfe, "Asyl"; Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk, "Weiterbildungskurs zum Thema Asylverfahren."

44 Sozialhilfe, "Asyl."

45 Sozialhilfe, "Asyl."

46 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 13, 2018: 20180913_13AS_DA-SEIN_Museum_II, Pos. 3; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, May 5, 2018: 20180705_4AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 3.

was one of the main reasons many asylum-seekers came to Projekt DA-SEIN at the Offene Kirche Elisabethen.[47] This was reflected in many of my conversations, as well as in data collected by the program, where 82% of attendees surveyed said that learning German was one reason they came to Projekt DA-SEIN.[48] Working on German homework with a volunteer or engaging in informal conversation are among the most common activities at Projekt DA-SEIN. Projekt DA-SEIN also supports this focus by requiring that Standard German be the spoken language by everyone while at the program, by organizing conversational and instructional language groups, and by encouraging asylum-seekers to bring homework to work on with volunteers.

Several asylum-seekers had acquired workbooks, dictionaries, or online materials to teach themselves German when courses were unavailable to them.[49] They often brought these to Projekt DA-SEIN to get help and corrections on the exercises. One refugee assigned to canton Aargau had acquired a book listing all German verbs and their conjugations in all tenses. He would bring the book to the program and find a volunteer to work through some of the verbs with him, asking questions about meaning, pronunciation, and tenses.[50] Many asylum-seekers who lived in the cantons of Basel-Land or Aargau would leave the program early on Wednesdays to attend a German language course offered at a local high school in Liestal (canton Basel-Land). This focus on language acquisition is taken up by many organizations working with refugees as well. On the KoFfF website, a clearing house for refugee programs in Basel, there are 17 programs listed that support German language learning, and this does not include organizations that help informally with language acquisition, such as Projekt DA-SEIN.[51] Over and over again, the importance of learning the local language is emphasized by volunteers, governmental organizations, and non-profits.

47 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 5, 2018: 20180905_6AS_IN, Pos, 329; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, October 29, 2018: 20181029_8AS_IN, Pos. 198; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, December 12, 2018: 20181212_22AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos, 3.

48 Projekt DA-SEIN, "Ergebnisse Umfrage."

49 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 4, 2018: 20180704_11AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 3.

50 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 4, 2018: 20180704_11AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 3; Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, May 17, 2018: 20180517_DA-SEIN_v2_PO, Pos. 3; 20180711_DA-SEIN_v2_PO, Pos. 8.

51 Koordinationsstelle Freiwillige für Flüchtlinge (KOFFF) Basel, "Koordinationsstelle Freiwillige Für Flüchtlinge Basel," accessed October 1, 2019, http://fff-basel.ch/.

3.4 The Asylum Process

The asylum process begins with the first interview upon arrival at the *Verfahrenszentrum* and establishes the person's claim for asylum in Switzerland. It also collects and records details about the person, their health, and their reasons for fleeing. A second interview takes place one to two years later (the 2019 revisions to the Asylum Law hope to expediate this timeline). Asylum decisions are rendered after the second interview, but it can take up to one year to receive the decision. Decisions fall into one of three categories: being accepted as a refugee and receiving a "B" Foreign Nationals Residence Permit; being "temporarily admitted" and receiving an "F" permit; and being rejected and receiving a negative decision (*Negativentscheid*). A "B" permit is granted to asylum-seekers based on the definitions established by the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Geneva Refugee Convention).[52] A "B" permit is issued for one year, but it may be renewed annually. After 10 years, and if the person has met the integration requirements, they may apply for a permanent residence permit ("C" permit).[53]

Asylum-seekers would often identify or introduce themselves by naming the permit letter they currently have, saying, "I am N," or "I have F." During my time in Switzerland I met very few, if any, asylum-seekers who were automatically granted a "B" permit. Most of the asylum-seekers I got to know, and whose residence status I knew, fell into two categories. Either their application was rejected (*Negativentscheid*) or they were granted temporary admission and received an "F" permit. For a person who receives an "F" permit, their asylum claim has been denied but it is impractical or dangerous to return them to their country of origin. The Swiss Secretary of Migration writes in an informational document:

> Asylum seekers whose application has been denied but who cannot return to their country benefit from temporary admission. To obtain this status, they must meet one of the following three conditions: their enforced removal is unlawful (concrete threat abroad; violation of the Human Rights Convention); enforced removal is not reasonable (war, grave personal distress): the enforced removal is not feasible (the journey is technically impossible at the time the removal decision was made).[54]

52 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Brief Overview*. The document defines the term "refugee" as: "[a] refugee is a person who, because of his/her race, religion, nationality, affiliation with a particular social group or because of his/her political opinions, has been subjected to serious disadvantages or has a well-founded fear of being exposed to such disadvantages in his/her home or country of origin."

53 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Brief Overview*.

54 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, FDJP, *Foreign Population and Asylum Statistics 2018*.

An "F" permit is issued for 12 months and can be renewed for another 12 months. The renewal process is regulated by the canton of residence. After five years the person may apply for a Foreign Nationals Residence Permit ("B") if they have met certain criteria. Those with an "F" permit can pursue more opportunities than those still in the asylum process (with an "N" permit). In particular, they can pursue educational courses and employment opportunities, they can receive a larger stipend (20% less than the full social support), and they are permitted to look for housing outside of the asylum house.[55] They still cannot travel out of the country or move out of the canton where they are assigned. Once an "F" permit is received, the focus is on meeting integration requirements, achieving the required language proficiency, securing educational opportunities, and looking for housing. Employment is usually still difficult to obtain due to lack of language proficiency, lack of education or necessary training, and employers' unwillingness to hire "F" residents due to perceptions that they will not remain in Switzerland. Yet, according to the Basel-Stadt Department of Social Services, 95% of those who are temporarily admitted remain permanently in Switzerland.[56]

A negative decision can be appealed within 30 days, but rates for acceptance after an appeal are low. According to *Beratungsstelle für Asylsuchende*, a legal-aid office for asylum-seekers in Basel, the most common reason an application is rejected is for lack of credibility. If there is any variation in details between the first and second interviews, the case is usually rejected.[57] Due to the length of time between interviews and the lack of information about the process before the first interview, inconsistent stories were not uncommon. Those who receive a negative decision and who are denied asylum must leave the country within 30 days.[58] Depending on the country of origin, those who are denied asylum are forcibly deported (*Ausschaffung*), are expected to voluntarily leave, or are required to participate in a resettlement program. Yet, many asylum-seekers have few good options, no safe place to go, and limited resources, so many stay in Switzerland or go to another E.U. country where they know people, even though they cannot apply for asylum there. Even if their asylum claim is denied, if they are not able to return to their country of origin, they are still eligible to receive emergency assistance from the Swiss government.[59]

Many of the asylum-seekers I got to know at Projekt DA-SEIN arrived during the 2015 and 2016 increase in migration to Europe. Many of them were still waiting

55 Sozialhilfe, "Asyl."

56 Sozialhilfe, "Asyl."

57 Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk, "Weiterbildungskurs zum Thema Asylverfahren"; Beratungsstelle für Asylsuchende BAS der Region Basel, *Jarhresbericht 2018*.

58 Migraweb: Leben in der Schweiz – Information und Online-Beratung, "Asylentscheide," accessed October 26, 2019, https://migraweb.ch/de/themen/asylrecht/asylverfahren/entscheid/.

59 Sozialhilfe, "Asyl."

for their asylum cases to be decided in 2018. While almost none had received final decisions when I arrived in January 2018, quite a few received decisions during the course of my year in Basel. It was widely understood that it took around three years for a final decision to be issued on an asylum claim. According to the 2018 Migration Report by the State Secretariat for Migration, in 2018 the average length of the asylum process for an individual was 466 days. This number varied widely based on the type of asylum case and related circumstances. For instance, this number includes Dublin cases, which are often resolved within a few months by sending the applicant back to the initial receiving country.[60] Therefore, when looking at applications where Switzerland is the responsible Dublin country (known as priority 2 asylum applications), 70% of asylum cases took an average of 592 days to process. Even though the average processing time was a little over one and half years, the SEM report also noted that many applications processed in 2018 originated in 2015 or 2016, two to three years prior.[61] At Projekt DA-SEIN, the common experience and accepted wisdom was that asylum cases took three years to resolve.[62]

Thus, while asylum claims in Switzerland have decreased from their peak in 2015 and 2016, many decisions rendered in 2018 were on claims from this time period. In 2018 a total of 14,926 people were either granted asylum or temporarily admitted in Switzerland, constituting an admission rate of 60.5% on asylum decisions.[63] In

60 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*. The 2018 Migration Report describes the average duration of the asylum process in further detail. "Duration of asylum applications handled in the first instance: In 2018 the average duration of asylum applications handled in the first instance was 466 days. This figure can vary widely depending on the volume of incoming asylum applications, the resources available to process and settle these cases and SEM's case management strategy. In 2017 it was 340 days; in 2016, it was 249 days; in 2015 it was 278 days; in 2014 it was 401 days; in 2013 it was 258 days; and in 2012 it was 163 days. The average duration of asylum applications handled in the first instance is not a very informative indicator. However, settlements can be divided into three categories: Dublin cases, which in 2018 accounted for 18 % of asylum applications received, have an average processing time of two months (61 days); priority 1 asylum applications (low protection rate), which accounted for 7% of the incoming asylum applications, have an average processing time of roughly six months (151 days); and priority 2 asylum applications (high protection rate), which accounted for a share of 70%, have an average processing time of 592 days. Many of the priority 2 asylum applications processed in 2018 had been lodged in 2015 and 2016."

61 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*.

62 In 2019 the asylum law was revised, with the goal of completing the asylum claims process within 140 days.

63 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*. The 2018 Migration Report details the rate of positive versus negative decisions. "Asylum was granted to 6358 persons (2017: 6360), while 8568 asylum seekers (2017: 7839) were temporarily admitted following a first-instance decision. When these two sets of figures are taken together, the share of positive decisions (protection rate) in 2018 rose to 60.5 % (2017: 57.5 %). 1760 asylum seekers

Basel-Stadt in January 2019, there were 219 people in the asylum process ("N" permit), 765 recognized refugees ("B" permit), and 886 temporarily admitted persons ("F" permit).[64]

For many asylum-seekers, much of the three years in the asylum system was spent waiting for the next step or for decisions from the Swiss government. This waiting is characterized by a lack of agency, as refugees have little influence over the timing of next steps and decisions from the Swiss government. Not only can they not affect the asylum application process, they also cannot take action in other areas of their lives, such as finding employment, securing more permanent housing, getting married, starting a family, or even visiting their own families (see more on how asylum-seekers navigate these challenges in Chapters 7 and 8).

3.5 Swiss Citizenship

Who gets to stay and how they get to stay is subject to definitions of what it means to be Swiss and who belongs within concepts of Swiss identity. These answers are undergirded by implicit beliefs and assumptions about home, belonging, and normative characteristics of Switzerland, its people, and group membership. These assumptions filter down to shape laws and policies on migration, asylum, and integration. Citizenship laws explicitly determine who belongs and has access to benefits and also serve to codify the history, assumptions, and values of a place via specific legal and social structures.[65] How a country defines citizenship affects how migration is understood and regulated and how newcomers are integrated into the society. This section explores how these laws impact the migration experience of asylum-seekers in and around Basel.

Due to Switzerland's federalist structure, citizenship and migration are regulated at three levels: national, cantonal, and municipal, making citizenship not only a national, but also a local question.[66] This multi-located definition of citizenship is anchored in Switzerland's history as a loose federation of cantons, dating back over 700 years. This loose alliance of independent cantons, whose modern form took shape in 1848 with the adoption of a federal constitution, remains an abiding feature of Swiss democracy. Cantons remain independent in significant ways, including by

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were transferred to another Dublin state, while Switzerland accepted 1298 persons from its Dublin partners."

64 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, FDJP, *Asylstatistik Januar 2019*.

65 Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul, "Citizenship and Immigration," 154.

66 For an in-depth analysis of the impact of Switzerland's local citizenship system, see: Marc Helbling, *Practising Citizenship and Heterogeneous Nationhood: Naturalisations in Swiss Municipalities*, IMISCOE Dissertations (Amsterdam University Press, 2008), https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/35252.

setting their own policies on education, social services, and taxation. According to the Swiss constitution, cantons are independent so long as this independence is not limited by federal law.[67] The independence of Switzerland's cantons is perhaps most recognizable in the diversity of national languages. There are four official languages in Switzerland (German, French, Italian, and Romansh) and each canton has one to two official cantonal languages, in addition to a proliferation of dialects, especially in the German-speaking regions.

Another aspect of the decentralized Swiss political system is its emphasis on direct democracy. Many policies are decided by peoples' initiatives and by direct popular vote on the municipal, cantonal, and national levels. Recent examples in Basel include votes on TV and radio fees, hospital consolidation, and church taxation rights. Direct votes are often considered a pure form of democracy, in contrast to a representative system, where elected officials make most policy and legal decisions. Direct vote allows individuals greater control over policies, but it can also lead to decisions that uphold majority positions and deny rights to minority groups. In Switzerland these majority opinions have sometimes served to protect an idea of a Swiss way of life, or of Swiss values, against outside influence.[68] The first recorded peoples' initiative was in 1873, when 60% of Swiss citizens voted to outlaw the ritual slaughter of animals.[69] While the initiative was brought under the guise of animal welfare, it clearly reflected anti-Semitic sentiments at the time. The ban remains Swiss law, though in 1978 it was moved from the constitution to the Animal Protection Act. A recent example of the use of direct democracy to protect Swiss values against perceived foreign influences is a 2009 popular initiative that, by a vote of 57.5%, banned the building of minarets in Switzerland. This initiative was couched within a law about building code, but the rhetoric, media, and debate focused on anti-Islamic sentiments.[70]

In addition to the effect of Switzerland's decentralized and participatory government systems, Swiss citizenship and migration laws are impacted by two other

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67 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation* (Fedlex, 1999), https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1999/404/en.

68 Camille Vallier and Nesa Zimmermann, "Muslims' Rights in Switzerland Between Federalism, Direct Democracy, and Human Rights," in *State, Religion and Muslims: Between Discrimination and Protection at the Legislative, Executive and Judicial Levels*, ed. Melek Saral and Şerif Onur Bahçecik, Muslim Minorities, vol. 33 (Brill, 2020), 500–52, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004421516_013.

69 Kantonale Integrationsprogramme, *MIX: Magazin für Vielfalt* 1, ed. Kantonen BE / BL / BS / GR (Umlaut – Büro für Kommunikation, 2018), https://www.mixmagazin.ch.

70 For more information see the discussion in Chapter 2, section 2.2.2, as well as: Samuel M. Behloul, Susanne Leuenberger, and Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, eds., *Debating Islam: Negotiating Religion, Europe, and the Self*, Global Local Islam (transcript Verlag, 2013), https://doi.org/10.1515/transcript.9783839422496; Tunger-Zanetti, "'Against Islam, but not against Muslims.'"

factors: Switzerland's history of independence and protectionism at a national level, expressed especially in its neutrality, and its high degree of regulation and order. Switzerland has been militarily neutral for over 200 years, with roots stretching back much further. It is not a member of the European Union or other alliances, and did not join the United Nations until 2001. At the same time, it is situated between major European powers and maintains a military through compulsorily male conscription. This neutrality does not exempt Swiss responsibility or participation in European or world events. For instance, Swiss banks harbored plundered assets during World War II and Switzerland participated in and benefited from European colonialism.[71] Protectionism leads to a high degree of regulation, especially economic and social regulation. Import and export laws and taxes are established to protect Swiss industry, agriculture, and other interests. In addition, education and employment systems are highly regulated in order to guarantee adequate training, fair wages, and economic security, and the social welfare system is highly developed. These threads of protectionism, regulation, and cantonal independence have a unique impact on citizenship and migration systems.

As in other areas, citizenship is governed on three levels, the federal, cantonal, and municipal, and municipalities are the final arbiter of citizenship. As the State Secretary of Migration website states, "In the first place, the communes and cantons are responsible for naturalization matters. The Federal Government lays down the relevant criteria."[72] Citizenship is automatically granted to children only if they have at least one Swiss parent. Even if children are born in Switzerland, they must apply for citizenship through naturalization if they do not have a Swiss parent. Until 1921 cantonal governments regulated their own immigration laws, and today fi-

71 See: Harald Fischer-Tiné and Patricia Purtschert, eds., *Colonial Switzerland: Rethinking Colonialism from the Margins*, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137442741; Andreas Zangger, *Koloniale Schweiz: Ein Stück Globalgeschichte Zwischen Europa und Südostasien* (1860–1930) (transcript Verlag, 2011), Suvi Keskinen et al., eds., *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region* (Ashgate, 2009). These developments have roots in the history of colonialism and the solidification of the nation-state. Despite the fact that Switzerland was never a colonial power, it participated in and profited from colonial activities, including the service of Swiss citizens as mercenaries for British and Dutch companies, the Swiss textile industry's involvement in the slave trade, and the work of Swiss missionary organizations. These activities provided wealth from the colonies to Switzerland. In 2009 Swedish feminist researchers coined the phrase "complying with colonialism" in their book about Nordic involvement in colonial projects. In a similar vein, while Switzerland, a small, mountainous country, is often perceived as outside European politics, it was able to profit by partnering with colonial projects. Even Swiss neutrality positioned it to take advantage of opportunities, regardless of the consequences, and colonial imagery and ideals were reproduced in Swiss society.

72 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, FDJP, *Swiss Citizenship / Naturalization*.

nal citizenship decisions rest at the local level.[73] Each Swiss citizen has a designated *Heimatort* (home place), which is the local municipality where a person is considered a citizen. This municipality appears on legal documentation, including passports, and is distinct from the person's birthplace or place of residence. Historically, the *Heimatort* granted rights to its citizens and was passed patrilineally through families, with women automatically adopting the *Heimatort* of their spouse upon marriage.[74] But since 1988, women can maintain their own *Heimatort* and children can take the *Heimatort* of one or both of their Swiss parents. Thus, a *Heimatort* is sometimes a place where a person has never lived or a place to which a person has a limited personal connection. Yet, this highly local identification serves to reinforce historical notions of belonging.

In cases of naturalization, the federal government can give the ok ("green light") for a person's naturalization application to proceed, meaning that they have met the federal requirements for length of residence as well as criteria related to language, integration, and safety. These criteria also include familiarity with Swiss systems and the "Swiss way of life."[75]

> Under the revised Swiss Citizenship Act, a person may be naturalised if they hold a permanent residence permit, have resided in Switzerland for at least ten years, and are well integrated. A person is considered well integrated if they command one of the national languages, show respect for public security and order, respect the values of the Federal Constitution, participate in economic life or in gaining an education, and support the integration of their family. Persons wishing to become naturalised must furthermore be familiar with the Swiss way of life and not pose a risk to Switzerland's internal or external security.[76]

Once applicants meet the national requirements, they may apply for citizenship in their local canton. Cantonal governments have their own additional laws and requirements that vary between cantons. Finally, citizenship applicants must be approved by their local municipality. In Basel-Stadt there are three municipalities: Bettingen, Riehen, and Basel. Municipalities vet applicants in a variety of ways, from individual interviews and tests, up to and including a vote by all registered citizens

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73 Didier Ruedin, Camilla Alberti, and Gianni D'Amato, "Immigration and Integration Policy in Switzerland, 1848 to 2014," *Swiss Political Science Review* 21, no. 1 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12144.

74 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Swiss Civil Code*, SR 210 (Fedlex, 1907), https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/24/233_245_233/en.

75 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, FDJP, *Swiss Citizenship / Naturalization*; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über die Ausländerinnen und Ausländer*, 142.20; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über das Schweizer* Bürgerrecht, 141.0.

76 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, FDJP, *Foreign Population and Asylum Statistics 2018*.

of the municipality on individual citizenship applicants.[77] In the city of Basel directly, naturalization applicants are interviewed by the local town council.[78] There have been some newsworthy examples of local citizens denying citizenship to long-term residents due to local disagreements. In one case, in the canton of Aargau, a long-term resident was repeatedly denied citizenship by vote of the local residents due to her vocal protest of the use of bells on cows, a long-standing and beloved Swiss tradition, based on her beliefs as a vegan.[79] There have also been several cases of municipalities rejecting citizenship applications of Muslim women who wore headscarves. In these cases, it was argued that the headscarf was "supposedly demonstrating that they were not willing to integrate and abide to 'Swiss values.'"[80] In two of the cases this argument was rejected, but in a third it was upheld based on other factors that indicated a lack of integration on the part of the applicant.[81]

3.6 Migration and Integration

While arguably rare, these disagreements over citizenship reflect an important piece of citizenship legislation and sentiment at each level: that new members of Swiss society are appropriately integrated in the "Swiss way of life." While integration can apply to other kinds of social integration,[82] assimilation or integration policies are key

77 Kanton Basel-Stadt, Justiz- und Sicherheitsdepartement, Bevölkerungsdienste und Migration, "Einbürgerungsverfahren," accessed October 20, 2019, https://www.bdm.bs.ch/Einbuergerung/Informationen-Einbuergerung.html#page_section3_section2.

78 Kanton Basel-Stadt, "Der Weg zum Schweizer Pass," (Justiz- und Sicherheitsdepartement, Bevölkerungsdienste und Migration, 2018), https://media.bs.ch/original_file/020137e862b03a982ab875ec405d4c8ce0614aac/der-weg-zum-schweizer-pass.pdf.

79 Megan Garber, "In Switzerland, You Can Be Denied Citizenship for Being Too Annoying," *The Atlantic*, January 14, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/01/switzerland-citizenship-nancy-holten/513212/.

80 Vallier and Zimmermann, "Muslims' Rights in Switzerland," 537.

81 Vallier and Zimmermann, "Muslims' Rights in Switzerland," 537: Vallier and Zimmermann explain these decisions in detail: "The Federal Court was seized on several instances, after citizens' assemblies in various towns rejected citizenship applications of women wearing a headscarf, thus supposedly demonstrating that they were not willing to integrate and abide to 'Swiss values' (Federal Court, ATF 134 I 49; Federal Court, ATF 132 I 167; Federal Court, ATF 134 I 56). In two cases, the Federal Court affirmed that '[t]he mere fact of wearing a headscarf does not, in itself, constitute a lack of respect regarding democratic and constitutional values.' However, in a third case, the judges considered that the town decision was not discriminatory, because the applicant had effectively demonstrated insufficient integration (she had no contacts with the local population and was unwilling to integrate in the professional life) (Federal Court, ATF 132 I 167)."

82 Integration is a goal and policy that is reserved not only for migrants. Those who exist outside of Swiss social, economic, and other systems, such as those who are unemployed or otherwi-

elements of many migration systems and aim to bring newcomers into greater participation with structural and social systems in the receiving country.[83] There is often a tension between ensuring the ability of migrants to participate fully in the new society and maintaining previous connections and diverse practices. In Switzerland, integration is an especially important pillar of policies related to migration, with variable enforcement depending on whether the migrant arrives highly qualified or from a "third state." Yet, new laws continue to reinforce the centrality of integration in migration and citizenship policies at every level of Swiss government.

At the Swiss federal level, the most recent version of integration requirements was rolled out as the "Integration Agenda" and added as an amendment to the Foreign Nationals Act (FNA), which was renamed the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act (FNIA), further highlighting the importance of integration.[84] The amendments and new act became law in January 2019 for the entire Swiss federation, making integration a nationally supported program.[85] The federal government also increased the money allotted to cantons for integration and implementation of the Integration Agenda, which occurs in partnership with non-governmental organizations, both religious and secular. Integration law is refined at the cantonal and municipal levels with additional requirements and is evaluated across cantons by the *Kantonale Integrationsprogramme* (KIP).[86] The new law hopes to increase support for integration programs through earlier intervention and more intensive outreach to benefit both the Swiss government and migrants.[87]

According to the Swiss federal government, the goal of the Integration Agenda is "to ensure long-term integration in the domestic labour market and the local community."[88] In this vein, integration programs are designed to facilitate migrants' entry into the political, social, and cultural areas of local life.[89] Integration focuses on several criteria, many of which are reflected in the federal government's citizenship

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se reliant on the social welfare system, are also subject to integration programs. See: Kanton Basel-Stadt, Departement für Wirtschaft, Soziales und Umwelt, "Sozialhilfe: Soziale Integration," accessed October 26, 2018, https://www.sozialhilfe.bs.ch/-sozialhilfe/soziale-integration.html.

83 Susan K. Brown and Frank D. Bean, "Assimilation Models, Old and New: Explaining a Long-Term Process," *Migration Information Source* (2006), https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/assimilation-models-old-and-new-explaining-long-term-process.

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

85 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*.

86 Kantonale Integrationsprogramme, "Integrationsagenda: Früher Einsetzen und Intensivieren," Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), accessed April 20, 2020, http://www.kip-pic.ch/de/kip/integrationsagenda/.

87 Kantonale Integrationsprogramme, "Integrationsagenda: Früher Einsetzen und Intensivieren"; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*.

88 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*, 38.

89 Manatschal and Stadelmann-Steffen, "Cantonal Variations."

requirements, including participating in local political, educational, and economic activities; not posing a security risk; and achieving adequate proficiency in the local language.[90]

> Successful integration is demonstrated in particular by being able to communicate in a national language in everyday situations, orally and in writing (at least to B1 level orally and A2 level written), showing respect for public security and order, and the values enshrined in the Federal Constitution, participating in economic life or acquiring an education and encouraging and supporting the integration of family members. In addition, applicants must be familiar with the Swiss way of life and pose no risk to Switzerland's internal or external security.[91]

The aim of integration is not only to increase participation by newcomers in society, but also to prevent certain outcomes. Specially, it hopes to prevent the development of parallel communities (*Parallelgesellschaften*) that exist outside the normative cultural landscape, reliance on the social welfare system, and criminal or disruptive activities. At the same time, the law's requirement to "be familiar with the Swiss way of life"[92] sets up a potentially wide range of interpretations of what it means to be "Swiss enough" to remain in the country.

Meeting integration requirements is critical to decisions pertaining to receiving "B" and "C" residence permits or receiving citizenship (as per the Swiss Citizenship Act – SCA).[93] Yet, because 60% of asylum applicants receive a positive decision (a "B" or "F" permit) and 95% of provisionally admitted people remain in Switzerland, the Swiss government considers it a priority to begin integration programs even before asylum decisions are rendered. Starting with this early intervention, integration has five prongs: ongoing case management, language learning, education, skills for the labor market, and "social integration."[94]

The high degree of regulation of Swiss economic and cultural systems further undergirds this focus on integration, since education, employment, health, and political participation are highly regulated by "rule structures."[95] The emphasis on rules and regulations is especially related to employment, as work is a very structured sys-

90 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über die Ausländerinnen und Ausländer*, 142.20, 26.

91 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*.

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

93 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*.

94 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*; Kantonale Integrationsprogramme, "Integrationsagenda: Früher einsetzen und intensivieren."

95 Bachmann, *Diskurse über MigrantInnen in Schweizer Integrationsprojekten*.

tem in Switzerland with high societal value.[96] The structure of employment systems clearly regulates involvement in this stratum of society. For example, during a conversation with an Eritrean refugee, who had no formal education before arriving in Switzerland, he described some places he had worked, mostly doing manual labor on the black market. He pointed out a house where he had worked for six hours for 15 CHF/hour carrying stones for new stone flooring that was being installed in the house. But even these jobs were few and far between. He told me:

> In Eritrea you can work but there is no money. You can work wherever, without school or training or having to be a certain age. But then you don't get paid. You can work for a whole day and at the end the person will say, no money, sorry. And you don't get anything. But here, in Switzerland, there are jobs and money, but you can't get them if you don't have the right schooling and internship and language skills.[97]

Integration is designed to help migrants build successful lives by meeting educational and language requirements for employment, thereby reducing the likelihood of relying on state support. Yet, there can be steep hurdles to entering these systems. Even migrants who received education before arriving in Switzerland find it difficult to obtain recognition for their training or degrees. In addition, Switzerland's systematic approach to education means many opportunities are limited to certain age groups (for many training programs participants must be under the age 25). Given the length of the asylum process, refugees often fear missing these age-related deadlines to pursue education.

The federal integration program is guided by the principle: "Expect and Encourage" (*Fordern und Fördern*).[98] This language reflects the emphasis, priority, and investment given to Switzerland's integration initiatives and the necessity of migrants' participation. Yet, as integration requirements become stricter, there is a shift from encouragement to requirement, and even compulsion.[99] Non-participation is not an option. This principle also reinforces integration as a one-way project, compelling

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96 Kantonale Integrationsprogramme, *MIX: Magazin für Vielfalt*, 27–29. The publication explains the Swiss emphasis on employment. "'In der Schweiz hat die Arbeit einen hohen Stellenwert,' antwortet denn auch Adrian Gerber, Chef Integration beim Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), 'als Erstes auf die Frage, weshalb die Arbeitsmarktintegration in öffentlichen Debatten so viel Gewicht hat.'" See also: Manatschal and Stadelmann-Steffen, "Cantonal Variations."

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

98 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*; Bachmann, *Diskurse über MigrantInnen in Schweizer Integrationsprojekten*, 35.

99 Eva Mey and Peter Streckeisen, "'Integration von Ausländern': Eine kritische Reflexion" (Züricher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften; Soziale Arbeit; Institut für Vielfalt und

newcomers to adopt to the normative culture without similar requirements for the receiving community.[100] There is an assumption that the "Swiss way of life" has specific parameters that should shape new arrivals in Switzerland but not be reciprocally changed by them. There is also insufficient acknowledgement of the diversity that already exists within Swiss society.[101]

This emphasis on integration of immigrants is rooted in a historical view of migration as a problem and the "Swiss way of life" as something to be protected. Starting in 1931, migration law included a clause that decisions related to migration should take into account the *Überfremdung des Landes* (over-foreignization of the country).[102] This terminology remained in law until it was removed in 2008. Yet, the threat of losing the "Swiss way of life" by an influx of immigrants remains an implicit feature of migration and integration policies, as seen in the results of popular votes related to those perceived as other.[103] A 2006 report by the federal government was entitled "Problems of Integration of Foreigners in Switzerland."[104] Even today, oppositional language framing migration as an issue of the other continues to dominate integration policies and rhetoric in Switzerland, with words such as "native" and "foreign" or "Swiss culture" and "alien culture."[105] In recent years, as in other European countries, the focus on "over-foreignization" has shifted to Islam and integrating Muslim migrants.[106]

Integration and assimilation vary along a scale, with assimilation usually denoting a more intensive effort to bring migrants into normative systems and integration often assuming that communities maintain some of their cultural diversity.

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gesellschaftliche Teilhabe, 2019), https://www.zhaw.ch/storage/shared/sozialearbeit/News/white-paper-integration-von-auslaendern.pdf, 4.

100 Jesus A. Garcia, "Resisting Assimilation and Other Forms of Integration," *Sociology Compass* 10, no. 6 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12365; Mey and Streckeisen, "Integration von Ausländern."

101 Mey and Streckeisen, "Integration von Ausländern."

102 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über die Ausländerinnen und Ausländer*, 142.20. The provision reads: "Die Bewilligungsbehörden haben bei ihren Entscheidungen die geistigen und wirtschaftlichen Interessen sowie den Grad der Überfremdung des Landes zu berücksichtigen."

103 Ruedin, Alberti, and D'Amato, "Immigration and Integration Policy in Switzerland, 1848 to 2014."

104 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Bundesamt für Justiz, BJ, *Probleme der Integration von Ausländerinnen und Ausländern in der Schweiz: Bestandesaufnahme der Fakten, Ursachen, Risikogruppen, Massnahmen und des integrationspolitischen Handlungsbedarfs* (Bundesamt für Migration, 2006), https://www.bj.admin.ch/bj/de/home/publiservice/publikationen/berichte-gutachten/2006-07.html.

105 Mey and Streckeisen, "Integration von Ausländern."

106 Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul, "Citizenship and Immigration."

At its most extreme, assimilation means total conformity to systems and social expectations. As sociologists Richard Alba and Victor Nee write, "In the most general terms, assimilation can be defined as the decline, and at its endpoint the disappearance, of an ethnic/racial distinction and the cultural and social differences that express it."[107]

In Switzerland, integration laws set up strict guidelines and focus heavily on singular notions of belonging.[108] Therefore, Switzerland is often considered to have a more "exclusivist" integration policy or an "assimilationist integration policy,"[109] in contrast to more inclusive policies that assume a higher rate of cultural difference between integrated groups.[110] As Swiss political scientist Anita Manatschal writes, "Support of cultural difference through specific policy measures is much more restricted in typically assimilationist countries like Switzerland compared with traditionally multiculturalist countries such as the Netherlands."[111] Switzerland has a narrower concept of belonging and stricter guidelines for entry into society. Integration ensures that new residents of Switzerland adapt to Swiss standards in civic and social areas, regulates rights and obligations, mediates inclusion and exclusion, and defines belonging and difference.[112] This can be seen in recent educational debates in Basel-Stadt about whether Muslim parents can restrict their children's participation in required swim courses. Recent rulings have sided with the obligation to educate children over the religious rights of parents.[113] These cases also reflect the growing focus of many European integration programs on Muslim migrants.

For asylum-seekers, integration expectations exert a considerable amount of influence over their daily lives. Many asylum-seekers understand that there is a need to integrate in order to survive in the highly structured Swiss system and that integration requirements can create hurdles and exclusions for those who do not already ar-

107 Richard Alba and Victor Nee, "Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration," in Special Issue, "Immigrant Adaptation and Native-Born Responses in the Making of Americans," *The International Migration Review* 31, no. 4 (1997), https://doi.org/10.2307/2547416.

108 Manatschal and Stadelmann-Steffen, "Cantonal Variations."

109 Ruud Koopmans, "Trade-Offs Between Equality and Difference: Immigrant Integration, Multiculturalism, and the Welfare State in Cross-National Perspective," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 1 (2010), https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830903250881; Manatschal and Stadelmann-Steffen, "Cantonal Variations"; Bachmann, *Diskurse über MigrantInnen in Schweizer Integrationsprojekten*.

110 Manatschal and Stadelmann-Steffen, "Cantonal Variations."

111 Manatschal and Stadelmann-Steffen, "Cantonal Variations," 678.

112 Manatschal and Stadelmann-Steffen, "Cantonal Variations."

113 Marius Rohrer, "Basel's 'Swimming Refuseniks': A Systemic Study on How Politics Observe Muslim Claims to Diversity in State Schools," in *Debating Islam: Negotiating Religion, Europe, and the Self*, ed. Samuel M. Behloul, Susanne Leuenberger, and Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, Global Local Islam (transcript Verlag, 2013), https://doi.org/10.14361/transcript.9783839422496.263.

rive "highly-qualified" by Swiss standards.[114] Yet, they must balance the uncertainty of whether they can remain in Switzerland with the pressure to meet integration requirements in the interim. This tension particularly manifests in a focus on learning the local language and a pressure to adapt to the "Swiss way of life," as seen in the "Expect and Encourage" principle, which creates pressure on asylum-seekers to focus on meeting requirements and adapting to Swiss systems and values.

3.7 Home and Asylum-Seeking

Home is defined by affective experiences as well as by legal and political systems and social expectations. For migrants, especially those waiting for decisions on their cases, experiences of home and belonging are shaped by the place where they arrive, its citizenship and migration systems, and expectations for integration. These systems reflect unique historical and social circumstances. In Switzerland these include the federal model of government and its high degree of cantonal independence, the concept of a "Swiss way of life" as something definable and attainable, and systemized migration and integration systems. These policies and protocols have an assimilationist tendency in Switzerland, and integration is guided by its "Expect and Encourage" principle. They seek to shape newcomers through normative values so that newcomers can participate in Swiss systems of employment, education, and civic engagement. But they also have the effect of reducing difference and setting strict social and legal hurdles for remaining in Switzerland. As a consequence, many asylum-seekers feel it is necessary to focus fully on the requirements needed to integrate into the Swiss system, both legally and socially. This aspect of distancing from the home that was left and focusing on Swiss requirements of belonging will be explored in a later chapter.

114 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Bundesamt für Statistik, *Anteil Der Angestellten Mit Tertiärausbildung, Die Einen Beruf Ausüben, Für Den Eine Solche Ausbildung Nicht Notwendig Ist Nach Migrationsstatus*, accessed April 23, 2021, https://www.bfs.admin.ch/asset/de/19584393.

4. The Offene Kirche Elisabethen: History, Theology, and Context

The Offene Kirche Elisabethen fills a unique role in the city of Basel. It is part of the two main, historical Christian denominations in Basel, the Evangelical-Reformed Church of Basel and the Roman Catholic Church in Basel. While the building, its pastors, and some of its programs and staff are supported by these two churches, the OKE does not have a traditional church structure or offerings. Founded in 1994 in response to changes in religious affiliation, church demographics, and theological commitments, the OKE was the first City Church in Switzerland. The City Church movement began in Europe in the 1990s to address declining religious affiliation and the increased diversity of people and social, cultural, and religious needs in the city. City Churches engaged more actively with social and political issues facing the city and with people who do not affiliate with religious organizations or churches; they also initiated cultural, ecumenical, and interfaith projects. In this spirit, the OKE's mission is to be a spiritual, cultural, and social resource for all people in the city of Basel, regardless of their religious beliefs or affiliation. Three theological strands – urban theology, public theology, and convivence – impacted the development of the City Church movement, the Offene Kirche Elisabethen, and, subsequently, Projekt DA-SEIN. In this chapter I trace how these three strands led to the articulation and evolution of the mission and programs of the OKE, and in turn, those of Projekt DA-SEIN.

4.1 The Elisabethenkirche in Basel

The Offene Kirche Elisabethen was established as the first City Church in Switzerland in 1994.[1] The church is housed in the *Elisabethenkirche*, a neo-Gothic style church on the edge of Basel's old town (*Alt-Stadt*) and in close proximity to the city's main railroad station. The Elisabethenkirche was constructed between 1857 and 1864 as a

1 In 2018, there were eight City Churches in Switzerland, most of them founded between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s.

Reformed church on the site of a historical, smaller church that was built in the 13th century and that had served as a hospital chapel and cemetery.[2] The new church was commissioned by Christoph Merian, a member of a prominent Basel aristocratic family, and was the first Reformed church built in Basel after the Reformation.[3]

The Elisabethenkirche is part of the Evangelical-Reformed Church of Basel (Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Basel-Stadt/ERK-BS). In Basel the historic state churches (*Landeskirchen)*, the Evangelical-Reformed Church and the diocesan Roman Catholic Church, are "Public Law Corporations" ("*Körperschaften des öffentlichen Rechts*"), which are recognized under public law and have certain obligations and privileges, such as the ability to collect taxes from registered members.[4] Those who affiliate with these denominations pay taxes, have access to specific religious services, and are officially recorded as members of the church within their specific parish.[5] These churches continue to occupy significant religious, cultural, and social roles in the city and are officially recognized by the cantonal governments. Today, the Evangelical-Reformed church in Basel-Stadt maintains seven congregational centers in seven Basel neighborhoods, owns 85 buildings in the canton, including churches, rectories, and residences, and runs numerous para-church and social service organizations.[6]

As the relationship between churches and the state shifted in the 20th century, how churches interacted with the city also changed. In the 1960s the Elisabethenkirche experienced a decline in membership due to two demographic changes that impacted churches in cities. First, urban and commercial development in the city center led to a decrease in the residential population, which slowly moved out of city centers to surrounding city districts and suburbs. Second, religious

2 altbasel.ch, "Die Alte Elisabethenkirche," accessed May 17, 2019, https://altbasel.ch/fromm/stlisbeth.html.

3 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Geschichte."

4 For more information, see: Christoph Winzeler, "Staat und Religionen in Der Schweiz: Eine Rechtliche Perspektive," *Religion.ch* (2021), https://www.religion.ch/blog/staat-und-religionen-in-der-schweiz-eine-rechtliche-perspektive/; Matthias Mahlmann, "Einführung in Die Rechtswissenschaft E-Skript: 14.2.2 Situation in Der Schweiz," Universität Zürich, accessed November 10, 2021, https://www.rwi.uzh.ch/elt-lst-mahlmann/einfuehrungrw/religion/de/html/zur_vertiefung_learningObject2.html; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation*.

5 Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Basel-Stadt, "Kirchen & Gemeinden," accessed July 29, 2019, https://www.erk-bs.ch/kirchgemeinden.

6 These include the Zwinglihaus (a center for education and interreligious dialogue), student housing, the OKE, and social outreach organizations, as well as the Basel Münster. The Münster was the cathedral of the diocese of Basel until the Reformation in 1529 and remains an important Reformed church and cultural and geographic center of the city. In addition, religious holidays and festivals continue to be part of the official city calendar.

affiliation decreased across the population while other religions and denominations, as well as the number of those who have no religious affiliation, increased.[7] Despite the continued centrality of the Evangelical and Catholic churches, official and unofficial membership in these denominations has steadily declined in the last half-century. In 1970, over 95% of the Swiss population identified as a member of either the Roman Catholic or the Protestant Evangelical-Reformed church (48.8% Reformed, 46.7% Roman Catholic).[8] In 2017 the landscape looked very different, with less than 60% of the population identifying with the Evangelical-Reformed or Roman Catholic churches (23.8% Reformed, 35.9% Roman Catholic).[9] The largest increase is among those who identify as *konfessionslos* (without a confession or unaffiliated), known as "nones" in the United States (this group increased from 1.2% of the Swiss population in 1970 to 26% of the population in 2017).[10] The canton of Basel-Stadt has a particularly high percentage of residents who identify as *konfessionslos*. In 2017 this group totaled nearly 50% of the Basel population.[11] Despite its historic affiliation, only 16% of the population of Basel-Stadt continues to identify with the Evangelical-Reformed Church.[12] Of this group, committed church members who attend services regularly are a much smaller group compared to "distant" members who do not participate regularly, if at all.[13] According to some studies this distant group represents 95% of church members in Switzerland.[14] The decrease in reli-

7 Monika Hungerbühler, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Basel – Offen und Gastfreundlich," *Diakonia* 44, no. 1 (2013), https://www.diakonia-online.net.

8 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Ständige Wohnbevölkerung ab 15 Jahren nach Religionszugehörigkeit seit 1910* (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2019), https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bevoelkerung/sprachen-religionen/religionen.assetdetail.33947017.html.

9 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Ständige Wohnbevölkerung ab 15 Jahren nach Religionszugehörigkeit seit 1910*.

10 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Ständige Wohnbevölkerung ab 15 Jahren nach Religionszugehörigkeit seit 1910*.

11 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Ständige Wohnbevölkerung ab 15 Jahren nach Religionszugehörigkeit und Kantonen* (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2017), https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bevoelkerung/sprachen-religionen/religionen.assetdetail.33947019.html.

12 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Ständige Wohnbevölkerung ab 15 Jahren nach Religionszugehörigkeit und Kantonen*.

13 Birgit Weyel, "Kirchenmitgliedschaft," in *Handbuch für Kirchen- und Gemeindeentwicklung*, ed. Ralph Kunz and Thomas Schlag (Neukirchener Theologie, 2014).

14 Wilhelm Gräb, "Kirche als Ort der Religion," in *Handbuch für Kirchen- und Gemeindeentwicklung*, ed. Ralph Kunz and Thomas Schlag (Neukirchener Theologie, 2014), 103. In Basel, 17% of residents identify as Roman Catholic. Despite Basel's history of being Evangelical-Reformed, the higher number of Roman Catholic members can be attributed to migration and an influx of Roman Catholics from other countries. Data is not available at the cantonal level, but in Switzerland-wide data, the percentage of people who identify as Roman Catholic increases dramatically if they have a migration background. Migration has had the effect of keeping Roman Catholic membership higher than the Reformed church, bringing in a proliferation

gious affiliation between the 1970s and the 2000s caused congregations to shrink and the demographics to shift older. Many large church buildings sat empty as their connection to the surrounding communities dwindled.

4.1.1 The Founding of the Offene Kirche Elisabethen

In 1968, amid this decline in urban density and religious affiliation, the Basel theater was rebuilt directly next to the Elisabethenkirche, leading to discussions on whether to demolish the church and replace it with a parking garage, a new museum building, or a shopping and residential area.[15] Because the Elisabethenkirche was one of the most important neo-gothic buildings in Switzerland (in Basel), the church was kept, despite its small congregation.[16] Yet, when another church, the *Lukaskirche*, was built in 1973 to serve the outer quarters of the city, the Elisabethenkirche ceased to be an operational congregation and was used for short-term projects until 1990, when the outside of the church was renovated.[17] At the same time, though the residential population decreased, the city center saw an increase in the number of daily visitors, as people traveled to the city center for work, shopping, and entertainment. A greater diversity of people circulated through the neighborhoods surrounding the Elisabethenkirche, bringing with them different spiritual, cultural, and social needs.

In 1991 Hansruedi Felix submitted a proposal to the Synod Council of the Reformed Church of Basel to create an "Open Church," and the Offene Kirche Elisabethen established itself as an independent association (*Verein*); the goal was to make the Elisabethenkirche a City Church, with an open and ecumenical mission to serve the city of Basel outside of traditional congregation structures.[18] In April 1994 the OKE was officially founded, with Hansruedi Felix as the church's first pastor. Hansruedi Felix (at that time using the name H.R. Felix Felix) was a young theologian and founding member of the Christian intentional community, *Kommunität Friedensgasse*, which was located in the city center of Basel and committed to reaching beyond denominational divisions, living in solidarity with the poor and marginalized,

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of independent churches, and increasing other religious affiliations, including Islam. Yet, the percentage of those with an affiliation with Islam has increased less than the percentage of those with no affiliation.

15 Hungerbühler, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Basel."

16 See: Hungerbühler, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Basel," 57; Offene Kirche Elisabethen, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Geschichte."

17 Hungerbühler, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Basel," 57.

18 Hungerbühler, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Basel," 57; Schubert, "City Churches"; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1El_IN.

and meeting social needs in the city.[19] The community was established in response to the same changes that were confronting urban churches, namely shifting urban demographics and decreasing religious affiliation. In response, it sought to be open to the diversity in the city and to express the Christian faith in more dynamic and inclusive ways.[20]

In 1988 Hansruedi Felix wrote down a vision for an "open church" that would bring together different people and cultures in a space that would include both religious and secular offerings.[21] Felix wrote, "The church should be a habitat (*Lebensraum*) for many different people and cultures, an everyday living space, a 'Biotope.'"[22] This pluralistic church would include cultural events as well as religious and secular offerings and be a place for people to gather regardless of religious affiliation or cultural background.[23] Shortly after Felix wrote his inspiration for an "open church," he spent two months in the United Kingdom, where he encountered St. James Piccadilly Church in London under the leadership of Anglican priest Donald Reeves. Felix saw many parallels between St. James Piccadilly and his own vision for an "open church." St. James Piccadilly offered a health and healing center, a cafe, and a variety of religious and secular offerings, from concerts to yoga to prayer services. Felix noted that the church attracted many different people, including bankers, those from the social margins, artists, musicians, and healers.[24] St. James Piccadilly was part of an emerging City Church movement that sought to reimagine the role of the church in response to social, economic, and cultural shifts within cities. Felix also visited churches in the Netherlands that were being repurposed to meet social and religious needs in their cities.[25]

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19 Catherine Brunner-Dubey and Pierre Brunner-Dubey, *Kraftvoll Einkehren: Eckpfeiler für eine Kirche der Zukunft* (Rex-Verlag, 1996), 31. Aspects of the community's work included diaconical community (living with people experiencing difficult life situations) and solidarity with the poor. Over the years (*Friedensgasse* disbanded in 2004), the community took in people who were struggling to find housing due to homelessness, disability, or addiction; ran a soup kitchen called *Gassenküche*; established a day-shelter for the homeless, known as Wall-Strasse; and led LGBT-welcoming religious services.

20 Schubert, "City Churches," 84.

21 Hansruedi Felix, "Der Anfang Der Offenen Kirche Elisabethen: Was Einem Jungen Theologen Als Vision Auf Dem Velo Geschenkt Wurde, Nahmen Kluge Kirchenrätinnen Auf: Felix Felix Traf Aber Auch Auf Vorbilder. Ein Bericht Von Ganz Am Anfang," in *Hallelu-JO: JO Zum Läbe JO Zum Liebe* (Offene Kirche Elisabethen, 2018), 16–19. Felix's idea was inspired by his experiences with the *Kommunität Friedensgasse*, his interest in the mystical experiences of the early church, and his encounter with urban theologies, especially the work of Harvey Cox.

22 Felix, "Der Anfang Der Offenen Kirche Elisabethen," 16–19.

23 Felix, "Der Anfang Der Offenen Kirche Elisabethen."

24 Felix, "Der Anfang Der Offenen Kirche Elisabethen," 17.

25 Toni Schürmann, "Die Pionierkirche," *Reformiert*, March 25, 2019, https://reformiert.info/artikel/recherche/die-pionierkirche.

When the Offene Kirche Elisabethen opened on April 30, 1994, it was the first City Church in Switzerland.[26] Today, there are eight City Churches in Switzerland, seven of them in German-speaking cantons and one in Geneva, a French-speaking canton.[27] They are located in urban areas and are usually ecumenical partnerships between the cantonal Evangelical-Reformed Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and sometimes also the Old Catholic Church (*Christkatholisches Kirche*). The Swiss City Churches share common themes, including an ecumenical and interfaith orientation, an openness to all people regardless of religious affiliation, and a program of diverse cultural, spiritual, and social offerings.[28] While each church has a slightly different character, the City Church movement sought to re-imagine religious structures and commitments in response to changes in urban demographics and religious affiliations.

4.1.2 The City Church Movement

City Churches in the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland reimagined their diaconal and missional imperatives in response to the changes in urban demographics and church affiliation.[29] These churches began to imagine ways to keep their buildings open and relevant, to reinvigorate spiritual traditions, to minister to diverse people, and to preserve and utilize their buildings. They sought to respond to the needs of their surrounding communities, even if their

26 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Geschichte."

27 Bahnhofkirche Zürich, "Über Uns: Entstehungsgeschichte," accessed September 10, 2019, https://www.bahnhofkirche.ch/angebote/entstehungsgeschichte/; Wirk Raum Kirche, "Offene Kirche: Experimentierraum, Bewegungsraum | Die Offene Kirche Ist Eine Institution in St. Gallen. Für Weltoffenheit und Dialog," accessed September 10, 2019, https://www.wirkraumkirche.ch/DE/4/OffeneKirche.htm; Reformierte Citykirche offener St. Jakob, "Offene Kirchen in Der Schweiz," accessed August 26, 2019, https://www.citykirche.ch/links. *Offene Kirche Bern* was established in 1999 in the *Heiliggeistkirche*, the most central church in the capital city of Bern. The *Bahnhofskirche* in Zürich was established in 2001. Unlike other City Churches, it was not established in an existing church building, instead it is located in the main train station. A second City Church, *Citykirche Offener St. Jakob*, is located in a more traditional church setting in Zürich. *Offene Kirche St. Gallen* was established in 1998 in the *Kirche St. Leonhard*. In 2005 it moved to a new location in a building that was not historically a church. *Offene Kirche Region Olten* opened in 2003, and *City-Kirche Zug* opened in 2006. The City Church in Geneva, *Église Évangélique de Plainpalais*, is part of a more traditional church structure and also operates an intentional community with housing for young men.

28 Offene Kirche Bern, "'Offene Kirche Bern' – Die Berner Citykirche: Wer Wir Sind und Wofür Wir Stehen," Offene Kirche Bern, accessed September 10, 2019, https://www.offene-kirche.ch/ueber-uns/offene-kirche-bern-die-berner-citykirche/. For instance, the *Bahnhofskirche* in Zug focuses on being a place of quiet and stillness, while *Offene Kirche Bern* hosts more religious and cultural events.

29 Schürmann, "Die Pionierkirche."

responses did not fall into traditional categories of church services or outreach. Church has historically been defined as the place where people practice the Christian faith, follow Christian teachings and practices, orient their understanding of reality, and connect with a community of believers.[30] As early as the 1960s, scholars such as Harvey Cox argued for churches to engage more directly with the surrounding society and secular concerns, particularly in urban spaces.[31] Cox presented a definition of the church not as an institution, but as the people, actions, and faith that constitute its work. Cox, and others, argued that these practices, religious or not, are more indicative of faith than religious affiliation.[32] This reframing of church priorities helped shift churches away from offering primarily religious services to a local congregation and towards offering social and secular programs to more diverse populations.

City Churches sought to build on their capital in the city as historic and geographic centers of social, cultural, and religious meaning-making. Through increased engagement with secular and social concerns, that were traditionally located outside of the church, City Churches broadened their understandings of religious commitments to include the offering of ecumenical, interfaith, and secular programs. City Churches might still host religious services, but they might occur at times more conducive to the schedules of office workers or they might respond to the needs of particular groups, such as nurses and doctors.[33] City Churches continue to witness to the Christian faith by honoring the theology, beliefs, and practices of their traditions, but they use these traditions to inspire work beyond the usual parameters of religious practice. Secular offerings and practices from other religious and spiritual traditions are incorporated into their work and their programs are adapted to address the broader needs and populations of their communities.

4.2 The Offene Kirche Elisabethen Today

The Offene Kirche Elisabethen is part of Basel's institutional church structures and is funded by the two historic churches in Basel – the Evangelical-Reformed Church (ERK) and the Roman Catholic Church of Basel-Stadt.[34] The church building is

30 Gräb, "Kirche als Ort der Religion," 189.

31 Paul H. Ballard, ed., *The Church at the Centre of the City* (Epworth, 2008), 5.

32 Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (Princeton University Press, 2013). This focus on actions over institutional structures has its roots in the Reformation. Many reformers, including Martin Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, emphasized works as the most important aspect of faith, over and against the Catholic church's focus on piety.

33 Teschner, *City-Kirche Modelle, Erfahrungen, Ideen*.

34 Schubert, "City Churches," 95.

owned by the ERK of Basel-Stadt. The individuals that make up the OKE's leadership, a Catholic theologian and a Protestant pastor, are trained and partly paid by their respective churches.[35] In addition, the Evangelical-Reformed Church of the neighboring canton, Basel-Land, also supports the church (the Roman Catholic church of Basel-Land occasionally supports special events of the church). In addition, it raises some of its own money through private donations, foundation support, and church rentals.[36] The OKE does not have a traditional parish structure and programs are open to anyone who is interested.[37] Currently, the church is led by a Protestant pastor, Frank Lorenz, and a Catholic theologian, Anne Burgmer. Burgmer replaced the Catholic theologian Monika Hungerbühler, who held the position from 2010 to 2022 (including during the time I completed this study).

While deeply rooted in the historic churches of Basel, the OKE's mission reaches beyond congregational church structures, in part by offering more diverse programs and using more inclusive language. The original mission statement (*Grundsatzpapier*) of the OKE was written in 1994 and clearly situates the OKE within the Christian tradition. It names several themes as central to its mission: an encounter with the Jewish-Christian tradition; a connection to the mystery of Christ; reconciliation across religious traditions; and an ecumenical orientation in the worldwide church. In August 2012 a new *Grundsatzpapier* was written by the current ministers of the church at that time, Hungerbühler and Andre Feuz, a Protestant pastor. The 2012 document contains key theological themes but uses less overt religious language.[38] The document focuses on the church's welcome of diversity and a shared and common life.

In 2018, the OKE website described itself as a church in the following way:

> The Offene Kirche Elisabethen (OKE) is a City Church for Basel and the surrounding region. Since 1994 it has provided spiritual, cultural and social offerings for all people, regardless of origin, skin color, sexual orientation or religion. The church is open to all people of good will. It lives the Jewish-Christian tradition with an ecumenical responsibility and an interreligious awareness.[39]

35 In 2018, Hungerbühler was the Catholic theologian, and the Protestant pastor was Lorenz.

36 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 79; 20190115_1EI_IN, Pos. 117.

37 Schubert, "City Churches," 88–89.

38 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, *Die Grundsätze der Offenen Kirche Elisabethen* (Offene Kirche Elisabethen, 1994); Offene Kirche Elisabethen, *Grundsatzpapier* (Offene Kirche Elisabethen, 2012).

39 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, "Die Offene Kirche Elisabethen (OKE)," accessed September 8, 2018, https://www.offenekirche.ch/de.html.

The OKE identifies a three-fold focus on offering spiritual, cultural, and social opportunities to people in the city of Basel.[40] Spiritual offerings include weekly opportunities to meet with a pastor, meditation and prayer times, and church services that are held specifically for and by women or that are held for specific religious and non-religious holidays.[41] Religious services and programs reflect important occasions based on a variety of commitments. Some services occur as part of the Christian calendar, others reflect important events for the residents of Basel, and others serve particular groups (such as women, LGBTQ people, and refugees). During 2018, the two largest services at the OKE were Easter, featuring traditional Swiss yodeling led by two Projekt DA-SEIN volunteers, and *Fastnacht*, marking the beloved and centuries-old Basel Carnival season. There is a de-emphasis on rites of passage such as baptism, confirmation, and marriage. Among the first offerings of the newly created OKE were monthly services for LGBTQ Christians and animal blessings.[42] The OKE directly addresses social and cultural concerns, such as when it hosts the monthly *Basel im Gespräch* program, a monthly forum that features speakers and public discussion on an issue impacting Basel. Topics in 2018 included a tax initiative on an upcoming ballot, the debate surrounding the right-to-die movement, and the role of immigrants in Swiss life. The Offene Kirche Elisabethen hosts exhibits and concerts and runs the café out of a side entrance of the church. In addition, the church rents the church sanctuary for cultural and social groups, including monthly services of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and regular discos catering to 30- and 40-somethings in Basel. In the area of social outreach, the church hosts a toy collection around Christmas, a weekly food bank, and it is active in refugee work through Projekt DA-SEIN and KOFfF, a service that coordinates volunteer opportunities to serve refugees around the city.[43]

The Offene Kirche Elisabethen is grounded in the Christian tradition yet is programmatically and structurally removed from many traditional aspects of church, instead focusing on the religious needs of the residents of Basel, regardless of religious affiliation or membership. This reframing of membership mirrors wider trends in church participation that I will explore below. In addition to attracting a broader membership, the OKE focuses on two of the four traditional areas of work (especially in Roman Catholic theology) that being a church comprises: *Martyria*, *Diakonia*, *Leitourgia*, and *Koinonia*. The OKE focuses on Diakonia, service to others, and

40 Hungerbühler, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Basel," 58.

41 Hungerbühler, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Basel"; Offene Kirche Elisabethen, "Die Offene Kirche Elisabethen (OKE)."

42 Schubert, "City Churches."

43 Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz, Kanton Basel-Stadt, "Koordinationsstelle Freiwillige Für Flüchtlinge Basel (KOFFF)."

Koinonia, gathering in community.[44] These areas of work have shaped the outreach and programs that the OKE offers and are guided by the mission statements of the church. Shifts in membership and a commitment to openness and convivence have shaped the priorities of the OKE. These themes are reflected in religious and secular language on the church's website, in programming, in the mission statements that shape how the OKE engages with the city, in the church's theology and social values, and in the affective experiences of participating in programs.

4.2.1 Membership at the OKE

The OKE shows up in the religious space of Basel and offers a model of religious belonging that is often in contrast with historic church understandings of membership. As an open, ecumenical City Church, the OKE challenges traditional understandings of church membership, especially within the established *Landeskirchen*. The OKE is committed to being a place for all people in the city of Basel, with a focus on public concerns. This commitment means it is situated within both the structures of the Swiss church and the broader experiences of life in the city.

The OKE's reframing of membership parallels both the decrease in church affiliation and the broader changes in civic engagement. Membership in organizations has shifted from long-term commitments based on tradition and need to commitments that are short-term, selective, and reflective of personal choice. In the face of this declining membership, many churches ask who its church members are, if the majority of the surrounding population are not church members. Churches are asking who they serve and what church look likes if membership is no longer based on tradition or historic affiliation. These shifts in church membership have raised the question of what defines a congregation, including whether a congregation is separate from the world or part of the society.[45] Traditionally, a parish is oriented towards its members and serves them through the activities of the church calendar, through hosting regular services and gatherings, and through offering Christian education and rites of passage. Guests and visitors may participate in some of these offerings, such as weekly services, but not all church activities are available to nonmembers. In this model, service to those outside of the church is an extension of the religious life of its members and its faithfulness to church teachings. Traditionally, this meant addressing social needs, evangelization, and moral leadership in relation to the secular world.

Yet, the OKE inverts this question by accepting the secular world as part of its congregation. In this situation, the divide between guest and member blurs. As

44 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN.

45 Uta Pohl-Patalong, "Kirche bei neuen Gelegenheiten," in *Handbuch für Kirchen- und Gemeindeentwicklung*, ed. Ralph Kunz and Thomas Schlag (Neukirchener Theologie, 2014), 101–2.

noted, nearly 50% of Basel's residents identify as *konfessionslos* or without religious affiliation. In addition, with over 95% of church members "distant," some churches seek to create a space for distant members who, nonetheless, still have a motivation to search for religious meaning.[46] Scholars such as Wilhelm Gräb suggest creating opportunities where "spiritual experiences can be made and [where] it is not about facts and numbers, but is about meaning."[47] These goals mirror programs at the OKE that seek to create a space for those who seek meaning and connection over facts and tradition. In this vein, the Offene Kirche Elisabethen sees itself as neither set apart from the world, nor offering a specific image of God.[48] Lorenz emphasizes, "Some churches tend to say that they are an oasis of silence. We don't say that […] We are part of the society and try to make this world a better place, to leave an empty space for God."[49] The church hopes to be a space for people to find the God they are looking for.[50]

Hungerbühler reflects that if people who come to the church do not affiliate with a denomination, then denominational distinctions are also not relevant.[51] In fact, the current leadership at the OKE defines the church not as ecumenical, as in the original *Grundsatzpapier*, but as "post-denominational" or, in German, *post-konfessionell*. Ecumenism refers to work between denominations, yet this definition does not fit when denominational affiliations are not present. Hungerbühler explains, "Denominations simply do not play a role anymore for either us or for the people, the volunteers who work here, and those who come to the church […] Most of them do not belong to a church."[52] Hungerbühler shares that it is not important for the Offene Kirche Elisabethen whether people who come there are officially part of the church and pay taxes.

Lorenz reiterates that the goal of the OKE is one of inclusion, harkening back to the original disciples. "Ecumenical is just trying to get one or two or three traditions together […] but there was once a community of people who dreamt bigger. This big dream included each and everybody, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, workers

46 Gräb, "Kirche als Ort der Religion," 193.

47 Gräb, "Kirche als Ort der Religion," 193–94.

48 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1EI_IN, Pos. 215.

49 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1EI_IN, Pos. 215.

50 Reformierte Kirchengemeinde Gundeldingen-Bruderholz, "OFFLine: Ort Der Stille und Begleitung," accessed October 20, 2019, https://www.erk-bs.ch/kg/gundeldingen-bruderholz/offline-gubru. Other church programs in Basel have different goals, for instance the Basel Offline program, hosted at Basel's Bruderholz church, seeks to provide a place of respite, retreat, and quiet from the city and everyday concerns.

51 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 79; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1EI_IN.

52 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 101.

and widows."[53] This sense of inclusion stretches beyond denominations and beyond designations of belief and unbelief. The OKE hopes to be a space for people to find the God they are looking for, not the God offered by the church. Instead of creating church for people, the OKE seeks to allow the church and its theology to reflect the people.[54] This dialectical relationship between theology and people's spiritual seeking is a constant conversation at the OKE. Hungerbühler says she is often asked what the limits are on what the church will offer or address. She writes: "In principle, the borders are very wide, as the leadership team interprets the Gospel. […] The team orients itself around the fullness of life and attempts more to justify why an event should not find space with us versus the other way around."[55] In this way, the church is oriented more toward acknowledging the otherness and alterity that already exists in its members and surrounding community. This recognizes that the God presented in a church may not be the God accepted by each individual member. Acknowledging this space has the potential to bring in more people and include the fullness of their experiences. As Lorenz says, "My personal motivation is to have this church as an empty space for the God that most people are looking for. Many people search for what might be God for them and I want to have this space open for these searchers for God."[56] The openness of the OKE allows for many different iterations of belonging, religious expression, and engagement with the city.

Despite the OKE's distance from traditional identifiers of religious belonging, many people feel "at home" at the church. Many people express a sense of belonging to the Offene Kirche Elisabethen, regardless of their personal beliefs or official religious affiliation. As Lorenz says, "Many people in Basel say: 'We don't belong to the church anymore, but the OKE, that is, if talking about church, if there is any, it's the OKE.'"[57] In my time as a volunteer at Projekt DA-SEIN, I found this sentiment frequently expressed among volunteers. Many people who attend programs at the Offene Kirche Elisabethen, and the population in Basel as a whole, do not affiliate with a religious denomination. One volunteer had left the church years before, yet through volunteering at Projekt DA-SEIN, she began attending other church events and expressed a sense of affiliation to the church through the Offene Kirche Elisabethen.[58]

In fact, many people know about the Offene Kirche Elisabethen first through its activities in the city and only second as a church. Many are first attracted to the

53 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1EI_IN, Pos. 123.
54 Hungerbühler, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Basel," 57.
55 Hungerbühler, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Basel," 58.
56 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1EI_IN, Pos. 215.
57 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1EI_IN, Pos. 101.
58 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, May 22, 2018: 20180522_Freiwilligensitzung_DO, Pos. 10.

church through its volunteer opportunities or its cultural offerings. These entry points make it a "young" church, in contrast to the aging congregations of many churches. In a survey conducted by the program, one young volunteer stated that many of their peers no longer connect to church, yet the OKE offers something important that church had provided in his past.

> In my circle of friends, the church does not play a role. But I still believe that people are always looking for community with other people with whom they can talk, exchange ideas, and do projects. The OKE is a place where you can meet and unite all interests, because everything is accepted and tolerated. When I go to church in my village there are only old people because the young just don't feel connected anymore.[59]

This focus on community over denominational or even religious attributes reflects the OKE's post-denominational stance. The church hopes to create a broad community, cutting across divisions, in order to minister in a climate of changing religiosity.

Beate Hofmann points out that civic organizations, including churches, are experiencing a shift from membership to participation models. Hofmann lists five characteristics of this new form of civic engagement.[60] The first aspect is a strong orientation toward content and concrete work instead of toward the organization and its worldview. Instead of joining an organization because of a belief in the mission and overall program, people choose to engage because of specific programs, which are often connected with concrete tasks and outcomes. This is seen in those attracted to the Offene Kirche Elisabethen as volunteers at Projekt DA-SEIN or as attendees at specific events and programs.[61] Second, people make engagement a conscious decision, not just a familiar part of a tradition. Instead of being involved in church because of family, social, and religious traditions, people choose church activities out of a menu of other social and community organizations and projects.[62] Third, the orientation of volunteers has shifted from an altruistic focus to a focus on one's own interests and causes. The driving force of involvement is no longer helping others but acting on one's personal beliefs and commitments. This was reflected in Projekt DA-SEIN volunteers, many of whom are already connected to migration experiences and oriented toward spaces of diversity. Fourth, changes in how people engage with organizations have shifted participation from long-term commit-

59 Projekt DA-SEIN, *DA-SEIN Interview: DA-SEIN und JUNG-SEIN Freiwillige* (Projekt DA-SEIN, 2018).

60 Beate Hofmann, "Ehrenamt und Freiwilligkeit," in *Handbuch für Kirchen- und Gemeindeentwicklung*, ed. Ralph Kunz and Thomas Schlag (Neukirchener Theologie, 2014), 144–45.

61 Pohl-Patalong, "Kirche bei neuen Gelegenheiten," 199–202.

62 Hofmann, "Ehrenamt und Freiwilligkeit."

ments to time- and scope-limited engagements with certain initiatives, projects, and actions. This more individualized involvement means people might connect to a church through one offering, but not participate in other programs or services and may come and go more readily.[63]

Finally, people's involvement in civil society has shifted from a willingness to be part of a hierarchical structure to a desire to co-create the engagement field. This greater participation, both by volunteers and by community members, means that the church and its programs reflect not only the theological commitments of the church but also the interests of participants. This is reflected in the rise in volunteer positions at churches like the OKE.[64] Like many City Churches, the OKE operates outside of traditional congregational structures and relies in diverse and structured ways on volunteers. The pastoral staff manages the space and leads many of the religious offerings, but much of the work of the church and its outreach programs are carried out by volunteers. The OKE's volunteers include people of diverse ages, from university students to retired community members, and diverse religious and cultural affiliations. At Projekt DA-SEIN volunteers range from those without religious affiliation, to practicing Christians of various denominations, to Jews, to Muslims.[65] In the church's 2017 annual report, over 60 volunteers were engaged in its programmatic work.[66]

4.2.2 Openness

Keeping the church open is central to the mission of the OKE and, on a basic level, means that that church space remains open to visitors. Throughout the week, church doors remain unlocked, and the sanctuary is open for people to enter. The space is configured to have multiple uses and accommodate frequent visitors. When the OKE was established, the inside of the church was renovated with these goals in

63 Pohl-Patalong, "Kirche bei neuen Gelegenheiten," 204.

64 Jan Hermelink, "Pfarrberuf und Pfarramt," in *Handbuch für Kirchen- und Gemeindeentwicklung*, ed. Ralph Kunz and Thomas Schlag (Neukirchener Theologie, 2014). In addition, professional ministry positions have become more diverse, demanding a wider range of skills from clergy. Clergy are expected to be able to fulfill more and diverse tasks and more leadership responsibilities rest on volunteers.

65 Muslim volunteers are often refugees or asylum-seekers who have participated in Projekt DA-SEIN or similar programs.

66 Bahnhofkirche Zürich, *Jahresbericht 2018* (reformiert_katholisch: Kirchen im Kanton Zürich, 2019), 9, 11. This reliance on volunteers is even more pronounced in other Swiss City Churches. The Offene Kirche Bern recorded 338 volunteers in 2018. Of these, 65 volunteers worked in "presence ministry" (*Präsenzdienst*), to staff the church when it is open. The church's ministry of presence kept the church open for 4,134 hours in 2018 (for 42,917 visitors; in all over 68,000 people took part in some program or visited the church in 2018).

mind: most of the pews were removed and replaced with chairs, the floors were leveled, restrooms were added, and the north entrance was converted into a café.

At a missional level, the church is open to all people regardless of religious beliefs, church affiliation, or social and legal status, and this reflects the OKE's commitment to addressing the spiritual, cultural, and social concerns of all people of Basel. In the 2012 mission statement (*Grundsatzpapier*) this openness is explained in terms of an aim to welcome all people: "Men and women, singles, pairs, and families, different sexual orientations and life paths, different religious and non-religious backgrounds – all of these belong to life, enrich humanity and expand and open the space of the church."[67] The OKE is open to the diversity of people, concerns, and interests in the city of Basel and is committed to being a place for all people in the city.

Openness can also be understood as accessibility. The physical building of the OKE is accessible to people and the church seeks to make its religious offerings accessible to different people and beliefs. An openness to social and political realities in the city and its wider population is also a characteristic of public theology, which puts religion in conversation with social, cultural, and political issues.[68] As Swiss theologian Thomas Schlag writes, public theology is less a specific ideology and more an attempt to take seriously the complexity of the theological-social-ethical realities in political, economic, and individual spheres.[69] In order to engage this complexity, public theology also develops language that is accessible to people outside of the Christian tradition.[70] More accessible language addresses common concerns across a population, such as the entire population of a city, more directly and broadly. South African public theologian John de Gruchy defines seven aspects of public theology for churches to consider, including developing language for people both inside and outside of the church.[71] The OKE's mission statements, while using some religious terms, strive to broaden their language and to connect to spiritual, social, and political concerns, regardless of religious context.[72]

The OKE's openness extends beyond physical and spiritual openness. It also includes openness to life events, moods, perspectives, and emotions. These affective

67 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, *Grundsatzpapier*.

68 Thomas Schlag, "Öffentliche Kirche," in *Handbuch für Kirchen- und Gemeindeentwicklung*, ed. Ralph Kunz and Thomas Schlag (Neukirchener Theologie, 2014), 180.

69 Schlag, "Öffentliche Kirche."

70 Schlag, "Öffentliche Kirche," 181.

71 John de Gruchy, "Public Theology as Christian Witness: Exploring the Genre," *International Journal of Public Theology* 1, no. 1 (2007), https://doi.org/10.1163/156973207x194466. Other aspects of public theology, according to Gruchy, are having knowledge about public issues, prioritizing those who are marginalized, and cultivating a lived experience of God.

72 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, *Die Grundsätze der Offenen Kirche Elisabethen*; Offene Kirche Elisabethen, *Grundsatzpapier*.

experiences are described in some OKE contexts with the term "ambivalence." For example, the 2012 *Grundsatzpapier* begins:

> Life is shaped by ambivalence: celebration and dance next to mourning and suffering. Sickness and healing, laughing and crying – an abundance of feelings, experiences and situations. This abundance of life has a place in the Offene Kirche Elisabethen, in events, celebrations, in conversations, and in spiritual care, on different occasions.[73]

Ambivalence refers to the range of emotions that animate a life, such as joy, grief, confusion, delight. These experiences of mixed or conflicting feelings can exist side-by-side. Ambivalence, in this context, means welcoming what is present, whether grief or celebration, laughing or crying.[74] It does not necessarily seek resolution but sees these affective associations as reflecting the abundance and complexity of life and seeks to create space for all of it. Ambivalence is open to contradictions, discomfort, and conflicting experiences and feelings. Here, ambivalence is understood not in negative terms, as the inability to make a choice, but as a necessary place of tension, especially when diverse people and experiences meet and interact, such as in convivial encounters.

4.2.3 Convivence

The 1994 mission statement (*Grundsatzpapier*) of the OKE notes that the church wants to listen to the people's concerns and what is important to them. Instead of founding a church parish, it will be a "low threshold" church that practices hospitality and is a place where groups can meet with their social, cultural, and religious concerns and learn together with their differences.[75] The statement further describes its mission as a "learning mutual process" where all participants co-create and contribute. For the OKE, its missional focus is the population of the city, Christian or otherwise. Instead of a program of evangelization and changing the other, the OKE focuses on building communities across difference.

This perspective draws from theologian Theo Sundermeier's "hermeneutic of difference" and his related concept of convivence. Convivence (*convivéncia* in Spanish

73 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, *Grundsatzpapier*.

74 The theme of ambivalence is reflected in two biblical verses at the beginning the mission statement. The first verse is from the Gospel of John; "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10 NRSV). The second verse is from Proverbs (an edited version of Proverbs 9:1–6 NRSV). "Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars. She has also set her table and calls, come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed, and live and walk in the way of insight."

75 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, *Die Grundsätze der Offenen Kirche Elisabethen*.

and *Konvivenz* in German) is a practice of creating community with others instead of for others.[76] Historically, *convivéncia* referred to the living together of different religions in medieval Spain.[77] The term was used contemporarily in liberation theology and means "living with others"; it "emphasizes the priority of practice over theory and prefers experience over insight."[78] Convivence can be understood as being together in communities of learning, helping, and celebrating that engage in ordinary activities of living in community. This central concept of living together focuses on everyday activities and celebrations. Social scientists Magdalena Nowicka and Steven Vertovec, who explored how conviviality is understood in a variety of academic disciplines, write: "Based on the Latin roots for 'with' and 'living,' the term 'conviviality' has long been associated with sociable, friendly and festive traits."[79] Through shared experiences, the goal is to participate in equal contributions of learned and lived knowledge.

Theological conviviality is described by Sundermeier's "hermeneutic of difference," also known as an "intercultural hermeneutic."[80] Sundermeier's use of convivence grows out of this hermeneutic and reframes mission away from textual understandings. Instead, he outlines an understanding of the other that evolves out of mutual respect, encounter, and learning.[81] This hermeneutic is not about understanding but about being mutually changed. Sundermeier's hermeneutic is grounded in experiences of the common life; it is grounded not in seeking knowledge about the other, but in being challenged, questioned, and enriched by the other.[82] Sundermeier understands convivence as being *with* people, not *for* people. Theologian Richard Bliese describes Sundermeier's convivence as being open to all people, even outside of the Christian church. "The church, for Sundermeier, should open up its invitation to the banquet table of the Lord – even to non-Christians – because this is the very nature of the eschatological meal."[83] The OKE reflects this willingness to embrace a diversity of people as well as the ambivalences and challenges of being church "with others."

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76 Sundermeier and Küster, *Konvivenz und Differenz*.

77 Jewish Museum, *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (Braziller, 1992).

78 Bliese, "Convivenz and Globalization," 235.

79 Magdalena Nowicka and Steven Vertovec, "Comparing Convivialities: Dreams and Realities of Living-with-Difference," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17, no. 4 (2014): 341, https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549413510414.

80 Theo Sundermeier, *Den Fremden verstehen: Eine praktische Hermeneutik*, Sammlung Vandenhoeck (Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1996), 183.

81 Sundermeier, *Den Fremden verstehen*; David W. Congdon, "Emancipatory Intercultural Hermeneutics: Interpreting Theo Sundermeier's Differenzhermeneutik," *Mission Studies* 33, no. 2 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1163/15733831-12341444.

82 Congdon, "Emancipatory Intercultural Hermeneutics," 2.

83 Bliese, "Convivenz and Globalization," 237.

In particular, the 1994 mission statement (*Grundsatzpapier*) draws a contrast between Sundermeier's model of church "with others" and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's model of church "for others." It states that the Offene Kirche Elisabethen "is not a church for others (Dietrich Bonhoeffer), but instead a church with others. The church does not work *for* those in need, but *with* those in need."[84] In the aftermath of the Second World War, churches took up an idea, first articulated by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, that the church should shift its focus from converting non-believers to serving others.[85] Bonhoeffer writes in *Letters and Papers from Prison*: "The Church is the Church only when it exists for others…The Church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell men of every calling what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others."[86] This theology, known as Pro-Existence, advocated for a church for others, instead of a church oriented exclusively towards its members. This shift to Pro-Existence, or working "for others," was a well-intentioned corrective but set up a hierarchical dynamic that precluded solidarity, reciprocity, and collaboration between communities. Sundermeier offered an alternative, known as the Con-Existence model and based on conviviality, which shifted the focus to working and living with others.[87]

Outside of the church, convivence is recognized as critical to civil society, especially through shared interactions and practices in cities where there are high levels of diversity. These everyday encounters of convivence bring people together without the goal of changing something, fixing something, or becoming something different. Instead, everyday interactions build a sense of community. Sociologists found,

84 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, *Die Grundsätze der Offenen Kirche Elisabethen*.

85 Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer Als Öffentlicher Theologe," *Evangelische Theologie* 69, no. 5 (2009), https://doi.org/10.14315/evth-2009-69-5-329; Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Öffentliche Kirche in Den Herausforderungen Der Zeit," *Evangelische Theologie* 79, no. 1 (2019), https://doi.org/10.14315/evth-2019-790104. The relevance of the political and social engagement of the church took on a new urgency in the wake of World War II. Particularly in the German-speaking world (understood as Germany, Austria, and the German-speaking parts of Switzerland), the legacy of the German church's overwhelming silence in the face of the Third Reich weighed heavily on post-war theology. The work of theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was killed for his involvement in the July 20, 1944, attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler, addressed the need for the church to take on greater responsibility in the world. His theology, known as Pro-Existence, advocated for a church for others, instead of for the church and its members exclusively. This focus on the world beyond the church, as well as Bonhoeffer's political actions, which were motivated by his religious convictions, and his subsequent murder, led many theologians to insist that after Bonhoeffer there could no longer be an apolitical church or theologies.

86 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. Reginald Fuller, rev. Frank Clarke et al., 3rd ed. (SCM Press Ltd, 1967).

87 Sundermeier and Küster, *Konvivenz und Differenz*.

in their research in diverse communities in the U.K., that in the practice of convivence, "the elective coming together of often ethnically diverse others, over time, in places, to do leisure 'things' meant these organizations could work as generative spaces of social interaction and shared practice through and in contexts of urban difference."[88] This definition of conviviality could be a descriptor of the work of the OKE, including Projekt DA-SEIN. In offering a space that is open to people of different religious and social backgrounds, the OKE creates possibilities for everyday, generative connections.

4.3 Projekt DA-SEIN

In 2014, the Offene Kirche Elisabethen launched Projekt DA-SEIN, an outreach program for recently arrived asylum-seekers and refugees.[89] At that time, the church provided a wide range of spiritual and cultural offerings while recognizing a need to grow their social offerings. Concurrently, migration became a culturally salient phenomenon in Basel and throughout Europe, with an increase in asylum-seeking to Europe. The OKE identified those who had recently arrived and applied for asylum as part of the Basel community and, as a church committed to being open to all members of the local population, it saw a need to include asylum-seekers in their outreach and programming.

The creation of Projekt DA-SEIN is both a reflection of the church's openness to all people in Basel and part of a larger religious response to the social and political realities of migration. Many religious denominations and organizations responded to the increase in migration at that time. Among Christian churches, this response was motivated by an emphasis on the importance of service to those in need and a theological resonance with themes of migration, exile, and loss.[90] As a City Church committed to the social, cultural, and religious life of Basel, the OKE was especially poised to respond to this shift in migration with theological and social offerings.

In particular, the OKE response to those who left their homes and arrived in Basel as asylum-seekers was the creation of Projekt DA-SEIN. When designing the program, instead of creating a specific programmatic structure, the leadership team opted to create a more open space of encounter. The project is largely unstructured

88 Sarah Neal et al., "Community and Conviviality? Informal Social Life in Multicultural Places," *Sociology* 53, no. 1 (2019): 69, https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038518763518.

89 Anette Stade, DA-SEIN: *Ankommen, Dabeisein, Mitgestalten – Ein Angebot für Asylsuchende in Basel* (KAITO; Im Auftrag der Christoph Merian Stiftung CMS und der Offene Kirche Elisabethen (OKE), 2014). The translation of the document title reads: "DA-SEIN: Arrive, be together, and create together – an offering for asylum-seekers in Basel."

90 For more information about Christian responses to migration, exile, and loss, see Chapter 2, section 2.3.3.

and seeks to go beyond meeting basic needs; instead it draws on the church's theology to prioritize building community. The program is designed to offer a space of convivial gathering where affective encounters might occur, where learning together might be prioritized, and where diverse experiences might be welcomed despite differences and challenges. In doing this, Projekt DA-SEIN intends to create a place for refugees and asylum-seekers to gather and experience a sense of home in Basel. The description on the Offene Kirche Elisabethen website states: "In the program DA-SEIN, refugees can find a piece of home away from home."[91] While home is not explicitly defined at Projekt DA-SEIN, Chapter 6 considers how aspects of the Offene Kirche Elisabethen and Projekt DA-SEIN reflect social and theological elements of home that shape the "piece of home" offered for asylum-seekers. The church's unique combination of theological and social commitments, the influence of local Swiss values, and the personal experiences brought by volunteers and staff offer a particular expression of home at Projekt DA-SEIN.

During my time at the program, asylum-seekers arrived from a range of countries, with the two largest groups being from Afghanistan and Eritrea. There were also asylum-seekers from Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Tibet, Sudan, Nigeria, Turkey, and other countries. The majority were men under the age of 30, but there were also women, children, and older men. The OKE also developed two parallel programs to Projekt DA-SEIN, mirroring the goal of connecting asylum-seekers and Swiss residents of Basel. Projekt JUNG-SEIN targeted asylum-seekers and refugees between the ages of 18 and 25, with the specific goal of connecting them with peers in the Swiss community. This program occurred on Friday and Saturday afternoons and had more programmatic elements, including sports and cultural events. It lost funding in the fall of 2018 and participants were absorbed into the Projekt DA-SEIN program. In the spring of 2018, Projekt FRAU-SEIN was launched. It met one day a week and was open only to women. The leadership of Projekt DA-SEIN felt this program was important, as many women did not feel comfortable attending the majority-male Projekt DA-SEIN. Attendance was lower at Projekt FRAU-SEIN and included more children, as women were encouraged to bring them. The focus reflected convivial goals while also involving more organized activities, such as conversation circles, cooking demonstrations, and events like yoga or bringing children to the local swimming pool.

4.4 An Open Church in Basel

The Offene Kirche Elisabethen occupies a unique place in the city of Basel. It is rooted in the historic Evangelical-Reformed and Roman Catholic churches of Basel and it

91 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, "Die Offene Kirche Elisabethen (OKE)."

occupies the first Reformed church built in Basel after the Reformation – this church was financed by Christoph Merian, who was from a prominent aristocratic family in Basel.[92] Yet, in the face of changing demographics and membership patterns, and with the church building largely unoccupied, the OKE was established in the 1990s as a place of welcome for all members of the Basel community. Inspired by the City Church movement in Europe, Hansruedi Felix, the founder of the OKE, created a vision for an "open church" that would bring together different people and cultures with religious and secular offerings.[93] The OKE creates a space that is beyond distinct church membership, and it even calls itself post-denominational. It centers openness in physical spaces, religious affiliations, and affective experiences. Openness and convivial interactions characterize many of the OKE's programs and offerings. In the case of Projekt DA-SEIN, asylum-seekers who live in and around Basel are invited to be together at the church and learn from and with one another and volunteers. Everyday activities, such as playing games, sharing meals, and engaging in conversation, are the heart of Projekt DA-SEIN and are more important than programmatic elements. This openness and this convivial structure make room for affective experiences that build connections between people and places. In Chapter 6, I will explore how Projekt DA-SEIN builds on the OKE's commitments to openness and convivence to offer a "piece of home" to asylum-seekers in Basel.

92 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, "Offene Kirche Elisabethen Geschichte."

93 Felix, "Der Anfang der Offenen Kirche Elisabethen."

5. Considerations on Research with Asylum-Seekers

This book is grounded in my ethnographic research with asylum-seekers at Projekt DA-SEIN. This ethnography involved a year of recording participant observations, over 75 formal and informal interviews, and many hours of being present, playing games, having conversations, and being attentive to the routines and concerns of Projekt DA-SEIN and the asylum-seekers who participate in the program. Collecting, recording, analyzing, and interpreting the data is a complex task. It requires skill in empirical methods as well as nimbleness and responsiveness to the needs of the research and the dynamic relationships between the researcher, the participants, and the field site. My ethnographic method was responsive to the people and circumstances at Projekt DA-SEIN that were part of my research. The goal of an ethnographic project is to create a "thick description" of a cultural group, in this case asylum-seekers at Projekt DA-SEIN. I sought to understand how Projekt DA-SEIN operates and how aspects of home are experienced, discussed, and thematized at the program. Because "thick descriptions" are both descriptive and interpretive, they represent the observed community from the perspective of both the participant and the researcher.[1] As John W. Creswell writes, "[An ethnography] is a holistic cultural portrait of the group that incorporates the views of the participants (emic) as well as the views of the researcher (etic)."[2] While my method prioritized the experiences of the program participants, it also accounted for the role and impact of the researcher. This is a relational ethnography that grounds research in relationships; prioritizes listening and presence alongside gathering data; and considers the social, political, and interpersonal dynamics of research. I draw on three tools to develop this model of relational ethnography: migration research, reflexivity, and collaborative inquiry.

Migration research provides protocols for working with vulnerable and marginal populations that account for their agency, preferences, and participation in the project. Migration research advocates for practicing care and deference when

1 John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Sage Publications, 2007), 217.

2 Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 72. See also: Elizabeth A. Munz, "Ethnographic Interview," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, ed. Mike Allen (SAGE Publications, 2017), 455–57, https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483381411.

conducting research with migrant populations, going slowly, shifting research approaches, and abandoning lines of inquiry depending on circumstances and impact. Reflexivity is an ongoing consideration of how the researcher's perceptions and presence impact the project, and it makes the researcher's involvement and influence more explicit.[3] The data of ethnographic inquiry is mediated by the perspectives, interests, and questions of the researcher. The researcher's social and personal background, academic training, beliefs, and motivations influence how a research project is approached, what questions are asked, and how answers are interpreted. The practice of reflexivity sheds light on the assumptions a researcher brings, the gaps in their knowledge, and their possible misunderstandings and even failures. Collaborative inquiry considers the relationship between and the interactions of researcher and participant as factors that contribute to the resulting data. It challenges the assumed hierarchy of researcher and research subject in order to highlight the ways knowledge is co-produced. It also considers how research subjects shape ethnographic data through their perspectives and reflections as well as how their knowledge is communicated, heard, recorded, and received. Establishing a relationship between researcher and participant both facilitates the research and impacts the information and data collected. Drawing on these three threads, this chapter describes a relational ethnographic approach, how it shaped my project and resulting data, and its relevance to future practical theological projects.

5.1 Research in the Context of Migration

Working across languages, cultures, and socio-economic groups adds urgency and complexity to a research project. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, "[R]esearch is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions."[4] These conditions are heightened when working with marginal and vulnerable populations and in situations with distinct and institutionalized power imbalances. Techniques of ethnographic research must deeply consider what is ethical, logistically possible, and appropriate for the larger context of people's lives.

This ethnographic project was situated amid the concrete power dynamics of asylum-seeking and involved those in the vulnerable circumstance of applying for asylum. These circumstances could not be treated merely as a context for the data

3 To see an example of how reflexivity is iterative and can change research design, see: Jun Li, "Ethical Challenges in Participant Observation: A Reflection on Ethnographic Fieldwork," *The Qualitative Report* 13, no. 1 (1 March 2008), https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1608.

4 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Zed Books, 1999), 5.

and research methods, for they constituted the lived reality that framed all my interactions with the asylum-seekers. Often when working with marginalized communities, the interactions of researcher and participant are not confined to the research topic. I knew about the challenges of the participants' asylum applications, about their families' health and well-being, about what they once were, and about what they hoped to become. As migration scholars Ilse van Liempt and Veronika Bilger write in *The Ethics of Migration Research Methodology*, "After all, the position of researcher vis-a-vis refugees may not be so different from that of a humanitarian field worker."[5] Asylum-seekers interact with many people, from staff at migration offices and non-profits to curious citizens wanting to learn about their stories for school projects or radio programs. Each of these interactions may be motivated by a different goal but may not appear different to the asylum-seeker who is fielding (often repeated) questions about their reasons for fleeing or their experiences adapting to the country where they have arrived. My participation was not always measurably different from that of other volunteers.

I was not simply a researcher; I was a German teacher, confidant, game partner, and fellow cook. Immersing myself in the context of my research by volunteering at Projekt DA-SEIN meant that I was a part of a program dedicated to creating relationships across difference. The experience of entering the Projekt DA-SEIN space, either in the garden are or the kitchen, was, characterized by arriving and entering a different kind of place. As I put down my backpack, took off my coat, and greeted the first people I saw, I transitioned to a different world, apart from the bustle of the city or the deadlines of my academic work. I entered a space that was not defined by transaction or accomplishment. Instead, it was defined by presence. Simply showing up was the work. In this way, everyone who participated was a central part of the program. Aside from people who came to offer one-time workshops or help with special events, volunteers and participants co-created a space of learning, exchange, and community-building. Each person played a role in shaping the place of Projekt DA-SEIN, even while they occupied unique roles and had different goals for participating in the program.

For me, the most important factor in securing interviews was my relationship to the potential interview partner. Securing formal interviews grew out of my involvement with the program as a volunteer. By building relationships through regular participation, I was able to establish rapport, gain trust, and grow connections. I spent time hanging out and being with asylum-seekers at Projekt DA-SEIN, often holding my specific goal of understanding home loosely. My approach was to first

5 Veronika Bilger and Ilse van Liempt, "Introduction: Methodological and Ethical Concerns in Research with Vulnerable Migrants," in *The Ethics of Migration Research Methodology: Dealing with Vulnerable Immigrants*, ed. Ilse van Liempt and Veronika Bilger, eds., (Sussex Academic, 2009), 5, https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.18427157.4.

get to know participants and build connections. Trust is a key factor in any interview situation, and it is even more important in situations where interview partners occupy a marginal or vulnerable social status. Van Liempt and Bilger document the complexity of overcoming mistrust in their study of migrants who have experience smuggling. "Upon arrival, asylum hearings or restrictive regulations create a culture of suspicion that makes the migrants generally mistrustful again while being continuously mistrusted and intensively questioned from many sides themselves."[6] This culture of mistrust and constant questioning was evident in my work at Projekt DA-SEIN. Asylum-seekers are categorized by their country of origin, their reasons for fleeing, and the details of their journeys. This categorization occurs with bureaucratic institutions, NGOs and assistance programs, and curious individuals, including volunteers and visitors at Projekt DA-SEIN. Telling their stories is expected, and even required, due to their circumstances as asylum-seekers.

Thus, the stakes are very high for participating in interviews. When I raised the topic of interviews, responses included trepidation, nervousness, skepticism, frustration, and sadness. Often it was unclear if it was the interview itself or the content that evoked these affective responses. Stories about fleeing and seeking asylum are often embedded in trauma and connected to the pressures of the asylum process, and they serve as reminders of what has been lost. In addition, these stories are often personal, and the details of asylum-seekers' lives are already more public than those of other people's lives. Rarely am I asked to give reasons for why I have chosen to move or pursue a certain life path, and I am not repeatedly asked to recount my distressing life events. The external lens brought by interviewers is often focused on the lives and stories of those who have experienced loss, pain, and marginalization. Researchers, and curious individuals, can bring assumptions of entitlement to hear others' stories of pain, loss, and oppression. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, scholars of Indigenous and Ethnic Studies, argue that extracting and retelling "pain narratives" from marginal communities can reinforce hierarchies and reduce asylum-seekers to objects of curiosity.[7] There is a balance in the desire to both engage non-dominant perspectives and honor the agency and dignity of the holder of the story.

At my volunteer orientation, I was cautioned against asking directly about asylum-seekers' journeys to Switzerland and their reasons for leaving.[8] This line of

6 Veronika Bilger and Ilse van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas in Research among Smuggled Migrants," in *The Ethics of Migration Research Methodology: Dealing with Vulnerable Immigrants*, ed. Ilse van Liempt and Veronika Bilger (Sussex Academic, 2009), 122, https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.18427157.9.

7 Eve Tuck and K. W. Yang, "R-Words: Refusing Research," in *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, ed. Django Paris and Maisha T. Winn (Sage Publications, 2014), 223, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781544329611.n12.

8 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, February 8, 2018: 20180208_DA-SEIN_v1_PO, Pos. 3.

questioning is potentially unwelcome to asylum-seekers for several reasons. First, these topics are likely to include traumatic memories they may not wish to tell. Fleeing as a traumatic event is noted by psychotherapists and art therapists who worked with volunteers and asylum-seekers. Second, the stories of why and how asylum-seekers fled must be told repeatedly in official asylum interviews. These stories must be deemed "believable" and must sufficiently meet asylum requirements in order to justify their asylum claims.[9] This creates a pressure to tell these stories correctly in the eyes of government decision makers.[10] There is a tension between the marginality of asylum-seeking and the hyper-focus on the refugee experience in the country where they are applying for asylum. Asylum-seekers are both relegated to the margins and subjected to scrutiny through bureaucratic and social systems. Third, curious journalists and individuals often probe, out of personal interest and curiosity about the other, for stories of fleeing. During my time as a volunteer at Projekt DA-SEIN, program participants were asked to share their stories for a radio program, for a student's school project, and for the purpose of documenting the program's work as part of its funding application.

Despite these cautions and my attentiveness to not ask directly about fleeing, stories about why asylum-seekers left, the details of their journeys, and their asylum experiences in Switzerland often came up in conversations. During my first day as a volunteer, I spoke at length with an asylum-seeker from Afghanistan who shared the story of his journey to Switzerland, including crossing the Mediterranean by boat from Turkey to Greece.[11] Several men from Eritrea and Nigeria talked about the brutality they endured in Libya and the terror of crossing the Mediterranean to Italy in overcrowded boats.[12] In addition, asylum-seekers often shared reasons for fleeing – including military conscription, war, and limited opportunities for education and work. These stories gave me additional information about what home could or could not provide. Yet, I did not feel that these were my stories to share, and I considered

9 Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk, "Weiterbildungskurs zum Thema Asylverfahren."

10 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, December 11, 2018: 20181211_21AS_FRAU-SEIN_II, Pos. 3. Some asylum-seekers declined interviews with me because they were focused on their official interviews. One woman told me she was unwilling to do an interview because talking about her "Heimatsland" would be too stressful. In addition, she had been contacted for her second interview but had not yet responded because she was so anxious about the prospect of the interview.

11 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, February 15, 2018: 20180215_2AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 11.

12 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, March 15, 2018: 20180315_18AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 1; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 6, 2018: 20180906_15AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 19–20; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, October 29, 2018: 20181029_8AS_IN, Pos. 102–50.

these narratives as having been shared in the context of vulnerability, trust, and relationship-building.

These examples illustrate the delicate ethical considerations of conducting research in the context of migration. Due to the precarious legal, emotional, and physical situation of many asylum-seekers, these ethical considerations are necessary even when conversations and interactions appear mundane. Asylum-seekers' lives, including access to basic resources, can be dramatically impacted by asylum decisions as well as by the perspectives of the community where they arrive. To account for the ethical dimensions of power and agency, researchers often use flexible and adaptive methods when building relationships with vulnerable populations. Reflexivity is one corrective that has emerged to address the ways imbalances between researcher and research subject may cause harm, further colonial and racist agendas, and lack empathy and consideration for the precarious personal and systemic circumstances that impact individual lives.[13]

5.2 Participant Observation

I spent 12 months (from February 2018 to January 2019) as a volunteer at Projekt DA-SEIN observing and recording the rhythms of the program and the interactions between staff, volunteers, and asylum-seekers. Projekt DA-SEIN is built on the participation of both asylum-seekers and Swiss volunteers. It is not primarily a service program, but an opportunity for different communities in Basel to interact, with a parallel goal of assisting asylum-seekers in finding connection and a sense of home in Basel. Volunteers not only assist with practical aspects of running the program, but also, more significantly, build relationships through daily interactions with program participants. By becoming a volunteer, I took on the role of participant while also enacting my role as researcher. In ethnographic parlance, I engaged as a participant-observer, participating in the community while also researching and collecting data on what I observed and experienced. I was both a member of the program, participating in daily tasks and interactions, and a researcher, noting and recording my observations.[14] While this created some tension, I primarily focused externally on my role as a volunteer while at the program. An observer can never *not* be present, even while minimizing their involvement. I occasionally jotted down

13 James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, 13th ed., A School of American Research Advanced Seminar (University of California Press, 2005). Also: Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

14 There is a necessary balance between participation and observation in any study. If the researcher becomes overly identified or invested in the field, they can lose the necessary distance for analysis and reflection. If the researcher maintains too much distance, there is a risk of not being close enough for accurate observations and understanding.

thoughts or mentally noted something I wanted to remember. After my volunteer shifts, I recorded my observations as field notes. At the beginning of my time as a volunteer at the program, I spent time learning the basics of the program and how things operated, introducing myself to people, and sharing stories.

As I became a familiar presence, I settled into the rhythms and found myself experiencing the program not only as a researcher and volunteer, but also as a community member. My participant observations took place primarily during my weekly volunteer sessions. As a volunteer I did not have a particular role or assignment while I was there. I engaged in conversation; played games; helped with German homework; shopped for, prepped, and cooked the daily meal; shared meals, snacks, and tea; helped with maintenance and cleaning; worked on projects, including art and sewing projects; discussed upcoming events; played with children; and participated in *Input Sessions*, short teaching sessions about a topic relevant to life in Switzerland for asylum-seekers. In addition, I conducted participant observation during special events such as the seasonal festivals hosted by the program. Both the summer and fall festivals took place while I was there and, at the fall festival, I led a workshop around the topic of home. I also participated in outings organized by Projekt DA-SEIN, including hiking excursions and attending local cultural events. I attended monthly volunteer meetings, trainings, and planning sessions, where I conducted participant observations. I sometimes met refugees and asylum-seekers informally, either because we encountered each other in Basel or because we made plans to attend local events together, such as the Swiss National Day celebration.

Projekt DA-SEIN is unstructured, and the flow of each day is impacted by who shows up, what was happening in their lives, and more mundane factors such as weather, available food, and cultural, religious, or social events. This "hanging out" or "being there" quality is a defining feature of the program, as reflected in the program's name: *DA-SEIN*.[15] This quality of hanging out became an important framework within my research, as it allowed me to integrate observations and participation and to build relationship. As I moved from participant observation to interviews, the relational aspects of building rapport and being with people in unstructured ways set the stage for how I engaged in formal interviews. I spent time talking and being with over 50 asylum-seekers (that I could identify by name) during my year volunteering at Projekt DA-SEIN. These conversations and interactions helped me develop a deeper understanding of the context of asylum-seeking, build relationships that led to interviews, and shape questions that I asked in interviews.

My goal was to collect data in order to accurately document the community, yet I also brought my own perspectives, experiences, and background to the research project. These included sensitizing concepts of home developed through my

15 Graeme Rodgers "'Hanging Out' with Forced Migrants: Methodological and Ethical Challenges," *Forced Migration Review* 21 (2004): 48.

research, my political and social views on migration, and my own experiences of home and migration. My sense of home is influenced by my family of origin and my experience of moving every few years throughout my childhood. As the daughter of a U.S. Army officer, I lived in both the U.S. and Germany during the Cold War and confronted the physical and political realities of borders and migration on a daily basis.

Therefore, my interviews and conversations about home took place in a context where both I and the asylum-seekers were migrants. I am not Swiss, I had grown up elsewhere, and I had only a temporary residence permit. (My permit, L, was for a short-term, one-year stay.) Because of the context of our interactions, even without asking about home, we often discussed country of origin, reasons for being in Switzerland, and stories of family. In addition, as newcomers, we often shared our impressions of Switzerland, our challenges with the local language and the cost of living, our life in the countries we left, and when we might go back. Asylum-seekers asked me about home or brought up the topic, unprompted by me. Unlike Swiss volunteers, these conversations assumed a shared context of being away from home. This shared context was supported by the environment of Projekt DA-SEIN, where different backgrounds were common.

Yet, our contexts of migration differed in significant ways. Any research, but especially one with marginalized populations, must contend with issues of power. I was aware of my own position of privilege on several levels, including my migration status and the benefits the interview would afford me in my goal of completing my doctoral dissertation. I am a woman of European descent with an American passport and a college degree. I am fluent in English and German and grew up with relative personal security for myself and my family. While I also jumped through numerous hoops to secure my one-year visa to live and study in Switzerland, my interactions with and reliance on the Swiss migration office were vastly different than the interactions and reliance of those applying for asylum. I could reasonably expect to maintain basic freedoms, economic security, and choices in my life, regardless of the decision of the migration authorities. In addition, I had language, economic, educational, and political capital to influence and advocate for myself to these authorities.

Reflexivity assumes that data is interpreted differently by different people, depending on their backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, and commitments.[16] It considers the role of the researcher in the data and research context. Someone with different characteristics may receive and interpret the data differently. In *Qualitative Data Analysis*, Ian Dey explains the importance of reflecting on the role and context of the researcher:

16 Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 151.

> [I]t is often essential to regard the researcher as part of the context being studied. This is obviously relevant in interviews, where the respondent is responding to some sort of stimulus on the part of the interviewer. It is also relevant in observational research where the researcher interacts socially with the subjects of the study. How subjects perceive and respond to the observer can then have a significant effect on what they say or do. The researcher's own actions and perceptions therefore become part of the social interaction, and need to be observed and analysed as such.[17]

My interactions with asylum-seekers at Projekt DA-SEIN impacted my research as much as the questions I asked. Had we interacted in a more formal setting, such as a legal aid office or a training school, our interactions and the data collected would likely have been different. Or if another program volunteer, such as a Swiss citizen or a staff member, engaged in this research, perceptions by asylum-seekers as well as the quality of interactions would also have differed. My presence at Projekt DA-SEIN as a scholar from the United States influenced the research project. Asylum-seekers perceived me in certain ways based on my migration history, language ability, and interpersonal dynamics, and their responses reflected assumptions or perspectives about me.

Ethnography relies heavily on the researcher's participation, including their positions, viewpoints, and social location. This reflexivity is an ongoing process of self-reflection that aims to understand how social location, assumptions, preferences, and perspectives influence the research process and resultant data.[18] It seeks to make implicit motivations, beliefs, and biases more explicit.[19] As an ethical practice in research, reflexivity asks who benefits from the research and how as well as how the data is organized and why.[20] When organizing and presenting

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17 Ian *Dey, Qualitative Data Analysis: A User-Friendly Guide for Social Scientists* (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 116.

18 Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 218.

19 Tone S. Kaufman, "Normativity as Pitfall or Ally?," *Ecclesial Practices* 2, no. 1 (2015): 92–93, https://doi.org/10.1163/22144471-00201006. As Kaufman writes: "I propose that attending to precisely reflexivity might change our initial, naïve normativity from an implicit to an explicit normativity."

20 For an exploration of reflexivity as ethics, see: Boguisa Temple, "Watch Your Tongue: Issues in Translation and Cross-Cultural Research," *Sociology* 31, no. 3 (1997): 607–18, https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038597031003016; Eve Tuck and K. W. Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 (2012), https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630; Marilys Guillemin and Lynn Gillam, "Ethics, Reflexivity, and 'Ethically Important Moments' in Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (2004): 261–80, https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403262360; Lindsay Baker et al., "Recognizing and Responding to Ethically Important Moments in Qualitative Research," *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* 8, no. 4 (2016): 1, https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-16-00384.

research, the researcher acts as a translator, making sense out of empirical data in conversation with relevant theories. This translation and organization occur within the complexity of the researcher's own experiences and assumptions. For me, this included my own experiences of home and migration, a sensitizing concept of home, my theological and sociological training, and my interactions with asylum-seeking at Projekt DA-SEIN.

5.3 Interviews

I conducted two types of interviews in my research – formal and informal. Formal interviews were scheduled, took place one-on-one, and followed a standard series of questions. These interviews were arranged during my time at the program, scheduled in collaboration with the interview participants, and conducted with a common set of questions and methods. Informal interviews occurred during unscheduled interactions, could involve multiple people, and did not follow a standard set of questions. These interviews often occurred during volunteer shifts and were sometimes revisited or picked up again at later meetings.

I conducted 67 informal interviews with 44 individuals, including asylum-seekers and refugees (32), volunteers (4), and staff (8). The 55 informal interviews with asylum-seekers represented 32 people, including 5 women and 27 men, ranging in age from 21 to over 50.[21] The religious backgrounds of those I interviewed were Islamic (both Sunni and Shi'a), Orthodox Christian, Catholic, Alevite, and atheist or agnostic. Their countries of origin were Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tibet, Turkey, Eritrea, Sudan, Nigeria, and Algeria. Their residency status was usually that of an "N" or "F" visa, but there was at least one person with a "B" visa and one person who was not eligible for a residency permit due to the Dublin accord.[22] Some asylum-seekers I interviewed or spoke with throughout the year started with "N"

21 In both my formal and informal interviews, I spoke with a greater number of men than women. This was due to several factors. First, more men than women applied for asylum in Switzerland. These proportionally fewer women were less likely to attend Projekt DA-SEIN. The reasons for this were cultural as well as circumstantial. Many women had more household and childcare responsibilities, which made them less available. In addition, when I arrived in February, a parallel program targeting women opened at the Offene Kirche Elisabethen on another day of the week. Part of the reason for opening this parallel program was that women did not always feel comfortable or welcome by men who attended the program, particularly those from the same cultural or national backgrounds. This was relayed to me by at least one woman I spoke with. In addition, this reasoning was given during an Input Session about gender relations. Women felt uncomfortable due to comments about their dress or other interactions, therefore they created a day specifically for women.

22 For more on the designations of these visas, see Chapter 3, section 3.4.

visas and during my time there received a response to their asylum application, which was usually a negative decision or an "F" visa. Because of limited opportunities for employment and schooling and the need to learn German, Projekt DA-SEIN attracted a proportionally larger number of asylum-seekers with "N" permits or recently acquired "F" permits (usually these people had been in Switzerland three or fewer years). My research, including formal and informal interviews, focused on those in the early stages of the asylum process.

Informal interviews often occurred during volunteer shifts at the program or related events. There was ample space to sit at tables, indoors or outdoors, or in separate corners in order to converse and share stories. Informal interviews were sometimes interrupted by planned events or meals, invitations to play games or help with German, or being joined by other program participants. At the same time, the unstructured nature of these conversations meant they could stretch out and cover multiple topics. Other times informal interviews occurred at program events or at scheduled or unscheduled encounters outside of the program. Walking, swimming, or hanging out often takes place at the Rhine River, a central and popular physical and social center of Basel, and this was a common place where both formal and informal interviews occurred.

I conducted 16 formal interviews with 15 different people: 8 asylum-seekers, 4 volunteers, and 2 staff members of Projekt DA-SEIN. I selected interview participants who had some involvement in the Projekt DA-SEIN program and were at an early stage in the asylum process, with either "N" or "F" permits. Five had "N" permits and were either waiting for an initial asylum decision or had received a negative initial decision (of the five, one had received a negative decision). Three interviewees had an "F" permit, which grants an individual provisional residence even when they have been denied formal refugee status. In addition, I did not know the migration status of one interviewee, while another had started with an "N" permit and, during my time in Switzerland, was subsequently granted an "F" permit. I interviewed a diversity of participants based on categories of place of birth and/or ethnicity. The asylum-seekers were from Afghanistan (3), Eritrea (2), Syria (1), Pakistan (1), and Turkey (1). Their ages ranged from 21 to mid-30s, and all were men. Their religious backgrounds were Muslim, Orthodox Christian, or Alevite. Their current religiosity varied, with some following strict religious protocols and some being atheist or non-practicing. Most of them spoke more than one language, even before arriving in Switzerland, and their first languages were Kurdish, Uzbek, Persian, Tigrinya, Tigre, and Pashto.

My four formal interviews with program volunteers were with two women and two men, ranging in age from their early 20s to 80. While they all were born and grew up in Switzerland, two had migration backgrounds, including one who was a permanent resident (C-visa) and not a citizen of Switzerland. Their first languages were Swiss German, and they were also fluent in Standard German as a second language,

which was what the interviews were conducted in. One interviewee was Protestant Christian and the other three were Roman Catholic by background. Again, their current religiosity varied but they all expressed some continued connection to Christian practices and the church. They had volunteered at the program between one and two-and-a-half years.

5.3.1 Building Relationships

The interviews in my study purposefully grew out of the time I spent at the program talking, cooking, practicing German, and playing games. I did not begin my formal interviews until I had been a weekly volunteer at the program for five months. This initial period of learning about the program, hearing stories, and familiarizing myself with the background and cultures of participants was critical preparation for conducting interviews. This was especially true given the context of asylum-seeking, where building trust and rapport is especially critical. Migration scholars have noted the importance of taking time to show up and be part of migrants' contexts. Psychologist Joan E. Sieber's writing on ethics in empirical research argues: "Researchers who are unprepared to understand the culture of the refugees they seek to study and to gain their trust via relationships with trusted gatekeepers are quickly out of their depth – even in their own country."[23] From the viewpoints of migrants, even apparently familiar contexts may not be experienced as familiar. Their realities are shaped by their often precarious circumstances. Research and relationships are grounded in trust. This trust must exist between advisors, universities, research partners, and, most significantly, research participants. Even if the circumstances that separate individual experiences are difficult to reconcile, the act of presence centers relationships and experiences of mutuality.

In my research I became familiar with Projekt DA-SEIN and its participants by showing up, being present, and participating in the program. I built relationships, got to know some of the regular guests, and became a "regular" volunteer myself. I became familiar with the structure of the program and some of the reasons people attended. I gained knowledge about the refugee and asylum process, listened to the stories and experiences shared by asylum-seekers and volunteers, and participated in the daily life of the program. By becoming part of the daily life of the program, I built trust and established relationships. Without taking this time, I would not have established the rapport to engage in in-depth interviews. In addition, I would not have gained the knowledge I needed to approach my research participants with nuance and sensitivity. While some of my interview partners may have participated in

23 Joan E. Sieber, "Refugee Research: Strangers in a Strange Land," *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics* 4, no. 3 (2009): 1–2, https://doi.org/10.1525/jer.2009.4.3.1.2.

interviews with people they did not know as well, and while many did other interviews with some frequency; the content, tone, and results of the interviews I conducted were shaped by my involvement at Projekt DA-SEIN and the relationships I established at the program.

While this familiarity with the program and these established relationships enabled my interviews, the interviews were not without complications. As van Liempt and Bilger note, there can be different motivations for building relationships, and it is important to be aware of issues of power and other motivating factors, such as interviewees wanting to be friends or romantic partners or wanting legal help or advice.[24] If I had a sense that an individual wanted something from me, either directly or indirectly, it was preferable to avoid doing an interview with them. Navigating boundaries added complexity to my research methodology and demanded greater reflexivity regarding my own social location, assumptions, and perspectives. In my time at Projekt DA-SEIN, I wrestled with my own guilt and limitations in helping asylum-seekers. I struggled with a sense of responsibility to my interview partners, due to the unequal power and privilege in our relationship. I wanted to avoid the presumption that I was "using" their stories and these relationships only for my research goals. I raised this question at the volunteer supervision meeting I attended. The psychologist leading the session, as well as other volunteers, emphasized that being present and sharing stories are powerful ways to show up in another's life. Yet I often wondered if being present to their stories was enough, especially as I witnessed struggles with bureaucracy, language, and money.

In addition, stories of fleeing were embedded in the history of the countries they left. This included colonial implications in places like Afghanistan. Many of the circumstances under which asylum-seekers had to flee allow for advantages in my own life. As a man reflected about the situation in Syria, "There are advantages for everyone, well, not everyone, but for the powerful, when the war continues and when they can sell weapons and get cheap oil and gasoline. This has advantages for places like the U.S., Russia, and Great Britain."[25] The politics in Africa and the Middle East are complex and entrenched in systems that, for some, create the need to flee and, for others, provide security and resources. I was repeatedly reminded that the lives of asylum-seekers hang in a balance, in ways that mine does not, despite our shared fundamental vulnerability.[26] Yet it was from places of shared humanity that relationships were built. We played games, such as dominos and Uno, and cheered when we won and laughed when we lost. We shared stories of our favorite food, often over

24 For more discussion on these challenges, see: Bilger and van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas," 128.

25 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 3, 2018: 20180903_6AS_NO, Pos. 13.

26 Bieler, "Verletzlichkeit."

meals cooked together. We played music we liked, on instruments or streamed on phones, while washing dishes. We considered whether the weather was favorable for outings, we discussed family we missed, and we offered advice on everything from the merits of different training programs in Basel to fashion and sports. These conversations and interactions were the work of being in the place of Projekt DA-SEIN, and therefore the work of the research.

5.3.2 Saying Yes

When I first started asking individuals if they would be interested in doing an interview with me, the experience was awkward due to my nervousness and eagerness. I often jumped in too quickly, making a rushed transition from chopping onions to talking about an abstract university project. This led to some confusion and the need for clarification. People I approached often wanted to know why I was interested in doing the interview, what I would do with the material, and how they could be helpful. There was also confusion about the context of the interview. Many said we could talk about the topic at any time, thinking my request was a conversation topic suggestion, rather than a scheduled and structured interview as part of a research project. Establishing the context for an interview involved negotiation, conversation, and clarification.

One hurdle to setting up interviews was the word "interview" itself, which can raise particular associations for asylum-seekers. The asylum process involves two high-stakes interviews to determine if they meet the criteria for asylum.[27] Therefore, an interview is not a neutral event, power, safety, and agency are all at stake, and thus it is often a high-stress event. In addition, being "unbelievable" (*Unglaubwürdig*) during the asylum interview process is the most common reason that asylum applications are denied. The two official state interviews are the only chances for asylum-seekers to communicate the legitimacy and veracity of their claims. In this context, the word "interview" is easily associated with the vulnerability and precariousness of asylum-seeking.[28] In order to build trust, I shifted my language away from the word "interview" to disassociate it from more negative interview experiences. I used other words, such as "conversation" or "discussion" in my requests. I also allowed for longer conversations leading up to interview requests or the actual interview in order to build trust around the process. I also emphasized during the interview that there was nothing participants had to tell me, there was no obligation to share particular stories or information. Unlike in their asylum interviews, they were free to answer according to their own level of comfort and to withhold information.

27 For more information on these interviews, see Chapter 3, section 3.4.

28 Guillemin and Gillam, "Ethics, Reflexivity, and 'Ethically Important Moments' in Research," 256.

Only a few people agreed to the interview on my first invitation. Most appeared skeptical, not saying no, but not agreeing. Often, I had to ask multiple times, over several meetings, for an interview. Each time, I engaged in a conversation about my project's structure and the participant's potential role. Those who were most willing to do the interview were also most familiar with me and the context of my request. Some knew about the project because of previous conversations, or they had experience with research or with interviews beyond those associated with their migration experience. If they had studied at a university, they tended to understand the context of my request more easily. Some were also personally interested in my research topic and wanted to discuss it at greater length, and others wanted to be helpful to me. Some were willing to do the interview because they wanted to practice their language skills, either English or German. Many refugees are highly attuned to the practical skills they need to acquire and the official requirements they need to meet in order to build a life in Switzerland. English, while not a requirement, was often viewed as a valuable skill and, for those who learned English before, there was a desire to practice it.[29] Sometimes a volunteer or other program guest recommended someone to me for an interview. There were complex motivations embedded in these interactions, making the reasons for doing an interview multi-layered.

Of those who agreed, several told me they were willing to an interview with me because they knew me and we had a relationship. I met an asylum-seeker from Afghanistan on my first day volunteering at the program. At this first meeting he shared personal stories about his family and his struggles in coming to Switzerland. Over the next few months, I interacted with him frequently as it became clear that he was a key member of the Projekt DA-SEIN community. Despite his apparent openness to sharing information, based on this first conversation and subsequent interactions, it took several conversations to schedule an interview. The day before our interview, he took me aside and explained that he was willing to do the interview with me only because he already knew and trusted me, but he did not want to be available to everyone in this way.[30] This caution around doing an interview was something I assumed in every interview, even when the interviewee did not express this directly. There is a vulnerability in the migration status of asylum-seekers, and inquiries about home, family, and coming to Switzerland delve into this vulnerable territory.

29 This sometimes clashed with Projekt DA-SEIN's official policy of speaking only Standard German (*Hochdeutsch*).

30 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 4, 2018: 20180704_2AS_II, Pos. 3.

5.3.3 Saying No

Having established a relationship with someone did not guarantee that they would grant me an interview. Several refugees declined to do an interview with me. A "no" answer was an equally important part of the research process, as it often reflected individual experiences with interviews or expressed choices about who to engage with and how to share personal stories. I never asked for their reasons for declining the interview, as I did not want to indicate that they had to justify their choice. Even so, most asylum-seekers who declined interviews offered some explanation for their refusal. The most common reason given was that they had done so many interviews and they were not interested in doing more. There are no options for asylum-seekers to refuse interviews related to their asylum applications if they want to remain in Switzerland. As discussed earlier, the stakes of the required asylum interviews are very high. There is a pressing need to appear believable and for their stories to convey that they meet asylum standards. Geographers Olimpia M. Valdivia Ramirez, Caroline Faria, and Rebecca Maria Torres explore the relationship between asylum officials and asylum-seekers. They discover that despite the veneer of objectivity in the asylum process, the methods of determining and judging the validity of asylum-seekers' claims are based on "highly affective and biased state assumptions about asylum-seekers and their motivation."[31] The explicit question of whether an asylum applicant has a "well-founded fear" is subjective and up to the state actors to determine.[32] In addition, methods of listening focused on centering worthiness and believability are embedded in assumptions based in racial, ethnic, religious, and national identities. It is within this context that asylum-seekers encounter requests for interviews, and these requests can elicit feelings of fear, stress responses, or a protective impulse.

Other reasons for refusing interviews included uncertainty about their language ability, an unwillingness to talk about difficult experiences, or a general frustration with the asylum process. Those who declined interviews were frequently still interested in conversing with me and sharing their experiences, but not in a formal format. Van Liempt and Bilger noted in their research that an asylum-seeker's refusal to do an interview was not necessarily correlated with a refusal to talk about their migration experiences.[33] Similarly, I discovered that asylum-seekers often wanted to share their experiences even if they did not want to participate in a formal interview.

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31 Olimpia M. Valdivia Ramirez, Caroline Faria, and Rebecca M. Torres, "Good Boys, Gang Members, Asylum Gained and Lost: The Devastating Reflections of a Bureaucrat-Ethnographer," *Emotion, Space, and Society* 38 (2021): 1, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2020.100758.

32 Valdivia Ramirez, Faria, and Torres, "Good Boys, Gang Members, Asylum Gained and Lost," 3.

33 Bilger and van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas."

An Eritrean asylum-seeker was one of the first people I asked to do an interview with me. He had talked frequently with me, and in these talks he shared his family situation, the meaning of his name, and work he had done. He immediately declined my request to do an interview, saying that he had already done so many interviews, and he did not want to do more. Several weeks later, a radio program broadcast from Projekt DA-SEIN. They asked for volunteers to say a few words about their experience of the program. Again, the asylum-seeker adamantly refused to speak when the radio producer offered him the microphone. Again, he said had already done so many interviews and was often pressed to do more. He shared a story of a time when someone walked up to him on the street and put a microphone in his face, asking him questions. As he recounted the experience, he appeared visibly upset, emphasizing that he had not welcomed this intrusion. After the radio program host had moved on with the microphone, we continued our conversation about his life and experiences before coming to Switzerland.

Van Liempt and Bilger share similar experiences in their empirical research with refugees, especially those who have experienced human smuggling. The researchers found that many refugees refused to do interviews because of a weariness at being questioned about their experiences, but that they were not necessarily unwilling to talk about these experiences in more informal settings.

> Surprisingly, persons did not refuse because he or she did not want to talk about the human smuggling process as such. The decision not to participate was rather related to the fact that these persons had been questioned many times already on their migration process and that they were tired of talking about it again.[34]

This weariness was especially evident when the subject of asylum interviews was raised.

Other program guests gave different reasons for not doing interviews. One person felt he could not adequately express his thoughts on the subject of home in a second language. Another woman refused because her second interview was scheduled for the next week, causing her anxiety. In addition, she told me that thinking about home made her too sad. Others were more forceful in their refusal. One participant, an asylum-seeker from Afghanistan, said he had done interviews before that benefitted the interviewer but left him, still, with nothing. Van Liempt and Bilger encountered this in their research as well. Some migrants refused interviews because of bad experiences they had with previous researchers, or a perception of

34 Bilger and van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas," 127. See also: Catriona Mackenzie, Christopher McDowell, and Eileen Pittaway, "Beyond 'Do No Harm': The Challenge of Constructing Ethical Relationships in Refugee Research," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 2 (2007), https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fem008.

the unequal benefits accrued to the researcher.[35] Denying an interview is often embedded in a larger frustration. An asylum-seeker I spoke with frequently had been denied asylum in several countries and had no easily apparent options to find a place where he could build a life. Migration research is situated within a climate of increased academic and popular interest in refugee issues and experiences. During my time at Projekt DA-SEIN I noticed numerous volunteers and visitors interested in researching asylum-seeking for anything from class projects to collection of official data on migrants. This heightened interest in, and eagerness for access to, the stories of asylum-seekers stands in juxtaposition to the limited power that asylum-seekers have to direct their lives, and especially to influence asylum decisions.

5.3.4 Refusal and Agency

In this difficult context of being subject to widespread scrutiny, yet having limited options, refusal and silence can be read as acts of agency. Refusal may be a way for marginalized communities to exercise control over their narratives, including how and when these are told.[36] Therefore, agency is often found in small acts, of which refusing an interview is one example. These acts of agency can be understood as "tactics" in de Certeau's theory of power in everyday life.[37] Tactics are ways that those with lesser power negotiate meaning and agency by re-purposing more official "strategies," structures, and systems.[38] Refusing to participate in media interviews or to tell one's story within the larger national narrative of Switzerland are ways of opting out of these systems. There are three ways that the presumed lack of agency of asylum-seekers is reinforced by researchers: presuming marginalized populations are voiceless until given a voice, focusing on stories of pain and loss, and approaching participants primarily as sources of information.

Many marginalized populations are viewed as "voiceless" until their stories are recorded and shared by journalists, academics, or others. This assumption of voicelessness further removes agency from communities and individuals and reduces their ability to control the distribution of their own stories. It concentrates power with the researcher and privileges researchers' desires over participants' desires. Tuhiwai Smith writes about research with indigenous populations in *Decolonizing Methodologies*. This kind of research, she explains, is embedded in a colonial history that "conveys a sense of innate superiority and an overabundance of desire to bring progress into the lives of indigenous peoples – spiritually, intellectually, socially, and

35 Bilger and van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas," 133.

36 Tuck and Yang, "R-Words," 243.

37 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 34–39.

38 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 34–39.

economically."[39] This motivation is embedded in the history of ethnography is often still present in research projects that hope to help, save, or interpret the lives of those in other communities.

In addition, ethnographic research can overly focus on telling the difficult stories, or "pain narratives," of the research subject.[40] As noted earlier, at Projekt DA-SEIN I was advised not to ask about stories of fleeing. Even though I intentionally avoided asking about these experiences, the stories I did hear were often embedded in contexts of loss and suffering. The researcher and writer shape how stories are told, and often the narrative of pain acts as a backdrop to the data, even if other angles are present. Tuck, as well as the philosopher and social critic bell hooks and others, challenge this focus on pain in the retelling of narratives in academic research. As Tuck and Yang further argue, while the subaltern can speak, they are only invited to speak their pain, and a politics of recognition built on pain narratives undergirds colonial and racial hierarchies.[41] Hooks describes in *Marginality as a Site of Resistance* (1990) how marginal voices are silenced, even when they are purportedly invited to speak for liberation.[42] There is an implicit instruction: "Do not speak in a voice of resistance. Only speak from that space in the margin that is a sign of deprivation, a wound, an unfulfilled longing. Only speak your pain."[43] In the official asylum process, the burden of proof lies with the asylum-seeker to demonstrate that they meet the criteria for receiving asylum. As Tuck and Yang argue, the researcher can adopt this perspective of needing to justify the needs of marginalized populations. In doing so, they focus on painful and sometimes humiliating narratives. "Damage-centered researchers may operate, even benevolently, within a theory of change in which harm must be recorded or proven in order to convince an outside adjudicator that reparations are deserved."[44] This approach demands a focus on "pain narratives" at the expense of other kinds of stories, such as those of refusal and agency. Yet, these alternative perspectives may offer more humanizing research trajectories.

In a similar way, there is a tendency for researchers to "mine" for knowledge in their fieldwork. This practice, conscious or unconscious, treats participants as sources of information, not as complex people and communities. Researchers often presume a right to access these stories due to personal interest, research goals, or a perceived moral imperative. Kakali Bhattacharya calls this approach by the

39 Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 56.
40 Tuck and Yang, "R-Words," 228.
41 Tuck and Yang, "R-Words," 226.
42 hooks, "Marginality as Site of Resistance."
43 hooks, "Marginality as Site of Resistance," 343.
44 Tuck and Yang, "R-Words," 227.

researcher "presumptive agency." As Bhattacharya explains, "I coined a term, 'presumptive agency' to question the researcher's assumptions about her entitlement to extract information from the participant."[45] One strategy to balance "presumptive agency" is for the researcher to recognize how agency is shared between the researcher and the participant. This might mean deferring some choices to the research participant, such as choosing the time and location of an interview, deciding on questions they would like to answer, and having open-ended conversations about the research or other topics. Van Liempt and Bilger, in their research with migrants, place a strong emphasis on letting participants guide choices around the interview process from the very beginning. They advocate beginning with periods of listening and adjusting research methods based on the choices of the participants, not on the researchers' preferred methodologies. With these suggestions they encourage researchers' willingness to *not* gain access to some information. They name this practice "the researcher's willingness to leave some 'stones unturned' and to learn not to ask further when this is not wanted."[46] This encouragement by Bhattacharya, to embrace research methodologies that disrupt the "will to know,"[47] might mean that some stories are not told by the academy.[48] Tuck and Yang argue that there are some stories that the academy is not entitled to, that there is "knowledge that the academy doesn't deserve."[49] Academic research has its own goals, histories, and biases. It is not endowed with a special privilege to access all stories and information. There may be other more appropriate interventions or values that are not centered in the academy. I found in my own research that not all knowledge and information I encountered was mine to share. There is some information from interviews that I chose not to use due to its delicate content or the context in which it was told. As Tuck and Yang write, "There are also stories that we overhear, because when our research is going well, we are really in peoples' lives. Though it is tempting, and though it would be easy to do so, these stories are not simply y/ours to take."[50] Because my research was centered in relationships I built over time, the boundaries between research information and information shared in a personal context was sometimes blurred. It was up to me to decide what was part of my research and what was not. When unsure in what context information was shared, I erred on the side of excluding it over including it in my research. I also excluded information

45 Kakali Bhattacharya, "Othering Research, Researching the Other: De/Colonizing Approaches to Qualitative Inquiry," in *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, Vol. 30, ed. John C. Smart and Michael B. Paulsen (Springer, 2015), 111, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9628-0_3.

46 Bilger and van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas," 134.

47 Bhattacharya, "Othering Research, Researching the Other," 111.

48 Tuck and Yang, "R-Words," 232.

49 Tuck and Yang, "R-Words," 232.

50 Tuck and Yang, "R-Words," 234.

from my research for other reasons, such as a participant's explicit request that certain details not be shared and my own sense that some stories were particularly vulnerable to share. I attempted to hold two goals at the same time, collecting informative data *and* respecting the agency of the participants. This effort attempted to address the power imbalances inherent in research by focusing on listening and relationship-building, recognizing moments of shared agency, and taking refusal as an important research point. By being willing to "leave some stones unturned,"[51] I sought to prioritize relationships, build trust with participants, and develop a more ethical research project.

5.3.5 Interview Scheduling

For those who agreed to do interviews with me, scheduling a time and place were the next steps in the interview process. Asylum-seekers still waiting for results of their asylum applications do not have access to the same infrastructure and resources as more established residents. Refugees and asylum-seekers live in shared housing (often sharing rooms) provided by the local government and managed by non-governmental organizations. They receive a limited amount of financial support from the state, do not usually have regular access to computers, often do not have email addresses, and do not have regular schedules. Circumstances vary by person, but in general, scheduling interviews involved considerable negotiation, flexibility, and creativity. Interviews were usually scheduled in person, often after several conversations, or via messaging systems, such as WhatsApp, after the initial in-person conversations.

Even after interviews were scheduled, interview participants sometimes rescheduled their meetings with me. My impression was that they took their commitment to the interview seriously. No one ever missed an interview and those who did reschedule were apologetic. The reasons for rescheduling were usually due to commitments to other people. One interview partner had to help his aunt who had sustained an injury. Another rescheduled in order to accompany another asylum-seeker, whose asylum application had been denied, to meet with a lawyer to appeal the decision.

Being an asylum-seeker in Switzerland means being subject to specific bureaucratic and practical conditions. The refugees' limited material resources, the lack of available meeting spaces at the Offene Kirche Elisabethen, and the fact that I did not have an office meant that the location of our interviews was not immediately obvious. Our interviews were without a fixed location, therefore finding a place for the interview became part of the data-gathering process. Based on the experience of van Liempt and Bilger, I approached these circumstances not as hindrances, but

51 Bilger and van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas," 134.

as part of the context and structure of my research. Van Liempt and Bilger often let the interview participant take the lead in choosing the location and context of the interview, including whether it will be recorded and how the questions will be answered.[52] This flexibility considers the interview partner as more than a source of information and as a participant in the research project. For my research, it also allowed for greater curiosity and a broader view about relationships to home in Basel.

I often met my interview partner at the Offene Kirche Elisabethen, as it was a site familiar to both of us as well as how we knew one another. From there, I invited the interview participant to determine the location of the interview. I conducted interviews in parks, at cafes, at libraries, and even on the banks of the Rhine River. Interview locations often emerged from places where my habitual paths overlapped with that of the refugees. My first interview, with an asylum-seeker from Turkey, took place in the cafe at the University of Basel's main library. He mentioned that he had seen me in the library and liked to go there. I selected this site because it was familiar to both of us but also offered some anonymity. I completed three interviews at Projekt DA-SEIN, in the garden outside of the main building and away from the activity of the program. Interviews partially took place when we were "on the way" to the interview location.

Margarethe Kusenbach offers a model for this interview-in-motion, which she calls the "go-along" interview.[53] Kusenbach's method merges phenomenological inquiry with ethnographic research by asking interview partners if she can join them on their daily activities and routines. During these "go-alongs" Kusenbach observes activities while also asking questions about these activities. This method merges observation and interviewing and provides a way to observe spatial practices while also engaging interviewees in shaping the research site.[54]

> The go-along method also brings greater phenomenological sensibility to ethnography by allowing researchers to focus on aspects of human experience that tend to remain hidden to observers and participants alike. It makes visible and intelligible how everyday experience transcends the here and now, as people weave previous knowledge and biography into immediate situated action.[55]

While my interviews were more structured than Kusenbach's and did not rely solely on walking, many of Kusenbach's methods applied to my research. Doing some of the interviews "on-the-go" offered me an opportunity to observe participants' interactions with local places. I sometimes asked questions about these specific places.

52 Bilger and van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas," 134.

53 Margarethe Kusenbach, "Street Phenomenology: The Go-Along as Ethnographic Research Tool," *Ethnography* 4, no. 3 (2003), https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138103430007.

54 Kusenbach, "Street Phenomenology," 463, 474.

55 Kusenbach, "Street Phenomenology," 478.

Other times I observed participants' interactions with places or people we encountered. Locating my interviews in-motion and without a clear location allowed me to engage the question of home in the materiality of the interview, not only in the interview questions.

5.3.6 Interview Protocols

Once we arrived at the location of the interview, I introduced the interview context and explained the consent form. I developed the consent form based off Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines from the United States. IRB guidelines establish an independent committee to review research projects and ensure that their methods protect the "rights and welfare of human subjects."[56] My consent form was written in both German and English. Due to varying language skills, I explained the consent form in detail and asked if participants had additional questions. I emphasized how the data would be used, that I would record the conversation, that they would remain anonymous, and that their signature was required on the form.

I also asked if they had questions about the form, and we engaged in conversation about it. Some participants did not have questions about the form of the process and did not seem concerned about the interview and how it would be used. Others wanted to know more about my project and how it would be published. Their questions largely appeared to stem from interest in the research project, how it was set up, and how they could help. All interview participants accepted the copy of the consent form I provided.

Using a consent form in research is necessary to ensure that participants are informed about the research, about how the data they share will be used, and about their right to withdraw from participating. Yet these forms also have the potential to alienate those in marginal circumstances and further cement the roles of researcher and participant. Some researchers working with migrant populations do not insist on signed consent forms.[57] Because of differing literacy levels, as well as cultural associations with signing documents, sometimes verbal agreements are more appropriate. While a consent form was necessary and appropriate for my work, not all migration researchers use consent forms. For example, van Liempt and Bilger often secured only verbal consent in their interviews with migrants. They discovered that written consent forms often made migrants wary and mistrustful of the

56 U.S. Food and Drug Administration, "Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) And Protection of Human Subjects in Clinical Trials," Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, accessed May 5, 2021, https://www.fda.gov/about-fda/center-drug-evaluation-and-research-cder/institutional-review-boards-irbs-and-protection-human-subjects-clinical-trials.

57 See: Mackenzie, McDowell, and Pittaway, "Beyond 'Do No Harm'," 307; Bilger and van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas," 131.

researchers.[58] The complications of consent forms became evident for me when participants read and signed the form. Some refugees had not attended school before fleeing their countries of origin and had learned to read and write only when they arrived in Switzerland. Asking participants to write their name and the date was not always a simple request. One interview partner explained that it took him a long time to write his name because he had not learned to write growing up, and this was because he did not go to school.

The consent form also included a place for a pseudonym. I explained that ensuring their anonymity meant that I would use another name when referring to them. I invited them to select a pseudonym for themselves, if they wanted, a practice employed by van Liempt and Bilger in their migration research.[59] Over half of the interviewees selected a name. This became another rich source of insight into cultural naming practices, identity, and associations with home. A Kurdish refugee from Turkey chose the Kurdish name of his hometown. Using the Kurdish name is forbidden in Turkey. Another participant from Afghanistan chose a common name from his region and we talked for several minutes about naming practices in this culture. Some participants did not express concern about their anonymity, and some even said I could use their real name, though I insisted on anonymity in my project.

To begin the interview, I explained the context of my work and my own interest in the research question. This introduction served to situate myself in a more personal way within the research and the conversation and provided a more informal entry point. The disadvantage of introducing my research in this way is that it can potentially shape participants' answers based on how they understand the topic and what they thought I wanted to hear. Yet, this challenge already existed through my involvement as a volunteer at Projekt DA-SEIN. Many already knew about my research project and had engaged me in conversation about it. Therefore, I decided that being transparent about my project as well as my personal connection to the topic was most important to my process.

My interview questions took a semi-structured format. I started the interview by asking one of two open-ended, biographical prompts.[60] "Tell me about 2 or 3 important places in your life. Please think all the way back to when you were young." The second question was "Please tell me about 2 or 3 important people in your life." These questions usually generated an initial story and from there the conversation developed. Towards the end of the interview, I asked a series of questions about specific topics, if they had not already been raised during the interview. These were about the interviewee's relationship to religion, Projekt DA-SEIN, and Basel. In addition,

58 Bilger and van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas," 131.

59 Bilger and van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas."

60 Uwe Flick, *Qualitative Sozialforschung: Eine Einführung*, 8. Auflage, Rororo Rowohlts Enzyklopädie (Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2017).

I asked targeted questions about home, though I never asked about specific migration experiences, as cautioned, even though these often emerged in other ways during the interviews.

My interview questions drew on my sensitizing concept of home and, therefore, did not start by asking for a definition of home, but instead asked about important people, places, and practices in a person's life. With these questions I hoped to elicit the complexity of home for each individual and the interplay of social, cultural, geographic, and familial influences on home. I paid attention to narratives about family, descriptions of important practices, and attendant affective associations, especially emotions such as longing and sadness. I took note of what was not mentioned, topics that were avoided, or questions that I was asked in return. I noted negative and missing experiences, understanding that these shape conceptions of home just as much as positive and present experiences do.[61]

I sometimes felt that my questions had minimal impact on what interviewees told me. Instead, their understanding of my topic and the relationship we had established had a greater impact on what they told me. Their answers often reflected their own sense of what I wanted to hear, their interests, and what they hoped to portray. In my interview with a Kurdish man, the interview focused on the religious traditions of his region in Turkey. Despite my questions about his personal relationship to home, our conversation largely circled around the theoretical until just before the end of our conversation. I circled back several times to his relationships to home and he finally shared a more personal story. Yet, it became clear to me that he was not comfortable discussing these more personal aspects of home. In hindsight, I wish I had let go of my desire to elicit more personal descriptions of home and followed his comfort level in exploring the topic. I took this experience into future interviews and attempted to slow down and trust the trajectory of the conversation and the approach each participant wanted to take.

Another interview partner, an Eritrean asylum-seeker, spoke mostly about his connection to religion and not as specifically about home. He was recommended to me by another volunteer at the program because of his strong religious faith and practice. She thought he would be a good conversation partner, as she knew I was interested in religion. In the interview we discussed his religious practices at length and his experiences as a Muslim both in Eritrea and in Switzerland. This was perhaps because his faith was important to him, but also because he understood religion as important to my project. The content of each interview still addressed the topics of home and asylum-seeking, but from different angles and perspectives.

Many of my interview partners expressed, at the end of the interview, a hope that they had been helpful. They often closed by offering me encouraging words, saying they hoped that my project would be successful and that they had been able to help.

61 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*.

These encouragements caused me to pause and consider my assumption that the interview was something that only served me. It is possible that my interview partners felt that the interview also served a need for them – perhaps a need to connect, to be helpful, to participate in something, or to tell a story. I did not ask directly about this, so I can only theorize based on these comments and responses.

5.3.7 Language

None of my interview participants completed the interview in their first language; all were conducted in second languages. Asylum-seeker interviews were conducted in either English or German, which were second languages for my interview participants. My volunteer interviews were conducted in Standard German, which is not the first language of these Swiss volunteers. Their first language is Swiss German. With every interview partner, I assumed we would speak German, but I let them know English was also an option. As mentioned earlier, some interview partners were interested in participating because of the opportunity to practice their English.

While many migration researchers, including van Liempt and Bilger, encourage the use of translators in interviews, I found advantages to conducting interviews without an interpreter.[62] Since my research was heavily embedded in the context of Projekt DA-SEIN and the relationships built at that program, bringing in an outside translator would have disrupted this context and felt at odds with my research questions. While a translator may have been able to tease out the nuances of asylum-seekers' experience and descriptions of home, the dynamic of negotiating home in the context of displacement and at Projekt DA-SEIN would have been diminished.

Geographer B. Filep, in his article *Interview and Translation Strategies*, argues against the use of translators and for finding a common second language. "Personally, I prefer conducting interviews without an interpreter […] I support the idea of finding an alternative common language with the interviewee, and, whenever possible, a language that can even be foreign to both."[63] Filep's preference for working without translators stems from the additional layer of translation that translators bring as another participant in the research process. The translator is another actor in the research process and therefore also impacts the informant, the communication process, and the translation process by bringing their own social location, assumptions, and perspectives to the research project.[64] Since meaning is socially produced, translators bring another layer of interpretation into this process of

62 Bilger and van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas."

63 B. Filep, "Interview and Translation Strategies: Coping with Multilingual Settings and Data," *Social Geography Discussions* 5 (2009): 64, https://doi.org/10.5194/sgd-5-25-2009.

64 Filep, "Interview and Translation Strategies."

meaning-making, both linguistically and experientially. Working across languages and with second languages requires additional considerations of translation strategies and self-reflection by the researcher about their own language abilities and social location.[65]

Meaning and understanding are negotiated even when language, culture, and context are shared. As Marjorie Faulstich Orellana, a professor of education and migration scholar, explores in her book *Mindful Ethnography*, all language contains contradictions and subjectivities, and ethnographic projects benefit from an awareness of these tensions.[66] Working across languages heightens this need for awareness and highlights the collaboration between researcher and participant. These interactions influence the interview and data. Meaning emerges through the researcher's and participant's cultural, social, and linguistic contexts, personal experiences, and choices about what and how to share information, even when a common language is used.

Most methodologies assume a common language that is used with a high, if not fluent, level of mastery. Acknowledging the limitations of working across languages brings greater focus to the act of translation that occurs in all communication. As Filep writes about interviews, "It is a conscious joint 'struggle' for the clarification of words or meaning and in the end a joint production of meaning and knowledge."[67] All interviews, even in shared first languages, involve translating one person's ideas through the experience and context of another person. Even when speaking the same language, understanding is filtered through the viewpoints of individual conversation partners, including their experiences and their relationships with language. A shared culture and language promote understanding, but meaning-making is still fluid and dependent on translation.

Instead of a translator, my interviews utilized other strategies and methods to determine meaning and elicit understanding for both of us. During both formal and informal interviews, we often mixed languages. Many researchers who work across languages encourage mixing languages to allow for greater flexibility in conveying meaning.[68] For those who spoke English, this meant mixing English and German. Interview partners also used their first languages. This occurred most often when talking about places and people's names. But sometimes they would also use a word

65 Danau Tanu and Laura Dales, "Language in Fieldwork: Making Visible the Ethnographic Impact of the Researcher's Linguistic Fluency," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 27, no. 3 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1111/taja.12150; Bogusia Temple and Alys Young, "Qualitative Research and Translation Dilemmas," *Qualitative Research* 4, no. 2 (2004): 353, https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794104044430.

66 Marjorie Faulstich Orellana, *Mindful Ethnography: Mind, Heart, and Activity for Transformative Social Research* (Routledge, 2020), 6.

67 Filep, "Interview and Translation Strategies," 64.

68 See: Filep, "Interview and Translation Strategies," 64.

that they were unable to translate, in the hope that I would understand it or that it had an English or German cognate. We freely used Google Translate or other translation software in these moments. This negotiation of words involved a back-and-forth conversation, further causing us to come to a shared understanding about certain words, terms, and descriptions. We created shared meaning in the interviews. The stories and descriptions existed in a shared space between the two of us that was unique to our conversation and connection. The negotiation of meaning was not driven by an abstract objective. I assumed that subjectivity existed in our interviews, and I focused instead on ensuring, as much as possible, that the participants' meaning took precedence over mine. The practice of reflexivity, as ongoing self-reflection, helped to tease out how social location, assumptions, preferences, and perspectives might influence the research process and to make my implicit motivations, beliefs, and biases more explicit.[69]

During the interview, many participants paused at regular intervals to ask if I understood what they had meant, interrupting their narrative to ask: "You know?" ("*Weisst du?*") or "You understand?" ("*Verstehst du?*"). If I indicated something was unclear, the interview partner often tried other words or phrases or described the word or phenomenon in alternate ways. I always put a blank pad of paper and a pen on the table between us at the start of the interview. The interview partner often used it to write out words or phrases or draw images or diagrams to help elucidate meaning. We often turned to other technology, looking up images or videos of events, or viewing locations on maps. This mixing of languages and technology served to distill information and negotiate meaning. Even misunderstandings could serve to uncover deeper understanding as we negotiated meaning by further questioning and interrogating words and phrases. When we did not understand each other, we looked for other words, descriptions, and communication methods. Language is a communication tool and involves a negotiation between intended meanings and interpretations. Even though we did not share mastery of the same languages, my interviews involved these same elements of negotiating meaning, often with additional tools.

5.3.8 Home and *Heimat* in Translation

I want to address a particular aspect of language relevant to my research, namely the use of the word *home*. Most of my interviews and conversations were conducted in Standard German, while a few occurred in English. As explained in the chapter about home, there are several German words for home: *Heim*, *Zuhause*, and *Heimat*.

69 Kaufman, "Normativity as Pitfall or Ally?," 92–93. Kaufman links the practice of reflexivity to revealing deeper assumptions that might influence the research process. "I propose that attending to precisely reflexivity might change our initial, naïve normativity from an implicit to an explicit normativity."

In my interviews the most frequent German word used for home was *Heimat*. *Heimat* is a word imbued with cultural specificity and affective associations within the German-speaking context. Yet, this cultural nuance cannot be assumed to carry over when *Heimat* is used in translation. For speakers of German as a second language, *Heimat* is unlikely to convey the cultural nuances of German-speakers who are more acculturated to the meaning and history of the word. Therefore, when the word *Heimat* was used by someone speaking German as a second language, I assumed that it did not carry the cultural meanings of someone speaking German as a first language. Instead, I assumed it represented a broad term for home and belonging, more akin the English use of the word home.

Because of the multiple and ambiguous meanings of home, I did not directly ask about *Heimat* or home until the end of a formal interview. Instead, I explored the nuances of home for each person through important places, relationships, and memories. At the end of an interview, for those speaking Swiss or Standard German as a first language, I asked specifically about their use and understanding of the word *Heimat*. A Swiss volunteer explained that the words *zu Hause* and *daheim* refer to the place where he lives, while *Heimat* refers to the place he lives as well as to the outer home, which encompasses a larger space and broader meaning.[70]

For those who spoke German as a second language, I asked about words for home in their first language. Some easily answered this question and others were unable to offer a word for home in their language. Of those who responded, many of the words were translated as either homeland and nation or house and dwelling. More abstract notions of home, such as those associated with *Heimat*, were infrequent. For example, a Persian speaker explained the meaning of three words that could mean home. According to his definitions, *Zadgah* means the place of your birth, *Watan* the country or place of citizenship, and *Maihan* the land or home where you live.[71] These words are similar to the three categories of home as defined by Islamic scholars. These are, "watan al-asli, the country of birth, the country of one's spouse or the place of permanent residence; watan al-sukna, the country of temporary residence and employment; and watan al-safari, the country that is traveled to."[72] The nuanced and varied answers that I received about the word home further underscore the complexity of definitions of home. In addition, language or individual words can be limiting when describing home. What one person means by home may not be what someone else means.

70 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 13, 2018: 20180913_1FW_IN, Pos. 177.

71 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 4, 2018: 20180704_11AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 5–12.

72 Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?," 191.

5.4 Relational Ethnography

My methodological decisions were based on my unique research setting and were the result of the realities of working with populations in the context of migration. These decisions were also related to my research goals, to the realities of working across languages, to the foregrounding of relationships, and to interview tools tailored to migration research. It was critical for me to follow interview methodologies that ensured that my research was ethical and objective and that participants were fully informed about the study and their role in it. Yet, the content and context of my interviews led to a more a collaborative interview style that foregrounded relationships. As van Liempt and Bilger reflect on in their research with migrant populations, "The more active involvement of both researcher and research participants also affects the relationship between researchers and respondents that could be best described as a more collaborative relation exceeding a simple relation of researcher and researched."[73] This relational ethnographic approach emerged in my own research process with asylum-seekers.

5.4.1 Co-production of Knowledge

My research practices approached the data collected not simply as information-gathering, but also as collaborative projects between myself and the research participant. Instead of viewing myself as the expert and collector of data, I sought to focus on how the research participant and I engaged in the topic of home and asylum-seeking together. This "joint production of meaning," as coined by Filep, acknowledges that meaning and information exist not in a vacuum, but in the social milieu and relationship between researcher and the research context.[74] Researchers do not simply document what happens but participate in creating the event and its potential meaning, through writing, recording, and asking questions.[75] Sociologist Stephen Hirschauer describes this process as a social and linguistic collaboration. "[M]ost ethnographies can be thought of as a collaborative verbalization of the social through participants and observers."[76] In ethnographic research, what is heard and how it is understood is a product of the interaction between researcher and research subject.

73 Bilger and van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas," 134.

74 Filep, "Interview and Translation Strategies," 64.

75 Filep, "Interview and Translation Strategies," 64.

76 Stefan Hirschauer, "Putting Things into Words: Ethnographic Description and the Silence of the Social," *Human Studies* 29, no. 4 (2007): 437, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-007-9041-1.

For the researcher, the goal is to put what did not exist before into words.[77] This documenting makes meaning and creates understanding, which is filtered through the listener's frameworks, experiences, and goals. One approach that attempts to account for this participation is the "active interview," as described by sociologists James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium:

> [I]nterviews are inherently social productions. With this orientation, respondents are better seen as narrators or storytellers, and ethnographers are cast as participants in the process. Working together, the interviewer and narrator actively construct a story and its meaning. Interviewing, then, is inherently collaborative and problematic.[78]

It is problematic because it is difficult to determine what impact the researcher has on the resulting data. Reflexivity in interpretation can help to account for the impact of the researcher, but the interpretive and collaborative processes are nuanced and not always transparent. Yet, the acknowledgement of collaboration makes an impact. The shift towards collaborative inquiry reflects an emphasis on relationality that acknowledges the co-production of knowledge between researcher and participant.[79]

While many interview methodologies assume that it is possible for the researcher to be a neutral observer, it is not completely possible to remove the researcher from the interview process. Typically, researchers generate the focus and questions of the interview and otherwise attempt to influence answers and the flow of the interview as little as possible. The goal of this approach is to prevent the resulting data from being unduly influenced by assumptions, ideas, and perspectives of the researcher. To achieve this outcome, researchers are encouraged to allow pauses, to refrain from interjecting, to ask follow-up questions at the end, and to not show visible reactions, responses, or emotions. The researcher should also avoid statements or questions that are suggestive or that imply expectations or hoped-for results.[80] These interview techniques assume that, with proper application of technique, the interviewer will minimally influence the interviews and the data collected. Yet collaborative interviews foreground the reality that both the researcher and the interview participant impact the data.

Many methodologies tacitly assume that the proper application of technique will lead to valid and "pure" results that reflect the authentic experience of the

77 Hirschauer, "Putting Things into Words."

78 James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, *The Active Interview*, Qualitative Research Methods Series, vol. 37 (Sage Publications, 1995), vii.

79 Holstein and Gubrium, *The Active Interview*.

80 Flick, *Qualitative Sozialforschung*.

interview participant.[81] Yet, researchers have argued that the idea of "pure" and singular data is a myth. Information is always produced in a specific context and by specific people. Holstein and Gubrium further make this point: "Any interview situation – no matter how formalized, restricted, or standardized – relies on the interaction between interview participants."[82] Kusenbach, a sociologist, and Barbara Czarniawska, a scholar of organizational theory, among others, point out the fallacy of thinking that an interview offers "unadulterated" information.[83] Czarniawska writes about social science research: "Another vain hope connected to an interview situation is that it will yield 'information,' 'facts.'"[84] Knowledge does not exist in a "pure" form that can be preserved through appropriate application of methods. Ethical and methodologically sound research practices are critical, yet knowledge does not exist in a rarified state. Data is always a product of the context in which it originates. The places where I conducted observations and interviews, as well as the perspectives and experiences I personally brought to the research project, impacted the data.

Instead of trying to remove the impact of the researcher, more collaborative interview approaches ask what is unique about the data, given the unique presence of the researcher. The interviewer not only formulates the questions, but also selects interview partners, chooses interview locations, records and transcribes the data, and interprets the results. Holstein and Gubrium continue:

> We contend that if interview data are unavoidably collaborative, attempts to strip interviews of their interactional ingredients will be futile. Instead of adding to the long list of methodological constraints under which interviews should be conducted, we take a more positive approach, proposing an orientation whereby researchers acknowledge interviewers' and respondents' constitutive contributions and consciously and conscientiously incorporate them into the production and analysis of interview data.[85]

This focus on the process of generating data highlights the relational aspect of data collection, production, and analysis. My interest in how home is experienced and created means that place and relationality are key components of data generation. In my experience, a collaborative interview style was more successful at including these aspects of my research interests in the process and analysis. Collaboration as-

81 Holstein and Gubrium, *The Active Interview*, 19.

82 Holstein and Gubrium, *The Active Interview*, 19.

83 Kusenbach, "Street Phenomenology"; Barbara Czarniawska, *Narratives in Social Science Research* (Sage Publications, 2004).

84 Czarniawska, *Narratives in Social Science Research*, 48.

85 Holstein and Gubrium, *The Active Interview*, 4.

sumes the interaction of the researcher in bringing themselves and their own reflexive awareness to the process. As Graham writes:

> In the interests of integrity and transparency, the self as researcher, as one who brings particular presuppositions, questions and interests, must be prepared to "write themselves in" to the text of their research. This practice […] entails more than simply "reflecting" in the sense of thinking deeply about something, but of identifying how we are simultaneously both the subjects and objects of our own experience.[86]

Relational research means that the researcher is open to being part of the research process, to reflecting on their biases and commitments, and to being changed by the experience. In collaborative research it is critical to acknowledge the researcher's role in generating data.

A more interactive method is often well-suited for research within the context of migration. In tandem with increased flexibility in interview methods, van Liempt and Bilger advocate for more conversational and improvisational interview methods in migration research. "[A]pplying an unstructured, conversation-like interview style by which interview partners could talk freely and according to their own structure, 'embedded questioning' and the private surrounding in which the interviews took place proved to be very helpful not only in a technical sense."[87] Conversational interviews are advantageous because they build trust and generate information that might not otherwise be offered. Allowing collaboration in the interview process is ethically and methodologically appropriate, allowing more flexibility in responding to the often complex and vulnerable situation of migrants. As described in my interview process, the frequent back-and-forth of conversations between myself and interview participants were necessary to clarify meaning, translate across languages, and understand ideas. This meant that sometimes I chose not to refrain from inserting myself into the interview. I approached interviews as a process of gathering information in a two-way conversation fueled on both sides by curiosity.

5.4.2 Practices of Pastoral Care

In addition to these methodological considerations, a collaborative interview style reflected my location as a theological researcher. Ethnographic theology includes empathic listening practices, conversational interviews, and an attitude of presence

86 Elaine Graham, "On Becoming a Practical Theologian: Past, Present, and Future Tenses," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 73, no. 4 (2017): 5, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i4.4634.

87 Bilger and van Liempt, "Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas," 134.

within empirical research.[88] These methods are drawn from practices and theories of pastoral care, theological anthropology, and Christian ethics. As practical theologian Mary Clark Moschella writes, "I suggest that ethnography can become a form of ministry, a kind of pastoral listening to a social group or a community of faith."[89] My context as a theologian often had clear impacts on the data collected. One example of this occurred in an interview when an interview partner (a volunteer) shared some very challenging and personal parts of her life. After sharing them, she commented: "I know now that you study theology, and maybe also, yes, that gives me confidence, that I can say these things to you."[90] Her own understanding of practices of care in religious settings influenced how she approached the interview and what she chose to share.

Non-theologians have also advocated for a shift in interview practices to reflect more collaborative methods and acknowledge interpersonal dynamics. Hirschauer calls the shift to a more collaborative interview style "empathic curiosity."[91] And sociologist Martin Gerard Forsey reframes the work of the researcher as a practice of "engaged listening."[92] Bhattacharya, an education and empirical methods scholar, advocates for a practice of "contemplative inquiry" in interviewing.[93] And Orellana advocates using tools of mindfulness when conducting ethnography in order to better engage listening and reflexivity.[94] These practices help to shift the researcher's understanding of an interviewer from a neutral source of information to a co-participant. By approaching their participants with "empathic curiosity," researchers can lean into a more collaborative interview process.[95] In addition, the practice of "witnessing" or "attentive presence" is particularly resonant with the ways I engage in research. "Witnessing" means bringing attention and presence to a person and

88 Christian Scharen and Aana M. Vigen, eds., *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (Continuum, 2011), 233.

89 Mary C. Moschella, "Ethnography," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 229.

90 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 20, 2018: 20180920_2FW_IN, Pos. 162.

91 Kaufman, "Normativity as Pitfall or Ally?," 104.

92 Martin G. Forsey, "Ethnography as Participant Listening," *Ethnography* 11, no. 4 (2010): 567, https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138110372587.

93 Kakali Bhattacharya and Meaghan Cochrane, "Assessing the Authentic Knower Through Contemplative Arts-Based Pedagogies in Qualitative Inquiry," in *The Journal of Contemplative Inquiry* 4, no. 1 (2017), https://digscholarship.unco.edu/joci/vol4/iss1/3/; Kakali Bhattacharya, "Critical, De/colonial and Contemplative Approaches to Qualitative Inquiry," Advanced Methods Institute, The Ohio State University, Advancing Culturally Responsive Research and Researchers, accessed May 27, 2021, last modified May 21, 2021, https://advancedmethodsinstitute.ehe.osu.edu/keynote-kakali-bhattacharya/.

94 Orellana, *Mindful Ethnography*.

95 Kaufman, "Normativity as Pitfall or Ally?," 104.

their situation, and it is not limited to listening. This practice is appropriate to work with vulnerable populations, and it allowed me flexibility in responding to difficult stories, working across languages, and engaging with the specific topic of asylum. In addition, given the circumstances of asylum-seekers in Switzerland, approaching my interviews without empathy and compassion would have felt inauthentic.

A theologically informed ethnography draws on practices of pastoral care. Pastoral care attends to the fullness of a person, including their cares and concerns, challenges, and potentials. While pastoral care (*Seelsorge*) is often a focus of Swiss churches working with asylum-seekers, it was not an explicit offering of Projekt DA-SEIN.[96] Instead, pastoral care was understood as part of the fabric of being together at the program. Focusing only on practical tasks or spending time with a small group of people was discouraged. There was an openness that was expected of participants when arriving at the program, an openness to the people and circumstances that might be encountered. This space of pastoral care prioritizes being with the cares and concerns of another person. In the context of ethnographic research, this translates as bringing attention to the larger story and concerns of a person.

My research questions focused on important people and places in a person's life in order to understand their relationship to home. These questions, and the semi-structured nature of interviews, elicited answers that brought up personal stories, longings, and both joyful and painful memories. Being present to these stories as more than data to be collected was an important part of my research approach. Pastoral care maintains a focus on the individual by being present, acknowledging their wholeness, and holding space. This approach can also be brought to ethnographic research. At various points in my research process, I offered to pray for an asylum-seeker's wish to see his mother again, I extended compassion when stories of loss were shared, and I relinquished control of the study by inviting asylum-seekers to accept or reject my invitation, to choose interview locations, and to ask me questions as well as answer mine. My goal of being present to the fullness of a person's experience was held to be of equal, if not more, importance than discovering truth, collecting data, and remaining neutral.

This theological underpinning of my research was also expressed in the goals and approach of Projekt DA-SEIN. As Hungerbühler told me in our interview, she considers the religious aspects of Projekt DA-SEIN to consist in seeing each person as a child of God. "I see you as a person, as I am a person, with fears, hurt, and a history, maybe also with scars. But I see also your hope and potential as a creation of God."[97] Bringing a pastoral approach to the task of research means having two goals simultaneously – a fidelity to the research questions and project and an openness to each person's human fullness, past, present, and future.

96 Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz et al., *Seelsorge im Bundesasylzentrum*.

97 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 27.

Other researchers have also approached ethnography with a sensitivity to being with people instead of only extracting information from them. These approaches consider the whole person while also acknowledging what the researcher brings to the process and the relationship between researcher and participant. In particular, Bhattacharya's research methods are designed to disrupt the "will to know" and to instead focus on being with the stories and experiences of each person.[98] She utilizes contemplative research approaches that acknowledge the deeper implications of research.

> Contemplative approaches reflect a set of practices that are focused on stillness, deep inner-journeys, and a triggering of insights and clarity that come from accepting that the process of inquiry is an excavating journey into self, understanding the relationship between self and other, and cultivating insights that stem from a state of expansive and critical awareness.[99]

A contemplative approach, like pastoral care practices, focuses research on the larger dynamics of interviews and on relationships between subjects. Contemplation in ethnographic inquiry is a practice that can also support reflexivity and an awareness of one's own assumptions and biases. Orellana writes that mindful approaches to ethnography can help researchers develop intellectual humility, cultivate intellectual and emotional openness in the field, and challenge the dualism of either/or thinking and insider/outsider positionalities.[100] Practices of mindfulness can cultivate self-reflection while reflecting on the subject matter. These reflections can open space for contradictions that one's own subjectivity brings to the field. While the roles of researcher and participant can never be fully equalized, these sociological and theological tools bring an awareness to how information is collected and acknowledge the complexity of interactions between researcher and subject. Considering people as more than subjects demands reflection and adaptability.

5.5 A Relational Approach to Research

Qualitative, empirical methods offer rigor in researching subjects outside of explicit theological spaces. At the same time, it was important to adapt these methods to reflect my location as a theologian and my research site at the Offene Kirche Elisabethen. I developed my own style that resonated with my priorities as a theologian and the priorities of the church and the program. As a researcher, I spent most of my

98 Bhattacharya, "Othering Research, Researching the Other," 111.

99 Bhattacharya, "Critical, De/colonial and Contemplative Approaches to Qualitative Inquiry."

100 Orellana, *Mindful Ethnography*.

time participating in the program, sitting and talking, playing games, and joining Input Sessions and events. A relational approach to research, informed by practices of pastoral care, prioritized building relationships over identifying research subjects and allowed me to focus on the fullness of the human person instead of only their identity as an asylum-seeker. I learned about the participant's interests, personality quirks, skills, family, and life, both before and during their time in Basel. These experiences shifted my perspective on asylum-seeking, or more specifically, on those who seek asylum. My relationships at Projekt DA-SEIN revealed that there is greater nuance in asylum-seeking than what is understood by viewing asylum-seeking only as a monolithic event characterized by desperation and a lack of options. While asylum-seeking involves unspeakable loss, trauma, and isolation, including a lack of options, these are not the only characteristics that apply to asylum-seekers. Being defined primarily by an oppressed and marginal status limits viewpoints and possibilities of thinking about individual situations.

Research that involves marginal and vulnerable populations must also pay attention to the impact of social location and power dynamics within methodology. It asks that the researcher acknowledge their own role in data generation, including using reflexivity to assess cultural location, assumptions, and biases. This demands that the researcher give up some agency in coordinating and conducting interviews as well as in the outcome, particularly when working with vulnerable populations. More collaborative research acknowledges this role of the researcher and embraces the co-production of knowledge, the role of empathy in the researcher-participant relationship, and the possibilities as well as the limitations of the research project. This approach is reflected in the final data that was generated and in my interpretive frameworks. In the next three chapters I will share insights from my research on home, asylum-seeking, and church. These insights draw on both the words and the experiences of my interview partners as well as on my observations and interpretations within a relational ethnographic framework.

6. "A Piece of Home" at Projekt DA-SEIN

Projekt DA-SEIN was founded in 2014 to offer a "piece of home" to asylum-seekers who arrive in Basel by providing them support that goes beyond offering basic necessities.[1] Projekt DA-SEIN emphasizes showing up and being together, in the spirit of conviviality, with a focus on presence over programs. In addition, the program embraces ambivalent experiences, provides welcome to those arriving in a new country, and helps asylum-seekers learn German and other local skills. By providing a space to be together with asylum-seekers, there is an emphasis on relationships over outcomes. A theology of conviviality also centers ordinary activities of living together and generates relationships built on mutuality and interdependence, instead of offering programs that teach and direct. Projekt DA-SEIN's focus on these relationships, especially between asylum-seekers and local volunteers, furthers its convivial emphasis and provides welcome through shared spaces and everyday activities. Convivial encounters as well as the social and theological commitments of the OKE shape the "piece of home" that is provided at Projekt DA-SEIN.

Despite the focus on conviviality and "being there" together, the relationships at Projekt DA-SEIN are often between people with very different social, political, and economic resources. In addition, asylum-seekers and volunteers participate in the program for different reasons. Asylum-seekers often come to Projekt DA-SEIN to meet people, to pass the time, for a meal, to learn German, or for access to resources. Volunteers often came to Projekt DA-SEIN to help those in the asylum system, to make a local impact on a large-scale issue, and to get to know people outside of their usual social circles. While many interactions at the program were convivial – for example, playing games and sharing meals – at other times relationships were structured around different motivations – for example, volunteers teaching German or asylum-seekers learning about Swiss social expectations. The unevenness of relationships sometimes impacts aspects of the program and creates more of a focus on teaching and learning than perhaps intended. This focus on helping sometimes took precedence over convivial goals of being together and learning together. In this way, the sense of home cultivated at Projekt DA-SEIN is also shaped by Swiss values,

1 Stade, *DA-SEIN*, 3; Offene Kirche Elisabethen, "Die Offene Kirche Elisabethen (OKE)."

language, and asylum requirements, even when these are sometimes at odds with the openness and conviviality promoted by Projekt DA-SEIN.

In this chapter, I show how Projekt DA-SEIN cultivates specific aspects of conviviality and welcome as well as how teaching and helping shape the home offered to asylum-seekers. In exploring the OKE's approach to home and asylum-seeking, I draw on my ethnographic research, including interviews and participant observations, as well as on program documents, to tease out how the social location of Basel and the theology of the OKE and Projekt DA-SEIN reveal aspects of home. I will describe the history of the program's founding as well as it goals and structure, which begin to shed light on the significance of both the social and theological motivations of the program and the quality of experiences cultivated at Projekt DA-SEIN. I will then share volunteer motivations and connections to the program, how the OKE's theologies of openness and conviviality shape the program, and how Projekt DA-SEIN incorporates an emphasis on integration, with special attention to the role of language as a marker of home and belonging. This chapter explores how qualities of home are complicated by the realities of asylum-seeking, the social and religious systems at play, and the diverse motivations of volunteers and participants. The "piece of home" offered by Projekt DA-SEIN may be understood in its focus on openness, its welcome of diverse experiences, and its cultivation of convivial spaces, as well as in the ways it reflects local cultural values and social expectations about home. Finally, the chapter offers reflections on the risks, possibilities, and limitations of the relational focus on home that is cultivated at Projekt DA-SEIN.

6.1 Welcome at Projekt DA-SEIN

Welcome at Projekt DA-SEIN is cultivated by the church's theology of openness, by volunteers and staff who participate in the program, and through a focus on ambivalence and presence. The structure of Projekt DA-SEIN, as a drop-in space with few programmatic elements, creates less of a focus on tasks and more of a relational emphasis. Projekt DA-SEIN prioritizes showing up and being present. This creates the feeling of a social club or family event, with activities embedded within a broader focus on being together. This familial feeling emerges through the welcome offered by staff and volunteers and the regularity of seemingly mundane activities, such as playing games, helping with meals and chores, and sharing stories of one's history, family, and interests. Both asylum-seekers and volunteers reflected that playing games, laughing together despite speaking different languages, and sharing meals created a sense of family and belonging. These convivial interactions can become associated with other places where these experiences had previously occurred, often in contexts of family and home. As a volunteer explained, reflecting on her experience at Projekt DA-SEIN, "Sometimes, being there, it is like being at home,

or with a family. I think it has something to do with being part of a group. When you feel like you belong to this group, it is a little bit like being at home."[2] Affective associations at Projekt DA-SEIN sometimes developed in ways that mirrored previous associations with family, community, and safety, and therefore created a sense of home.

Home is often defined by affective associations of safety, warmth, and welcome. Hungerbühler, the OKE's former Catholic theologian, reflects this understanding when she explains that one way home is understood at Projekt DA-SEIN is by being known and being safe. "We define home as a place where you are welcome, where you feel understood, where you feel safe, where you are valued and loved, where you can open up [...] that they know there is a place here next to the church where they can come when they are happy or sad or hungry or so."[3] Projekt DA-SEIN hopes to provide a space that offers this safety and a sense of being welcomed amid difficult experiences of asylum-seeking. This is expressed in the OKE's motivations for establishing the program, in the church's theology of openness and convivence, and in the ways volunteers shape the program.

6.1.1 Projekt DA-SEIN: Motivations

The initial Projekt DA-SEIN program was sponsored by the Christoph Merian Stiftung (CMS), a Basel-based foundation established by Christoph Merian, the Basel aristocrat who sponsored the construction of the Elisabethenkirche.[4] The program description identifies the target audience for the program as asylum-seekers who arrive in Basel via the Reception and Processing Center (*Empfangs- und Verfahrenszentrum/EVZ*). It identifies this audience specifically as "all asylum seekers with residence permit N or F, refugees with permit B, rejected asylum seekers and asylum seekers (still) without a regulated (and official) residence (EVZ) who remain in Basel for a short or long period of time."[5] The description further defines this group as typically young men, children and youth, and families. These groups have continued to be the primary participants in the program. The two spin-off programs, Projekt JUNG-SEIN and Projekt FRAU-SEIN, developed more targeted programs for these audiences. Projekt DA-SEIN casts a wide net, and the majority of participants are young men, under the age of 30, who arrived in the last three

2 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, October 25, 2018: 20181025_4FW_IN, Pos. 127.

3 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 67.

4 For more information, see: Christoph Merian Stiftung, "Christoph Merian Stiftung," accessed April 8, 2019, https://www.cms-basel.ch/.

5 Stade, *DA-SEIN*, 3.

years and are waiting for, or have recently received, results of their asylum applications. Asylum-seekers at the program had arrived from many different countries, including Afghanistan and Eritrea (these represented the two largest groups) as well as Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Tibet, Sudan, Nigeria, Turkey, and other countries.

The project description, written by Hungerbühler, the Catholic theologian serving the OKE at the time, and Annette Stade, the project consultant, acknowledges the diverse needs, beyond basic necessities, of those arriving in Basel as asylum-seekers. The document states, "Projekt DA-SEIN works to consciously create something beyond or in addition to 'basic services' for asylum-seekers."[6] Projekt DA-SEIN hopes to address the broader needs of asylum-seekers, including emotional and spiritual needs. In contrasting the offerings of the OKE with those available elsewhere, the project description states, "Besides basic provision of food and lodging, the public has only offered very few options for coping with and structuring everyday life."[7] By acknowledging the need for programs that provide emotional support, structure, and community, the OKE attends to the affective experiences of participants. It understands that asylum-seekers bring complex experiences such as loss, trauma, and dislocation, even as the program offers community, respite, and support.

The program is designed with few programmatic elements; instead the focus is on co-creating community and learning together, echoing the spirit of convivence. Without using the word "convivence," the project description reflects this language by stating that Projekt DA-SEIN creates "room for experiences and knowledge to be exchanged and connections created between the (socio-)culture of the host country and the different (socio-)cultures of the asylum-seekers and refugees."[8] The program provides a space to build community and share everyday experiences together with both Swiss volunteers and other asylum-seekers and refugees. In this context, convivial goals are supported by structures that attend to emotional and social experiences.

6.1.2 The Structure of Projekt DA-SEIN

The main program, Projekt DA-SEIN, was open three days a week during my time as a volunteer (though this has varied throughout the life of the program). During the open hours, the rooms in the basement of the church offices and the adjacent courtyard are open to asylum-seekers. Refugees and asylum-seekers can drop in at any time and attendance may vary. Some asylum-seekers show up every week while

6 Stade, *DA-SEIN*, 3.

7 Stade, *DA-SEIN*, 3.

8 Stade, *DA-SEIN*, 5.

others attend only sporadically or for special events. When Projekt DA-SEIN was established, an effort was made to advertise the program at refugee centers, at asylum homes, and through the word-of-mouth of other asylum-seekers. These efforts continued during my time at the program. When a new group of women from Eritrea arrived in Basel, they were picked up by a staff member and brought to the program as a group. Asylum-seekers and refugees were often referred to as guests (*Gäste*) at the program and were considered partners in building the community.

The physical space of the program in the basement of the church administrative building is accessed from a lower courtyard, where many activities occur in the warmer months. Inside the basement, the first room one enters is the kitchen, which has a large circular table. To the right is a smaller room referred to as "the chapel." It is most often used for group gatherings, for learning German in larger groups, for playing music, or for events such as watching the World Cup soccer tournament. From the kitchen, the next room is a large hallway with a foosball table, a storage area and coat rack, a bulletin board with relevant information such as contacts to relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations, a locker for volunteers to store their belongings, and a prayer book where participants are encouraged to write prayers and intentions. Further down a small hallway is the bathroom. To the right is a larger main room with long tables and benches, a computer, children's toys, cabinets for storing supplies and games, a sewing machine, and cushioned benches along two walls. Especially in colder months, this room is where most activities take place, including small group conversations, playing games, and learning German together. In addition, meals and occasional workshops take place in this room. The spaces were renovated for the purpose of the program – the original program was located entirely outdoors.

The heart of the program is found in the open hours, when the space can be used as participants desire. Often people sit at the tables, drink coffee, play games, work on German homework, share food, and converse. Sharing stories, cooking, playing games, and learning skills occupy most of the time at the program. Upon arriving, each person checks in on a clipboard and retrieves their name tag (or makes one if it is their first visit). There is a coat rack anyone could use and a small locker where volunteers can store and lock up their personal items. Each day a meal is cooked and shared at the program. The ingredients for the meal come from the food share program, also housed at the church, and additional items are purchased from the program budget. Meals are cooked by volunteers, asylum-seekers, and program staff. Occasionally, and more often during the summer months, special activities might be planned, such as hikes or outings to a museum or a cultural event. Infrequent Input Sessions cover a range of cultural and social topics, including Swiss holidays, religious celebrations, Swiss cultural practices, or skills such as cooking or personal health. There are occasional opportunities to participate in a choir or dance performance, join an art class, receive acupuncture, or attend theater or cultural events.

The program lists four basic values that are displayed in the kitchen: respect, gratitude, and appreciation as well as a commitment to being in community (*Respekt*, *Dankbarkeit*, *Wertschätzung*, und *Gemeinschaftsein*). These are in addition to the house rules that call for respect and mutual participation within the program; prohibit violence, drugs, and alcohol; and allow smoking only if one is over 18 years old. In addition, all participants are required to wear name tags, speak Standard German, and help with daily chores such as cooking and cleaning, as assigned by a staff member.

6.1.3 Welcome as Openness to Asylum-Seekers

The OKE's commitment to openness means welcoming diverse populations, as is seen in the choices the church has made to keep the church building open, to create diverse religious and spiritual offerings that are not tied to membership or affiliation, and to center social and cultural concerns alongside the religious and spiritual. This welcome is also seen in the OKE's outreach to asylum-seekers, which acknowledges the many experiences of unwelcome during the asylum journey. As the program description states, those "who have left their homelands due to social, political, religious, or economic reason, already have a difficult path behind them. Arriving in Switzerland, they feel foreign, disoriented, and lost in a new country."[9] Projekt DA-SEIN hopes to provide a different experience for asylum-seekers now that they have arrived in Basel.

This welcome is cultivated at Projekt DA-SEIN through intentional practices such as greeting people when they arrive by shaking hands and exchanging names and pausing to say good-bye when someone leaves.[10] Greeting and leave-taking, while also cultural practices found in Switzerland (see discussion in section 6.3), became a defining feature of the program, and one that often engendered a sense of welcome. These moments of greeting, though simple and ritualized, created affective connections that built over time and generated feelings of being known and welcome at the program. Hungerbühler shares that Projekt DA-SEIN's hope is for asylum-seekers "to be welcome downstairs, be called by name, be heard and seen, and be shown real interest."[11] This welcome begins by using a person's name

9 Stade, *DA-SEIN*, 3.

10 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 27, 2018: 20180927_DA-SEIN_v1_PO, Pos. 2. For example, one day I described arriving and entering the courtyard outside of the program. There were small groups of 2–3 people at different tables doing homework, often with one volunteer helping one or two asylum-seekers with German. As I walked past one group, both people, an asylum-seeker and a volunteer, paused and said hello to me and reached out to shake my hand. I shook their hands and greeted them back, then continued into the building.

11 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 27.

and creating time and space to talk and sit together. A volunteer reflected on this experience of welcome, especially in a diverse community.

> It really makes an impression that people from different origins and different religions and different languages are simply together in one place. And there are nice experiences, like when you arrive and people greet you and call your name from across the room. It gives you a kind of sense of home, because, how should I say it, you are recognized and probably also a little valued.[12]

Being recognized and valued creates a sense of belonging and occurs with simple actions of saying hello and shaking hands. Other practices at the program that cultivate a sense of welcome and generate community include wearing name tags and extending intentional invitations for asylum-seekers to join in activities.[13] Name tags and being known by name can provide a greater level of connection and generate a sense of family, as the volunteer above articulated. Name tags also encourage people to use each other's names and often facilitate conversations about the origins of names, how to pronounce them, what they mean, and how people received them. These exchanges can lead to talking about language and family. These conversations helped to build relationships, generate affectivity, and create a shared environment by bringing divergent experiences, including the use of different languages, into conversation. While this echoes basic hospitality, Projekt DA-SEIN aspires to go beyond hospitality by building a more mutual community across difference.

6.1.3.1 Volunteers and Openness

The welcome offered to asylum-seekers, the OKE's emphasis on openness, and a desire to have an impact on the political issue of asylum-seeking were reasons many volunteers were drawn to Projekt DA-SEIN. In a 2018 volunteer survey, as well as in my interviews, volunteers described being attracted to the OKE because of its openness. The volunteer survey summarized, "For many volunteers at the OKE, 'open' is a key word for their engagement and self-understanding. One said, 'For me, it is an attitude of openness and respect, which one pays to and owes one another.'"[14] For this volunteer, openness was a value they respected and felt reciprocated in, which gave them an entry point into volunteering at Projekt DA-SEIN. As Lorenz emphasized, "Last year we interviewed our volunteers about their motivation and […] they all emphasized the word 'open,' 99.5% emphasized the word 'open.'"[15]

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12 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 26, 2018: 20180926_3FW_IN, Pos. 91.

13 Not everyone wore a name tag, but volunteers and staff were instructed to ask people to put on name tags if they were not wearing them.

14 Projekt DA-SEIN, *DA-SEIN Interview*.

15 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1EI_IN, Pos. 215.

Another volunteer experienced openness at Projekt DA-SEIN in contrast to previous experiences of religious organizations being closed and rigid. After a lifetime of distance from the church, she felt connected to the OKE because of her participation in Projekt DA-SEIN as a volunteer and the openness of the church.[16] For another volunteer, openness translated into the experience of being together across differences at Projekt DA-SEIN. The volunteer told me:

> I think it is wonderful and impressive that people from different backgrounds and religions, different languages, are simply together in one place and get along so well. So it's that experience that I keep having, and for me it is the most wonderful experience, that in this place, we are all humans in the end, no matter where we come from. That's what I love so much.[17]

The space of difference found at Projekt DA-SEIN is not experienced as a space of exclusion, instead it is seen as a space of possibility. Most volunteers are not church members but are instead attracted to the church because of its cultural and social activities. This openness to non-members provides Projekt DA-SEIN with a diversity of volunteers who then provide welcome to asylum-seekers and who share their own visions and connections to home.

6.1.3.2 Welcome as Affective Experiences

Convivial experiences, such as those facilitated by greeting practices and by using one another's names, can generate affective experiences that build community and even generate feelings of home and family. The experience of arriving at Projekt DA-SEIN is less about showing up at a formal program and more about arriving at home or joining a social group of close friends. One is greeted, settles in, and is open to what might happen – participating in a conversation, chopping vegetables, listening to someone play music, playing with a child, helping with homework, participating in a sewing or art project, playing a game, or drinking a cup of a tea while observing the goings-on. There are limited requirements as to what someone is expected to do, except to engage with one another in some way.

This focus on presence and being together prioritizes relationships. This priority can create the feeling of a gathering with friends or family, with activities embedded within a broader focus of being together. This familial feeling emerges through the regularity of seemingly mundane activities that characterize conviviality, such as showing up, playing games, having conversations, and helping with meals and chores. In addition, feelings of safety and familiarity can be built through these activities.

16 Freiwilligensitzung Protocol, May 22, 2018: 20180522_Freiwilligensitzung_DO, Pos. 10.

17 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 26, 2018: 20180926_3FW_IN, 91.

Being part of everyday activities and sharing stories came to define the moments where I also felt a sense of belonging at the program and, in turn, where I experienced moments of home. One day I helped another volunteer and an asylum-seeker with a sewing project. The volunteer had brought a bag of clothes for hemming and the participant, who had worked for a time as a tailor before immigrating, was helping to alter them. I started chatting with them and then joined in, helping to cut, pin, and sew. During this time, we shared stories of work we had done, work we wished we had done, and work we hoped to do. While we collaborated, we talked and joked.[18] I reflected in my notes at the end of the day, "I had a sense, while sitting there, of being part of a community. I knew a lot of the people who came in and out of the room. I also know the rituals and ways of the program to some degree. This sense of familiarity gives me a sense of home."[19] Knowing people and being known, familiarity with systems and rituals, and engaging in shared practices, as well as laughing and talking, contributed to my own feelings of being at home at Projekt DA-SEIN.

Meals and chores also added to the convivial and familial associations of the program. On my first day of helping to prepare dinner, asylum-seekers and staff helped orient me by pointing out cutting boards and other kitchen tools I needed. I recorded the following observation about this experience: "Being in the kitchen was like being part of a family. There was a lot of working together but also assigning tasks […] It gave me a family feeling of community and work."[20] As I learned where the cutting boards were stored and as I chatted with participants, I became more familiar with and to the program, while deepening my knowledge of how the program operates, interacting with others, and establishing my own place within systems and relationships.

Feeling valued, being recognized, and sharing experiences with others can generate affective associations that translate to feelings of being at home or with family. An asylum-seeker from Eritrea reflected on his experience at Projekt DA-SEIN: "I feel that when you are also open with some people […] like when you joke each other […] you feel like brothers and sisters."[21] The welcome cultivated at Projekt DA-SEIN, along with the activities of being together, playing games, sharing a meal, and helping with projects, creates a feeling of connection and even feelings of home in some interactions. Echoing this sentiment, Renate Gäumann, Coordinator of Asylum and

18 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 6, 2018: 20180906_DA-SEIN_v2_PO, Pos. 13–21.

19 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 6, 2018: 20180906_DA-SEIN_v2_PO, Pos. 11–12.

20 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 27, 2018: 20180927_DA-SEIN_v1_PO, Pos. 18.

21 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 13, 2018: 20180713_3AS_IN, Pos. 386.

Refugee Services for Basel-Stadt, spoke at the program's *Sommerfest* and lauded Projekt DA-SEIN, saying the program provides connections to home by offering opportunities to be together, to share stories, and to build relationships.[22]

Yet, despite the emphasis on showing up and being together, there are also intentional ways that the program hopes to help asylum-seekers. These include cultivating relationships, assisting with the asylum process and the integration process, and sharing cultural resources and information. These aspects of helping are reflective both of the church's theological commitments to service and *Diakonia* and of the ways the OKE is embedded in Swiss political and social systems.

Home at Projekt DA-SEIN is also shaped within a social location and is culturally and spatially informed by Basel's distinct characteristics, geography, politics, and culture. Through its organizational structure, funding, language, customs, and physical location, the church is embedded in local social systems. At the same time, the OKE's theologies of openness and conviviality encourage individual and collective connections at the program that can generate meaningful experiences and "social existential feelings," to use Fuchs' words.[23] These feelings are connected to particular engagements with the world that can generate (or not generate) a "sense of place."[24] An openness to the diversity of experiences asylum-seekers bring cultivates a "piece of home" that is shaped by convivial and affective experiences, not just by the social and cultural norms of a place. Both aspects shape the home that participants encounter at the program. The OKE is embedded both in Switzerland and in the asylum system and, at the same time, it is creating new ways of being together across difficulty and difference.

6.1.3.3 Seasonal Festivals

One of these ways of being together is through seasonal festivals. These festivals make up a major programmatic element of Projekt DA-SEIN. These regular, non-religious festivals occur up to four times a year and are open to the public. In the original program description, seasonal festivals are described as a way to extend the program's goals of celebrating life and creating community. These festivals are also designed to invite the Basel community to get to know the program by visiting the church, enjoying food cooked by the asylum-seekers and volunteers, and experiencing aspects of the program, often through artistic performances or exhibits that are curated by members of the Projekt DA-SEIN community. The festivals feature art, music, culture, food, and dancing, much of it created by and with asylum-seekers. The original program description describes the participation of asylum-seekers as

22 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 11, 2018: 20180811_Sommerfest_v1_PO, Pos. 37.

23 Fuchs, "The Phenomenology of Affectivity," 612.

24 Convery, Corsane, and Davis, *Making Sense of Place*, 2.

both hosts and guests. "The meal should be prepared in advance by or with the help of the participants and the decisions, music, etc. will be organized or created by the participants. At the festival itself, however, the participants are guests."[25] This mixing of guest and host hopes to cultivate mutuality, break down one-sided hospitality, and extend welcome to asylum-seekers who have recently arrived in Basel.

The program description defines these festivals, not as parties focused on fun but, instead, as "a celebration of life."[26] The festivals acknowledge the tension between celebration and grief, reflected in the OKE's embrace of ambivalence. Ambivalence describes the complexity of human experience – the grief and joy, laughter and tears, that are often experienced through emotions, feelings, or affective associations.[27] This ambivalence is often heightened in the difficult situations many asylum-seekers have had and continue to experience.[28] The original Projekt DA-SEIN project description reads:

> Asylum-seekers and refugees who arrive in Switzerland have often been forced to leave family, relatives, and friends, who are threatened by war or economic insecurity. These circumstances, and their own insecure and difficult situations, mean many of these people are not thinking about festivals and celebrations.[29]

These seasonal celebrations are intended to provide a way to ritualize the year and provide welcome and celebration amid the difficulties many asylum-seekers face. They also offer a chance for other members of the Basel community to be hosted by the OKE and Projekt DA-SEIN participants and offers a chance to bridge the gap between asylum-seekers and the broader community.

6.1.4 Program Leadership

From 2016 to 2019, Projekt DA-SEIN was directed by Hungerbühler and managed by Ils van Looven. The program staff who run the daily operations of the program consist of young men completing their civil service (*Zivildienst*) and other interns. Switzerland has compulsory military service for all men.[30] Men who object to military conscription for reasons of conscience can participate in an alternative program of civil service, called Zivildienst, where they work in social service programs.[31]

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25 Stade, *DA-SEIN*, 6.

26 Stade, *DA-SEIN*, 6.

27 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, *Grundsatzpapier*.

28 Stade, *DA-SEIN*, 4.

29 Stade, *DA-SEIN*, 4.

30 Women may also volunteer to participate in military service, but they are not required to.

31 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über den zivilen Ersatzdienst (Zivildienstgesetz, ZDG)*, 824.0 (Fedlex, 1995), https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1996/1445_1445_1445/de.

Projekt DA-SEIN is one such program that benefits from this civil service program. Those completing their Zivildienst at Projekt DA-SEIN are responsible for the daily operations and are present on-site during open hours. There is high turn-over in these positions, as their service postings last only a few months. During my time at Projekt DA-SEIN there were at least eight different people responsible for the daily operation of the program. Yet, the Zivildienst participants also provided consistency through their daily presence and were aided by volunteers during open hours. The presence of these young Swiss people also brings the context of Switzerland to the program. Conversations about heritage, language, and distinct Swiss practices occurred with those completing their Zivildienst as well as with volunteers. Volunteers and staff shape the experience of the program in significant ways, including by bringing their own experiences, motivations, and understandings of home to bear on their interactions.

6.1.5 Program Volunteers and Welcome

Volunteers are essential contributors to the interactions at the program, since they help facilitate opportunities for mutual learning and offer welcome to refugees and asylum-seekers at Projekt DA-SEIN. Creating connections between asylum-seekers and the local Swiss population has always been an important goal of the program and is reflected in the original project description:

> For many asylum-seekers and refugees who have lived in Basel for a long time, contact with locals is usually limited to necessary administrative procedures, a small circle of people who provide support, and advice organizations. DA-SEIN places great value on maintaining and expanding the existing networks for asylum seekers and refugees as well as their advocates and confidants.[32]

These networks are primarily made up of volunteers from the Swiss community, though not all volunteers are Swiss citizens or long-term residents. There are a large number of non-Swiss residents in Basel, and the volunteer group reflects this diversity. For instance, I had recently arrived in Basel from the United States for my year of research and doctoral studies. While I spoke German, I did not speak or understand Swiss German. Two of the first volunteers I met were another American and a woman from Peru who were both in Switzerland due to work and family commitments.[33] Volunteers also include refugees or asylum-seekers who are now permanent residents, citizens of other countries working in Basel (ex-pats), and resi-

32 Stade, *DA-SEIN*, 4.

33 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, February 8, 2018: 20180208_DA-SEIN_PO.

dents of neighboring countries (France and Germany) who travel across the border to volunteer. Volunteers included those with Jewish, Muslim, and Christian identities, and those who attend church regularly, sporadically, and never at all. While some volunteers have a history of church affiliation, many do not. The division of participant and volunteer was sometimes even less clear, as asylum-seekers become volunteers, sometimes taking on this role in the parallel program, Projekt JUNG-SEIN. This diversity of volunteer affiliations creates a unique mix of populations, where asylum-seekers, ex-pats, permanent residents, and citizens all show up with the goal of being and learning together. These convivial encounters facilitate many aspects of home. Volunteers are highly valued at the program. They are viewed as important participants in the Projekt DA-SEIN community, and they help create the sense of home that Projekt DA-SEIN cultivates.

Volunteers sign up for weekly shifts of around three hours and, while they commit to regular shifts, their attendance can vary and they come and go over time.[34] Volunteers interact with participants where there is need and interest.[35] This might occur through conversation, playing games, helping with German homework, cooking, or sharing tea. Some volunteers have a special interest that they offer to asylum-seekers at the program, whether helping with introductory German, reviewing resumes, or teaching new games. Yet most volunteers expect to simply show up and hang out with whoever is there. Becoming a program volunteer is less about facilitating the program and more about becoming part of the program. The daily, unscripted interactions of program participants, volunteers, asylum-seekers, and refugees are the heart of the program. Showing up, having conversations, playing games, or practicing German are not tangential but central to the volunteer description. The presence of volunteers shapes the atmosphere of welcome and being together that is at the heart of the program. In this way the program's emphasis on convivial interactions becomes more than an abstract goal; it is embodied through the presence of volunteers.

Volunteers are often thanked, and this message of gratitude, including the acknowledgment that the program would not be able to run without volunteers, is repeated. Volunteers attend monthly meetings led by the Projekt DA-SEIN leadership team and are kept abreast of upcoming events and relevant activities in the community via a weekly email. Regular "supervision" meetings are also offered. This is an opportunity for volunteers to meet together with a psychotherapist and discuss any issues that might arise for them through the volunteer work. Topics could include feelings about the volunteer work, setting boundaries, or reviewing specific encounters or situations.

34 Stade, *DA-SEIN*, 7.

35 Visitors can also drop in when invited by volunteers or program leadership.

Volunteers are an important source of support and connection to the local population for asylum-seekers, and this is a defining feature of Projekt DA-SEIN. The initial program description states: "At Projekt DA-SEIN, volunteers not only support project management and program offerings but are also a cultural and integrative bridge for asylum-seekers to a new home."[36] Volunteers are seen as key to creating connections to Basel for asylum-seekers, and this includes supporting their integration into Swiss life. This support might include helping asylum-seekers understand the local social, cultural, and political norms and expectations, learn the local language, or navigate the infrastructure and bureaucracy of the city and state. This dual role of providing support and companionship as well as education and social integration reflects the situation of Projekt DA-SEIN as both a theologically and a socially informed program.

6.2 Ambivalence and "Being There"

In addition to welcome and hospitality, two other beliefs motivate the program's engagement with asylum-seekers: a desire for each person to be known and seen in their fullness, which is a reflection of the church's focus on "ambivalence," and a focus on being present, or "being there," over specific activities or outcomes. The focus on ambivalence extends welcome to the diversity of experiences that asylum-seekers bring to the program. And "being there" refers to an aspect of presence that is fundamental to the program and that is embodied through volunteers, staff, and asylum-seekers by showing up and being together.

Projekt DA-SEIN's welcome extends beyond opening the church doors for meals, German lessons, or festivals. Projekt DA-SEIN seeks to welcome the fullness of asylum-seekers, embracing both the positive as well as the more difficult, or even negative, aspects of their lives. Hungerbühler shares,

> Yes, it is important to us, as a social project, that we don't just see those who have fled only as persecuted or sad or existentially broken. Instead, they are also precious people who bring something with them. They have experienced something, maybe really terrible things. Yet there is still something indestructible, that is our belief, like the mystics say: "There is the spark of God in every heart."[37]

This welcoming of the diversity of human experience and a willingness to embrace its complexity is captured in the OKE's understanding of "ambivalence," which involves welcoming and accepting the fullness of life, including positive and negative

36 Stade, *DA-SEIN*, 7.

37 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 51.

experiences and emotions, even if they are contradictory. The good and the bad, grief and joy, mourning and celebration are welcomed as part of the fullness of human experience.[38] This is especially significant for people, such as asylum-seekers, who are often primarily identified by characteristics of their flight and need for asylum.

Projekt DA-SEIN attempts to step outside of these dominant narratives and include all sides of the asylum-seeker's experience. The program recognizes the difficult situation of many asylum-seekers, but also that they are whole people with skills, talents, families, hopes, and dreams. During my time at Projekt DA-SEIN, I spoke with a person who had a computer science degree, a physicist, a beautician, a tailor, and many teachers, artists, and accomplished athletes. These parts of themselves, hidden in the broader community and within the asylum process, were witnessed and sometimes actualized at the program. At Projekt DA-SEIN asylum-seekers could show other parts of themselves, including professional and personal capacities, and be defined beyond the characteristics that also oppress them.

Hungerbühler describes this focus on seeing the whole person, beyond their most pressing needs: "I see you as you are. I see you as a person, as I am a person, with fears and suffering, with a history, perhaps with scars, but I also see your hope, your potential, and that you are created by God."[39] In contrast to narratives about good or bad asylum-seekers, Projekt DA-SEIN acknowledges that all people are complex and that there is power in being seen through the lens of one's greater humanity. From a theological aspect, Hungerbühler shares that being seen by God is one powerful way of being in relationship with the divine. "Another name for God is not only 'da-sein' but also 'El Roi,' God sees. Many people want to simply be seen and not simply be invisible."[40] Projekt DA-SEIN, by being a place designed for asylum-seekers, brings this focus and visibility to the lives of its participants.

The name of the program, DA-SEIN, also emphasizes "being there" over direct assistance or programs. As Hungerbühler explains, one meaning of DA-SEIN is taken from the biblical story in Exodus where Moses encounters God in the burning bush. Yet, the meaning of "being there" also provides non-religious meaning and motivation for the program. "[DA-SEIN] is the name of God, 'I am there,' or 'I am with you,' or 'I will be there,' as in the passage where God reveals himself in the bush to Moses. And on the other hand, in everyday language, it is simply, 'we are here, we want to be here for you and with you.'"[41] This commitment to "being there" creates convivial spaces to be with difficult experiences, even across differences in migration status. In a program report from 2018, a staff member describes an experience of being together with the uncertainty that asylum-seeking creates. The

38 Offene Kirche Elisabethen, *Grundsatzpapier*.

39 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 27.

40 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 55.

41 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 134.

report describes when an asylum-seeker received a deportation notice. The staff member explains,

> He came to us with the notice and cried, and we were aware that despite this great friendship and our closeness, we have two different fates, and we listened and encouraged him. And then we prayed together. That doesn't happen every day! But it was important! […] There were maybe ten of us there and suddenly one of them started to tell about his flight. And then others told their stores of fleeing and suddenly it was a very open-hearted, empathetic space. That's why this experience didn't pull the floor out from under us. Instead, it was the opposite, it strengthened us to continue on.[42]

In this example the community was not able to change the outcome of the asylum decision directly. Yet, being in community, without being able to fix the situation, nonetheless generated connection, support, and empathy. This coming together in difficult circumstances reflects the dual context of Projekt DA-SEIN as providing both emotional and social connection. This social and spiritual support includes an acknowledgement of the spiritual needs of asylum-seekers. Religion plays a minor role at Projekt DA-SEIN. There is no evangelizing, and everyone is free to practice their faith and follow their own beliefs. Hungerbühler says, "Downstairs religiosity, in an explicit sense, does not play a role. Rather, downstairs, everything must be very free […] that is very, very important to us, so it is not an issue. Downstairs people can feel at home with their religiosity and traditions."[43] Yet attention to asylum-seekers as "created by God" and as having equal worth as others informs the program. There is also an effort to cultivate reciprocity and openness by welcoming diverse religious practices while also offering Christian practices that may support asylum-seekers.

For example, there is a prayer book (*Gebetbuch*) that sits on top of the locker used by volunteers in the middle hallway of the program. There is a sign in front of it that reads: "Every Monday and Thursday at 12:00 we pray for you in the church. You are welcome to write your wishes, concerns, and prayers or simply your name or the names of your friends and family in this book. We take these concerns and prayers to the City Prayer and pray for them."[44] Volunteers are encouraged to use the prayer book as a resource with asylum-seekers when a difficult issue arises, though it is usually a passive presence. It was sometimes used one-on-one with asylum-seekers, and it was used in one instance during an Input Session when all attendees were gathered together. This Input Session addressed changes to E.U. and Swiss migration policies that occurred in April 2018 and directly impacted program participants. Specifically, these changes dictated how and when asylum applicants had to leave

42 Projekt DA-SEIN, *DA-SEIN Interview*.

43 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 25.

44 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 31.

Switzerland in the case of a negative decision on an asylum application. For asylum-seekers from Ethiopia and Afghanistan, the official government policy, in cases of a negative decision, changed from voluntary return to involuntary deportation. One asylum-seeker who was a frequent participant at Projekt DA-SEIN had been arrested the previous day and, it was feared, would soon be deported under these new agreements.[45] An Input Session was held, and these changes were explained, with the aid of flip charts and diagrams. At the end of this presentation, the program manager brought out the prayer book. She wrote the name of a Projekt DA-SEIN participant, who had been arrested under these new laws, in the book. She then asked everyone to take a moment to think of this man, wish him the best, and send him thoughts. Then she invited people to speak out loud what they would like to say to him and what they would like to wish for him. She wrote down the things people said out loud in the prayer book. Asylum-seekers and volunteers offered wishes for security amid the uncertainty and for perseverance, strength, peace, hope, health, and support; they also offered wishes that he would be able to live where he wants to live.[46] This relational action engaged all members of the Projekt DA-SEIN community in being together in the face of inhospitable migration policies. The opportunity to incorporate concrete ways of being together in difficulties is a unique aspect of Projekt DA-SEIN. Though little direct action could be taken in the face of these new laws, praying and being together acknowledged and witnessed their impact on the community.

This focus on presence, on "being there," and on convivial interactions straddles religious and non-religious understandings of the importance of being with people in their struggles without the objective to fix, teach, or direct. In this vein, Hungerbühler describes Projekt DA-SEIN as moving away from the hierarchal thinking of "we give you something." Instead, the intention is "we are here together, and we learn from one another." She goes on to say, "Of course we remain in a privileged situation, that is undisputed and cannot be discussed away."[47] Yet there is a focus not just on serving asylum-seekers' needs, but also on their active participation in and contribution to the program. In this way, conviviality seeks to move away from hierarchical structures where those with more privilege serve those with less privilege. This relational focus underpins Projekt DA-SEIN's approach to home: being together in the joy and grief, amid the political advantages and disadvantages. There is a goal of interdependence and of mutual support, even while acknowledging the discrepancies in structural access and legal and social standing.

45 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, April 25, 2018: 20180425_DA-SEIN_Input_v2_PO.

46 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, April 25, 2018: 20180425_DA-SEIN_Input_v2_PO, Pos. 37.

47 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 19.

Hungerbühler describes her response to hearing about the difficult situations many people encounter, whether asylum-seekers or others. "I try to show that I have great empathy for these people. I cannot take away their sadness, but I can see and hear." This presence with another person is a central activity of Projekt DA-SEIN and a primary way the program believes it can assist asylum-seekers. In presence, helping is defined by being connected to and in relationship with one another. Presence is an aspect of conviviality, where being together is intentional even if, at the same time, it is ordinary. This interdependence necessitates shared spaces, such as those created by the OKE. In this way, conviviality creates opportunities for interdependence, working together, relying on each other, and impacting one another.

At the same time, Projekt DA-SEIN acknowledges the limits of the program's staff and volunteers in helping program participants. Instead, the leadership structure emphasizes showing up for people even while acknowledging that staff and volunteers often have little power to change peoples' situations, whether physical, economic, emotional, or spiritual. As Hungerbühler explains, "You cannot help most people. You can assist or give advice or you can say to yourself, 'Yes, ok, that was helping someone.' But we are actually convinced that each person can only help themselves, you can only be like a midwife. But you can't do anything in place of them doing it themselves."[48] This outlook acknowledges the difficult and marginal situations of asylum-seekers while being frank about the structural challenges that exist. The program wants both to help asylum-seekers and refugees make a home in Switzerland and to acknowledge the complexity embedded in this desire to help. Hungerbühler explains this tension saying, "No, you cannot save anyone. They must take the step themselves. But you can maybe simply strengthen their trust in that path."[49] Hungerbühler goes on to explain that supporting asylum-seekers in this way means being in contact with them and wading into the difficult waters they might face.[50] This focus on being together embraces showing up, not fixing. As Hungerbühler says, "We cannot change their situations, but we can be there and accompany them for a part of the journey."[51] A theology of convivence focuses on accompaniment over concrete outcomes, partly due to the acknowledgement that changing

48 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 51.

49 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 53.

50 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 53. Hungerbühler says: "I read this once: 'The path reveals itself when you walk it, it is not already there.' […] There is a wonderful Jewish midrash about the people of Israel crossing the Red Sea. The people had to first go in the water, and then it rolled aside and was passable. […] So, you have to get wet, and that means, in relation to DA-SEIN, to really be in contact with these people."

51 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20180520_Yodelmesse_1EI_II, Pos. 3.

systems is often out of the hands of either person. Yet, a singular focus on the individual can also obscure the larger systems at play in creating the need for asylum, and this limits the impact of convivence.

6.3 Helping at Projekt DA-SEIN

Projekt DA-SEIN is an outreach program designed to connect asylum-seekers with Swiss volunteers and the broader Basel community. The program hopes to help asylum-seekers establish a new home in Switzerland by offering spaces for them to gather, opportunities for them to access tools and resources, and assistance in meeting Swiss asylum and integration requirements. It also supports refugees and asylum-seekers by providing opportunities to meet other asylum-seekers and Swiss volunteers, to learn local customs and practices, to get assistance with job and school applications, and to become familiar with Basel, as well as to utilize the space of Projekt DA-SEIN for their own purposes, such as cooking, organizing events, playing games, and using equipment, for example, a sewing machine.

At a more substantive level, Projekt DA-SEIN seeks to help asylum-seekers who arrive in Basel to bridge the social, political, and economic barriers they encounter and to navigate the many practical aspects of applying for asylum. This helping, while not identified as the primary motivation of the program, remains a significant part of Projekt DA-SEIN. Helping is complex, as are its motivations and impacts. Sometimes helping at Projekt DA-SEIN focuses on the explicit goals related to meeting asylum requirements and integrating into Swiss society. Other times helping responds to a particular need presented by an individual or group of asylum-seekers, such as childcare needs, or answers specific questions about rules and expectations related to employment or housing. Projekt DA-SEIN is motivated by the church's theology of providing welcome and assistance to asylum-seekers, yet, at the same time, it is embedded in Swiss social and political systems. The structure of Projekt DA-SEIN reflects these political and social realties of Switzerland while at the same time it hopes to help asylum-seekers navigate the asylum requirements that these systems create.

6.3.1 Customs and Practices

As a program located in Basel, Switzerland, Projekt DA-SEIN is shaped by local cultural practices, laws and systems, geographic features, language, and values. One of the ways the program cultivates a sense of home in Basel is by teaching Swiss cultural practices and values at the program, both directly and indirectly. These practices include meal practices, greetings, social expectations, and language. Cultural values are also taught at the program, including topics such as gender roles, fair-

ness, respect, and acceptance of difference. This teaching occurred both explicitly through Input Sessions and implicitly through expectations of how to be at the program. Many of these practices and values are embedded in everyday interactions and, in teaching them, the program hopes to help asylum-seekers adjust to life in Switzerland by becoming more familiar with Swiss life. Yet, these locally specific practices are also ways that normative systems are reinforced, often without reflection, in everyday practices.[52] Thus, this kind of helping can also reinforce hierarchies and discount knowledge and practices brought by asylum-seekers.

Rules at the program, both implicit and explicit, were usually implemented to cultivate welcome and build community. As described above, these practices are critical to cultivating the welcome that is central to the OKE and Projekt DA-SEIN. Yet these same practices can reinforce the social norms and cultural values of the context in which the program is located. Practices at Projekt DA-SEIN included greeting people who arrived with a verbal greeting and handshake, always wearing a name tag, and helping to clean up at the end of the day. In addition, chores were randomly assigned to groups of people before the daily meal ended and included doing the dishes, cleaning the bathroom, and sweeping or mopping the floors. During mealtimes everyone was expected to sit at the tables, to not use cell phones, and to not leave the table until everyone was done with the meal. While these expectations facilitated convivial interactions, they were sometimes also enforced in ways that reflected more hierarchical relationships and reinforced Swiss social norms.

Staff reminded asylum-seekers to put on a name tag and asked volunteers to monitor and remind asylum-seekers to do this as well. Other rules, such as not using cell phones during dinner, were more consistently enforced. During one meal, a staff member reprimanded an asylum-seeker for getting up before the meal was finished. "Everyone has to stay at the table until the staff says so, it's for a good reason."[53] These interactions ranged from direct to casual reminders, sometimes interspersed with humor. At another meal an asylum-seeker was spotted using his phone under the table and the staff members on either side reminded him not to. They all laughed about it, saying he is monitored or watched from both sides.[54] While this was a casual comment, monitoring and being watched are often experiences closely linked to asylum-seeking and may have been experienced in more threatening ways in their country of origin or upon arriving in Switzerland.

In addition, rules were reviewed during volunteer meetings. At one meeting, systems for assigning kitchen tasks were reviewed as well as check-in procedures

52 Bridge, "Pierre Bourdieu," 77.

53 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, June 21, 2018: 20180621_DA-SEIN_v2_PO, Pos. 5–12.

54 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 13, 2018: 20180913_DA-SEIN_Museum_v2_PO, Pos. 18–19.

(for documenting who attended). At another meeting there was a long conversation about how to prevent games and game pieces from going missing. One idea from a volunteer was to have volunteers "check out" the game with an asylum-seeker.[55] Other culturally constructed concepts, such as time, punctuality, and follow-through revealed additional values at the program. During the daily program hours, these weren't often an issue, aside from daily chores and meal preparation, as people are free to drop in and leave as they like. Yet, for special events, such as attending a performance or exhibit, volunteers were often enlisted to encourage asylum-seekers to sign up and commit to attending events.[56] In addition, leaving for events such as a hike or a performance usually involved catching the correct tram on time or arriving in time for an event. These were times when staff specifically commented on the challenges of getting participants to be on time.[57]

Cultural practices and rules provide shape to the program and serve several functions. First, they give structure and common expectations to the program. By encouraging familiarity with names, an atmosphere of welcome is cultivated, and by setting common ground rules, the program creates reliable expectations for those who participate. Second, many of its practices and rules reflect the customs of the place where the program is located, namely Basel, Switzerland. Formal greetings with handshakes, eating meals in a group, and being on time are common practices in Switzerland. By modeling and teaching these practices, Projekt DA-SEIN also tries to help asylum-seekers learn about and adapt to the place where they find themselves.

6.3.1.1 Input Sessions

The sharing of local Swiss values also occurs during Input Sessions. These Input Sessions are organized by staff (and occasionally by volunteers or asylum-seekers, with the assistance of staff) and cover cultural, social, and religious topics. Sometimes the topics are related to current events, such as changes to migration laws or upcoming holidays and religious events. Input Sessions about political issues also offer opportunities for being with difficulties (see the example in section 6.2.1). Sometimes Input Sessions cover a social topic perceived as both important to know and different from perspectives asylum-seekers might bring, for example, relations between men and women or views on homosexuality. And sometimes they cover local religious holidays or practices. Because many religious holidays are also national holi-

55 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 18, 2018: 20180918_DA-SEIN_Sitzung_v1_PO, Pos. 9.

56 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, May 30, 2018: 20180530_DA-SEIN_v2_PO, Pos. 4.

57 I did not have issues with individuals not showing up for interviews or when we planned to meet.

days and schools and businesses are closed, these Input Sessions offer information about both the religious and social context of Switzerland.[58]

During my time at the program, Input Session topics included Easter, Ramadan, and other fasting holidays; Christmas and Pentecost; changes to migration laws; relations between men and women; homosexuality; and hygiene and health. These sessions were presented as informational and were not designed to tell people how to think. But they often modeled social expectations and values such as fairness, respect, and acceptance of difference. As Lorenz shared, there are tenets on which the program does not compromise, especially related to areas such as inclusion, equity, and gender identity.[59] In this case, navigating how to live and learn together erred on the side of teaching in order to protect rights viewed as critical by the church.

At another Input Session, focused on relationships between men and women, a staff member led the conversation and individuals in small groups were invited to reflect on cultural norms in their countries regarding how men and women interact. The Swiss cultural norms were also presented, setting up a contrast and compare model for the conversation. The Input Session ended with a strong emphasis on equal rights between genders as a value and right in Switzerland and one that had been fought for over the years. This was then extended to emphasize that anyone who is in Switzerland is subject to this gender equality, including women from asylum-seekers' countries of origin.[60] Several examples of how men at the program had not extended this right to women from their country of origin were described in order to emphasize that this value was expected at the program.

Yet, differences in values and backgrounds sometimes led to conflict. An asylum-seeker I spoke with expressed his frustration about a conversation he had with a volunteer who insisted that the burka should be outlawed in Switzerland.[61] And on my part, I had more than one conversation with asylum-seekers who voiced anti-Semitic views they had inherited from their countries of origin.[62] I was unabashed in my critique and insistence that anti-Semitism was illegitimate and unacceptable

58 There are also Input Sessions about holidays from other religions and traditions, such as the Muslim celebrations of *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*. These were presented by program participants, both refugees and volunteers, in conjunction with program staff. These Input Sessions depend on whether the refugees are interested in presenting parts of their traditions and cultures.

59 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1EI_DA-SEIN_IN.

60 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 26, 2018: 20180726_DA-SEIN_Input_v1_PO, Pos. 59–71.

61 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 20, 2018: 20180920_6AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 7.

62 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 29, 2018: 20180929_JUNG-SEIN_v1_PO, Pos. 9–11; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, November 15, 2018: 20180915_14AS_Rheinschwimm_II, Pos. 11.

and built on a history of blaming Jews. Thus, learning and teaching sometimes appeared under the guise of paternalism, yet it can also be viewed as a shared responsibility to create livable societies and challenge destructive views.

At the same time, Projekt DA-SEIN does not always directly challenge external structures that impact asylum-seekers or explicitly work towards systemic change. When an undocumented asylum-seeker arrived who was unable to apply for asylum in Switzerland due to the Dublin accord, staff tried to find temporary housing for him but also understood their actions as a short-term solution. One staff member said, "We can't do anything about it, if he's out and gets caught, he is deported."[63] There is a desire to help asylum-seekers succeed in the asylum process, yet the very process is heavily stacked against asylum-seekers. While volunteers and church resources hope to help participants set up their lives in Switzerland, the ways to do this are inherently limited by the asylum system.

6.3.1.2 A Focus on Integration

There is a tension in the program between, on one hand, the goals of shared convivence and being with and, on the other hand, an emphasis on helping asylum-seekers integrate in Switzerland. As explored in Chapter 2, home can become identified with normative and rigid definitions of belonging that exclude diversity and alterity. Nation-states are particularly prone to creating singular definitions of home while excluding nuance and diversity. In Switzerland, national languages, geography, and the cultural imagination similarly define a Swiss vision of home. In significant ways, asylum-seekers are considered as being outside of Swiss definitions of home and belonging and as needing to adapt to Swiss values and perspectives.

In this way, the state's focus on integration places a high value on adopting Swiss viewpoints, customs, and values, as framed in the need to "be familiar with the Swiss way of life."[64] Familiarity with the "Swiss way of life" includes knowing the social customs, history, language, and norms that define Swiss society, all of which are things encouraged at Projekt DA-SEIN.[65] Integration is often viewed in a positive light, as providing avenues for asylum-seekers and other migrants to be more fully part of the local society and to take advantage of more opportunities. Yet, integration also

63 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 18, 2018: 20180918_DA-SEIN_Sitzung_v1_PO, Pos. 5

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

65 Antonius Liedhegener, "Religion, Bürgergesellschaft und Pluralismus. Gesellschaftliche und politische Integration aus der Perspektive demokratischer politischer Systeme," in *Integration durch Religion? Geschichtliche Befunde, gesellschaftliche Analysen, rechtliche Perspektiven*, ed. Edmund Arens et al., Religion – Wirtschaft – Politik (Pano-Verl., 2014), 63.

carries highly normative expectations that neither account for the diversity implicit in a society nor take consider what newcomers contribute to the shared space.[66]

These assumptions and expectations about integrating into Swiss society are often adopted by non-profit organizations. At Projekt DA-SEIN, a focus on helping asylum-seekers adapt is found in the original program description. In addition, volunteers and staff support asylum-seekers in learning about Swiss life both directly and indirectly by teaching about Swiss cultural values, instituting social expectations such as speaking German and wearing name tags, creating guidelines for participating in meals, and teaching the importance of understanding and adhering to values such as equal gender roles, fairness, respect, and acceptance of difference.

During my time at Projekt DA-SEIN, there was an emphasis on increasing the program's support for integration goals. These integration goals focus on several criteria, many of which are reflected in the federal government's citizenship requirements, including participation in local political, educational, and economic activities; not posing a security risk; and achieving adequate proficiency in the local language.[67] At a volunteer meeting, suggestions were made by volunteers and staff to include more topics related to integration, including focusing German conversations on topics in the integration manual, having a specific conversation topic each month, preparing Input Sessions related to integration (such as learning about parks in Basel, trash collection, and cultural topics), and focusing on both written German homework assignments and conversation practice.[68]

Staff members told me that integration goals did not conflict with other goals of the program, such as convivence and being together. On the contrary, they were seen as critical to helping asylum-seekers gain a foothold in Switzerland and achieve milestones such as finding an apartment, securing education opportunities, and gaining employment.[69] The desire to help asylum-seekers adapt to the Swiss culture informs many aspects of Projekt DA-SEIN, such as providing support in learning German, assisting with job and school applications, serving and preparing food, creating connections to legal aid non-profits and other support services, and organizing events and projects. Helping both bumps up against the convivial goals of Projekt DA-SEIN and is understood as a way of reaching these goals. Being together and showing up at the program often also meant teaching and helping asylum-seek-

66 Mey and Streckeisen, "Integration von Ausländern."

67 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über die Ausländerinnen und Ausländer*, 142.20, 26.

68 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, May 22, 2018: 20180522_Freiwilligensitzung_DO, Pos. 27–33.

69 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, June 26, 2019: 20190626_2EI_II; 20190227_3EI_II.

ers in ways that are surprisingly similar to the requirements of integration (see further discussion in section 6.4).

This similarity reveals the overlap between the goals of convivence and goals of integration. They both hope to generate successful communities of co-existence with the other. They approach this goal differently in that convivence seeks to *recognize* difference while integration hopes to *reduce* difference. Yet, despite these contrasts, both systems operate by accepting and undergirding the civic and social orders. As David Congdon points out, while Sundermeier's "hermeneutic of difference" opens a space for encountering the other, it does not effectively acknowledge or work to change structural realities that reinforce systems of power.[70] By working to recognize the other within existing systems, the systems themselves often fall out of focus. At the program there was often little distinction between the goals of welcome and "being there," with an emphasis on convivial interactions, and a focus on supporting integration through learning German and other local practices. This blurring of motivations means that the ways Projekt DA-SEIN tacitly underscores the asylum system were sometimes obscured. Welcome, like hospitality, is consistently extended by those who have access and control of resources.

6.3.2 Volunteers and Helping

This blurring of welcome and integration was also reflected in the motivations of volunteers who participate at program. For volunteers and church staff, the reasons to help asylum-seekers were diverse but often focused on impacting individual lives by helping asylum-seekers adapt to life in Switzerland and navigate the requirements of the asylum system. Yet this desire, like Congdon argues above, does not always acknowledge larger structural realities. Instead, it operates inside of them. In addition, volunteers bring their own sense of what they can offer asylum-seekers and their own sense of home and belonging.

Some volunteers had a specific desire to give something to others in response to the privileges and opportunities they had been given. Others wanted to help asylum-seekers in Basel during a difficult period of transition. Some wanted to share familial aspects of home and to create deeper connections in the community. Others wanted to make an impact and help asylum-seekers with specific skills such as learning German or finding jobs. Others wanted an opportunity to have relevance in the world, to contribute, and to make a difference. One volunteer had been forced to retire early from work due to health challenges but still desired a place where she could share her gifts and make an impact.[71] Another volunteer, also retired, wanted a place to share his professional skills of career counseling. In addition, the staff at

70 Congdon, "Emancipatory Intercultural Hermeneutics."

71 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 18, 2018: 20180718_5FW_II.

Projekt DA-SEIN had told him how delighted they were to have a male volunteer, when the majority of volunteers were female, as well as an older person, since many asylum-seekers were used to more intergenerational contexts.[72]

For many volunteers, being able to help was a primary motivation to volunteer at the program. Some volunteers wanted to create better circumstances for newly arrived asylum-seekers in order to share what they had received in their lives in Switzerland. In a 2018 volunteer survey, one respondent explained, "I have had such a good life. We are a very integrated Swiss family, original Swiss, and therefore, I particularly enjoy meeting these people and getting to know them and hearing from them."[73] Helping and contributing can bring more fulfillment, even for those who are not retired or facing limited social access. Several younger volunteers also talked about how meaningful it was to participate in a program like Projekt DA-SEIN and be part of the lives of asylum-seekers.[74]

While a desire to help can easily reflect patterns of power and privilege, as well as othering impulses, helping and contributing are also related to meaningful work. Many volunteers connected with this aspect of work at Projekt DA-SEIN. The volunteer who had been forced to leave her professional life due to health challenges was still able to contribute to society and share her skills and experiences.[75] Lissa Malkki, in her book *The Need to Help*, explores the personal needs that are met for people who participate in humanitarian projects.[76] She found that those who engage in humanitarian outreach are people with diverse desires and needs who "sought to be part of something greater than themselves, to help, to be actors in the lively world."[77] Making a contribution beyond the self is an important human endeavor. There are many needs that are met through altruism and service, including discovering oneself, generating feelings of making an impact, and connecting to people and causes that are bigger than oneself. These goals can have a positive personal impact in volunteers' lives, such as finding greater meaning and building a sense of identity and belonging.

Several volunteers even expressed the ability to help and contribute at Projekt DA-SEIN as one way they experienced home at the program. It is not surprising that ideals of helping found resonance in a church setting, where service is tied to

72 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 13, 2018: 20180913_1FW_IN, Pos. 136. This valuing of the contributions of elders is another way of creating alternative spaces at Projekt DA-SEIN that acknowledge wisdom, age, and diversity.

73 Projekt DA-SEIN, *DA-SEIN Interview*.

74 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 26, 2018: 20180926_3FW_IN; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, October 25, 2018: 20181025_4FW_IN.

75 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 18, 2018: 20180718_5FW_II, Pos. 5.

76 Liisa H. Malkki, *The Need to Help: The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism* (Duke University Press, 2015).

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

faithfulness to God. Christian theology implores followers to emulate the ways that Jesus attended to those in need and to look beyond themselves to a larger community. Some volunteers who had left the church found that participating in Projekt DA-SEIN reconnected them to their roots in the church. Contributing to the life of another person or to a larger community are often part of human meaning-making, socially and theologically.

Helping at Projekt DA-SEIN is often found in acts of showing up and being present in mundane ways, such as in games and sharing meals, as well as being present to the difficult realities of asylum-seeking, including the violence and injustices many have faced.[78] This focus on "being with" stands in contrast to some of the more overt motivations and actions designed to help asylum-seekers. I noticed that I also valued helping asylum-seekers and sharing my skills while volunteering at the program. One example was on a day I was asked to show someone how to operate the sewing machine. I spent the afternoon helping a woman make a traditional Eritrean house dress. She told me it was the kind of dress her mother made, but she had sewed them by hand. She spoke very little German, but we spent the afternoon collaborating on a project that was important to her, and became important to me.[79]

Yet acts of helping, especially across power differentials, can entrench the divide between those with access to resources and power and those without. Helping can become tied to paternalism and a focus on self-fulfillment over actions that make a real impact on the needs and lives of others. At Projekt DA-SEIN I noted at times paternalistic comments and behaviors. This became particularly obvious in situations of teaching or instruction. There were many teachable moments of telling asylum-seekers how things operate in Switzerland, sometimes concerning practical matters, such as punctuality and greeting practices. Other times teaching occurred in the areas of social mores and values, either formally at Input Sessions, such as about gender relations, or informally in conversations about practices in Switzerland, such as when discussing dating, social customs, and family practices (see the examples in section 6.3.1). Though these teachable moments are well-intentioned, they can act to maintain hierarchies and reinforce acceptable systems of knowledge.

As Russell argues in her in her book *Just Hospitality*, the goal of a hospitality grounded in justice is "to meet others as they are, not as objects of our charity, but persons in their own right, capable of making choices about their destiny. If we insist they dress as we do and follow the same manners, we are not exercising

78 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1EI_IN, Pos. 239. Lorenz states: "Sometimes it's sad, but that's the way it is. To be there in the presence of sadness, of violence, of bad memories, that's it."

79 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, April 5, 2018: 20180405 _32AS_II.

hospitality but 'reforming' others to match our expectations."[80] At Projekt DA-SEIN, encouragement toward adapting Swiss ways of life often became enmeshed with hospitality in ways that echo Russell's definition of "reforming."[81] Though supporting asylum-seekers in adapting to life in Switzerland was motivated by the very real requirements of the asylum system, this focus also served to dilute hospitality into conforming, while the agency of asylum-seekers became secondary.

There were also comments about asylum-seeking that, while also well-intentioned, reinforced notions of who deserves to seek asylum or not. One volunteer lamented that an asylum-seeker's application had been rejected, noting how diligently he had worked. "He is the kind of person we want," she said.[82] Yet, qualifying for asylum is based not on personal characteristics, or even following local habits and practices, but on the need of a person to find a safe and livable place to build a life. This basic tenet of asylum was sometimes obscured by the pressure to fit into the Swiss community.

At the same time, some volunteers struggled with a sense of guilt for not being able to do more to help asylum-seekers or to be more available to volunteer at the program. The psychotherapist who led a supervision meeting encouraged volunteers to be present to people where they are and to also take care of their own needs when processing the difficult stories and situations they witnessed.[83] She also commented that confronting the powerlessness of asylum-seeking can reflect the lack of power in our own lives, which is often hidden from view (see more in section 9.2.3). For citizens of first-world countries, it is often unfamiliar to focus on this lack of agency and vulnerability and it can be uncomfortable to be confronted with it.[84] Vulnerability is a fact of all life (see the discussion in section 2.1.4), yet it is common to attempt to distance oneself from this reality. Volunteering at Projekt DA-SEIN brought one's own vulnerability and dependency into view.[85]

The psychotherapist encouraged volunteers to recognize their powerlessness but also to step out of their role in the cycle of trauma. She presented a model called the "trauma triangle," which identifies three roles that can reemerge in current relationships for those who have experienced trauma – victim, perpetrator, and savior. If volunteers continue to play the savior role, they can actually continue

80 Russell, Clarkson, and Ott, *Just Hospitality*, 81.

81 Russell, Clarkson, and Ott, *Just Hospitality*, 81.

82 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, April 25, 2018: 20180425_DA-SEIN_Input_v2_PO, Pos. 68.

83 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 22, 2018: 20180822_Supervision_volunteer_meeting_v1_PO, Pos. 18, 30–31.

84 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 22, 2018: 20180822_Supervision_volunteer_meeting_v1_PO, Pos. 28.

85 This vulnerability and dependency are also conditions of creating home (see discussion in section 2.1.4).

the trauma cycle, instead of disrupting it. This reflects a pattern found in Western cultures: when entering new spaces Westerns can see themselves as the hosts, even in contexts where they are the newcomers. Taking on this assumed role of host can serve to perpetuate roles of dominance and impose an "organizing reality" on these spaces, superseding other ways of being (see more in 9.2.3).[86] In his book *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*, theologian Willie Jennings calls this tendency to take on the assumed role of host "inverted hospitality."[87] In the case of volunteers at Projekt DA-SEIN, automatically adopting the role of hosting and helping can serve to perpetuate a trauma cycle that maintains disempowering patterns in asylum-seekers' lives, instead of supporting their agency and autonomy.

6.3.3 Home and Safety

The desire to help is often related to another aspect of home that emerged in my conversations with volunteers and staff: the experience of safety and security and the desire to share this experience. Lorenz connected safety and security directly to his own understanding of home.

> I don't think that we have a steady home here on earth. I was born in Germany and came here in 1989 and now I'm naturalized, I'm doing service in the Swiss Army. So "home" is where I share the same faith and the same values, that's home. And where I can rest and be safe; where I can give back what I brought with me.[88]

This sense of safety and security as home was reflected in his interactions with asylum-seekers. He mentioned that asylum-seekers have also thanked him for protecting them by protecting Switzerland, a place where they are safe. He relayed a conversation he had with an asylum-seeker who had served in the military in his country of origin and now thanked Lorenz for protecting Switzerland.[89] Lorenz reflects, "He thanks me for protecting the country where he is safe. That's home."[90] Here home is a shared experience of safety that is connected to a common place.

Another volunteer explained that his definition of home includes safety, and that this safety is connected to a specific place. "I think I would define home as, on one

86 Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (Yale University Press, 2011), 58.

87 Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 8.

88 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1EI_IN, Pos. 189.

89 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1EI_IN, Pos. 189.

90 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2019: 20190115_1EI_IN, Pos. 189.

hand, a feeling of safety and, on the other hand, also security."[91] He went on to say: "Yes, home for me is a place where I feel safe, where I feel a certain security. That can be a closed space, like my grandparents' house. But it can also be a mountain landscape where you have often hiked, or a lake where you regularly swim, for example. For me, that is home."[92] Another volunteer mentioned physical security and comfort as hallmarks of home that they realized were not universally shared. "Home [...] is strongly connected with a feeling, which is also about eating, drinking, and other things that are critical. Things like having an apartment, everything that I take for granted, but I am made aware here that these things cannot be take for granted."[93] These practical aspects of home were noted by this volunteer as missing from the lives of many asylum-seekers, who often did not have access, for example, to long-term housing or employment. This definition of home as safety echoes Hungerbühler's understanding of home at Projekt DA-SEIN, quoted at the beginning of this chapter: "We define home as a place where you are welcome, where you feel understood, where you feel safe, where you are valued and loved, where you can open up."[94] This security was often elusive for asylum-seekers, who have limited ability to influence asylum decisions or to help the families they left behind.

Yet, the connection between home and security can also reinforce barriers that designate who do or does not belong. The security of home often protects group identity and is defended by building borders, both physical and symbolic, as well as by arming armies, reinforcing ethnic and racial categories, and policing language and behaviors. This side of safety often comes at the expense of the safety and security of others. In the case of asylum-seeking, perceived safety is often defended from outsiders, including newcomers such as asylum-seekers. This tendency is often heightened when migrants arrive from countries with fewer economic resources.

6.3.4 Learning German at Projekt DA-SEIN

Another specific way Projekt DA-SEIN helps asylum-seekers is by supporting them in learning German. At a practical level, Projekt DA-SEIN puts a high value on learning German, and one of the most frequent activities at the program is doing German homework. Most often volunteers would help asylum-seekers with German homework, but asylum-seekers would also help each other, or work in groups.

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91 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 26, 2018: 20180926_3FW_IN, Pos. 56.

92 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 26, 2018: 20180926_3FW_IN, Pos. 55.

93 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 20, 2018: 20180920_2FW_IN, Pos. 193.

94 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 16, 2019: 20190116_2EI_IN, Pos. 67.

Learning German is critical for meeting Swiss integration requirements as well as for accessing schooling, work, and housing. The Swiss government emphasizes the importance of learning German for integration, and meeting this requirement was a strong focus for Projekt DA-SEIN. Finding German courses, completing homework, moving through the course levels, and passing exams occupied significant space and time at the program. The need to learn German in order to succeed in Switzerland (both by meeting integration requirements as well as by accessing schooling, housing, and work) was embraced by most people at the program, including volunteers, staff, and asylum-seekers.[95] Most asylum-seekers received at least one language class, and doing German homework and practicing speaking German was a focus of many afternoons at the program. Most often volunteers would help asylum-seekers with German homework, but asylum-seekers would also help each other, or work in groups.

I did not encounter ambivalence on the part of Projekt DA-SEIN leadership or volunteers on the centrality of learning German for new asylum-seekers. In fact, the requirement to speak Standard German was one of the few rules at the program.[96] Staff would remind groups to speak Standard German, and this point was reinforced at monthly volunteer meetings. This desire to support asylum-seekers in learning German emerged in other contexts, such as Input Sessions, where the interactions also included encouraging asylum-seekers to practice writing and speaking. This emphasis reflects an understanding of German proficiency as necessary for integrating into Swiss society.[97] Of course, the requirement to speak Standard German served a practical purpose as well. It is the most common language spoken among program participants, whether asylum-seekers, volunteers with varying language abilities, or local staff, and having a standard language fostered inclu-

95 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, November 3, 2018: 20181103_Herbstfest_v2_PO, Pos. 30. One volunteer, who was especially committed to German instruction, founded a small non-profit, raised money, and purchased a van. *Sprachmobil* offers a mobile German learning and meeting space for refugees around northwest Switzerland. The volunteer takes the mobile learning station to asylum homes, and to other places where refugees gather, and teaches German.

96 While the local language is Swiss German, most official business in Switzerland is conducted in Standard German, and refugees and asylum-seekers are required to learn and are taught Standard German.

97 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 26, 2018: 20180726_DA-SEIN_Input_v1_PO, Pos. 77–96. During an Input Session, when groups were asked to contribute answers to a question, a staff member repeatedly encouraged one of the participants to write the answers, to practice their writing, though the asylum-seeker was hesitant. In response, the staff member emphasized the importance of taking advantage of opportunities to learn and practice German. "You have to see it as practice. I can already write. You need to take advantage of everything possible here. Whenever you can, practice writing, talking, reading."

sivity and helped to prevent the group from dividing up based on languages spoken and country of origin. At the same time, other languages were spoken at the program, and not only by asylum-seekers speaking their first language. Volunteers might speak Swiss German among themselves, and English was sometimes spoken both by volunteers and asylum-seekers as another shared language.

In many ways, learning German reflects the high value many volunteers place on the need for security. If asylum-seekers learn German, the thinking goes, they have more opportunities to pursue education and employment and succeed at integration. This focus on German takes succeeding in the system as the highest goal, privileging it over other ways convivial interactions might unfold. These might include recognizing ways asylum-seekers show up at the program beyond their progress towards meeting milestones set by the Swiss government. While the fullness of asylum-seekers is embraced more readily at Projekt DA-SEIN, a focus on integration can still dominate interactions with asylum-seekers.

For example, sometimes the best way to help an asylum-seeker was not language learning, but the presence cultivated by the program. One day I interacted with an asylum-seeker at the program who had already applied for asylum in another European country. He was unable to apply for asylum in Switzerland, to take advantage of government programs for asylum-seekers, or even to stay in Switzerland. He spoke very little German, but he did speak English, and I spoke with him at length on one of his first days.[98] At the time he was sleeping on the streets and expressed despair at his situation and the inability to create a new life in Europe. Being present to his story and pain, even in English, was a way to help him, and one that potentially exceeded the benefits of offering a lesson in German or helping him access educational resources. At a volunteer meeting I mentioned my conversation with this asylum-seeker and that we had spoken English. A staff member said, "No, Standard German is what everyone must speak. That is a ground rule."[99] Despite the well-intentioned focus of this rule, it was misplaced in this context. Instead, the presence cultivated by the program was a more important avenue to supporting this asylum-seeker, as it was with others.

6.4 Possibilities and Limitations of a Relational Home

The asylum system, and the many political and social dynamics that cause people to flee, create the need for programs such as Projekt DA-SEIN. Projekt DA-SEIN offers welcome to all members of the Basel community and creates a space for convivial

98 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 6, 2018: 20180906_15AS_II.

99 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 18, 2018: 20180918_DA-SEIN_Sitzung_v1_PO, Pos. 5.

interactions – telling stories, learning together, sharing meals, and building community. The OKE recognizes that asylum-seekers have endured loss, trauma, and threats to life during their flight and that they arrive far from their families, homes, and communities. Projekt DA-SEIN hopes to counteract the lack of local connections many asylum-seekers experience by extending welcome and opportunities to "be there" together. Yet, this welcome is extended in a particular context and with particular social and theological underpinnings. Theologies of conviviality and ambivalence operate alongside local Swiss customs and values.

Convivial interactions at Projekt DA-SEIN and "being there" cultivate relationships between asylum-seekers and volunteers that deepen connections and build social networks and support systems. This relationality is a characteristic of the "piece of home" Projekt DA-SEIN offers (see section 7.4 for more on relationships and home). The social character of places, especially important places such as home, reinforces the central role of relationships in definitions of home. At Projekt DA-SEIN, being present in grief, acknowledging ambivalence, and embracing mutuality provides a "piece of home" to asylum-seekers that is relational, even amid the limits of the asylum system. At the same time, systems of asylum can shift the focus of these interactions to learning and meeting requirements and, in doing so, structure relationships in ways that reinforce hierarchies between haves and have-nots. One example of the complexity of this interplay is seen in the tension between welcoming and helping. This tension, especially when not acknowledged, can blur the motivations and goals of the program.

While political, economic, and social systems that operate in asylum-seeking are deeply entrenched, failing to acknowledge these can reinforce hierarchies even amid practices of welcome and hospitality. At Projekt DA-SEIN, a theology of convivence focuses on extending welcome rather than on achieving concrete outcomes, partly due to the acknowledgement that changing the system is often out of the hands of either the asylum-seeker or the volunteer. Yet, this acknowledgement of limited agency can also forestall Congdon's "emancipatory hermeneutics."[100] This hermeneutic engages in the struggle for liberation with the other, including working to change structural realities that reinforce systems of power. At Projekt DA-SEIN, this struggle could include exposing how integration is a coded endorsement of Swiss ways of being that exclude alternate frameworks.[101]

This "emancipatory hermeneutic" is another angle on Russell's "just hospitality," which hopes to cultivate and deepen convivial community by acknowledging the potential misuse of hospitality and welcome.[102] Welcome, within this hermeneutic, becomes more than one-sided hospitality; it is also a commitment to collaboration and

100 Congdon, "Emancipatory Intercultural Hermeneutics."

101 Congdon, "Emancipatory Intercultural Hermeneutics."

102 Russell, Clarkson, and Ott, *Just Hospitality*, 121.

interdependence with asylum-seekers. As Russell reminds us, welcome is a two-way street that demands solidarity and partnership.[103] This solidarity demands risk and vulnerability on behalf all people involved, otherwise welcome reverts to one-sided comfort and charity.

Like the psychotherapist suggested at the supervision meeting (see section 6.3.2), helping is a response to the real risk and vulnerability that are part of each person's life, but that can remain hidden in more affluent countries and communities. Building relationships and welcoming those more visibly impacted by life's uncertainties exposes hidden vulnerabilities. In this way, feminist scholars argue, the trope of home as circumscribed and safe is problematic, especially given the violence that sometimes occurs in spaces of home.[104] Instead, a more relational understanding of home centers mutuality, risk, and connection. "[W]e need also to move beyond the dichotomy of home/not home, of safety and risk, to imagine an alternative: I want to argue for an ideal of home as a site of the risk of connection, of sustaining relationship through conflict."[105] A focus on security can obscure the real risk in relationship, in welcome, and in hospitality. At Projekt DA-SEIN, the groundwork for this connection has been laid, even if it operates within systems that further entrench the divides that make the program necessary. Relationality at Projekt DA-SEIN, that is centered in welcome and convivence, provides a foundation for further work toward justice and hope for asylum-seekers. In the next chapter, I further explore the connections and complications of home by focusing on places and relationships within definitions of home, particularly as these are revealed in the lives of asylum-seekers.

103 Russell, Clarkson, and Ott, *Just Hospitality*, 121.

104 Weir, "Home and Identity."

105 Weir, "Home and Identity," 8.

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.

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.

8. Home and Agency

There is a marked lack of agency in experiences of asylum-seeking. In Switzerland, asylum-seekers live in shared housing, survive on a small stipend, and have limited employment opportunities. The physical and bureaucratic structures exert control over their everyday lives and dictate where they can live, work, and go. Paradoxically, asylum-seekers are often fleeing from the control of a government or institution, only to arrive in another system they must then navigate with limited autonomy. As one asylum-seeker from Turkey described it, "We are the ones downtrodden by politics."[1] Whether in their country of origin or their country of arrival, asylum-seekers are at the mercy of systems of government and other social and cultural institutions.

When asylum-seekers arrive in Switzerland, they are both relegated to the margins and subjected to scrutiny through bureaucratic and legal systems. This marginal position of asylum-seekers is reinforced in laws, on news reports, and through popular images. Asylum-seekers experience a tension between this marginality and a hyper-focus on their actions and experiences. For new asylum-seekers, their ability to come and go is closely managed. This extends even to where they live, as asylum homes are run by the government and managed by nonprofit organizations. Often permission is needed to do activities like swimming or visiting others.[2] Especially if rooms are shared, there are few places that feel private. Therefore, even the physical place of living is highly regulated by outside systems. The ability to pursue personal and professional interests is also limited. One asylum-seeker was trained as an artist and lamented the fact that he had no place to do his art.[3]

The ability of asylum-seekers to change their circumstances is tenuous. On the one hand, they have already changed their circumstances by fleeing. Under the dire circumstances of war, the threat of imprisonment, or the needs of the family, asylum-seekers took control by fleeing. This is arguably an extreme and unwanted ex-

1 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, February 22, 2018: 20180222_16AS_DASEIN_II, Pos. 7.

2 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, October 19,2018: 20181019_Asylerfahren_SAH_v2_PO, Pos. 8.

3 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 19, 2018: 20180719_4AS_NO, Pos. 30.

perience of agency, where the other option is that one's life, livelihood, or family is taken away. Assigning agency to asylum-seeking acknowledges individual choice but can also obscure the many structures and systems that work against asylum-seekers and over which they have little sway. Growing up, starting a family of one's own, and changing jobs are all significant moments of individuation. Yet these steps are difficult for asylum-seekers, who are relegated to waiting, caught between the experience of leaving home and of not knowing whether they will be able to stay in Switzerland.

Yet, I noticed ways that asylum-seekers acted at Projekt DA-SEIN and in the broader community, how they shaped their experiences even with limited resources, and how they built relationships and took steps within the asylum system to make Basel more familiar. These activities show ways that asylum-seekers exercised agency in their lives, making choices that impacted their relationships to others and their environment. Sometimes these moments occurred through bringing familiar practices to the new place or by using spaces in Basel in familiar ways. Agency sometimes looked like adopting external integration requirements, such as a focus on learning German. By taking control of these activities, asylum-seekers claimed some sense of agency for themselves, even if the impact was difficult to assess. For example, those who expressed a connection to Basel as home often described the ways that they acted within the limits of the systems they were subject to. This included teaching themselves German through self-directed exercises, offering insights and assistance to newer asylum-seekers, and utilizing public places for personal purposes.

These activities were often hidden, even though they occurred in public spaces. As explored in Chapter 7, asylum-seekers often create and use places in new ways when more dominant ways of using space are unavailable to them, and this occurs in response to experiences of marginality and dislocation. This utilization of third space allows asylum-seekers to cultivate individual existences and create pieces of home. Using places in new ways, such as by creating locations that feel more familiar, finding places for reflection, and knowing how systems work, can be a way of acting to create home in inhospitable places. Home is not only a commodity or a designation, as argued by feminist scholars, but also a personal place marked by the ability to individuate and define oneself in relationship to history, community, material objects, and safety.[4] As Young writes, "A person without a home is quite literally deprived of individual existence."[5] While asylum-seekers occupy a precarious state, they also cultivate individual and collective existence. One way of doing this is make the unfamiliar familiar. Thus, for asylum-seekers who have lost home, acts of

4 Young, "House and Home," 163.

5 Young, "House and Home," 162.

agency help to recreate a sense of home, even while they remain dislocated from the dominant culture and dependent on an inhospitable government.

8.1 Relational Agency

Agency is about the potential or capacity to change things, often with a focus on structure and actors.[6] In this way, many philosophical definitions understand agency as occurring through the intentional use of existing structures.[7] Thus, agency arises from conscious choosing that includes reflexivity and the utilization of external structures.[8] Yet, there are complex reasons for acting, not all of which are known even to the actor. There is debate about how much agency can be attributed to intentionality and how much is the result of states of mind, circumstances, and responses to the given environment. While agency is more often associated with intentionality, agency cannot easily be reduced to intention and desire.[9]

In taking a step back from intentionality, agency also draws on the root of the word "act" and its consequences. Human activity of any kind is action and occurs whenever humans gather. In these moments people act on one another by being in relationship. Instead of intentionality, *relational agency* locates agency in interdependence and relationships. As sociologist Ian Burkitt writes, instead of seeing "agents as autonomous, independent, and reflexive individuals," relational sociology understands that "agents are always located in manifold social relations."[10] People are always acting within their social, political, and geographic environments and communities. This understanding of agency moves away from the more dominant view that individuals operate autonomously, and instead emphasizes interaction and joint action.

Agency is not only connected to the ability to make desired changes but is also linked to responses to external factors that impact a person. Simply acting conveys a sense of control, even when that impact is minimal. Instead of a definition of agency

6 See: Margaret S. Archer, *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

7 Markus Schlosser, "Action," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford University, 2019), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/action/; Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events: The Philosophical Essays of Donald Davidson* (Oxford University Press, 2001), essay 3, https://doi.org/10.1093/0199246270.001.0001.

8 Archer, *Culture and Agency*; Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Polity Press, 1986).

9 Markus Schlosser, "Agency," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford University, 2019), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/agency/.

10 Ian Burkitt, "Relational Agency: Relational Sociology, Agency, and Interaction," *European Journal of Social Theory* 19, no. 3 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431015591426.

that relies on external structures and reflexivity, relational agency argues that all actions are relational and affect others and the world through their connectedness.[11] Relational agency looks at how people affect the world through interactions and networks.[12] It focuses on how a sense of agency emerges when people interact together in everyday interactions. Considering the concept of agency as relational challenges notions of independence that are defined by self-sufficiency and even private property. Scholars argue that autonomy and agency are not synonymous with ownership and self-sufficiency. Feminist scholars offer a definition of home, in terms of relational autonomy, as "supportive interdependence."[13] This definition highlights interdependence and is seen in the many ways that women create and care for home.

Relational agency is also evident at Projekt DA-SEIN, where diverse members of the Basel community are invited to build relationships and to co-create a community. The program's focus on "being there" and supporting convivial interactions provides opportunities for relationships to occur and relational agency to emerge. These relationships underpin Projekt DA-SEIN's approach to home as being together in the joy and grief and across political advantages and disadvantages. Projekt DA-SEIN supports interdependence and mutual support, even while acknowledging the discrepancies in structural access and legal and social standing. Simply being together in the basement of the church offices means that people from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Switzerland, the United States, and many other countries act upon each other by engaging with one another through conversations, games, and shared meals.

This conviviality at Projekt DA-SEIN cultivates interdependence. This interdependence, as discussed in section 6.2, involves opportunities for working together, relying on each other, and impacting one another. Theologian HyeRan Kim-Cragg stresses the importance of interdependence within community. She explains that the community benefits when interdependence is undergirded by a "narrative agency": the action of telling one's story and having it heard by others.[14] This definition of interdependence is one of the hallmarks of Projekt DA-SEIN. Asylum-seekers and volunteers share stories and listen to one another on a daily basis. These mundane interactions of listening and narrating shape relationships and individuals. They impact one another relationally. The impact of this relational agency on one another is measurable less by concrete changes that occur, such as in opinions or in asylum results, and more on how individuals are impacted by the opportunity to be together. Participants at Projekt DA-SEIN act on one another,

11 Burkitt, "Relational Agency," 323.

12 Burkitt, "Relational Agency," 330.

13 Weir, "Home and Identity," 14.

14 HyeRan Kim-Cragg, *Interdependence: A Postcolonial Feminist Practical Theology* (Pickwick Publications, 2018), 5.

and their perspectives and experiences may influence each other; priorities may shift and friendships may develop. These relationships also develop in the midst of the difficult process of waiting for results of asylum applications. Because much of this process involves extended periods of waiting, the process both dominates asylum-seekers lives and is largely devoid of active steps. Instead, waiting becomes a constant backdrop in the lives of asylum-seekers.

8.2 Waiting

When immersed in the Swiss asylum process there is a lack of agency in waiting on decisions and navigating systems that dictate where one can live, work, and travel. For many asylum-seekers in Switzerland, much of the three years in the asylum process is spent waiting for the next step or for decisions from the Swiss government (see more details about the asylum process in Chapter 3). This period of waiting is marked by lack of access to education, employment, and social engagement. There is a pressure to adapt quickly to the new system, and at the same time asylum-seekers have little control or agency to affect this process. Thus, they must hurry up and wait at the same time.

Waiting is not exclusive to the asylum-seeking experience in Switzerland. Many steps on the journey to finding a new home involve waiting. One asylum-seeker recounted his journey to Europe like this: He traveled from Eritrea to Ethiopia (4 months), then Sudan (9 months), then Libya (4 months), then Italy (1 month), and then Switzerland. He had now been in Switzerland almost three years. He had left Eritrea when he was 17 and he was now about to turn 23, and he was still waiting to hear if he could stay in Switzerland. He said these six-plus years were a long time to wait and that the years were marked by boredom and frustration.[15]

Diane Singerman's concept of *waithood* describes how young adults who are unable to take the next steps of adulthood, such as employment and marriage, remain in a state of waiting.[16] This experience of waiting is characteristic of young people who are navigating the time between leaving home as youth and starting their lives as adults. In many practical ways, this time of waiting is characterized by an inability to move forward in life as well as by limited agency and curtailed options. Yet, waiting is not passive. Life continues even if obvious next steps are unavailable.

This concept of *waithood* applies to asylum-seekers in Switzerland who have little influence over the timing of the next steps and decisions from the Swiss govern-

15 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, April 12, 2018: 20180412_18AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 4–5.

16 Diane Singerman, "Youth, Gender, and Dignity in the Egyptian Uprising," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 9, no. 3 (2013), https://doi.org/10.2979/jmiddeastwomstud.9.3.1.

ment. Not only can they not affect the asylum application process, they also cannot take action in other areas of their lives, such as finding employment, securing more permanent housing, getting married, starting a family, or visiting their families. In Switzerland, some opportunities, such as schooling, are restricted to those under a certain age, so waiting can also mean loss of opportunities. Due to the structural circumstances that asylum-seekers face, such as a lack of educational placements or of entry-level jobs, this period of waiting is especially precarious.[17]

The asylum process is an extreme form of waiting due to the need to wait for an outcome of an asylum application before being able to pursue education, work, travel, or even relationships and family life. Many times, I heard the lament from asylum-seekers that three years was a long time to wait without knowing if one could remain in Switzerland while also being unable to pursue activities that would lead them closer to the life they desire. An asylum-seeker who had recently received word that his asylum application was rejected said that waiting three years only to receive a negative decision was devastating.[18] The difficulty of waiting for a decision from the Swiss government emerged so frequently at Projekt DA-SEIN and in my conversations that it became part of the undercurrent of the program. "Waiting is hard," I was told numerous times during interviews and informal conversation at Projekt DA-SEIN. One asylum-seeker told me he was going to write the government to ask why his asylum decision was taking so long, something that both of us knew would be futile. Other asylum-seekers I spoke with described waiting as characterized by boredom, frustration, fear, or anxiety. Many asylum-seekers understood this waiting as something that required patience. Asylum-seekers need to simultaneously know the system, have patience with long waiting times between steps, and wrestle with their own lack of power to affect their lives or the lives of their families.

Waiting on bureaucratic systems that cannot be controlled can be understood as a less generative place of waiting. The German word *abwarten* is a distinct form of waiting that is different from waiting as defined by practices of patience, which anticipate the realization of a hoped-for outcome (*Geduld haben*). While waiting on the results of an asylum application has qualities of both, more often I experienced the frustration and stress of *abwarten* in asylum-seekers' stories, due in large part to the entrenched structural circumstances of asylum-seeking.

In contrast, Projekt DA-SEIN is a place of waiting and uncertainty while at the same time it is a place of engaging in life. There are opportunities to build relationships, learn German, and share stories – all despite, and at the same time as, the fear

17 Singerman, "Youth, Gender, and Dignity in the Egyptian Uprising."

18 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 25, 2018: 20180725_8AS_Rhein_concert_II, Pos. 6.

and uncertainty. This uncertainty can also be understood as part of home. Home is defined not only by stability, but also by waiting, longing, and seeking.[19]

8.2.1 Separating from Home

During this period of waiting, some asylum-seekers also expressed the need to stay focused on requirements for living in Switzerland. Thinking too much about the home they left behind was viewed as a distraction, not a support. They needed to focus on the demands of life in Switzerland, not the places or people they left. Distancing themselves from the former home as well as its affective associations allows more effort and attention to be put on the work of establishing a life in Switzerland.

Thus, separating from the home that was left can be an intentional act and necessary for avoiding distraction and pursuing a home in Switzerland. The choice to keep one's former home at a distance is both encouraged by the Swiss migration system and a strategy for dealing with the affective emotions of separation that might surface, such as depression, sadness, or lack of motivation. One asylum-seeker from Afghanistan emphasized this point, saying that he needed to separate from family in order to focus on Swiss migration requirements. "I can't think about my family too much or I just get sad and don't do anything. I really need a separation – to focus on here – on learning German so I can get a job and send my family money. I need to focus on the future, not on right now but on what's ahead."[20] Especially when waiting for a decision on an asylum application or permanent residency, many asylum-seekers found that it is necessary to distance themselves from their families and the home that was left.[21]

This choice also serves to create distance from feelings of sadness associated with the home that was left. The asylum-seeker quoted above told me that he must focus on the steps to stay in Switzerland. If he did not, he would be depressed about his circumstances and sad about his family's situation. These feelings would prevent him from taking action in necessary areas. He felt that he must study and learn and motivate himself to move forward. He said he stays up until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning everyday learning German by himself.[22] During a later conversation he described practices he observed in Switzerland, especially around dating and drinking, which he named as a distraction. He said, "That's not for me. I want to be really focused, do my German test, get a job now that I can, and after that I want to take English

19 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*; Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration"; Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*.

20 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_NO, Pos. 8.

21 The expectations communicated by integration laws and the length of time needed to process asylum claims lead to uncertainty as well as to a focus on meeting requirements that are within one's control.

22 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_NO, Pos. 8.

classes in the evening. I really, really want to put myself on the right path."[23] This legalistic language of right and wrong reflects an understanding that following the system is of critical importance to building a life in Switzerland. And a focus on correct behavior and meeting necessary milestones reflects Swiss migration requirements for adapting to the "Swiss way of life," including learning the local language and participating in social and political life. While this is a response to the bureaucratic requirements, it can also be interpreted as an act of agency. Working towards specific goals is a way to have some power in a process marked by a lack of agency.

Another interviewee talked about whether he could imagine having his own family in Switzerland.

> That doesn't work right now. Right now I don't have a real job, I must learn German again. It takes time. I can't do everything. I must simply have patience. Have patience. If I say, "I need this, I need that, it must be today," that doesn't work. If it must be today, it is not today; tomorrow, it is not tomorrow; the day after tomorrow, it is also not the day after tomorrow. Slowly. Step by step.[24]

This sentiment of taking the next steps was reflected in the comments of another asylum-seeker who told me he must focus on the things he has to do in Switzerland in order to be allowed to stay. He had just received his provisional permit ("F") and was able to take additional German courses to help him meet the language requirements. His next hurdle was to get into a training school in order to get a job, an opportunity that is only available to him until the age of 25, which would be in one year. He said that facing all these challenges is not what he wants to be doing in Switzerland, but that he must do it. "But I must. But I must," he repeated often during our interview.[25] He just had to do it. He understands that in order to build a life in Switzerland he must keep focusing on each subsequent step. While the choices that lead to a separation from home are often painful, much of the asylum experience is characterized by narrow options. Agency can be understood as choosing to pursue the steps that are available, even when limited and constrained.

8.2.2 Learning German

Agency was often revealed in asylum-seekers' choices to pursue specific activities, as illustrated above. One pursuit that was frequently mentioned was learning German. As discussed in Chapter 6, German was an activity that volunteers often helped asylum-seekers with at Projekt DA-SEIN. Many bureaucratic requirements shape

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

24 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_IN, Pos. 414.

25 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 19, 2018: 20180719_4AS_NO, Pos. 23.

the initial possibility of a new home, but perhaps none as much as learning the local language. Adapting to the Swiss way of life, whether in employment, education, or social systems, is predicated on language skills (achieving oral B2/written A1 levels).[26] While the migration requirements to learn German represent external expectations, some asylum-seekers embraced these requirements as a way to achieve a new home and sought out opportunities to learn German as well as local customs and practices. Since asylum-seekers waiting for immigration decisions can pursue few educational or employment opportunities, asylum programs focus especially on language acquisition. Thus, the pressure many asylum-seekers feel, as well as one of the few things within their control, is learning German.

Most asylum-seekers I encountered did not question the importance of learning German. They took seriously the need to learn German and applied themselves with consistency and rigor. During an activity at Projekt DA-SEIN's *Sommerfest*, one of the most common "wishes" expressed by asylum-seekers was for help learning German.[27] Similarly, during an interview, a man from Afghanistan gave examples of prayers he makes, one being for help in learning German.[28] When I visited Education and Participation (ECAP), a language school in Basel, the director said that while refugees and asylum-seekers vary in basic language skills, a common factor is their motivation to learn.[29] Asylum-seekers often told me that their first year in Switzerland was difficult when they could not speak the language. They told me they were very depressed and sad. Once they learned the language, they began doing more and going out of the asylum home, which made them feel happier and more connected. One asylum-seeker told me, "Without language it is difficult. With no language, it was so hard."[30] One asylum-seeker from Afghanistan, who did not have access to additional German courses, spent his time working through a book of conjugations of German verbs.[31]

Asylum-seekers often relayed that because their opportunities to work are limited while they are waiting for their asylum claim to process, they can be very bored, and activities like learning German can help fill their time.[32] Learning German was

26 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, EJPD, *Migration Report 2018*.

27 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 11, 2018: 20180811_Sommerfest_v1_PO, Pos. 9–16.

28 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_IN, Pos. 301.

29 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, October 19, 2018: 20181019_Asylerfahren_SAH_v2_PO, Pos. 11–12.

30 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, October 29, 2018: 20181029_8AS_IN, Pos. 182.

31 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 4, 2018: 20180704_11AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 3.

32 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, February 15, 2018: 20180215_2AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 7.

also a popular reason for attending the program. Some refugees told me they only attend the program when they need help with German. One day at Projekt DA-SEIN I talked with a woman from Tibet who had a test for her German class the next day – speaking, writing, and listening. She was nervous, but her teacher told her not to study too much.[33] I knew from an earlier conversation that she spent any free time she had, when she was not taking care of her children, studying at the University of Basel medical library. For her, studying German offered some agency in the process. As with many other asylum-seekers, staying focused on the necessary legal steps laid out by the Swiss government was seen as a necessity.[34]

Some asylum-seekers adopted a critical stance towards fellow asylum-seekers who did not fully apply themselves to learning German or who did not take advantage of the systems of integration that were offered to them. One asylum-seeker was especially critical because, as he told me, "Without German, you have no chance."[35] This sense of having a chance was precariously balanced between trying to meet requirements to improve their situations and waiting for asylum application results over which they had little control. The criticism of those who did not meet integration requirements was practical. It expressed concern for the asylum-seekers' abilities to survive in Switzerland given the lack of alternative paths, even if the concern was also misplaced in terms of its assumption as to the degree that these choices could affect the situation. The importance that many asylum-seekers granted to learning German reflected stress about their future and an attempt to control some aspect of the process.[36]

At the same time, some asylum-seekers expressed overt resistance to learning German. One of my interview partners told me he refused to learn or speak German his first year in Switzerland. He said he hated learning it. If needed, he would speak English instead. He said that even if they would have paid him one million Swiss Francs for each word he learned, he would not have wanted to learn it more, nor would he have learned it with more ease. While eventually he did learn German, this resistance speaks to a small stand against the dominance of language and integration.

Efforts to exert agency, as well as acts of resistance, are responses to the pressure to adapt to a system while also having little agency to affect the process. Asylum-

33 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, June 21, 2018: 20180621_DA-SEIN_v2_PO, Pos. 6

34 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 29, 2018: 20180929_7AS_NO, Pos. 18.

35 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_IN, Pos. 147, 211; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 13, 2018: 20180913_13AS_DA-SEIN_Museum_II, Pos. 3.

36 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 29, 2018: 20180929_7AS_NO, Pos. 6.

seekers know that there is little room for mistakes, and they often work hard to try to meet the requirements within the given structures and time frames. Asylum claims are evaluated on whether they meet the criterion of asylum, namely danger in their country of origin, and the most common reason given when an asylum application is denied is lack of credibility. While these aspects are difficult for an asylum-seeker to control, knowing how the system functions can impact one's ability to answer questions in ways that convey "believability." Knowing the system can potentially impact their ability to stay and to establish a life in Switzerland. Failure to integrate and learn German, criminal or civil infractions, or deviations from the asylum system could result in a claim being denied or could prevent asylum-seekers from establishing themselves in Switzerland long-term; it could limit their ability to work, to live independently, or to visit their families.[37] The stress of having overcome so many challenges only to miss the last hurdle was another motivation for choosing to focus on migration requirements. As one asylum-seeker told me, he prays to God for help learning German. But, he explained, "God says, I will help you, but only if you also help yourself."[38]

8.3 Familiarity

Familiarity is a characteristic often associated with home. Familiar people, landscapes, and languages are often identified as aspects of home. Yet, when home is defined by familiarity, these familiar aspects are almost too close to be recognized. As Kaufmann writes, the familiar home is one that is secluded and withdrawn.[39] Often, it is only when home is lost that it is revealed. In the experience of asylum-seeking, familiar places and people are taken away, and there is a lack of choice in these separations. Choosing to find and reengage familiarity is an act of agency and a way to locate home.

In the asylum system, familiarity is often understood as a top-down requirement, as in the Swiss citizenship law that applicants must "be familiar with the Swiss way of life."[40] This emphasis on familiarity fuels the focus on integration into these "familiar" systems and trickles down to shape migration and asylum systems. This requirement "to be familiar with the Swiss way of life" influences asylum-seekers' focus on learning German as well as on familiarizing themselves with Swiss laws and

37 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über die Ausländerinnen und Ausländer*, 142.20; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Asylverordnung 1 über Verfahrensfragen*, 142.311; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über das Schweizer Bürgerrecht*, 141.0.

38 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_IN, Pos. 301.

39 Kaufmann, "Heimat als Präsenz im Entzug," 31.

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

social customs. Many asylum-seekers understood this learning as something that required patience. An Eritrean asylum-seeker told me, "Here in Switzerland, when you are coming from another country, you have to have patience. When you don't have patience, then you don't understand the way of life, and you don't understand the system."[41] These systems might include bureaucratic or organizational systems, including the migration system, schools, or transportation infrastructure. It might also refer to cultural and social systems such as customs, traditions, and habits. The asylum-seeker further explained that in Eritrea he had grown up knowing the rules and is familiar with them, but that in Switzerland he is not familiar with the social, cultural, and political rules.

In this way, a lack of familiarity was often named a as a reason asylum-seekers did not experience home in Switzerland. In the experience of asylum-seekers, familiar places had been lost, along with the agency to decide when and how this loss occurs.[42] Yet, familiarity is also arguably a crucial lifeline in the ability to make Switzerland a home. This disconnect often defines the asylum experience. In this section I illustrate two ways that asylum-seekers cultivated familiarity, despite these real limitations. The first is by bringing practices and customs from their country of origin to Basel. This might include practices such as language, games, religious practices, and food. The second way is by making aspects of the new place familiar. This might include frequenting certain locations in Basel and making these places homelike through regular activities and friendships. Just as the psalmist writes "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?,"[43] asylum-seekers look for ways to be themselves in spaces where they are other.

8.3.1 Bringing Practices from Home to Basel

When arriving in Switzerland and while waiting for results of their asylum applications, asylum-seekers bring practices of home from their countries of origin. These diverse practices, while rarely officially acknowledged, become part of the spatial landscape of Basel. Asylum-seekers practice their religions at store-front mosques, play sports, meet with friends for meals or along the river, and live, work, and learn in local neighborhoods. These practices serve to remind asylum-seekers of home, and while they can sometimes make their experiences in Basel more familiar, they often also highlight the unfamiliarity of the new place. Absence was also a significant aspect of these familiar practices. Practices that were brought to Basel, including familiar religious services and rituals, reminded asylum-seekers of the communities they had left. One asylum-seeker noted the lack of the call to prayer in Switzerland as

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

42 Bieler and Kunz, "Responding to the Loss of Home," 142.

43 Psalms 137:4–6 King James Version.

a reminder of his disconnect from home. Making places familiar creates a sense of identity that includes the new place and that at the same time can incorporate that which is strange or different into the new. Missing the amplified call to prayer connects the asylum-seeker to their sense of home because it makes the missed home present. As René Kaufmann, and others, write, it is often the loss of home that brings home into focus.[44] Thus, home can often only be recognized with distance; home is often hidden from view until it is gone.

Many religious practices, such as those that celebrate festivals and holy days, center community and, when reenacted in a new place, create familiar connections to the home, while also drawing attention to those who are not there. Other rituals involving food and community do the same thing. These religious practices were often closely linked to their countries of origin, connecting asylum-seekers to the culture, beliefs, and education of those places, as well as to specific memories of the people and places of home. Yet, when they took place in Basel, these often occurred in alternate locations. Orthodox Christian services took place in Protestant churches, such as the Offene Kirche Elisabethen, mosques were located in storefronts, and other religious practices might occur privately in homes or while walking along the river (see section 8.1.3).

One of interviewees shared his experience in Basel of the celebration of *Muharram*, a Muslim holiday that commemorates the death of Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of the prophet Muhammad and one of the first Imams for Shi'a Muslims. This event connected him to the Shi'a community in Basel as well as to memories of home. Yet, in Basel, the ten-day event is shortened to six or seven days and takes place at a sports club, not a mosque. For him, there were many things missing from the observance of Muharram in Switzerland, including the practice of visiting the homes of other families in his village. He shared that his village has about 200 homes and that he knows everyone. That's very different from Basel, he remarked. On the occasion of these religious feast days, he would go to visit neighbors in their homes and there would be huge spreads of food. "I know everyone," he said, and if he needed help, they would help him, including financially.[45] This kind of familiarity also denotes a willingness to show up in one another's lives in a way that was not always mirrored in Switzerland.

Food was also closely associated with home and often missed by asylum-seekers. The asylum-seeker who shared his experience of marking Muharram in Switzerland told me he really misses Afghan food and does not like Swiss food. He showed me

44 Kaufmann, "Heimat als Präsenz im Entzug."

45 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 19, 2018: 20180719_4AS_IN; 20180719_4AS_NO, Pos. 16.

photographs of some of the dishes associated with the Muharram holiday.[46] Another asylum-seeker from Eritrea commented on times he felt at home in Switzerland. He said that he has a feeling of home when he is with close friends or when he visits an older woman from Eritrea who prepares the traditional coffee ceremony and serves it with injera and lamb meat.[47] The coffee ceremony is always done with other people; it is both relational and embodied. Several men from Afghanistan regularly cooked for the Islamic festivals of *Eid Al-Fitr* and *Eid Al-Adha*, preparing traditional dishes with pride and adding a few Swiss touches.[48] At the *Eid al-Adha* feast that I attended, traditional dishes were prepared, and the room was arranged to reflect how the meal would be served if we had been in Afghanistan. The "chapel" of Projekt DA-SEIN was converted to a mosque, a white cloth was laid out, shoes were required to be removed before entering, and the meal was served on the floor.[49] The organizers expressed a desire to recreate the experience as it would be in Afghanistan. Yet, another man from Afghanistan scoffed at this choice. He said in Afghanistan everyone wore lose-fitting clothes that made sitting on the floor more comfortable. Yet, in Switzerland everyone wore jeans or other more fitted clothing that made sitting on the floor less practical.[50] This is an example of the tension that can arise when familiar experiences are enacted in a new place and are layered with the unfamiliar.

The unfamiliar aspects of the familiar also occurred due to differences in social norms and cultural practices. For example, games and sports that were played in Switzerland often connected participants to home, yet they were also experienced in unfamiliar social contexts. Dominos were frequently played at Projekt DA-SEIN, especially by men from Iraq, Syria, and Algeria. They all spoke Arabic and shared a history of playing dominos in their countries of origin. When they played at the program, they were happy to include volunteers and asylum-seekers from other countries. A man from Algeria told me that the game reminded him of home, since in Algeria men often play dominos in cafes.[51] He then commented how the game, while familiar, was different to play in Switzerland. He told me it is different to play with

46 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 19, 2018: 20180719_4AS_IN; 20180719_4AS_NO.

47 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 13, 2018: 20180713_3AS_IN.

48 *Eid al-Fitr* is the Islamic festival that marks the end of Ramadan, a month of fasting observed by Muslims. *Eid al-Adha* is the second main Islamic festival and is known as the Festival of Sacrifice. It commemorates the willingness of Ibrahim (Abraham) to obey God and sacrifice his son.

49 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 23, 2018: 20180823_DA-SEIN_v1_PO.

50 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 23, 2018: 20180823_DA-SEIN_v1_PO.

51 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, April 19, 2018: 20180419_DA-SEIN_v1_PO, Pos. 7.

women, as occurs in Switzerland.[52] In Algeria, women only play dominos at home and never in public places. This mixing of the familiar and unfamiliar reflects and reshapes understandings of home. In addition to bringing familiar practices to Basel, asylum-seekers also created familiarity by engaging in the place of Basel. In particular, asylum-seekers made places familiar by creatively using them, not always in ways they were intended.

8.3.2 Creating Familiar Places in Basel

When I asked about ways that Basel felt like home, asylum-seekers often named places that were outdoors and public, even if those places were not originally designed for the activities they were used for. This included utilizing the spaces of Projekt DA-SEIN in the basement of the church administrative building, frequenting cafes that do not require purchase, attending public events, or gathering along the Rhine River and in public parks. These locations were used for socializing, exercise, or reflection and, despite being public, they became personal and familiar. Occupying these spaces was often a necessary part of inhabiting a third space, where opportunities for ownership or social membership are limited. While privacy and individuation are often important aspects of home, these markers are noticeably lacking for many asylum-seekers and are difficult to find in the dislocation and the uncertainty of navigating a new home.[53]

Thus, activities that may often occur in private homes sometimes take place elsewhere for asylum-seekers, including in public locations. For example, many asylum-seekers mentioned the Rhine River, a prominent landmark in Basel, as a place where they spent time. Outside of Projekt DA–SEIN, asylum-seekers often met at the river, in parks, at public events, or in cafes. These places have multiple advantages because they are public, offer experiences that might feel familiar to former homes, and provide anonymity and the chance to be alone. In addition, they are outside of centers of commerce and therefore do not require money for entrance or participation. These public locations were frequented for socializing, exercise, or reflection and often became both personal and familiar.

8.3.2.1 The Rhine River

One asylum-seeker from Eritrea emphasized the necessity of public spaces more directly, saying that the Rhine River made the city livable. He described swimming in the river in the village where he grew up and said that without the Rhine River, he

52 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, April 19, 2018: 20180419_DA-SEIN_v1_PO, Pos. 9.

53 Young, "House and Home."

could not live in Basel.[54] There was a physical connection and familiarity for him between the river of his youth and the Rhine. Another asylum-seeker from Afghanistan told me that he found the water of the Rhine very calming. When he is feeling sad, out-of-sorts, or unwell, he walks by the water and it always helps him.[55] Another asylum-seeker emphasized how he spends time along the Rhine River, in an area with fewer people, so he can enjoy the quiet and have space to think and pray. Walking and thinking in the early morning or late evening was also something he did in his country of origin.

> When I want to think about things for myself, to speak with myself, I like places that are not so loud – silent places. The other side over the river is more silent so I like to walk there. Most of the time I walk in the evening – ten o'clock, eleven o'clock. You don't find any disturbing sounds or moving cars. […] Also, it is the time, as a Muslim, the time of the first prayer.[56]

At the river he found a place of quiet, personal reflection, and prayer, especially at night when there were fewer people. He made a public place both personal and familiar, even tying the place to his Muslim religious practice, something largely unfamiliar in Basel. Another asylum-seeker also expressed the importance of finding public places that are quiet. He said he liked to go to a particular city park because it was very quiet and very clean. When I asked where he wanted to do his interview, he took me to this park. It was on the other side of the train station, and as we walked there, he emphasized, "Oh, yeah, it's always very quiet here."[57] The quiet that might be missing from their asylum homes was sought elsewhere.

8.3.2.2 Interviews

The places of Offene Kirche Elisabethen and Projekt DA-SEIN were significant places of interaction and relationship-building. Many of my informal interviews as well as most of my participant observations occurred in the spaces of Projekt DA-SEIN: the garden, the kitchen, the chapel, and the main activity room. The importance of familiar places also emerged when I conducted formal interviews. Projekt DA-SEIN and the Offene Kirche Elisabethen did not have consistent rooms or spaces available for interviews, I did not have an office or other private space, and asylum-seekers primarily lived in asylum homes with limited privacy. As discussed in Chapter 5, I collaborated with my interview partners to find places for our

54 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 26, 2018: 20180726_8AS_swim_II, Pos. 2.

55 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, January 18, 2019: 20190118_2AS_walk_II, Pos. 2.

56 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 13, 2018: 20180713_3AS_IN.

57 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 19, 2018: 20180719_4AS_NO, Pos. 5.

interviews. I started by asking them where they would like to do the interview. If they were unsure or did not want to choose a place, I suggested one. I conducted interviews along the Rhine River, in a local park, in the main garden of the Offene Kirche Elisabethen, in the public plaza in front of the theater, and at the University of Basel's theology faculty. Many of these places are public: the OKE (by its own definition, an open church), the local café that does not require purchase, the park, and the paths along the Rhine River. With a few exceptions, these places were not designed or intended for academic interviews. Instead, the interviews were embedded in the location of Basel and further shaped by the ways place was constructed by my interviewees as well as by our relational and collaborative process of engaging in an interview. Finding a place for the interview was also an exercise in finding public places that also felt private.

One of my first interviews illustrates how an "interview-in-motion" can reveal agency and reveal relationships to place.[58] Originally, my interview partner expressed a desire to do the interview inside the church at the OKE, which is located a few hundred yards from the meeting space of the DA-SEIN program. When I met him, we realized that the church was closed for cleaning and there was no private space available in the Projekt DA-SEIN rooms. So, the interviewee suggested a route for us to take, and I followed. As we conversed along the way, I refrained from suggesting meeting places or directing our walk. We first stopped at a café that does not require purchase, to see if that would work. However, we ran into another asylum-seeker, also a Projekt DA-SEIN participant, and my interview partner suggested we continue walking. We walked further and ended up at an outcropping along the Rhine River. He told me that he likes to go there to sit, think, and watch.[59] Giving up some of my agency to let interviewees select interview locations was not only a courtesy and a chance to share power but also an opportunity to see how they use and relate to the city.

8.3.2.3 Tactics

How individuals use a cityscape is explored in de Certeau's concept of strategies and tactics, and it provides a helpful lens to understand how those on the margins access agency and make places familiar.[60] In his book *The Practices of Everyday Life*, de Certeau considers agency within marginal places.[61] *Strategies* are employed by those with more cultural power, whereas *tactics* are more subversive practices used by those with less institutional power. Strategies utilize space to create systems that

58 For a definition of "interview-in-motion," see Chapter 5 and Kusenbach, "Street Phenomenology."

59 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_NO.

60 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

61 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

serve strategic objectives.[62] Those with greater power use these strategies to employ the city in ways it was intended to be used, such as: the church for prayer, the café for conversation and socializing, and the river for relaxing. This also happens at the level of migration policies and at the level of urban design, which designates uses for public spaces. Yet, those with less power employ tactics to repurpose the cityscape and utilize it in non-conventual ways. Tactics provide asylum-seekers a means of creative resistance and agency to use the created landscape for their own purposes.[63] Tactics are a form of agency and a way to create meaning with less direct access to power.

De Certeau's most famous example of a tactic is from his chapter "Walking in the City."[64] In this chapter, de Certeau describes two views of New York City, one of which is from the top of the World Trade Center Tower. This view reveals the strategies of governments, businesses, churches, and other organizations that create a unified system designed and produced with clear objectives and modes of engagement. The second view is from street level, where the viewer is walking. In contrast to the bird's eye view, the walker on the street does not necessarily experience a unified view of the city nor engage with it in designated ways.[65] The walker wanders, making connections and choices in the moment that may or may not use the cityscape in its intended capacity.

Tactics provide a means of creative resistance and agency for the average person, who is thus able to use the created landscape for their own purposes. As artist and historian Andrew Blauvelt writes, "Tactics, on the other hand, are employed by those who are subjugated. By their very nature tactics are defensive and opportunistic, used in more limited ways and seized momentarily within spaces, both physical and psychological, produced and governed by more powerful strategic relations."[66] Tactics create more familiarity in the city by allowing everyday interactions to create personal meaning, affective attachments, and familiar corners. Michel Foucault similarly explores and expands the spatial and geographic aspects of power, showing how the construction of space can serve to control the body.[67] Yet, the body can also navigate space in new ways. For example, an asylum-seeker from Syria felt most at home by making the area where he lived in Basel familiar and focusing his activities there. He preferred to shop and socialize in the neighborhood where he lived, a section of town on the opposite side of the Rhine River from the OKE. In his town in Syria, he also kept a small range, preferring to stay in the neighborhood where he

62 *Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life*, 52–56.

63 Andrew Blauvelt, *Strangely Familiar: Design and Everyday Life* (Walker Art Center, 2003).

64 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 91.

65 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 91.

66 Blauvelt, *Strangely Familiar*.

67 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

and his family lived.[68] This mode of walking as a tactic was also reflected in my own engagement with asylum-seekers in Basel. I often met asylum-seekers outdoors, in public places, or at the Offene Kirche Elisabethen. Tactics make public and private spheres more fluid.

8.3.3 Agency and Helping

Agency was also seen in the desire to help others or to create opportunities. Frequently, upon thanking my interview partners for their participation, asylum-seekers reciprocated by saying how much they hoped they had been helpful. One asylum-seeker said that since he had been helped by so many, he also wanted to help in return.[69] In the same fashion, asylum-seekers often contributed to Projekt DA-SEIN by teaching games, cooking meals, or sharing cultural and religious practices, as was made possible through the structure of the program. In addition, asylum-seekers also helped one another. One of my interviews was rescheduled because the participant needed to accompany another asylum-seeker, whose asylum application had been recently rejected, to a legal office.[70] Another interview was interrupted when the interviewee received a phone call from a newer asylum-seeker who needed help figuring out how to buy a pass for the local tram system.[71] Advocating for and accompanying other asylum-seekers was a way of helping one another and affecting the system by working on behalf of others. Helping one another creates horizontal networks and reciprocity that can establish a sense of agency for asylum-seekers. One day, I was struggling to help an asylum-seeker with a math course he was enrolled in.[72] Another man from Afghanistan joined us and was far more adept at explaining math concepts than I was. This inverting of assumed roles and challenging assumptions about who can help did not always occur, even at Projekt DA-SEIN. The roles of those who can help and of those who need help can become entrenched in systems including the asylum system; this can also happen when hospitality becomes "inverted" or serves to protect those with resources.[73] Yet, despite its limitations, Projekt DA-SEIN often provides a distinct sense of agency for asylum-seekers and volunteers. The very act of bringing people together means that they impact

68 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 29, 2018: 20180929_7AS_IN, Pos. 434.

69 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_IN, 133.

70 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 3, 2018: 20180903_6AS_NO, Pos. 13.

71 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_IN, Pos. 219–22.

72 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 20, 2018: 20180920_6AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 7.

73 Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*; Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*. For more information on inverted hospitality, see section 6.3.2.

one another and that roles, along with assumptions about who can help who, can be challenged.

Asylum-seekers do not only want to be helped. Even in the liminal space of asylum-seeking, migrants sought out places where they could exercise power and agency. Asylum-seekers often helped each other with German or math homework, and did not rely solely on volunteers. The annual Ramadan and *Eid al-Fitr* meals were hosted by Afghan men who took over the cooking and converted the room known as the chapel into a mosque, where shoes were banned and the feast was set out on the floor. As noted in Chapter 6, participating in something greater than oneself meets personal needs and enables people to be actors in the greater world.[74] This desire is not the exclusive domain of those who have greater resources to give. By contributing to the well-being of themselves, each other, and the Projekt DA-SEIN community, asylum-seekers were able to use their agency to build connections and contribute a larger goal.

8.4 Creating Home

Asylum-seekers' connection to home in the new location was impacted by their own agency. On the surface this was often expressed as the hoped-for ability to work, to live in Basel, and to have a family and children. Other times this was expressed more subversively through the use of marginal spaces or through *tactics*, de Certeau's term for using resources in unintended ways to cultivate agency and control.[75] This was seen in the utilization of public places for personal purposes, such as walking along the Rhine River as a place of reflection and prayer. Agency sometimes looked like adopting external integration requirements, such as a focus on learning German. By taking control of these activities, asylum-seekers claimed some sense of agency for themselves, even if the impact was minimal, instead of leaving their fate only in the hands of bureaucrats and systems. In addition, asylum-seekers offered their own leadership and cultural resources to the program. Asylum-seekers challenged rules and assumptions, such as when they spoke their first languages and thus went against the program requirement to speak only Standard German, or when they played music and games from their countries of origin.

I began the exploration of home in Chapter 2 by deepening the definition of place as socially constructed and embedded in affectivity. Home is constantly shifting, often illusive, and deeply longed-for. This understanding of home is embedded in relationships to places and people and connected to experiences of both familiarity and

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

75 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

unfamiliarity. In engaging asylum-seekers in an exploration of home, the importance of relational agency emerged. Home, and longings for home, are connected with the ability to act on one another, or to "be together" in convivial spaces. This relational autonomy is also reflected in Projekt DA-SEIN's focus on being there, showing up, embracing ambivalence, and creating a space in which to be together, rather than on programmatic elements. Yet, the togetherness cultivated by eating, laughing, sharing stories, and mourning losses is not orchestrated by Projekt DA-SEIN. Instead, Projekt DA-SEIN offers space for asylum-seekers and volunteers to act on one another, to influence and shape one another and the spaces of the program. This relational agency emphasizes home as a verb, as a process of becoming, of living between the known and the unknown.[76] Through building relationships and cultivating their own agency, asylum-seekers actively create home, even if their efforts are limited by the circumstances of migration and they remain subject to powerful political systems.

76 Buchanan, *Go Home!*; Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*.

9. Conclusion: Contested Home

This book explores home in the context of asylum-seeking by utilizing ethnographic research to examine and better understand the intersection of home, church, and asylum-seeking. It engages the question of asylum-seeking and home within the ecclesiological context of Projekt DA-SEIN, a church-based outreach program to asylum-seekers and refugees in Basel, Switzerland. Considering migration, and particularly the experiences of recently arrived asylum-seekers to Switzerland, within questions of home and church provokes theological and social reflection, reveals new characteristics of church outreach, and offers points of friction for how home is understood.

The Offene Kirche Elisabethen fills a unique theological and social role in the landscape of the city of Basel. As a historical building of the Evangelical-Reformed Church in Switzerland, it carries forward the religious history of Basel. As a City Church, it is attentive to issues particular to its urban context. As a church committed to openness, it embraces diversity within the city. As an ecumenical (and post-denominational) church, it straddles ecclesiological divides and offers possibilities for future iterations of church. The surge in arrivals of refugees and asylum-seekers, beginning in 2015, posed the question of how to live together as a global community in local spaces. From its place at the intersection of established communities and local systems and new models of church, the Offene Kirche Elisabethen attempts to answer this question through Projekt DA-SEIN.

In considering the example of Projekt DA-SEIN, I conclude by reflecting on two questions about home, migration, and church. First, how can churches take seriously the importance of place without becoming entrenched in established definitions of home and belonging? And second, what is a possible and productive theological engagement with home as it is seen through the lens of asylum-seeking? By drawing on the work of the OKE and the experiences of asylum-seekers, I consider home as a contested site that straddles the local and the global, the public and the private, and the settled and the migrant. To do this, I take into account how the OKE attends to the public sphere by working both in the local community and within a global context. Attending to global issues in the local context addresses complex forces at play in urban centers and considers those most impacted by these forces,

including those on the margins, such as migrants. Yet, it can also inadvertently center normative markers of belonging and reinforce social hierarches by overemphasizing local definitions of place. There is a tension between ensuring the ability of migrants (and others) to participate fully in the established society while also acknowledging their diverse contributions and practices.

Understanding home as contested is a perspective that is especially relevant in situations of migration, where home is both a central question and one that is often determined by systems of government or sociopolitical conflicts. Amid this tension, I offer three additional examples of how the OKE engages with a contested home in the context of asylum-seeking: by countering the isolation of migration, by arguing for the grievability of marginalized lives, and by reflecting on the role of vulnerability in engaging home. I also consider the possibilities of "de-heimatizing" belonging or disassociating home from belonging.[1] What are other possibilities for considering home, and in what other places might belonging and community reside, especially as revealed through the experiences of asylum-seekers? By exploring the tensions embedded in questions of place and home, I consider home within the border spaces revealed in this book: between settled and migrant, helping and agency, familiarity and unfamiliarity, conviviality and integration, staying and going, absence and presence, and waiting and acting.[2]

In a similar way, Christian theology often reflects on home as a journey using the metaphor of being on a pilgrimage and temporarily establishing a home on earth, yet it is not the final destination. This acknowledgement of the centrality of longing for home, as part of its very definition, can help churches create room for other people and ideas and avoid reified definitions of home and belonging. Churches can also acknowledge their own location on borders, including between new and old forms of religious practices, between the political and the religious, and between settled and seeking.

For this reason, theologian Polak and others suggest that considerations of home should begin from the perspective of migrants.[3] As theologian Elaine Padilla argues, instead of centering nation-states' definitions of who does or does not belong, we would do well to consider border spaces as generating new social definitions, including new understandings of home.[4] Considering border spaces reveals the complexity of home that is often overshadowed by entrenched and sentimental definitions of home. Home has most often been defined either by nation-states or by comfortable

1 Ayata, "Prologue."

2 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*; Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration."

3 Polak, "Migration as a Sign of the Times."

4 Elaine Padilla, "Expanding Space: A Possibility of a Cavernous Mode of Dwelling," in *Contemporary Issues of Migration and Theology*, ed. Elaine Padilla and Peter C. Phan, Christianities of the World (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 69.

personal associations. Yet many scholars and writers advocate for considering home through the lens of diaspora, migration, and multiplicity.[5] It is at these interstices that home emerges.[6] Acknowledging these intersections offers an opportunity to destabilize home from its moorings as fixed and unchanging. The following reflections on the OKE's relationship to the public sphere and its theological engagement with a contested home, including themes of isolation, grief, and vulnerability, serve to broaden definitions of home.

9.1 Engaging in the Public Sphere

In this section I consider how churches can expand their understanding of home and migration and reclaim practices that deepen their connection to place *while also* acknowledging home as both complex and contested. In other words, how can churches take seriously the importance of place without becoming entrenched in established definitions of home and belonging? And what is a possible and productive theological engagement with home as it is seen through the lens of asylum-seeking? In a similar way, Grau asks several theological questions (referenced in Chapter 2) about how to live generatively within the tension between migrant and settled theologies.[7] These theologies are, on the one hand, the Exodus, and, on the other hand, settlements and land claims. She challenges Christians to not only focus on the Exodus narratives but to also take seriously the stories of settlement, including the biblical stories of Israel's eras of establishing kingdoms and holding slaves.[8] To do this she asks:

> How do we reroot ourselves and become people of the land wherever we are? How do we understand land and home on a planet where a changing climate is forcing many to migrate? What in the narrated changes and shifts of population allows the preservation of important cultural elements, while being open to other cultural practices? What would be a viable theological engagement with land, community, and livelihood seen under the aspect of migration?[9]

These questions challenge normative assumptions about place and land that have undergirded expansionist and missionary tendencies of the church. Christian the-

5 R. P. Paudel, "Unhomely Home: Cultural Encounter of Diaspora in Jhumpa Lahiri's the Namesake," *NUTA Journal* 6, no. 1–2 (2019): 71, https://doi.org/10.3126/nutaj.v6i1-2.23231.

6 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*, 33.

7 Grau, "Circumambulating Exodus-Migration-Conquest."

8 Grau, "Circumambulating Exodus-Migration-Conquest," 15.

9 Grau, "Circumambulating Exodus-Migration-Conquest," 12.

ology also identifies with a migration history through the Israelites' exile as well as Jesus' itinerant ministry and welcoming of the stranger.

In fact, Christianity has also been affiliated with a settled history and associated with established institutions and governments. These questions highlight tensions raised in this book between home, place, and migration. Who can claim home, and where and under what circumstances can it be claimed? Home is often evoked as an ideal, desired space, but it is also a concept that motivates political and social action, both to protect and delimitate. For example, the Offene Kirche Elisabethen created Projekt DA-SEIN due in part to their access to physical infrastructure, funding, and community connections, including the Swiss religious and governmental systems. Yet, the OKE also created Projekt DA-SEIN *because* of their willingness to live within the asymmetry of being both settled and migratory.

One answer on to the question of how to engage home and place without resorting to entrenched definitions of home is to foster a deeper engagement with the public sphere. In this vein, Padilla explores the tensions between global connectivity and local identity, writing: "On the one hand, there may be a universal welcome; on the other, a localization of origins may lend itself to entrenched views on identity."[10] As seen at Projekt DA-SEIN, teaching local customs, language, and practices often becomes a focus of the program, despite a desire for more convivial and balanced relationships. This emphasis on helping often defines ways that churches respond to migration, with a focus on direct service and pastoral care.

Projekt DA-SEIN's response to migration reflects unique political and ecclesiological qualities. As an urban church in Switzerland, the OKE prioritizes responding to issues that impact their local environment. Attending to the city and the well-being of its residents is at the heart of the church's theology of openness, which demands an inclusive response to the social and demographic character of the city. In this way, the Offene Kirche Elisabethen occupies a specific place in the context of Basel and responds politically as well as religiously to the city, including the asylum-seekers who reside there. The OKE attends to the intersection of the personal and political through Projekt DA-SEIN, through hosting cultural and social events, and through the church's physical openness. Thus, the OKE prioritizes community at the level of the city by attending to the needs and realities of the urban context and acting politically to engage and care for all members of the greater community. This acknowledgment of a political response has repercussions for the discourse on home. While home is often understood at the personal level as household and family, the OKE's focus on the city expands home beyond the personal and into the public and urban space.

10 Padilla, "Expanding Space," 65.

As Hannah Arendt posited in *The Human Condition*, the social emerges at the intersection of the personal and political.[11] While the city might provide housing to asylum-seekers, *living* in the city, perhaps even finding *home* in the city, demands far more. On the part of churches, this demands an openness to the ways home is construed for newcomers, even if these are unusual or unfamiliar. Scholars such as Joisten and Bhabha likewise view home as deeply intertwined with the familiar and unfamiliar. As Bhabha writes, "The home does not remain the domain of domestic life, nor does the world simply become its social or historical counterpart."[12] Instead, recognition of home as personal and public is often unsettling, especially when these new aspects feel alienating. Thus, that which is other from the dominant local definitions of home is considered outside that definition. This is seen within the asylum process, where integration is understood as a one-way project, compelling newcomers to adopt to the normative culture without similar requirements for the receiving community.[13] Similarly, churches often "include" diverse practices instead of recognizing that the other already exists.[14] Doing so reinforces the power differential of hospitality, where those with more access to resources can offer welcome and control access.[15]

For migrants, especially those waiting for decisions on their cases, home is shaped within the tension between the restrictive systems of their current place and the affective associations they have with family and community. Holton describes this dialectic of home as consisting of locations that shape people's everyday lives and of the affective feelings they generate, such as security and belonging.[16] This can generate a tension in home between its locality and its existentiality. Ahmed describes these aspects of home as a place of sensory and embodied experience (in the lived locality) and a place of identity formation (consisting of affective and imagined experiences).[17] The OKE and Projekt DA-SEIN seek to bridge these two poles of connectivity by bringing the local community together – connecting both asylum-seekers and longer-term residents. It can be argued that Projekt DA-SEIN exists in a liminal space between the precarious situation of asylum-seeking and the established government and social systems of Switzerland, including churches.

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11 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), 26–27.

12 Homi K. Bhabha, "The World and the Home," *Social Text* 31–32 (1992): 141, https://doi.org/10.2307/466222.

13 Mey und Streckeisen, "Integration Von Ausländern."

14 Richard Fenn, "Diversity and Power: Cracking the Code," in *Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship*, ed. Brian K. Blount and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 65.

15 See: Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*; Dufourmantelle, "Hospitality"; Russell, Clarkson, and Ott, *Just Hospitality*; Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*.

16 Holton, *Longing for Home*, 17.

17 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 89–90.

The OKE strives to build community outside of dominant frameworks of power and definitions of belonging. Dominant frameworks can reinforce hierarchies of power, especially hierarchies that exoticize or other those who fall outside accepted definitions of belonging. These frameworks exist in political systems as well as in ecclesiological settings that prioritize existing structures. Projekt DA-SEIN's goal of offering asylum-seekers a "piece of home" is an acknowledgement that home is available even to those categorized as not belonging. In this way, Projekt DA-SEIN facilitates interdependence and relational agency through its welcome by creating a space to freely come and go, by limiting programming, by encouraging participants to engage as they choose, and by offering opportunities for participants to contribute their expertise. Within Projekt DA-SEIN, being together is emphasized, especially as it is reflected in a theology of convivence.[18] Although convivence is a missional concept, it moves away from knowledge production that is one-directional. Convivence aspires to increase relational agency and decrease the hierarchical nature of helping and hospitality, shifting away from a model where those with more power serve those with less power. Instead, convivence acts to support the contributions of all participants, who are encouraged to share their expertise and leadership. Projekt DA-SEIN creates an open space for asylum-seekers to bring themselves, their concerns, and their contributions. Sharing stories and skills, negotiating power dynamics, and building networks, both vertical and horizontal, create opportunities for reciprocity (and also reveal efforts that sometimes fell short).

Focusing on the multiple impacts that shape understandings of home can help to decouple home from rigid definitions of place, which are often rooted in sentimental attachments that obscure the complexity of home and exclude that which is considered other. These complexities of home are rarely taken up in the face of localized social and political systems. How a church, which is both socially and theologically informed, responds to and acts within this debate speaks to its larger role in the public sphere. By attending to the needs of the city and the diversity of its residents, which includes recognizing asylum-seekers as part of the city, the OKE gestures towards an understanding of place that is both historically informed and open to expanding iterations of home. In this way, the OKE addresses both the local impact of migration politics and their own responsibility to respond to the city. For example, the OKE attends to the public sphere by acknowledging the global realities that have brought asylum-seekers to the places in and around Basel. On the one hand, technology and globalization have expanded connections and opportunities to engage with communities across geography. On the other hand, globalization has also intensified local definitions of identity and culture, leading to increased na-

18 See my discussion in Chapter 5 of a theology of convivence (*Konvivenz*), as developed by Theo Sundermeier.

tionalism and populism. International and national politics, as well as economic and social forces, shape specific urban contexts and the communities who live there.

A response to the local environment is a response to global issues. In this way, churches have the opportunity to broaden their definition of home by bringing a sharper lens to their particular social, physical, and political locations, by engaging more deeply with their place in the public sphere, and by broadening their response to global issues, including migration. Even as the OKE reflects aspects of the political systems of citizenship and asylum by focusing on integration and helping, it also asserts that home is not exclusively an established and settled concept related to territory and settlement. In doing so, it holds out hope for the possibility of a different future that is open to the unsettling aspects of home. This hope for a different future is especially relevant within the life-and-death reality of migration.

9.2 Theological Engagements with a Contested Home

The OKE acknowledges the presence of asylum-seekers and opens a space where they are not only served and welcomed but also invited to co-create. Drawing on theological commitments of openness, convivence, and ambivalence as well as values associated with home, such as security, belonging, and relationships, Projekt DA-SEIN offers a "piece of home" to asylum-seekers in Basel. Through relational agency, "being there," and acknowledging the fullness of each person's experience, Projekt DA-SEIN welcomes the varied histories of asylum-seeking and recognizes the potential of individuals, beyond their need for asylum. Projekt DA-SEIN opens a co-creative space for the city to negotiate what it means to live together, in the original spirit of convivence, living well together.[19] Drawing on the model of Projekt DA-SEIN, this section considers a possible and productive theological engagement with home as seen through the lens of asylum-seeking. To do this, I elaborate on three examples of how "being there" offers this engagement with home through disrupting isolation, grieving and remembering, and engaging vulnerability. By disrupting isolation and providing opportunities for grieving and remembering, the OKE creates a space that counters dominant interactions with asylum-seeking. In addition, I reflect on vulnerability and its challenges in relation to home and convivial relationships.

9.2.1 Disrupting Isolation

Projekt DA-SEIN embraces several approaches that are counter to the dominant narrative of asylum-seeking. First, the OKE and Projekt DA-SEIN offer an alterna-

19 Bliese, "Convivenz and Globalization," 235.

tive space to the isolation of asylum-seeking. The politics of asylum-seeking occur in a context of death and isolation. From unseaworthy boats crossing the Mediterranean Sea, to overcrowded refugee camps, to the circumstances that cause people to flee in order to preserve their lives – asylum-seeking is a life-or-death project. When arriving in a country to apply for asylum, bureaucratic systems work to keep asylum-seekers in isolation. While Switzerland offers basic sustenance to asylum-seekers, these accommodations also separate them from other parts of Swiss society. Asylum-seekers are housed in asylum homes, given a modest stipend, and precluded from engaging in work, education, or other social programs. In addition to these tangible forms of isolation in Basel, there are also numerous losses, including the death of people along the way, people lost to the system or to traumatic experiences, losses of family due to distance, and losses of not being able to fulfill cultural obligations, such as caring for aging parents.

This experience of isolation was revealed in comments and conversations with asylum-seekers. One man from Afghanistan lamented that in the neighborhood in Basel where he lived, he often said hello to people but did not get a response.[20] Another man from Afghanistan, who had studied art, expressed disappointment that he did not have a place to do his art since the space of the asylum home was so limited. Rooms are often shared, common spaces are crowded and not always well-maintained, and privacy is limited.[21] Due to the traumatic experiences of fleeing and the uncertainty of their present circumstances, it was not uncommon for asylum-seekers to report that they had trouble sleeping or concentrating. Several asylum-seekers shared that before coming to Projekt DA-SEIN, they stayed in their rooms in the asylum home and did not interact with others. In addition, isolation occurs through traumatic experiences and the loss of physical, economic, social autonomy as well as the experience of not being able to pursue significant life milestones, as explored in Chapters 7 and 8. Many asylum-seekers tried to distance themselves from the stress of isolation through focusing on meeting requirements, through coping mechanisms such as smoking, or through engaging in activities at Projekt DA-SEIN or at other organizations.[22] One asylum-seeker told me that "It is not good to be sad."[23] He told me that his mother always taught him that Allah likes it when people

20 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 26, 2018: 20180726_DA-SEIN_Input_v1_PO, Pos. 228.

21 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, November 21, 2018: 20181121_1AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 3.

22 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, April 12, 2018: 20180412_18AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 6; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 13, 2018: 20180713 _3AS_IN, 123–37; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, February 15, 2018: 20180215_2AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 15.

23 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, February 15, 2018: 20180215_2AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 16.

laugh. She told him that when he is with others and makes them laugh, then God is also laughing, and that is good. He always remembered this story and, in Basel, he began to engage with others, make friends, learn German, and attend Projekt DA-SEIN.[24]

This diverse community of people and experiences at Projekt DA-SEIN counters the dominant approach to asylum-seeking, which separates those in the asylum process from the wider Swiss community while also insisting they make efforts to integrate and adopt the "Swiss way of life."[25] Several asylum-seekers told me they appreciated Projekt DA-SEIN because they could learn about people from other countries and connect with them despite having different backgrounds.[26] Projekt DA-SEIN attempts to create an ephemeral community that is different from the asylum system and that interrupts practices of isolation. Projekt DA-SEIN counters the isolation of migration by offering experiences of home through convivial interactions of sharing time, food, and stories.

Projekt DA-SEIN disrupts isolation through everyday activities such as dropping by, having conversations, playing games, cooking meals, and negotiating relationships. In doing so, Projekt DA-SEIN interrupts the experience of isolation. It is a political act to shape practices that counter a context where isolation is part of the systematic treatment. Simply being invited into a Swiss church to meet and interact with people who live in Basel is unusual. During my time at the program, there were many intentional moments of creating this political community. New asylum-seekers were picked up and introduced to the program, including a group of women who had recently arrived from Eritrea, and trips were organized to cultural and social events.[27] Yet even beyond these specific actions, the political intention of building community together, as reflected in a theology of convivence, motivated and infused the program, its activities, and its ideals.

While people often meet in homogenous groups in churches, Projekt DA-SEIN is a heterogeneous community. There is a diversity of asylum-seekers, though they share a similar path, as well as a community of diverse Swiss residents who are interested in engaging with asylum-seekers. They are religious and non-religious, young and old, and Swiss citizens and non-citizens, including ex-pats or migrants who are

24 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, February 15, 2018: 20180215_2AS_DA-SEIN_II, Pos. 16.

25 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, FDJP, Foreign Population and Asylum Statistics 2018.

26 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 13, 2018: 20180713_3AS_IN, Pos. 378–82; Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 5, 2018: 20180705_2AS_IN, 149.

27 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 11, 2018: 20180711_DA-SEIN_v2_PO; Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, July 12, 2018: 20180712_DA-SEIN Wanderung Reigoldswil_v2_PO; 2 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, May 30, 2018: 20180530_DA-SEIN_v2_PO.

more established. Even without knowing a lot about each other, the project creates a sense of community grounded in simply being there together.

In addition, Projekt DA-SEIN asks what people from different backgrounds can bring to Swiss society. While this sometimes focuses on food, cooking, or arts, there is an openness to diverse opinions, an appreciation of the skills and knowledge asylum-seekers bring, and an acknowledgement of the limited opportunities many of them have to use and share these skills in Switzerland. The program creates opportunities for acknowledging asylum-seekers in ways that Swiss integration requirements do not, and it supports them as much as is legally and practically possible to secure jobs or succeed in their asylum applications. Acknowledging the range of what asylum-seekers bring can serve to counter isolation by offering them opportunities to lead, teach, and share their skills. Projekt DA-SEIN creates a space that allows for people's potential, even if it is limited in the moment. In this space, asylum-seekers project themselves into a livable future by acting where they can.

9.2.2 Grieving and Remembering

Another way of attending to the situation of asylum-seekers and countering isolation is to create space for practices of grief. During many conversations and interviews, I listened to stories about grief and loss. Expressions of grief usually fell into two categories: grief, loss, and longing for the people and places that were left, and grief, uncertainty, and powerlessness in the face of the asylum process, its rules and regulations, and the length of time the process took. In addition, grief emerged from past traumatic experiences, including lengthy imprisonments of themselves or family members, and the difficulty, pain, and fear endured while traveling to Europe, including imprisonment, hunger, extortion, and imminent threats to life. Asylum-seekers were faced with the precariousness of their own lives, which was often experienced in boats on the Mediterranean. Many people expressed the difficulty of fleeing home, traveling to Europe, and now waiting for years without resolution of their asylum applications. This difficulty was also seen in concern about when and if they would be able to see their family again.

In addition, there was grief due to lost opportunities as a result of bureaucratic regulations, age, and other limitations. While many people I spoke with had excelled at school, held leadership roles in their communities, or dreamed of leading particular lives, their opportunities in Switzerland were limited, even if their asylum applications were accepted. It was not uncommon for asylum-seekers to tell me their actual age, which often varied from their official age because some opportunities, such as schooling, are limited by age requirements and because there are advantages to being young. In addition, some Swiss cantons had more generous programs for asylum-seekers than others. I noticed this in particular around access to Ger-

man courses, which varied depending on the canton where an asylum-seeker was assigned.

The Offene Kirche Elisabethen and Projekt DA-SEIN's value of ambivalence provides opportunities for engaging in celebration and joy as well as grief and loss, including through aesthetics and art. At Projekt DA-SEIN's festivals, asylum-seekers shared original poetry, music, and songs from their countries of origin, participated in dance and performance pieces, and created visual art and short films about their experiences. At the Projekt DA-SEIN fall festival, I offered an opportunity to create collages about home. Often the images selected conveyed longing – a field of flowers that were reminiscent of the flowers that bloomed during spring in that person's country of origin, or religious images that spoke of a sense of being protected.[28] At the program after dinner, often when everyone was engaged in chores, it was common for someone to play music from their country of origin, which often caused people cleaning in the kitchen to start singing the lyrics and dancing. Songs specifically about longing and grief were also shared. One day an asylum-seeker described a song from Iraq. The song said: "If you lose gold, you can always buy more gold. If you lose your home, you cannot get it back."[29]

In the face of tragedies that cannot be resolved, it is important that there are places that provide a space where grieving is possible. Projekt DA-SEIN offers an example of how grief is acknowledged, without forcing asylum-seekers to tell their stories. It was an emphasis of the program to avoid prying questions or direct inquiries about stories of fleeing; these inquiries can be traumatic and unwelcome. Yet, building relationships and trust creates places where stories might emerge and be shared. In addition, practices of the program provided opportunities to acknowledge grief in a way that allowed grief neither to be productive, in terms of illustrating a point or legitimating a claim for asylum, nor to be fully resolved or healed. In this way, asylum-seekers were able to step outside of the extractive grasp and outside of a focus on their "pain narratives," which serve bureaucrats, academics, and interested citizens at the expense of the personal stories of asylum-seekers and cultivate a singular focus on their pain.[30]

Projekt DA-SEIN creates opportunities to connect in the midst of grief as a political act in the context of asylum-seeking. The OKE, by creating a space for grief, creates a space for life. Judith Butler offers a concept of the "grievability of life," arguing that only under conditions when loss would matter does life appear. Butler

28 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, November 3, 2018: 20181103_30AS_Herbstfest_II.

29 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, August 23, 2018: 20180823_DA-SEIN_v1_PO, Pos. 10.

30 Tuck and Yang, "R-Words."

writes, "Precisely because a living being may die, it is necessary to care for that being so that it may live. Only under conditions in which the loss would matter does the value of the life appear."[31] This "grievability of life" is unequally applied. In many circumstances, certain lives are more grievable than others. This has been seen in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected some countries and racial and economic groups more severely. Other examples are found along the U.S.-Mexico border, where one deterrent strategy is to allow for the possibility that people will die while attempting to cross the desert, and in global inequities in access to health care and life-saving measures. The question of whose life is worth grieving is a political question.

In Basel, considering the grievability of the lives of asylum-seekers is likewise a political question. For Projekt DA-SEIN, grief is considered not only in retrospect, but also in its future possible iterations. The results of an asylum interview, the possibility of securing work or schooling, and even the ability to connect with family and friends or to learn German all impact the grief that is possible in life. Likewise, Butler's theory considers the potential for grief as something that energizes and supports life. "[G]rievability is a condition of a life's emergence and sustenance," Butler writes.[32] Without the potential for grief, life is not really life. Similarly, Martha Nussbaum argues in her philosophy of compassion that compassion entails judgements about the significance, worthiness, and connection we feel for those suffering.[33] Nussbaum goes on to say that compassion emerges only when a common human worth and vulnerability are acknowledged.[34] By caring for the lives of asylum-seekers, offering compassion, and celebrating and grieving losses, the OKE broadens definitions of who matters in the local definitions of home.[35]

Projekt DA-SEIN also provides opportunities for collective expressions of grief. This occurs through Christian practices, such as remembering the dead on All Saints Day, and community rituals, such as gathering to send prayers and thoughts to a community member detained under new asylum laws (see section 6.2). These rituals of remembrance were often opportunities to acknowledge the loss and trauma with which many asylum-seekers live. At Easter, the story of Jesus' last supper was presented in the context of Jesus' solidarity with the poor and with those who lack political and social rights. Good Friday, the commemoration of the crucifixion of Jesus,

31 Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (Verso, 2009), 14.

32 Butler, *Frames of War*, 15.

33 Lisbeth Lipari, *Listening, Thinking, Being: Toward an Ethics of Attunement* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 180.

34 Marta Craven Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, 8th ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

35 Butler, *Frames of War*, 14.

was contextualized within the sadness and grief that is part of every life and is recognizable in our own disappointments and regrets.[36] On All Saints Day, a small bonfire was lit in the courtyard and the significance of remembering the dead was explained, including the theological roots of the holiday and the common rituals and practices around death. Notecards were passed out where asylum-seekers could write the name of someone who had died that they wanted to remember. These were then added to the fire, along with prayer cards that had been left in the church throughout the year. This ritual used fire to symbolize the releasing of prayers, both those left in the church and those contained in remembering the dead. This ritual created room for remembrance of the diverse and sometimes difficult experiences of asylum-seekers, including loss, death, and grief. In addition, it involved asylum-seekers in engaging with the longing and prayers of others, by bringing the prayers left in the church to the fire and offering them to God. Handling the hopes and longings of others was a powerful reminder of the universality of hopes and prayers as well as of loss and longing. It was also a way to acknowledge and cultivate interdependence, even amid the differences in access to political and social capital.

Being together and praying together is a way of supporting one another and sharing in one another's griefs and joys. Prayers and solidarity were also offered during the Input Session, described in Chapter 6, that shared relevant information about asylum laws and about how these changes had already impacted a member of the Projekt DA-SEIN community.[37] Coming together created a way to acknowledge the difficult impact of these changes, even though there was little direct action that could be taken. It provided a place to deal with the difficult experience of losing a friend and colleague to a system that was outside of one's control. It also created space for volunteers to confront and wrestle with the limitations of their own ability to impact the asylum experiences of those who attend the program. Despite their more privileged situation in Switzerland, volunteers had little latitude to change the impact of these laws. Input Sessions created places to be together with what had been irrevocably lost through death and deportation as well as to confront feelings of powerlessness. This acknowledgement of shared experiences, as well as of the divergent impacts of legal and political systems, brings the issue of grievability into everyday encounters and offers a broader definition of home.

36 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, March 29, 2018: 20180329_DA-SEIN_v2_PO, Pos. 7.

37 Participant Observation by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, April 25, 2018: 20180425_DA-SEIN_Input_v2_PO, Pos. 5–64.

9.2.3 Shared Vulnerability

The grievability of life is also rooted in mutual dependence and vulnerability. At is root, vulnerability means we are reliant on the earth and others for life. This vulnerability is a counterpoint to the focus on welcome and hospitality in outreach to asylum-seekers. As reflected in the discussion about hospitality, the ability to offer welcome and resources is predicated on having control over those resources (see section 2.1.4). At the same time, the perceived dichotomy of the poles of host-guest is tenuous – the designation of host or guest can change at any moment. Admirand writes, "As displaced persons and irregular migrants know, their perceived status by the dominant group in a society can literally change overnight."[38]

There is an undeniable vulnerability to seeking asylum. It is visible in the images associated with migrating, in the ways asylum-seekers are categorized and discussed, and in the aid that is offered, or not offered, to them. Yet, as explored when considering agency in Chapter 8, there are moments when asylum-seekers, despite limited cultural, financial, or political resources, develop practices that resist this host-guest divide. Yet, there is also a persistent tendency of volunteers and staff to view themselves exclusively as hosts. This pattern is reflected historically in Western Christianity, which has taken on the role of host in many contexts that it has entered. This tendency is especially recognizable in missionary work, when Western Christians entered other's homes yet took over the role of teaching, organizing, and hosting. Jennings calls this "inverted hospitality," a phenomenon that makes people into guests in their homes.[39] Similarly, Christine Pohl writes, "There is a kind of hospitality that keeps people needy strangers while fostering an illusion of relationship and connection. It both disempowers and domesticates guests while it reinforces the hosts' power, control, and sense of generosity."[40] Instead, recognizing the possibility of both affecting others and being affected by others means that an individual moves between both the poles of giving and receiving, of being host and hosting.

This relational agency demands vulnerability on the part of all those involved. Vulnerability is a shared human condition, as are the related conditions of exile, guest, and stranger. This "fundamental vulnerability," as Bieler describes it, is the potential to impact and be impacted, to touch and be touched by others (see section 2.1.4).[41] Bieler's fundamental vulnerability emphasizes an openness to the vulnerability of life that is inherent to embodied existence, even as some people are more impacted by situational vulnerability, which is based on circumstances, such

38 Admirand, "The Ethics of Displacement and Migration in the Abrahamic Faiths," 676.

39 Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 58.

40 Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 119.

41 Bieler, "Verletzlichkeit," 169.

as asylum-seeking.[42] This openness is also at work at Projekt DA-SEIN, as seen in convivence, interdependence, and relational agency.[43] Yet, centering shared vulnerability could further disrupt isolation and create more mutuality between asylum-seekers and volunteers.

For example, at Projekt DA-SEIN volunteers occasionally recounted losses and migration stories from their own families. When they shared these with me, they were often presented as being "not as bad" as what asylum-seekers experienced.[44] In the same way, when sharing these histories of migration with me, they were quick to qualify that these were nothing like the experiences of asylum-seekers being forced to leave. While this reveals an important truth, it fails to acknowledge that grief and loss are a shared experience. Instead, it serves to consolidate experiences of security with volunteers while experiences of vulnerability become the exclusive purview of asylum-seekers. Yet, both guest and host are impacted by the experiences of hospitality *and* hostility (to use Derrida's polarity),[45] or the ability to help and the need to be helped. Thus, volunteers and staff naming and sharing their own vulnerabilities and losses, in appropriate ways, can further situate home in spaces of risk and vulnerability instead of only security and familiarity. Moving home beyond definitions of home as safe and comfortable centers mutuality and connection.[46]

Scholars such as Joisten, Ralph, and Staeheli situate home not only in the perceived security of staying but also in the uncertainty of leaving. Others, such as Dufourmantelle, go further to locate belonging in the original human experience of exile (see the discussion in section 2.1.4).[47] This vulnerability as a quality of home reflects human reliance on the earth and others for life. Interdependence, depending on one another and the earth, and the relational agency it affords, are necessary conditions of creating home. This foregrounding of vulnerability can stand in contrast to a focus on welcome, as at the OKE. Acknowledging the shared condition of exile instead avoids outsourcing experiences of vulnerability to the other. Focusing only on the vulnerability of migrants creates opposing poles, where migrants are vulnerable and the Swiss are secure. Instead, true relationality enters into the risks of common humanity.

Catherine Keller writes about this in describing the importance of relational theology. "Every relation co-constitutes its world, for better or for worse. In the inter-

42 Bieler, "Verletzlichkeit," 171.

43 Bieler, "Verletzlichkeit," 169–70. Alternately, situational vulnerability is based on circumstances, personal, social, or structural, that create vulnerable conditions. This might include migration, illness, or discrimination.

44 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 13, 2018: 20180913_1FW_IN, Pos. 100.

45 Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*.

46 Weir, "Home and Identity," 8.

47 Dufourmantelle, "Hospitality," 14.

stices of the creation, new connections are continually created. This mutual creativity offers little security. It creates at the same time our mutually assured vulnerability."[48] Keller's concept of "mutually assured vulnerability" argues that it is only when we acknowledge our shared vulnerability that collaboration and co-creative work towards a new world become possible. In a similar vein, theologian Dorothee Sölle acknowledges, in *The Window of Vulnerability*, that security is an illusion, particularly for those living in first-world countries.[49] This is illustrated in Chapter 6, where it was seen that many citizens of wealthier countries place a high value on this perceived security as a marker of home.[50] Writing in the chapter "We Want Peace, Not Security," Sölle argues, "Thus security, which we are supposed to receive in exchange when we forgo genuine peace, is increasingly neuroticized; our need for it becomes insatiable; one can never be secure enough."[51] Like *Heimat* (see section 2.2.1), security becomes a seemingly innocent hope that belies its power to separate and perpetuate harm. According to Sölle, acknowledging a shared vulnerability is essential to counteracting the powerful systems that attempt to defend a sense of security at the expense of those who lack it.[52]

Similarly, Miguel de la Torre argues in his book *The U.S. Immigration Crisis* that the virtue of hospitality is not the appropriate approach to the current immigration crisis.[53] Echoing Derrida, he writes, "To practice the virtue of hospitality assumes the 'house' belongs to the one practicing this virtue who, out of the generosity of their heart, is sharing her or his resources with the Other who has no claim to the possession."[54] Instead, de la Torre advocates for a deeper acknowledgement of how patterns of injustice, including U.S. political, military, and economic intervention, have created the conditions necessary for migration and a consideration of "the responsibility of restitution."[55] This discussion of restitution, shared vulnerability, and mutual responsibility is notably lacking in many conversations about migration. Instead, countries where asylum-seekers arrive are typically cast as the allowing host while the migrant remains the needy guest. As Jennie Molz and Sarah Gibson write in *Mobilizing Hospitality*, "If the immigrant is imagined as 'the guest,' the 'host nation' maintains its historical position of power and privilege in determining who is

48 Catherine Keller, *God and Power: Counter-Apocalyptic Journeys* (Fortress Press, 2005), 133.

49 Dorothee Sölle, *The Window of Vulnerability: A Political Spirituality*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Fortress Press, 1971).

50 Keller, *God and Power*, 133.

51 Sölle, *The Window of Vulnerability*, 4.

52 Sölle, *The Window of Vulnerability*, 4–5.

53 Miguel de La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis: Toward an Ethics of Place* (Cascade Books, 2016), 156.

54 De La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis*, 158–59.

55 De La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis*, 159.

or is not welcome to enter the country."[56] Considering the limitations of hospitality reminds us that true openness is both possible and severely limited by external circumstances. Instead, it is our shared vulnerability that ultimately deconstructs systems and builds new communities. As Russell writes, welcome is a two-way street that demands solidarity, partnership, and risk. Without this, even convivence can become one-sided comfort that stops short of mutuality and liberation.[57] Vulnerability can point the way toward an "emancipatory hermeneutics" that engages in the struggle for liberation *with* the other.[58]

9.3 De-heimatizing Belonging

This book engages the context of asylum-seeking, specifically the experiences of asylum-seekers at Projekt DA-SEIN in Basel, Switzerland, in questions of home. It reveals aspects of home as they emerge amid the tensions of helping and agency, familiarity and unfamiliarity, conviviality and integration, staying and going, absence and presence, and waiting and acting. In this way, this book challenges the tendency of home to become a fixed and sentimental concept, used to bolster comfortable feelings and to exclude threats to familiarity and security through fixed definitions of place. Instead, it attempts to contribute to a new understanding of home by including even those who are between homes, who do not have homes, or whose homes are threatened.

The work of the Offene Kirche Elisabethen reveals a tension in home between its locality and its existentiality, between the concrete place of home and the affective associations with and longings for home.[59] In addition to these two poles, Sander adds a third element, the representative narrative (i.e. the expressivity of home).[60] How home is described and the stories people tell about it influence its reality, composition, and meaning. Given the narrative shape of home, it is worth considering the ubiquitous use of the word "home." The term is often used, without much consideration, to indicate the place one lives, the people one considers family, and the affective associations that recall feelings of safety, security, and belonging. Yet, home is not a fixed entity; it shifts through lifetimes and with changes in places, relationships, and affectivities. As Knott writes in *The Location of Religion*, places "are repeatedly bounded and settled in common discourse only to be punched through

56 Jennie G. Molz and Sarah Gibson, "Introduction: Mobilizing and Mooring Hospitality," in *Mobilizing Hospitality: The Ethics of Social Relations in a Mobile World*, ed. Jennie G. Molz and Sarah Gibson (Ashgate, 2007), 9.

57 Russell, Clarkson, and Ott, *Just Hospitality*, 122.

58 Congdon, "Emancipatory Intercultural Hermeneutics."

59 Holton, *Longing for Home*; Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*.

60 Sander, "Religion am Third Space von Beheimatung," 367.

and unsettled by alternative accounts. The particularity of a place arises from the complexity of its social relations and the sum of the stories told about it."[61] This narrative shape of home is grounded in relationships and affective experiences that are not fixed over time.

Yet, as seen throughout this book, stories told about home are often described in nostalgic or sentimental terms. This focus can serve to obscure the ways home can also be place of conflict, ambivalent feelings, and rigidity. As Ahmed describes, a definition of home "as a purified space of belonging" requires a narrative that is fixed and unchanging. Ahmed writes, "(T)his narrative requires a definition of home that is itself impossible: it stabilizes home as a place with boundaries that are fixed, such that the home becomes pure, safe, and comfortable."[62] Instead, as described in this book, home is often uncomfortable and unfamiliar. In other words, many definitions of home seek to eliminate the vulnerability that is embedded in home.

Given the ways home often obscures its more difficult sides, including its life-denying policies and practices, some scholars advocate for considering alternative ways of describing connections to place and experiences of belonging. Ayata calls this process the "de-heimatization" of belonging and advocates for decoupling home and belonging. She argues that *Heimat* (home) is not a neutral term and, therefore, cannot be neutrally reclaimed.[63] In Ayata's example (see section 2.2.1), the German term *Heimat* has been distorted to support the comfort and security of some at the expense of others, for example through colonialism and restrictive migration policies.[64] As Blickle writes, *Heimat* is usually "something in the face of which one feels essentially innocent and taken care of."[65] "De-heimatization" challenges this perceived innocence. Associating home with comfort and security creates a false sense of harmlessness that obscures the ways home does violence, for example through migration policies. This can be seen in how home has been forcibly defended from outsiders, debated during cultural shifts, and fortified through borders.

Instead, a consideration of home as contested and as emerging in border spaces acknowledges home as located in the in-between and amid multiplicity. It centers understandings of home as both concrete and local as well as defined by longing, imagination, and absence. This definition of home centers vulnerability, relational agency, grief and celebration, and familiarity amid unfamiliarity; it centers an acknowledgement of multiple social contexts and traditions and a curiosity about what new forms of being together might emerge. In this way border spaces can reveal other forms of belonging. Borders account for multiplicity, are steeped in the

61 Knott, *The Location of Religion*, 33.

62 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 87–88.

63 Bilgin Ayata, "Der Siegeszug Des Heimatbegriffs"; Ayata, "Prologue."

64 Ayata, "Prologue"; Blickle, *Heimat*, 6.

65 Blickle, *Heimat*, 149.

dynamics of shifting relationships, and are a nexus of beginnings and endings.[66] Thus border spaces reiterate that "Being at home is not the ending point," as Padilla writes.[67] Instead, home is a beginning, and often contains multiple beginnings.[68]

Considering home in more dynamic contexts reveals possibilities for renewed definitions of belonging that take seriously a world altered by migration and globalization. Padilla suggests that an alternate relationship to place and home might be called "dwelling hospitably."[69] This dwelling expands on Derrida's notion of building and dwelling to suggest that alternate spaces might entail "a sacred interdependence."[70] As seen at Projekt DA-SEIN, interdependence and conviviality offer new iterations of belonging and being in community. While place is understood as socially produced, centering interdependence further highlights how place can generate new ways of being together. In practical, if imperfect, ways, "dwelling hospitably" exists at Projekt DA-SEIN as it creates a place located between worlds.

The OKE embraces its home in border spaces – as a City Church it is faithful both to its work as a Christian church and to its commitment to respond to the city where it is located. It embraces the privilege of being able to affect change and offer resources while also putting its focus and faith in the simple act of "being there." By holding out the possibility of a "piece of home" for asylum-seekers in Basel, where otherwise they are considered the stranger and the other, the OKE and Projekt DA-SEIN express faith in a home that is more than political designations and more than security and comfort. Instead, home is an expression of mutuality and liberation that centers belonging. Several asylum-seekers expressed how the place of Projekt DA-SEIN provided something that was missing for them, namely connection to others and a place to belong.

> The first time I attended Projekt DA-SEIN, I was like: "Oh my God, I've been looking for this place!" Because being a refugee with little money, you cannot go everywhere and make friends. You need a place where you can feel a bit comfortable and be judged for who you are. The project gave me a lot of things – I made a lot of friends, I learned about the culture and, I mean, I even made my German a bit better here […] Even though sometimes my friends, they are kind of making fun of me: "Oh, you are going to the church, and there is a project in church." And I say, "Well, for me church, mosque, or any God, all these are the same places."[71]

66 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*; Padilla, "Expanding Space."

67 Padilla, "Expanding Space," 57.

68 Padilla, "Expanding Space," 63.

69 Padilla, "Expanding Space," 54.

70 Padilla, "Expanding Space," 66–68.

71 Interview by Katherine Kunz, Basel, Switzerland, September 5, 2018: 20180905_6AS_IN, Pos. 329, 337.

For this asylum-seeker, the place of church and mosque were not defined by their doctrinal aspects, but instead by the places they represented in his life. For him, church was a place he had been searching for, without knowing that it was a church. What he found there was an experience that went beyond categories of church, mosque, or God. He found comfort, friends, opportunities for learning, and a place to go that was, at least partially, his own.

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