WHOSE HOME, WHO BELONGS?

THE CONCEPT OF *HEIMAT* IN GERMAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE SINCE 2015

By

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Abstract

The German word *Heimat* has no direct English equivalent: Its closest translations are "home," "homeland" or "hometown," depending on the context. But it also comes with strong undertones of belonging, rootedness, and emotional connection—and has been instrumentalized by far-right political actors and movements since the National Socialists to denote who belongs and who doesn't. The term has taken on special significance at various points throughout German history; since the arrival of more than a million refugees into Germany in 2015 and 2016, it is again the subject of fierce debate. This thesis explores the concept of *Heimat* in German political and social discourse since 2015, using triangulation to examine the topic from both the top-down and bottom-up perspective. First, it analyzes two speeches delivered in German Bundestag in 2018 and 2019, respectively, to establish some discursive uses of *Heimat*. Then, via four focus groups conducted in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, it analyzes the way regular Germans and German residents construct and view the term. Ultimately, the thesis demonstrates that *Heimat* has become a shorthand for political actors to describe their visions for the future of the country; it is also a concept with deep meaning for individuals, the significance of which often doesn't line up with the way it is used by politicians. Examining the uses and construction of *Heimat* in politics and society provides a useful window into more universal issues related to populist far-right parties and their impact on political discourse.

Keywords: Germany, *Heimat*, far-right populism, immigration, belonging

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1. INTRODUCTION

In March 2018, shortly after taking office as Germany's interior minister, Horst Seehofer decided to rename the ministry he had been selected to lead. Instead of the Ministry of the Interior, it became the Ministry of the Interior, Construction, and *Heimat*.[1] That final word, *Heimat*, has no direct English equivalent: Its closest translations are "home," "homeland" or "hometown," depending on the context.[2] But it also comes with strong undertones of belonging, rootedness, and emotional connection. In its most basic form, *Heimat* is the place one feels at ease, where one is understood, that one longs for when one is away; in Seehofer's native Bavaria, where his Christian Social Union (CSU) party dominates, the term might be associated with traditional *Tracht* clothing, ebullient crowds in beer gardens and idyllic Alpine landscapes. The deep emotions and longing evoked by *Heimat*, however, are precisely what gives it the potential to be extremely potent in political discourse. The word has been instrumentalized by far-right political forces since the Nazi era, with nativist politicians using the term to make explicit their vision for an exclusive Germany that defends the *Heimat* of "real" Germans from the threat of outsiders.[3] In fact, just months before Seehofer's decision, the populist far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party became the first far-right political force to win seats in the German Bundestag since World War II: Running on the slogan, "Our Country, Our *Heimat*,"[4] AfD politicians capitalized on anti-refugee sentiments to win more than 5 million votes.[5]

That fundamentally conflicted context and the polarized political atmosphere in Germany help explain why Seehofer's addition of *Heimat* to his ministry's title was applauded

[1] "Geschichte des Ministeriums." Bundesministerium für Inneres, Bau und Heimat, accessed January 27, 2022, https://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/ministerium/unsere-geschichte/geschichte-ministerium/geschichte-ministerium-artikel.html
[2] See the Pons English translation of *Heimat*: https://en.pons.com/translate/german-english/Heimat
[3] See, for example, Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear* (London and Thousand Oaks, C.A.: SAGE, 2020).
[4] See, for example, this image via the AfD Erzgebirge: https://www.afd-erz.de/home/unser-land-unsere-heimat.html
[5] "Bundestagswahl 2017: Ergebnisse." Bundeswahlleiter, Wiesbaden, 2017, https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/bundestagswahlen/2017/ergebnisse.html

by some but fiercely lambasted by others. In the German weekly newspaper *Die Zeit,* one author wrote, "*'Heimat'* is not a politically innocent term, and a ministry won't change that," adding that the word "should be left to the [political] right."[6] Two writers with immigrant backgrounds, Fatya Aydemir and Hengameh Yaghoobifarah, responded to the ministry's new name with a 2019 book of essays titled, "Your *Heimat* is Our Nightmare." The word *Heimat* can feel inherently threatening to those who don't fit the typical idea of what it means to be "German," they wrote: Right-wing parties have used the term as a way "to deprive all those people who don't fit this ideal of their right to exist."[7]

Seehofer's decision and the resulting debate in the German public sphere were a reflection of—and perhaps on Seehofer's part, a recognition of—the renewed relevance *Heimat* had found in German political and social life. At varying points in the last two centuries, *Heimat* has among other things referred to the preservation of local and regional traditions and identity; it has been used to prop up the blood-and-soil ideology of the Nazis; and it has been a nostalgic utopia for a battered nation looking to rebuild and forget.[8] Since 2015, the word has again taken on heightened significance in German political and social life: The arrival of more than a million refugees into the country in 2015 and 2016 served as a major shock wave in German politics, drawing new fault lines in the political landscape and helping fuel the rise of the AfD.[9] Numerous books and newspaper op-eds sought to make sense of whether and how the concept

[6] Schreiber, Daniel. "Heimatministerium: Deutschland soll werden, wie es nie war." *ZEIT Online,* February 10, 2018, https://www.zeit.de/kultur/2018-02/heimatministerium-heimat-rechtspopulismus-begriff-kulturgeschichte
[7] Fatya Aydemir and Hengameh Yaghoobifarah. *Eure Heimat ist Unser Albtraum* (Berlin: Ullstein fünf Verlag, 2019).
[8] See Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials* (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 1990)*;* Alon Confino, "The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Heimat, National Memory, and the German Empire 1871-1918," *History and Memory* 5, no. 1 (1993): 42-86; Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat: A German Dream: Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture, 1890-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Peter Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Concept of Homeland* (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2002); Susanne Scharnowski, *Heimat: Geschichte eines Missverständnisses* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2019); Elsbeth Wallnöfer, *Heimat: Ein Vorschlag zur Güte* (Innsbruck: Haymon Verlag, 2019).
[9] Kai Arzheimer and Carl C. Berning, "How the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and their voters veered to the radical right, 2013-2017," *Electoral Studies* 60 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2019.04.004.

was relevant in modern German life, with some asking if the term should even be used at all in contemporary discourse.[10] As the historian Celia Applegate writes, *Heimat* has long "been at the center of a German moral—and by extension political—discourse about place, belonging, and identity."[11] Although Applegate's book first appeared in 1990, her observation holds true today: *Heimat* has become what's known as a *Kampfbegriff* (tendentious term) in German politics and society. It is both a concept that is being actively fought over by various political actors and one which those same actors use to present their visions for the future of Germany.

It hardly seems a coincidence that recent years have led to a *Heimat* resurgence. After all, the word tends to be most often evoked in times of extraordinary change throughout German history, whether politically, economically, or socially. Idealizing one's idyllic *Heimat*, the rolling hills and the farms and the traditions, first gained popularity during the Industrial Revolution when life for people in what is now Germany changed massively. *Heimat* came up again during both World Wars—as a call to arms and a thing to fiercely defend—and again during the efforts to rebuild afterward, as Germans reckoned (or didn't) with the horrific crimes committed by their friends, parents and neighbors. As the historian Peter Blickle puts it, the idea of *Heimat* "is one of the main elements in contemporary renegotiations of what it means to be German," adding that it "tends to be invoked when German-speaking cultures are expressing their difficulties in adjusting to modern life."[12]

What's more, the meaning of *Heimat* is also further complicated by the fact that it is often used in everyday settings: References to the word can be seen in banal settings as varied as a billboard for a new Netflix show ("FIND HEIMAT"), a package of frozen potatoes in an Edeka supermarket ("a real piece of *Heimat*!"), or a brand of local gin ("an honest taste from

[10] See Scharnowski, *Heimat*; Aydemir and Yaghoobifarah, *Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum*; Martina Hülz et al., eds., *Heimat: Ein vielfältiges Konzept* (Wiesbaden: Springer Verlag, 2019), Emily Schultheis, "Heimat: Home, identity, and belonging," *Institute of Current World Affairs*, June 5, 2020, https://www.icwa.org/heimat-home-identity-and-belonging/, and others.
[11] Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, 4.
[12] Blickle, *Heimat*, 27.

the *Heimat*").[13] Germans will casually mention they're traveling back to their *Heimat* for the weekend or remark that a certain dish or image or smell reminds them of their *Heimat*. Blickle writes that many Germans "use the word *Heimat* the way they use such words as tree, house or water"[14]—in other words, as something so innate and obvious it hardly requires explanation.

But the word does require explanation: *Heimat*'s wide range of contextual meanings, combined with the deep emotional undertones of the word and its casual use in everyday settings, make *Heimat* a flexible term—one that different political actors can activate in different ways by drawing on those historical connotations. Along with equally contentious, historically loaded, and difficult-to-translate terms such as *Volk* (people) and *Leitkultur* (dominant culture and values), the AfD has frequently invoked *Heimat* in its election appeals. Its leaders often frame *Heimat* as a traditional way of life that desperately needs protection from external threats and outsiders. Meanwhile, politicians on the left, including the Greens and the center-left Social Democrats (SPD), have argued the term should not be left to the far right and seek to reframe it as something decidedly inclusive.[15]

This thesis examines the complexity of the debates surrounding *Heimat*, both the way the concept is represented both in German political discourse and how (or whether) that corresponds with its use in the everyday lives of people in the country. The conflicted nature of *Heimat*, its history and its contemporary uses, is a wide-ranging topic that has been written about extensively and could fill many master's theses. However, I will focus my research on the concept of *Heimat* since 2015, considering the ways the term's historical context and connotations have both been utilized amid and evolved due to the arrival of a large number of refugees into Germany. Although other scholars have looked at the discursive use of *Heimat*

[13] The first two references are based on personal observation; the third, "Heimat Gin," https://www.heimat-gin.de/.
[14] Blickle, *Heimat*, 3.
[15] See, for example, a 2020 speech from President Frank-Walter Steinmeier: https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/bulletin/rede-von-bundespraesident-dr-frank-walter-steinmeier-1720560

in contemporary German politics[16] and Austrian politics[17], their focus has been quite different: Some studies looked at the occurrence of the term in the AfD's state- and federal-level party programs, while others have explored the way Austrian President Alexander van der Bellen and the populist far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) used the term in the 2016 Austrian presidential election and 2019 parliamentary elections, respectively. My thesis will further enrich existing research on *Heimat* by combining an analysis of the top-down discursive use of the term in German political speeches with a bottom-up exploration of its meanings among German citizens and residents.

The thesis is organized into four main chapters: Chapter Two outlines how *Heimat* fits within relevant theory, including the construction of national identity, political rhetoric, belonging, banal nationalism, and the "everyday nationhood" framework. Chapter Three briefly traces the history of *Heimat* and outlines the current political and social context in Germany, including the rise of the AfD. Chapter Four offers an explanation of my empirical research. Chapter Five includes my empirical findings, which are separated into two parts. I begin by analyzing the way the word is used discursively by contemporary political actors, using the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)[18], a branch of critical discourse studies, to examine two speeches delivered on the floor of the German Bundestag. Then, I present the findings of four focus groups conducted in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, which offer a window into the way *Heimat* is constructed by different groups within German society in everyday settings.

[16] See Fritz Reußweg, "Heimat und Politische Parteien," in *Heimat: Ein vielfältiges Konzept,* ed. Martina Hülz et al (Wiesbaden: Springer Verlag, 2019), 371-89; Georg Schuppener, "Heimat-Lexik und Heimat-Diskurse in AfD-Wahlprogrammen," *Revista de Filología Alemana* 29 (2021), 131-151.
[17] Andrea Tony Hermann, "Rethinking 'Heimat'? 'Heimat' as a Contested Term in the Austrian Presidential Election Campaign of 2016," *Austrian Journal of Political Science* 48:4 (2020); Georg Weidacher, "Wo Populisten zu Hause sind: Das Konzept Heimat in rechtspopulistischer Rhetorik am Beispiel der FPÖ," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 50 (2020): 231-58.
[18] Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach." In *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies, 3rd Edition* (London: Sage, 2016), 23-61.

Using results from my empirical research, I posit that *Heimat* has become a shorthand for political actors to describe their visions for the future of the country—but it is also a concept with deep meaning for individuals, the significance of which often doesn't line up with the way it is used by politicians. It can be a place, a feeling, an ideology, or a nostalgic longing for a utopian past; it can be deeply emotional, an inherent threat or completely banal, depending on the context and the listener. "As long as no one asks what *Heimat* is, German speakers think they know," Blickle writes. "But as soon as someone asks, the difficulties begin."[19] Understanding those difficulties, both from the top-down discursive perspective as well as the bottom-up individual understanding of the word, can shed important light on the way the discussion surrounding *Heimat* has shifted in the last seven years—and give indications as to how these questions will be debated in Germany in the years to come.

[19] Blickle, *Heimat*, 1.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter gives an overview of the relevant theoretical approaches that will be examined in relation to *Heimat.* It is divided into five sections: The first four explore connections between *Heimat* and political rhetoric; constructions of identity and, in particular, national identity; belonging; and banal nationalism and "everyday nationhood," respectively. The fifth section presents the three research questions which have guided my empirical research. Sections one and two form the basis of the theoretical framework necessary to answer my first two research questions and the analysis of the political speeches; sections two through four provide the theoretical framework for the third question and the focus groups.

2.1. *HEIMAT* AND POLITICAL RHETORIC

2.1.1. *Heimat* and Populist Rhetoric

To understand the dominant discursive use of *Heimat* in German politics—that of the populist far-right AfD, the one to which others are directly or indirectly responding—one must first understand the specificities of populist rhetoric which are activated by the invocation of *Heimat.* According to Cas Mudde's widely accepted definition, populism is a "thin" ideology in which political actors argue they represent the "pure people" rather than the "corrupt elite" and claim politics should reflect the will of the people.[20] Typical populist rhetoric, whether on the political left or the right, builds on this basic definition, creating a discursive "us" versus "them" by whatever means possible. As Wodak explains, populist parties on the far right typically define the nation as a "homogeneous *ethnos, populum or Volk*," one that relies on nativist criteria; these parties' key appeal to voters is often based around "the idea of a *heartland, fatherland, homeland* or *Heimat* which has to be protected against internal threats and dangerous outsiders." Typically, Wodak adds, such appeals are accompanied by the

[20] Cas Mudde, "Populism in Europe: An Illiberal Democratic Response to Undemocratic Liberalism," *Government and Opposition* 2021: 1-21, doi:10.1017/gov.2021.15

assertion that the far-right party is the sole savior who can prevent these internal and external enemies from destroying their way of life.[21]

In this way, *Heimat* is useful not just in helping populist political actors define who belongs to the community, but in delineating who is *not* part of it. With regard to *Heimat* specifically, the historian Peter Blickle states that the term "provide[s] a sense of ontological security at the expense of those who are not given access because they might threaten this small world."[22] By speaking about a national community and the characteristics that define it, political actors can also determine—whether implicitly or explicitly—the desired limits of those communities. Wodak and Köhler assume it is a much more potent way of defining the boundaries of a nation than factors like citizenship: "In contrast to changeable legal categories such as citizenship, residence status, or the right to asylum discussed above, *Heimat* refers to a more permanent population that determines who 'really' belongs."[23] As will be demonstrated in both the analysis of Bundestag speeches and the focus groups, these features of populist rhetoric play heavily in the way *Heimat* is both used by politicians and interpreted by their audiences.

2.1.2. *Heimat* as a 'Floating Signifier'

Rhetorically, *Heimat* can be categorized as what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe refer to as a "floating signifier." In their definition, a floating signifier is a term whose meaning is not fixed and thus can be instrumentalized by different actors to mean different things in different contexts. This is slightly different from what Laclau and Mouffe deem an "empty" signifier, or a word used in everyday contexts that, when it occurs in political discourse, has

[21] Wodak, *The Politics of Fear,* 94.
[22] Blickle, *Heimat,* 78.
[23] Ruth Wodak and Katharina Köhler, "Wer oder was ist 'fremd'? Diskurshistorische Analyse fremdenfeindlicher Rhetorik in Österreich," *SWS-Rundschau* 50, no. 1 (2010): 33-55.

become so abstract it is difficult to tie to any one ideology.[24] Scholars have argued that concepts as varied as "fake news,"[25] "race"[26] and "sustainable development" in contemporary political debates constitute floating signifiers.

The application of Laclau and Mouffe's concept for *Heimat* is appropriate in the context of this thesis: *Heimat,* as a word replete with both banal everyday uses and charged political uses, effectively serves as a screen onto which political actors or individuals can project a range of different feelings and ideologies. Two versions of this will be examined in the analysis of Bundestag speeches. First, politicians from the AfD speak about protecting the *Heimat,* therefore activating a vision of a country in which the traditional way of life is upheld and foreigners are either not welcome or must give up their culture and adhere to the national one to be accepted. Second, left-leaning parties, whether the German or Austrian Greens or Germany's Social Democrats, use *Heimat* to present a vision of a country in which diverse individuals may coexist and belong to the same "imagined community."

2.2. *HEIMAT* AND IDENTITY

2.2.1. *Heimat* and "Imagined Communities"

Speaking about *Heimat* in contemporary German political discourse also requires attention to concepts of identity, particularly on the national level. Although *Heimat* was originally a term more commonly used to speak about regional identities and traditions,[27] in the last century it has been used to construct and shape versions of national identity, along the

[24] Ernesto Laclau, "Why do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?", in *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996).
[25] Johan Farkas and Jannick Schou, "Fake News as a Floating Signifier: Hegemony, Antagonism and the Politics of Falsehood," *Javnost - The Public* 25, no. 3 (2018), 298-314, https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2018.1463047
[26] Stuart Hall, "Race, the Floating Signifier: What More Is There to Say about 'Race'?", in *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, ed. Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (New York: Duke University Press, 2021), 359-373, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478021223-022.
[27] See, for example, Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*; Blickle, *Heimat*; Scharnowski, *Heimat*.

lines of what Benedict Anderson famously referred to as "imagined communities."[28] The precise size of these "imagined communities" is not set by Anderson, but does come with some basic guidelines: They are large enough that not all members know each other, but bounded in a way that its members still feel a sense of belonging and shared identity. As a result, the term is most often used in conjunction with nations; I will return to this concept throughout the thesis as a shorthand for the types of communities politicians and focus group participants see themselves as part of (or, in some cases, not part of).

2.2.2. *Heimat* and the Construction of National Identity

When other scholars of nationalism outline key components of national identity, they frequently emphasize its territorial aspect and the need for some sort of shared past or culture. For example, Anthony Smith sees "an historic territory or homeland" as well as "common myths and historical memories," as fundamental features of national identity.[29] Smith defines the nation as a cultural and political bond, uniting in a single political community who all share a historic culture and homeland (as opposed to a state, which he defines as a public political institution). According to Smith, nationalist politicians tend to invoke two main genres in their ideological appeals which are directly tied to these shared cultures and homelands: Landscape or poetic spaces, and history or golden ages. As Smith writes, "It was these ancient beliefs and commitments to ancestral homelands and to the generations of one's forefathers that nationalists made use of in elaborating the new ideology, language and symbolism of a complex abstraction, national identity."[30]

In a similar vein, research on the discursive construction of national identity by Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cilla and others can help explain why *Heimat* is a powerful rhetorical device

[28] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983).
[29] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991).
[30] Smith, *National Identity*, 78.

for those seeking to define national communities and identities, since *Heimat* and *nation* can serve similar functions in political rhetoric. In their study, the authors explore five thematic aspects to understand the ways in which contemporary Austrian identity is discursively constructed: the linguistic construction of the *homo Austriacus*, the narration and confabulation of a common political past, the linguistic construction of a common culture, the linguistic construction of a common political present and future, and the linguistic construction of a 'national body.'[31] In political rhetoric, *Heimat*—like other problematic and politically ambiguous German words, *Volk* and *Leitkultur*—is or can be associated with multiple aspects of this national identity construction, including shared pasts, culture and representations of national communities; these words are often also utilized to support nativist, ethno-nationalist worldviews. As will be illustrated by the analysis of Bundestag speeches, this overlap between the key components of national identity and *Heimat* help explain why the term can be so effectively connected to the construction of the "nation."

2.2.3. *Heimat* as a Bridge Between Regional and National Identities

In his study of the construction of German national memory and identity in the late 19th century, Alon Confino sees *Heimat* as crucial to bridging the gap between existing local and regional histories and the creation of a German national identity. Drawing on Anderson's "imagined communities" and Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*[32], Confino traces how existing history in different communities, often exemplified in *Heimatmuseen* (*Heimat* museums) or *Heimatliteratur* (*Heimat* literature); he argues that what makes *Heimat* interesting for scholars of nationalism is "that it reveals the depth of meaning, intellect and feeling of the

[31] Ruth Wodak et al, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity (2nd Ed.)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 30.
[32] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

national idea."[33] It manages to encompass the already strong regional identities that existed before German unification by being purposely vague, according to Confino:

> To fit every *Heimat* in Germany, the German *Heimat* had to fit no specific one. To enable every German to imagine his or her own individual *Heimat*, the German *Heimat* had to fit any place and no place, thus becoming applicable to every local and regional identity in Germany. A clearly defined national *Heimat* would have been unable to convey the meaning of unity and diversity and to harmonize the indivisible nation with the multitude of local and regional identities.[34]

This description helps explain why conceptions of *Heimat* can be so varied among Germans and immigrants to Germany today. Even as it is used as a way of signaling Germany's national "imagined community," it has retained its local and regional meaning; as the focus groups will show, many people still think of their own *Heimat* as regionally rather than nationally defined.

2.3. *HEIMAT* AND BELONGING

2.3.1. Social Identity Theory

Heimat is deeply tied to concepts of belonging, both in politicians' use of it to denote who is part of a given "imagined community" (as is explored in the analysis of speeches, Chapter 5.1. as well as in individuals' use of *Heimat* to help understand and describe their own place in society (as is explored in the focus groups, Chapter 5.2.). The social psychologist Henri Tajfel describes belonging as a basic human need: Even if groupness is only vaguely defined, people will take those groups and fill them with meaning. According to Tajfel's social identity theory, an individual experiences collective identities based on their membership in one or more groups; he or she will join or stay in groups that positively contribute to his or her social identity, and if this is not the case, that individual will seek to either leave the group or reframe group attributes in a way that makes them more positive.[35] These evaluations of positive and

[33] Confino, "The Nation as a Local Metaphor," 42-86.
[34] Confino, "The Nation as a Local Metaphor," 65.
[35] Henri Tajfel, "Social categorization, social identity and social comparison," in *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations* (London: Academic Press, 1978), 255-256.

negative attributes are made in comparison with other groups, which can lead to different kinds of intergroup tensions depending on how an individual sees his or her place compared with that of other groups.[36] The focus groups demonstrate that a feeling of belonging is a key component in seeing a place as one's *Heimat*; participants' hesitance to say they feel somewhere is their *Heimat*, particularly among immigrants, is often connected to their struggle to feel accepted by the in-group or believe their group faces distinct disadvantages there.

2.3.2. Minorities, Assimilation and Acculturation

The immigrant perspective of Heimat also requires engagement with relevant theories related to minority groups, as well as the processes of their assimilation and/or acculturation. As Tajfel notes in his writings on the topic, a group can be considered a minority if its members have been deemed "different" by the majority group based on certain physical and/or cultural traits, if those traits put group members at some sort of social disadvantage, and if the group itself is aware of these disadvantages and its group boundaries.[37] Drawing on the need for a positive social identity, this minority status creates a permanent tension between the need for a positive social identity and the restrictions minority group members face. Minority groups and group members can then respond to the status quo in a variety of ways: In some cases, they seek to assimilate into the majority society or hide their origins, while in others they retain their own group identity and adopt some aspects of the majority in order to seek more respect and a positive social identity.[38] Particularly among the focus group participants with an immigration background, these themes were frequently raised in connection to feeling at home in one's

[36] Tajfel, "Social categorization, social identity and social comparison," 256-259.
[37] Henri Tajfel, "The social psychology of minorities," in *The social psychology of minorities* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1978), 312.
[38] Tajfel, "The social psychology of minorities," 316-343.

Heimat: Refugees as well as children and grandchildren of Turkish guest workers were very aware of their minority status and responded to it in different ways.

Along those lines, John W. Berry's acculturation theory is helpful for thinking about *Heimat* with regard to immigrants in Germany. Berry argues that acculturation, or the cultural change brought about by intergroup encounters, depends on two different dimensions: First, whether an individual retains or rejects his or her native culture, and second, whether he or she adopts or rejects the new host culture. Based on these two dimensions, Berry posits there are four possible strategies for acculturation: Assimilation (when individuals adopt the host culture and reject their native culture), separation (when individuals reject the host culture and retain their native culture), integration (when individuals both adopt the host culture and also retain their native culture), and marginalization (when individuals reject both their native culture and the host culture).[39] Berry also notes that for integration to function successfully, the host society must be "open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity": Members of the host society must be willing, in other words, to mutually accommodate the newcomers, rather than treating integration as a one-way process.[40] In the context of *Heimat* and a definition of German identity, culture and social norms play a significant role; questions about integration and assimilation have been a core part of the discussion over who belongs and who does not. Rogers Brubaker argues that there has been a "modest return" of assimilation within Europe in recent decades, including in Germany, although he notes that understandings of assimilation have shifted away from the previously narrow focus on Anglo-conformity.[41] This, too, closely relates to questions of *Heimat* within Germany: As will be shown in the focus groups results, there is significant disagreement with regard to what successful integration or assimilation

[39] John M. Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 46, no. 1 (1997), 9-12.
[40] Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," 10.
[41] Rogers Brubaker, "The return of assimilation? Changing perspectives on immigration and its sequels in France, Germany, and the United States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, no. 4 (2001), 531-548.

should look like, as well as the extent to which one must integrate or assimilate to be considered part of a German *Heimat*.

2.4. BANAL NATIONALISM AND BOTTOM-UP CONSTRUCTIONS OF *HEIMAT*

2.4.1. Banal Nationalism

Heimat's use in everyday settings and contexts, more than just serving as a basis for the word's "floating" designation, is an aspect of the term that should be explored in its own right. Considering *Heimat* and its function in political rhetoric is a decidedly top-down exercise; however, this project seeks to understand bottom-up conceptions of *Heimat* as well. For that, the concepts of *banal nationalism* and *everyday nationhood* are crucial. According to Michael Billig, banal nationalism is a form of nationalism that emerged when what he deems "hot" nationalism cools and becomes "embedded in routines of life." Using the seminal example of an unwaved U.S. flag hanging from a front porch in an American town, Billig argues that banal nationalism can "serve to turn background space into homeland space."[42] As a possible shorthand for the nation, *Heimat* can have a similar function, something that arose frequently in the focus groups: References to *Heimat* may appear in banal settings, but still contain undertones of the nation and national identity.

2.4.2. 'Everyday Nationhood' and Constructions of Heimat

Jon Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss take this idea further, writing about the idea of "everyday nationhood." In their argument, the way politicians and institutional actors speak about the nation often does not directly correspond to the way the nation is constructed and viewed by its citizens in everyday settings. The nation "comes to matter in certain ways at particular times for different people," they write, which is why studying elite rhetoric is only

[42] Billig, Michael. "Remembering Banal Nationalism." In *Banal Nationalism* (London: SAGE, 2010), 37-59.

one facet of nationalism and the nation.[43] Dividing their framework into four different categories—talking the nation, choosing the nation, performing the nation and consuming the nation—Fox and Miller-Idriss set out a new agenda for future study of nationalism. Focusing research on these everyday occurrences, and not just the content of these occurrences but when and in what contexts they arise, sheds important light on the study of nationalism.

These authors and others have used the "everyday nationalism" framework to various settings in different countries, many of which produce interesting insights into the salience and meaning of the nation in ordinary individuals' lives. Fox, for example, studied the way national holiday commemorations and sports games are experienced (or not) in national terms by Romanian and Hungarian university students in Cluj, Romania.[44] Miller-Idriss applies it to her research on extreme-right radicalization among youth, looking at the spaces (physical and imagined) where radicalization occurs: In neo-Nazi clothing brands, extreme-right cooking shows on YouTube and at mixed-martial arts gyms, among others.[45]

Heimat, like the nation, is a concept individuals interact with in varying ways that are sometimes different from those used by political actors to serve specific rhetorical purposes. This aspect of the term, using the "everyday nationhood" framework, was explored through a series of focus groups. There is, of course, ample space to explore *Heimat*'s banal and everyday expressions: One could delve deeply into the appearance of *Heimat* in the names of restaurants, consulting agencies and in advertisements and sporting events, among other areas. However, given the scope of this thesis, I will focus my application of the "everyday nationhood" framework on one particular area: The way individuals speak about their *Heimat* individually and in small groups. In the focus groups, I sought to understand both the everyday, positive

[43] Jon E. Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss, "Everyday nationhood," *Ethnicities* 8, no. 4 (2008): 540.
[44] Jon E. Fox, "Consuming the nation: Holidays, sports, and the production of collective belonging," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 2 (2006): 217-236.
[45] Cynthia Miller-Idriss, *Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020).

uses of the term and the extent to which its negative connotations—as explored in the contextual section—are present in Germans' minds.

2.5. RESEARCH GAP AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis explores the concept of *Heimat* since 2015, considering the ways the term's historical context and connotations have both been utilized amid and evolved due to the arrival of refugees into Germany. There has been no shortage of research and writing on the concept of *Heimat* and other scholars have looked at the discursive use of *Heimat* in contemporary German and Austrian politics. However, few have combined analysis of the term's political uses with qualitative research on its construction and uses among regular Germans and immigrants to Germany. My thesis seeks to enrich and add to existing studies of *Heimat* by combining an analysis of the top-down discursive use of *Heimat* in German politics with a bottom-up exploration of the term among German citizens and residents.

Using the above theoretical framework as my guide, this thesis seeks to answer the following three main questions:

1. **In which way do different political actors discursively use the concept of *Heimat* in their electoral appeals since 2015?**
2. **How do these different uses of the concept condense and represent differing ideas about inclusive and exclusive societies?**
3. **Are there distinctly different ways these uses correspond to different meanings of *Heimat* among Germans and German residents?**

3. HISTORICAL AND CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Given the long history that has contributed to the many connotations present in *Heimat* today and the complex political landscape in which its renewed significance is taking place, understanding the relevant historical and contemporary context is necessary before proceeding to the empirical research. This chapter is divided into two main parts: In the first section, I trace the history of the term *Heimat* from its early origins to its contemporary uses in German politics. The second section provides important context about the political and social situation in Germany since 2015, including the influx of refugees that year and the following year, the discourse surrounding their arrival, the history of immigration in Germany, and how this political landscape helped fuel the rise of the AfD.

3.1. A CONCEPTUAL HISTORY OF *HEIMAT*

3.1.1. *Heimat* in the Romantic Era

Although it existed beforehand, the concept of *Heimat* as we know it today—a term with multiple layers of meaning and emotion—is typically traced back to the mid-19th century.[46] In the heyday of German Romanticism and amid the major societal, economic and geopolitical shifts of the time, it referred primarily to local and regional places rather than the nation: *Heimat* served as the expression of a connection to local communities and their traditions, landscapes and customs. For example, the burgeoning genre of *Heimatliteratur* (*Heimat* literature) told stories of such communities, glorifying the everyday lives of people in villages and towns.[47] Around 1900, the so-called *Heimatbewegung* (*Heimat* movement) gathered steam across Germany, aimed at promoting nature and preserving local and regional identities.[48] Mass emigration to the United States, the start of the Industrial Revolution, and the

[46] Scharnowski, *Heimat*, 19.
[47] Scharnowski, *Heimat*, 69-74.
[48] Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, 59-107.

unification of Germany combined to make this a period of profound change for many Germans; as a result, Heimat correlated with these places, both physical and metaphorical, and the desire to construct and maintain such local and regional identities in the face of major societal, economic and political change (albeit on the local and regional level, rather than the national level). The *Heimatbewegung* and 19th century conceptions of *Heimat* in some ways reflect Smith's conception of an *ethnie*[49] and Wodak et al's five aspects of the discursive construction of national identity.[50] As discussed in Chapter 2.2.2., both concern themselves greatly with a sense of shared history and tradition; these were the very aspects on which early conceptions of *Heimat* were based.

3.1.2. *Heimat* as Ideology: World War II and Nazi Era

The first half of the 20th century saw *Heimat* shift from being primarily affiliated with places to an abstract ideology, something inextricably intertwined with nationalism and the nation. Already during World War I, *Heimat* was tied with the fatherland (*Vaterland*) and nation: Soldiers went to war to protect their *Heimat*, fight for their fatherland and stand up for the German nation, while mothers and children stayed home and did what they could to support the war effort from what became known as the *Heimatfront*.[51] Under National Socialism, it was invoked not to promote local and regional identities but to serve a specific nationalist, ideological purpose: *Heimat* became increasingly tied to the idea of the German *Volk* and *Nation* as the Nazis defined it, a "pure" people with traditions and idyllic landscapes that needed to be protected from outside threats. As Svenja Kück writes, "The term stood for a manageably romantic alternate world, the nature of which was increasingly mixed with the

[49] Smith, *National Identity*, 14.
[50] Wodak et al, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, 30.
[51] Ernst Otto Bräunche, "Der Krieg an der "Heimatfront." Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg, accessed December 15, 2021, https://www.lpb-bw.de/geschichte-ersterweltkrieg00.

blood-and-soil ideology of the National Socialists."[52] The Nazis used the concept of *Heimat* not only to glorify a certain, exclusive kind of Germanness but to vilify the groups its ideology targeted, especially Jews: Unlike the real Germans grounded in their *Heimat*, Jews, Roma and others were *heimatlos*, groups without a homeland.[53] This conception of *Heimat* as a tool of political ideology has continued to be a cornerstone of far- and extreme-right rhetoric in Germany in the years since.

3.1.3. *Heimat* as Forgetting: Post-WWII

After World War II, when a defeated Germany sought to rebuild and forget, *Heimat* became associated with both innocence and guilt. It served as a balm against the population's postwar trauma and a term against which young people rebelled; for many, it was a place into which a traumatized population could reach for comfort, a nostalgia for an idealized past. Most emblematic of this form of Heimat were the *Heimatfilme* (*Heimat* films). The genre, which originated during the Nazi regime but continued in the second half of the 20th century, followed a typical formulaic concept: The films told stories of village communities, taking place in idyllic landscapes and telling everyday tales of communities and families.[54] The concept of *Heimat* during this time, as embodied in the *Heimatfilme*, "came to embody the political and social community that could be salvaged from the Nazi ruins," Applegate writes. She adds that *Heimat* was seen not as a perpetrator of Nazi ideology but rather a victim of it, becoming the "least objectionable expression of togetherness" for Germans at a time when German togetherness was viewed with suspicion.[55] Still, the Nazi-era associations of the word did not disappear, and as members of the 1968 generation rebelled against the postwar silence of their

[52] Svenja Kück, *Heimat und Migration* (Bielefeld: Transkript Verlag, 2021), 34.
[53] Blickle, *Heimat*, 14.
[54] Blickle, *Heimat*, 134.
[55] Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, 240.

parents, they began to view the word as inherently suspect—a sense that persists today among some on the left.[56]

3.1.4. *Heimat* as Modern *Kampfbegriff*: Current Debates

Today, these various aspects and connotations of *Heimat* are at play in the word's renewed significance in German political rhetoric. The traditions, nature and culture of the Romantic-era *Heimatbewegung* and the nostalgia of the post-World War II *Heimat* conceptions play into the way the term is viewed by, for example, the Bavarian conservative CSU party. Its then-leader, Horst Seehofer, is the one who added *Heimat* to the interior ministry's name, a move that placed emphasis on the concept and simultaneously connected it to issues of domestic security. And the AfD's conception of *Heimat,* as both a spatial and metaphorical homeland for the "real" Germans under threat from foreigners, is a continuation of the *Heimat*-as-ideology strategy of the Nazis. The AfD is far from the only far-right political force to use *Heimat* in recent years: Others include the neo-Nazi NPD party, which calls itself the "social *Heimat* party" (as does the Austrian FPÖ), and extreme-right groups named things like *Zukunft Heimat* ("Future Heimat") or *Heimattreue Deutsche Jugend* (*Heimat*-loyal German Youth).

For far-right political movements, including the AfD and its Austrian counterpart, the FPÖ, Heimat serves a similar purpose to that of the Nazis: Their use of the word makes clear statements about who belongs to the German *Heimat* and who doesn't, implying the Heimat faces an imminent threat and the AfD is the only party capable of protecting it. During the 2017 election, one AfD poster read: "Our Country, Our *Heimat*" (*Unser Land, unsere Heimat*)[57]; another poster from the 2019 European Parliament elections urged people to "save" or

[56] Scharnowski, *Heimat*, 158; Blickle, *Heimat*, 134-35.
[57] AfD Erzgebirge, https://www.afd-erz.de/home/unser-land-unsere-heimat.html

"preserve" the *Heimat* (*Heimat bewahren!*).[58] This kind of statement uses the typical "us-versus-them" framing of populist discourse; it implies that Germany and the German Heimat belong to the "real" Germans, not to those they consider outsiders. One AfD politician, a Saxony-Anhalt Bundestag member named Andreas Mrosek, put it this way at a 2021 campaign rally: "Our *Volk* is German, our *Heimat* is German, our culture is German, and that's how it should stay."[59] As Wodak writes, this is a key characteristic of populist far-right rhetoric: Such parties refer to a fatherland, homeland or *Heimat* "which has to be protected against internal threats and dangerous outsiders," setting themselves up as the only ones capable of saving the true people from these threats.[60]

The CSU, Seehofer's Bavaria-based conservative party, uses *Heimat* in a way that more resembles the romantic and regional conceptions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. On a campaign poster during the 2018 Bavarian elections, the state premier Markus Söder stands in a traditional *Tracht* jacket, surrounded by men and women in similar jackets and dirndls. "*Heimat*: Maintain Our Bavarian Way of Life," the poster reads.[61] For the CSU, invoking *Heimat* often comes with these traditional symbols of Bavarian and Alpine culture: *Tracht*, mountains, nature, traditional food, and others. Although this frame is not as explicitly exclusive as the AfD's, it is also not necessarily inclusive: This idea of long-held traditions and customs represents people who have lived in Bavaria for generations, not the country's newcomers who might have different customs.[62]

The Greens and the center-left Social Democrats (SPD), however, present a markedly different concept of *Heimat*: Theirs is explicitly inclusive, seeing diversity as a strength and

[58] See, for example, this image via *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 3, 2018: https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/europawahl/wie-afd-mit-europawahl-plakaten-gegen-bruessel-polemisiert-16160803.html
[59] Andreas Mrosek, campaign speech, Dessau, Germany, April 17, 2021.
[60] Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*, 94.
[61] See *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, August 22, 2018: https://www.sueddeutsche.de/bayern/landtagswahl-bayern-csu-spd-streit-1.4100474
[62] See, for example, Aydemir and Yaghoobifarah, *Eure Heimat ist Unser Albtraum*.

recognizing one can have more than one *Heimat* (or an old and a new *Heimat*). One campaign poster from the Greens' 2018 state election campaign in Hesse perhaps best illustrates this framing of the concept: Under the slogan "*Heimat*? Of course!", the poster features a Black hand holding a white one.[63] It goes on to define *Heimat* in the most inclusive way, saying, "A Hessener is anyone who wants to be a Hessener."[64] And shortly after taking office in late 2021, the new interior minister Nancy Faeser, a member of the SPD, wrote on Twitter that *Heimat* "includes all people, no matter where they come from, what they believe, who they love."[65] This conception of *Heimat* returns to the more benign, positively connotated base of the word while simultaneously using it to project a certain worldview and the belief in an open society.[66] It seeks to break down existing group barriers, redefining German group belonging as something accessible to those often considered outsiders.

3.2. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT IN GERMANY 2015-PRESENT

3.2.1. Refugee Policy and Arrivals 2015-16

Perhaps most decisive in the current *Heimat* discourse was Germany's decision to accept more than a million refugees following the outbreak of a brutal civil war in Syria. According to German government statistics, 476,649 individuals applied for asylum in Germany in 2015, followed by another 745,545 in 2016; the majority of these applicants came from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.[67] Initially, as the refugees made their way through Europe

[63] "'Heimat? Natürlich!' und 'Tarek statt GroKo': GRÜNE Schlussphasenplakatierung mit Al-Wazir und für die offene und vielfältige Gesellschaft." Press release, Grüne Hessen, October 12, 2018. https://www.gruene-hessen.de/partei/presse/heimat-natuerlich-tarek-statt/

[64] It is worth noting that Tarek al-Wazir, the Greens' top candidate in that election, could himself claim more than one Heimat: He was born in Hesse to a Yemeni father, and is a dual German-Yemeni citizen.

[65] Nancy Faeser, Twitter post, December 18, 2021, 10:21 a.m., https://twitter.com/nancyfaeser/status/1472134841529507840.

[66] Austrian President Alexander van der Bellen, a member of the Austrian Greens, used similarly inclusive messaging in his 2016 presidential campaign. For more on this, see Hermann, "Rethinking 'Heimat'?".

[67] "Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2020." Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, last modified September 2021: https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2020.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=5.

and arrived in Germany, they found an overwhelmingly positive reception among the German population. Many in Germany saw accepting refugees as the country's moral duty: Thousands turned out to welcome them at train stations and volunteered their time, money and expertise to help newcomers get settled. Summing up this spirit, the then-Chancellor Angela Merkel famously declared, *"Wir schaffen das"* ("We will manage.").[68] But not everyone embraced this so-called *Willkommenskultur* (welcoming culture), and the political mood toward refugees shifted after those initial months. During New Year's Eve celebrations in Cologne in 2016, dozens of women were assaulted by young men who appeared to be of African and Middle Eastern heritage; the situation quickly unleashed a political scandal, fueling anti-refugee sentiment.[69] That incident, combined with smaller ones—often highlighted by right-wing media and politicians—shifted the discussion away from refugees as people fleeing war and atrocities toward one in which those refugees posed a security threat. In August 2018, a German man was fatally stabbed during a street brawl in the eastern city of Chemnitz; when rumors circulated that his killers were a Syrian and an Iraqi man, supporters of the far and extreme right took to the streets. The protests eventually turned violent, with neo-Nazis hunting and attacking dark-skinned people through the city. The Chemnitz protests demonstrated the extent to which anti-refugee sentiment had permeated and radicalized in parts of German society, particularly in eastern Germany.[70]

3.2.2. Immigration in Germany

With the refugees' arrival, Germany was once again plunged into a debate about its identity and its future as a society: Who gets to belong in Germany, and how is one's German

[68] Janosch Delcker, "Merkel on migration: 'We will manage,'" *Politico Europe*, October 8, 2015, https://www.politico.eu/article/merkel-on-migration-we-will-manage/.
[69] Kate Connolly, "Cologne inquiry into 'coordinated' New Year's Eve sex attacks," *The Guardian*, January 5, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/05/germany-crisis-cologne-new-years-eve-sex-attacks.
[70] Katrin Bennhold, "Chemnitz Protests Show New Strength of Germany's Far Right," *The New York Times*, August 30, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/30/world/europe/germany-neo-nazi-protests-chemnitz.html.

Heimat allowed to change? But although the many newcomers served as the catalyst for broader debates about German identity, integration and society, the country has long had a complicated relationship with its history regarding immigration. Beginning in the 1950s, millions of so-called *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) moved to West Germany from Turkey, Spain, Italy, Morocco and other countries to help rebuild after the destruction of World War II. They played a significant role in what's known as the German "economic miracle"; although their stays were intended to be temporary, many remained in Germany and had families that are now in their second or third generations. In what was then East Germany, the Communist government also brought in *Vertragsarbeiter* (contract workers) from other countries, including Vietnam, Mozambique and Cuba.[71] Additionally, in the wake of the war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, a significant number of refugees from the region came to Germany.[72]

Today, Germany is a diverse country: Government statistics show that in 2019, 21.2 million people, or 26 percent of the population, have what is known as a "migration background" (*Migrationshintergrund*). This is defined as someone who was either born outside of Germany or has at least one parent not born in Germany.[73] However, the political and societal discourse surrounding immigration in Germany has long lagged behind the reality.[74] Calling Germany a "country of immigration" remained controversial until recently: It was a rare enough statement among top-level politicians that, when the then-German president

[71] Marcel Berlinghoff, "Geschichte der Migration in Deutschland," Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, May 14, 2018, https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/dossier-migration/252241/geschichte-der-migration-in-deutschland/

[72] For reflections on the refugee experience in the 1990s, see, among others, Saša Stanišić's 2019 memoir *Herkunft* on his family's history coming from Bosnia.

[73] "Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund in Deutschland." Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Migrationsbericht 2019, accessed April 6, 2022, https://www.bamf.de/DE/Themen/Forschung/Veroeffentlichungen/Migrationsbericht2019/PersonenMigrationshintergrund/personenmigrationshintergrund-node.html.

[74] Emily Schultheis, "Germany faces its own racial reckoning," *Institute of Current World Affairs*, July 1, 2020, https://www.icwa.org/germany-faces-its-own-racial-reckoning/.

Christian Wulff acknowledged this in 2010, this was a notable and newsworthy moment.[75] The country also had a citizenship law based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, requiring German descent rather than residence in the country at the time of birth[76]; this law remained in place until 1999-2000, when the German government passed legislation loosening the requirements and moving away from a strictly *jus sanguinis* understanding.[77]

3.2.3. Rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party

It was within this context that, in September 2017, the AfD became the first far-right party to enter Germany's parliament since the end of World War II. The party won 12.6 percent of the vote nationally, giving it 94 seats in the Bundestag.[78] That moment unsettled Berlin's political establishment and opened uncomfortable conversations about where the AfD's more than 5 million votes had come from: Many in Germany believed that the country's work in critically engaging with its Nazi past, and the protections against extremist forces written into their constitution, would help keep them free of the populist wave cresting around the world. Founded in 2013 by a group of economics professors, the party had started off as a small movement opposed to the euro bailout. Its name was a play on German Chancellor Angela Merkel's statement at the time that there was "no alternative" to financially propping up southern European countries—a promise to speak hard truths mainstream politicians wouldn't.[79] At the outset, the AfD was a relative non-factor in German politics: The first time

[75] Christian Wulff, "Rede zum 20. Jahrestag der Deutschen Einheit," transcript of speech delivered in Bremen, Germany, October 3, 2010, https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Christian-Wulff/Reden/2010/10/20101003_Rede.html
[76] Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).
[77] Anuscheh Farahat and Kay Hailbronner, "Report on Citizenship Law: Germany," *European University Institute: Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies*, March 2020, https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/66430/RSCAS_GLOBALCIT_CR_2020_5.pdf.
[78] "Bundestagswahl 2017: Ergebnisse," Bundeswahlleiter.
[79] See, for example, Melanie Amann, *Angst für Deutschland* (München: Droemer, 2018).

it campaigned for office during Germany's 2013 federal elections, it narrowly missed the 5-percent threshold necessary to win seats in the Bundestag.[80]

But AfD leaders were adept at recognizing the most potent fuel for their movement: Even though the party had not initially focused on immigration and refugee issues, its leaders heard those critical voices and recognized the potential this issue could have. They subsequently turned it into an ideological lightning rod, to great effect. Sharply and relentlessly criticizing Merkel and the German government, AfD leaders instrumentalized the refugee influx to build momentum and become a significant force in German politics. Their 2017 election program, for example, calls for a stop to further refugee arrivals in Germany, no family reunification for refugees already in the country, the end to dual citizenship and the belief that it is an immigrant's responsibility to assimilate to Germany.[81] When Merkel called on the German citizenry to exercise compassion for people fleeing a brutal civil war and allow those newcomers to build a new life for themselves in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, AfD leaders declared this was proof that Merkel was effectively a dictator determined to destroy the *Heimat*, German society and the stability of its citizens.[82]

Since then, the party has played a disproportionate role in debates about refugee, integration and immigration politics, changing the culture of the Bundestag[83] and even pulling other parties to the right on immigration issues in an attempt to fend off electoral challenges

[80] "Bundestagswahl 2013: Ergebnisse," Bundeswahlleiter, Wiesbaden, 2013, https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/bundestagswahlen/2013/ergebnisse/bund-99.html.
[81] "PROGRAMM FÜR DEUTSCHLAND: Wahlprogramm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl zum Deutschen Bundestag am 24. September 2017," Alternative für Deutschland election program, April 22/23, 2017, https://www.afd.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/111/2017/06/2017-06-01_AfD-Bundestagswahlprogramm_Onlinefassung.pdf.
[82] See, for example this 2018 speech from AfD domestic politics spokesman Gottfried Curio: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvG4DCiMQTk
[83] Emily Schultheis, "Fear and Loathing in the Bundestag," *The Atlantic*, February 5, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/02/germany-afd-merkel-spd-populism-immigrants/552278/.

from the AfD.[84] Since 2020, the party's support has decreased slightly, in part because it has struggled to adapt its message during the coronavirus pandemic: In the 2021 federal election, it won 10.3 percent of the vote nationwide. However, it has increasingly consolidated its support in the five eastern German states, becoming the strongest party in Saxony and Thuringia.[85]

[84] Emily Schultheis, "How Far Will Bavaria's CSU Go to Fend Off Germany's Far Right?" *Foreign Policy*, June 15, 2018, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/06/15/how-far-will-bavarias-conservatives-go-to-fend-off-the-far-right/.
[85] Emily Schultheis, "Germany's far-right AfD loses nationally, but wins in the East," *Politico Europe*, September 28, 2021, https://www.politico.eu/article/german-election-far-right-afd-loses-nationally-but-wins-in-east.

4. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter offers a detailed description of the research design used in this project. Since I sought to understand both top-down and bottom-up constructions of *Heimat*, I have used triangulation—in other words, a combination of multiple qualitative research methods—to examine various aspects of the issue.[86] First, I conducted a small qualitative discourse analysis that establishes some current uses of the word *Heimat* in German politics. This was done by examining the term's discursive use in two political speeches, both delivered on the floor of the German Bundestag (one in 2018, the other in 2019). With that analysis as my basis, I conducted four focus groups—one online pilot study and three in-person discussions—to understand how and whether those discursive frames are shared by regular members of the population. Through these two different methodologies, my findings shed light on how *Heimat* functions in contemporary Germany on multiple levels.

4.1. TOP-DOWN RESEARCH: SPEECH ANALYSIS

4.1.1. Description of Critical Discourse Studies and the Discourse-Historical Approach

To analyze the two selected speeches, I have used the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), one branch within the broader field of critical discourse studies. Critical Discourse Studies is a problem-oriented, interdisciplinary approach to the study of not just words and specific texts, but "how power relations are exercised and negotiated in discourse."[87] CDS focuses on "naturally occurring" language use, with texts, discursive events and discursive strands as its basic units of analysis; scholars of critical discourse studies analyze these at different levels, exploring the discursive strategies used by different actors (such as nomination, predication and argumentation). The DHA in particular, pioneered by Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, delves into the historical inferences and context to better understand

[86] Markus Rheindorf, *Revisiting the Toolbox of Discourse Studies* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).
[87] Ruth Wodak, *Disorders of Discourse* (London: Longman, 1996).

the discursive strategies being used by different actors.[88] The DHA is an ideal methodology and method of analysis for the concept of *Heimat*, given how much historical baggage the word carries and the contemporary political context in which it has again become highly relevant. As such, I used this approach to examine the contextual references present in both speeches.

4.1.2. Data and Sample Selection

I explore this topic by analyzing and comparing two speeches from the German Bundestag that prominently feature *Heimat* and exemplify its deeply divergent uses. The first speech, from Curio, who serves as the AfD's domestic political spokesperson, came during a debate about a draft immigration law in 2019. In the speech, he argues that asylum-seekers in Germany, and the lenience of governing politicians toward them, are causing the loss of the "beloved" *Heimat* of those who have a true claim to it. The second, from the Greens' Özdemir, occurred during a debate about supporting German-Turkish journalist Deniz Yücel in 2018. Özdemir delivered an impassioned speech in which he contested the AfD's exclusive definition of Germanness and *Heimat*, offering an inclusive vision of his own. These two speeches were selected because they succinctly but effectively crystallize each respective party's discursive ideological use of *Heimat*. Additionally, since they were both delivered on the floor of the Bundestag (albeit on different days), they follow a similar length and format—each approximately 5 minutes long—and are therefore easier to directly compare. Parliamentary speeches, aimed at the dual audiences of lawmakers in the chamber and the broader public, are a venue in which politicians can deliver condensed glimpses of their ideological outlook and policy positions.

[88] Reisigl and Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," 23-61.

4.1.3. Analysis of Speeches

The analysis of the speeches touches on the respective politicians' nominative strategies (how each uses *Heimat* to construct a concept of "us" versus the out-group "them"), argumentation strategies (how each substantiates his point of view and what strategies he uses to explain it), and the discourses to which each politician links *Heimat*. The analysis will also examine how *Heimat* factors into the speeches' respective constructions of German identity.

4.2. BOTTOM-UP RESEARCH: FOCUS GROUPS

4.2.1. Description of Focus Groups

For the bottom-up section of my empirical research, focus groups were selected as the best method to explore this topic. I chose focus groups instead of individual semi-structured interviews because *Heimat* is a concept with deep social connotations; exploring the topic in a group setting helped elucidate those socially constructed contexts and allowed participants to build off one another's comments.

4.2.2. Description of the Selected Location: Gelsenkirchen, Germany

The focus groups were conducted in Gelsenkirchen, a city of approximately 260,000 inhabitants in the Ruhr Valley.[89] Gelsenkirchen was selected as the location for the focus groups because it offers a wide range of views and attitudes that can lead to different understandings of *Heimat*: It is a deeply diverse, struggling former coal mining city, one which also has a small but significant base of support for the AfD. The state in which Gelsenkirchen is located, North Rhine-Westphalia, is Germany's most populous: It is home to approximately 18 million of the country's total 83 million population.[90] It is also one of only two German

[89] "Strukturdaten Gelsenkirchen," Bundeswahlleiter, Wiesbaden, 2017, accessed April 14, 2022, https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/bundestagswahlen/2017/strukturdaten/bund-99/land-5/wahlkreis-123.html.
[90] "Bevölkerungsstand: Bevölkerung nach Nationalität und Bundesländern." Destatis / Statistisches Bundesamt, June 21, 2021, https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Bevoelkerungsstand/Tabellen/bevoelkerung-nichtdeutsch-laender.html.

states to have its own *Heimat* ministry (the other being Bavaria, established under Seehofer). The entire Ruhr Valley, of which Gelsenkirchen is one city, is a densely populated region within North Rhine-Westphalia that first saw its population explode during the Industrial Revolution in the mid-19th century. Gelsenkirchen was once home to 14 different coal mines and a thriving manufacturing industry; however, with Germany's move away from coal and the general trend toward deindustrialization, the region struggled to adjust and has been plagued by economic decline and high levels of unemployment.[91]

Today, the city has a fairly negative reputation within Germany, in large part due to its economic struggles. At €16,203 per year, Gelsenkirchen has the lowest average income anywhere in Germany[92]; it also has the highest unemployment rate at 14.8 percent[93] and the highest child poverty rate at 41 percent.[94] The city also boasts disproportionately high support for the far-right AfD: In the 2017 federal elections, 17 percent of Gelsenkircheners voted for the party, making it the AfD's strongest constituency in all of western Germany.[95] It is also a deeply diverse city, with a disproportionately high percentage of residents who have a migration background (*Migrationshintergrund*). According to state-level statistics from 2019, 37.6 percent of all residents fall into this category, meaning either they or at least one parent were not born in Germany.[96] Gelsenkirchen was also selected because of my previous

[91] "Stadtgeschichte(n) Gelsenkirchen," Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Stadt Gelsenkirchen, 2015, https://www.gelsenkirchen.de/de/stadtprofil/stadtgeschichten/_doc/die_geschichte_der_stadt_gelsenkirchen.pdf.
[92] "Gelsenkirchen ist Schlusslicht beim Pro-Kopf Einkommen," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 24, 2019, https://www.waz.de/wirtschaft/verbraucher/gelsenkirchen-ist-schlusslicht-beim-pro-kopf-einkommen-id217013761.html.
[93] "Großstädte mit der höchsten Arbeitslosigkeit, Mai 2021," *Institut Arbeit und Qualifikation der Universität Duisburg-Essen*, 2021, https://www.sozialpolitik-aktuell.de/files/sozialpolitik-aktuell/_Politikfelder/Arbeitsmarkt/Datensammlung/PDF-Dateien/abbIV38b.pdf.
[94] Antje Funcke and Sarah Menne, "Factsheet: Kinderarmut in Deutschland," *Bertelsmann Stiftung,* 2020, https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/291_2020_BST_Facsheet_Kinderarmut_SGB-II_Daten__ID967.pdf.
[95] "Bundestagswahl 2017: Ergebnisse Gelsenkirchen," Bundeswahlleiter, Wiesbaden, 2017, https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/bundestagswahlen/2017/ergebnisse/bund-99/land-5/wahlkreis-123.html#zweitstimmen-prozente508.
[96] "Anteil der Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund an der Gesamtbevölkerung." Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe, accessed May 22, 2022, https://www.statistik.lwl.org/de/zahlen/migration/.

ethnographic work in the city: In August and September 2020, I spent four weeks meeting with various residents to write about the reasons for the AfD's relative strength in the city[97] and its complicated politics of integration.[98] Given that successful focus groups depend heavily on local contacts and networks to recruit participants, my previous research in the city was a significant help in making this research a reality.

4.2.3. Participant Selection and Composition of the Focus Groups

Out of a possible data set of adults living in Gelsenkirchen, 26 people participated in four focus groups. These participants were recruited directly via local contacts in the city, as well as via an advertisement and Google Forms link shared in various Gelsenkirchen-related groups on Facebook. A pilot study was conducted via Zoom with residents of Gelsenkirchen on April 9, 2022; the other three were held in person in Gelsenkirchen from April 22-25, 2022. The pilot study had five participants, four of whom had an immigrant background; the participants were adults ranging from 22 to 62 years of age. For the three in-person groups, participants were grouped based on their immigration background: Since I hypothesized that different immigration backgrounds might lead to different attitudes about and conceptions of *Heimat*, the purpose of these selections was to compare views among these groups and allow group members to expand on these constructions among those with similar backgrounds. One group, conducted on April 24, 2022, was composed of refugees and other recent arrivals to Germany: That group had 6 participants, aged 30 to 51. A second group was conducted on April 22, 2022, among second- and third-generation immigrants from various countries: That group had 9 participants, aged 18 to 49. Finally, a third group was conducted on April 25, 2022

[97] Emily Schultheis, "In western Germany, a struggling city seeks to move beyond stereotypes." *Institute of Current World Affairs*, September 29, 2020, https://www.icwa.org/in-coal-country-germans-navigate-future/.
[98] Emily Schultheis, "Inside Germany's Successful and Broken Integration Experiment," *Foreign Policy*, October 16, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/10/16/inside-germanys-successful-and-broken-integration-experiment/.

primarily among Germans without an immigrant background: That group had 6 participants, aged 39 to 66. Due to a miscommunication, one participant, a 43-year-old refugee from Syria,

Group	Participant ID	Gender	Age	Migration background	Citizenship
1	G1P1	M	50	second / third generation	Germany
1	G1P2	M	38	first generation	Bosnia-Herzegovina
1	G1P3	F	62	first generation	USA
1	G1P4	M	41	no migration background	Germany
1	G1P5	M	22	second / third generation	Germany, Turkey
2	G2P1	F	18	second / third generation	Germany, Spain
2	G2P2	F	22	second / third generation	Germany, Turkey
2	G2P3	F	18	second / third generation	Germany
2	G2P4	F	49	second / third generation	Germany
2	G2P5	F	26	second / third generation	Germany
2	G2P6	F	22	second / third generation	Germany
2	G2P7	M	49	second / third generation	Netherlands, Germany
2	G2P8	F	27	second / third generation	Germany
2	G2P9	F	22	second / third generation	Germany
3	G3P1	F	51	second / third generation	Germany, Turkey
3	G3P2	F	37	first generation	Armenia
3	G3P3	M	30	first generation	Mali
3	G3P4	F	32	first generation	Syria
3	G3P5	M	32	first generation	Cameroon
3	G3P6	M	31	first generation	Nigeria
4	G4P1	M	43	first generation	Syria
4	G4P2	F	66	no migration background	Germany
4	G4P3	F	39	no migration background	Germany
4	G4P4	X	40	no migration background	Germany
4	G4P5	F	48	no migration background	Germany
4	G4P6	M	45	no migration background	Germany

attended the group of Germans without an immigrant background instead of the group for first-generation immigrants and refugees; rather than turning him away, I opted to include him in the group and see how his presence and contributions—having one out-group member—affected the discussion among non-immigrant participants.

4.2.4. Description of Focus Group Topics and Questions

Each group lasted between 90 minutes and 2 hours. In all groups, participants were asked a series of questions related to *Heimat* and their own experiences with the concept. They began with an open-ended question about how the participants or their families first came to Gelsenkirchen. Next, participants were asked to write down a few notes about what it means to feel at home somewhere, as well as what they think of when they hear the word *Heimat*. Participants were then shown three maps—one of the world, one of Germany and one of Gelsenkirchen and the Ruhr Valley—and asked to place a sticker or stickers on the place(s) they considered their *Heimat*, then explain their choice. They were also asked if it is possible for someone to have more than one *Heimat*. In the second section of the focus groups, participants were asked about the way others conceive of *Heimat* and whether that had ever impacted their own lives. They were asked who gets to decide whether a place can be someone's *Heimat*, then asked to respond to two quotes from different politicians. The first quote, from interior minister and SPD politician Nancy Faeser in late 2021, reads: "Heimat includes all people, regardless of where they come from, what they believe or who they love. The term should signal that we want to hold together as a society."[99] The second, from AfD Bundestag representative Andreas Mrosek, reads: "Our *Volk* is German, our *Heimat* is German, our culture is German, and that's how it should stay."[100] After the discussion of the political

[99] Faeser, Twitter post, December 18, 2021.
[100] Mrosek, campaign speech, April 17, 2021.

rhetoric on *Heimat*, participants were asked if they had any additional topics to discuss or other remarks to add. Although this same series of questions was asked in each of the four discussions, participants responded to them in different ways; as a result there was considerable variation between the topics raised in each discussion.

4.2.5. Analysis of Focus Groups

Like with the speech analysis, I have used qualitative discourse analysis to evaluate the results of the focus groups. Drawing on Michal Krzyzanowski's approach toward analyzing focus groups[101] and the strategies applied by Wodak et al. with regard to focus groups on Austrian identity[102], I have identified the primary and secondary discourses that arose during the groups, explored the areas of agreement and disagreement between the participants, and explored how participants' views on *Heimat* are shaped by discourses surrounding national identity and belonging.

[101] Michal Krzyzanowski, "Analyzing Focus Group Discussions," in *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[102] Wodak et al, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity.*

5. RESULTS & ANALYSIS

5.1. QUALITATIVE DISCOURSE-HISTORICAL ANALYSIS: DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF *HEIMAT* IN POLITICAL SPEECHES

This section presents the findings from the first part of the empirical research conducted for this thesis. It analyzes two speeches delivered in the German Bundestag, one by Greens politician Cem Özdemir in 2018 and one by AfD politician Gottfried Curio in 2019. The concept of *Heimat* features prominently in each, providing ample opportunity to understand the discursive strategies with which different parties use the concept in their electoral and political appeals. Using the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), this section analyzes the nominative and argumentation strategies employed by each speaker, as well as the related discourses to which each refers (intertextuality and interdiscursivity) and their respective constructions of national identity.

5.1.1. Relevant Discourses: *Heimat* as Security, *Heimat* as Diversity

First, I examined the topics and discourses to which Curio and Özdemir connect the concept of *Heimat* throughout their speeches. Since parliamentary speeches are typically delivered during debate on a particular piece of legislation or issue, it can be telling to see which topics and discourses they invoke when. Curio, not surprisingly, speaks about "the beloved *Heimat*" and "loss of *Heimat*" during a debate about a proposed asylum law in 2019, tying it closely to the need to uphold "law and order." His AfD party has been deeply critical of German refugee policy, consistently advocating for tougher border controls and the speedy deportation of those who have been denied asylum. In this way, Curio connects *Heimat* to discourse on immigration and discourse on law and order. Additionally, his frequent invocation of the financial dimension of asylum-seekers' aims, whether his reference to tax-paying citizens or his pairing of "loss of *Heimat*" and "financial robbery" at one point in the speech,

also connect to discourse on the German social system (and its alleged misuse). This effectively criminalizes all "others" in Curio's view, which is a common AfD refrain.

Özdemir's speech, by contrast, took place in the midst of a 2018 parliamentary debate about the journalist Deniz Yücel, who was imprisoned by the Turkish government for approximately a year due to spurious accusations that he was disseminating propaganda for an allegedly terrorist organization.[103] Yücel, who was born in Germany to Turkish parents, is a German-Turkish dual citizen; therefore, Özdemir's motives in bringing up the concept of *Heimat* are clearly related to the composition of the German citizenry and a celebration of diversity and inclusion in Germany, as well as fundamental rights and values of democracies (such as freedom of the press). In engaging with the concept during a debate about a dual German-Turkish citizen, he is explicitly using it in ways the AfD would object to: To refer to those who have come from somewhere else or don't fit with what has been traditionally seen as "German" in a nativist sense. At one point, Özdemir refers to that directly, saying "we" are pleased Yücel was released from prison, but "we would be just as happy if his name were Gustav Müller or something else like that, because every citizen of this country deserves that this country stands up for him." (Müller is a common surname in Germany; by using this and comparing it to Yücel's Turkish-sounding surname, Özdemir underscores his point about German identity and loyalty being available to all Germans regardless of their heritage.) As a result, Özdemir uses *Heimat* here in direct response to the way it has been instrumentalized by the AfD and other far-right groups: He has been speaking for years about the belief that the term should not be left to far-right political actors, and that its core meaning is something positive and inclusive that can appeal to everyone.[104]

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[103] Tagesschau, "Entlassung aus Haft: Freiheit für Deniz Yücel," February 16, 2018, https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/yuecel-199.html.
[104] Blickle, *Heimat*.

5.1.2. Nomination: Constructing "us" and "them"

When considering the discursive meanings of *Heimat* in the two Bundestag speeches, it is helpful to consider the nominative strategies each politician employs: Who do they include in the collective "us" and who is framed as the out-group "them"? For Curio, the AfD politician, "us" is broadly defined in two different ways: It includes, at varying points during the speech, tax-paying citizens and "the people." At the very beginning of his speech, Curio speaks about "rejected asylum-seekers" who "collect"—ostensibly in terms of financial benefits from the state—while the "citizen" watches, dismayed, as "the tax money he has earned" goes to someone with no right to remain in Germany. Throughout the speech, Curio makes references to what are presumably these same upstanding, tax-paying "citizens" and the ways they suffer due to the rejected asylum-seekers who do not leave the country, including difficulties finding affordable housing and good-paying jobs. It is here that *Heimat* enters his speech: These things combine to create a loss of *Heimat* for the "us" about which Curio speaks. The second "us" Curio refers to briefly, at the end of his speech, is "the people": In typical populist form, which Mudde, Wodak and others say typically involves political actors claiming they speak for the "pure" people (see Chapter 2.1.1., Curio says the current government's failure means power should be returned "to the people."

The out-group "them" in Curio's speech is also defined in two separate ways: First, in contrast to the upstanding citizen, it is the rejected asylum-seekers and the "culturally foreign" immigrants who are responsible for the loss of the tax-paying citizens' *Heimat*. But there is another out-group dimension in Curio's speech as well: The so-called "grand coalition" between the conservative Christian Democrats (CDU) and the center-left Social Democrats (SPD), which governed the country under Angela Merkel as chancellor until late 2021. Here, the coalition politicians are portrayed as out-of-touch elites and contrasted with "the people," to whom Curio says power and decision-making rights should be returned; in his description,

the governing coalition makes decisions that are against the will of the people and has lost "democratic legitimacy." This dual "them," of foreigners and political elites, is characteristic of populist far-right rhetoric and features similarly among far-right political actors in other countries.[106]

Özdemir's speech, by contrast, is directed specifically at AfD parliamentarians: In his remarks, there is not so much a "us" versus "them" as an "us" versus "you" (*Sie*). (It is worth noting that *sie* could also be a reference to a third-person plural "them" or "they"; however, in this case, based on Özdemir's formulations and the way he looked directly at the AfD parliamentary group as he spoke, that he means *Sie,* the formal version of "you.") Throughout his speech, he aims his increasingly impassioned comments at the AfD members sitting on one side of the Bundestag chamber: Whether saying they "dream at night" of an authoritarian system like Turkey or that they "despise this country," Özdemir voices his frustration and accusations directly toward the people and the political opposition about whom he is speaking.

By contrast, Özdemir defines "us" as members of all the parties besides the AfD, saying at one point, "All of us, the democratic part of this house." But his construction of "us" functions on two levels: Although he is speaking in this context about parliamentarians from the "democratic" parties, he clearly implies this division is present in society at large as well. The Bundestag members included in the "democratic part of this house" represent the people who voted for them, implying that just as there is a majority in the Bundestag against the AfD, there is a majority in the population that stands against the AfD. Additionally, later in the speech, Özdemir refers to groups of people with varying immigration histories: Not just Bavarians and Swabians, but "people whose ancestors came from Russia" and "people whose ancestors came from Anatolia." It is clear Özdemir also intends these individuals, as citizens of the country, to be included in the "us" or the *Heimat* for which he claims to speak.

[106] Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*, 8.

5.1.3. Argumentation Strategies

Interestingly, both men use their speeches to develop a very similar core argument: They base their speeches around the *topos of threat*. A *topos*, which has its roots in Aristotelian rhetoric, is a traditional theme or argumentative formulation.[107] In this line of argumentation, there is a major threat to the Germany "we"—whichever "we" each speaker respectively means—know and love today, and that threat must be dealt with. To Curio and the AfD, asylum-seekers and "culturally foreign" immigrants along with misguided politicians are the source of danger; meanwhile, to Özdemir, it is the AfD itself and the way it "despises" everything that is about Germany that is good and worthy of respect. As a result, their assertions of what needs to be protected are fundamentally in opposition to each other: To Curio, what is under threat is the German prosperity and way of life in various forms, including the social system, the housing and labor markets, the culture. To Özdemir, however, what is under threat is the diversity and tolerance Germany has fought hard for over the years—and it is endangered by the very party that suggests it wants to protect the *Heimat*.

In Curio's case, this threat endangers the "true" Germans and comes from a combination of ineffectual government and a mass of greedy asylum-seekers. In his speech, he employs additional *topoi,* such as the *topos of urgency* (Germany must quickly solve the issue of asylum-seekers and failed deportations, or else the dark picture of the future he has outlined will come to pass), the *topos of burdening* (the number of asylum-seekers is too large for Germany, therefore the system will be burdened by their presence), and the *topos of people* ("the people" want Germany to retain its *Heimat* and avoid the problems caused by asylum-seekers, so the government should give them what they want). As Wodak outlines in *The Politics of Fear*, these are all part and parcel of populist far-right rhetoric.[108]

[107] Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*, 74-76.
[108] Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*, 8-12.

As referenced in the section on relevant discourses, Curio's argumentation focuses on law and order, stressing the financial and security aspects of migration: If Germany does not take concrete action to remove rejected asylum-seekers, a series of bad things will happen. Toward the end of his speech, Curio briefly sums up what he and the AfD believe are "effective" measures that could solve the crisis: He says the German government could fix things by "simply saying the border can now be secured," deporting those who have committed crimes, and integrating people "in the direction of the *Heimatland*." Since Curio argues the government is not taking these measures, he concludes they are not interested in being effective, but rather in "programmed failure." This, he continues, is the reason political power should be handed back to "the people." In other words, Curio begins with a bleak picture about what is occurring to the German *Heimat* under the current government's watch and ends by concluding this means "the people" (which, according to him, are represented by the AfD) should be the ones in charge to protect it.

In Özdemir's speech, the threat comes from within the country: In his view, the danger to the German *Heimat* comes from the AfD, precisely the political force Curio believes should be in charge. Unlike Curio, however, Özdemir employs a different set of *topoi* to make his case, most of which have to do with defining Germany's national character and promoting diversity. When he speaks about the AfD despising everything that makes Germany great and respected, he is invoking the *topos of national uniqueness*: The various characteristics he attributes to Germany, whether its memory culture or its diversity (as outlined in the following section), are what make Germany unique, and this uniqueness is something that should be celebrated. And he raises the *topos of diversity* as well, arguing that Germany is a diverse country and that this is a good thing. For Özdemir, a certain type of modern and diverse Germany—one in which anyone, regardless of their family heritage, can claim German identity

and a *Heimat* in Germany, is under threat; by his logic, the only way to fend off this threat is to vote out the AfD or reduce their influence in German politics.

5.1.4. Constructions of German Identity

These two speeches also make clear that Curio and Özdemir—as representatives of their respective parties, the AfD and the Greens—have different views about what constitutes German identity, although Özdemir is the only one who engages explicitly and at length with the topic. Curio speaks more implicitly about who may be included as a "real" German, referring primarily to "citizens" without specifying who those citizens are. However, in denoting his conception of "us" and "them" in the speech, he does clearly indicate who is *not* included: The asylum-seekers who are supposedly exploiting Germany's social system and causing the loss of *Heimat.* Additionally, his comments can be interpreted and contextualized within the broader AfD discourse surrounding immigration, which makes it clear that there is a certain type of traditional German who fits with the country's cultures and values. Curio's comments about good, tax-paying "citizens" who are faced with the loss of their *Heimat* due to "culturally foreign" immigrants draw a contrast with what he describes as those opportunistic immigrants who come to Germany solely to take advantage of its social system.

To Özdemir, bringing up *Heimat* is a way to actively construct a certain version of German identity, an inclusive one in which people like Yücel (and himself) are a proud part of the community. He says the idea that the AfD should be allowed to "determine who is German and who is not" is dangerous because the far-right party "despises" many of the things for which Germany is respected around the world, including its memory culture, its national football team (which contains many players who might not fit Curio's nativist German norm), and its diversity. Of Germany's diverse national community, Özdemir says, "That includes Bavarians, Swabians, but also people whose ancestors came from Russia. And that includes

people whose ancestors came from Anatolia, who today are just as proud to be citizens of this country." In other words, it doesn't matter where someone or their parents came from: Germans are German citizens, regardless of their immigration background, their culture, or their religion. Considering this in the context of Wodak et al's five thematic areas related to the construction of national identity,[109] Özdemir engages here with nearly all of them: He speaks about a shared past and culture, as well as about shared values for the future.

Additionally, Özdemir's closing line reiterates this insistence on *Heimat* as something he and others with an immigrant background can and should claim for themselves, making themselves part of Germany's "imagined community." In closing, he refers to an incident shortly beforehand where AfD members at an event called for his deportation back to his *Heimat* (which they imply is Turkey):

> [Y]our raging mob - your raging mob - your raging mob wanted to deport me. It's easier than you think. On Saturday, I'll be back in my *Heimat*. I'll fly to Stuttgart, then take the S-Bahn [local train], and I'll end up at the last station, Bad Urach. That's my Swabian *Heimat* and I won't let you destroy it.

Here, Özdemir directly rejects the idea that someone with an immigrant background cannot claim Germany as their *Heimat*: He both sees himself as Swabian and has forefathers from Anatolia, and passionately asserts his right to both things. By invoking the trip back to his *Heimat*, the details of the flight and the regional train trip illustrate how his trip "home" is precisely the same kind of journey the AfD politicians would make. And by ending with a declaration that he won't let the AfD "destroy" his *Heimat,* he is turning their rhetoric about a *Heimat* under threat back on them.

In summary, Curio and Özdemir present starkly different visions of *Heimat* in their parliamentary speeches. Curio's is a nativist vision of the concept in which the way of life of "real" Germans must be protected against an influx of greedy, culturally foreign asylum-

[109] Wodak et al, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, 30.

seekers; for him, *Heimat* is connected primarily to discourses on national security, law and order, and alleged misuse of the social system. Özdemir, meanwhile, sees *Heimat* as something that both should be available to all German citizens and that is made stronger, not weaker, by growing diversity in the country; for him, *Heimat* is connected with national identity, multiculturalism, and democratic values.

5.2. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF FOCUS GROUPS

This section presents the findings from the second part of the empirical research conducted for this thesis. It analyzes the results of four focus groups conducted among residents of Gelsenkirchen, Germany: One pilot study conducted via Zoom on April 9, 2022 and three in-person focus groups conducted between April 22-25, 2022. As outlined in Chapter 4.2.4., participants were asked a series of questions to gauge their understanding and interpretation of *Heimat* in different contexts. This section will outline the major findings, including areas of agreement and disagreement; primary and secondary topics of discussion; participants' views on how *Heimat* connects to German identity and belonging; and their perspectives on the role of *Heimat in* German politics.

5.2.1. Primary and Secondary Topics of Discussion

As is often the case in focus groups, each group was given the freedom to respond to questions in whatever way they saw fit; as the moderator, I did my best to allow discussions to unfold organically within the time frame and still making sure to address all key questions on the discussion guide. With this in mind, the range of discourses raised by participants varied considerably between the different groups. Naturally, the dominant topic of discussion was participants' conceptions of *Heimat*, which began first with questions about what it means to feel "at home" somewhere and specifically what *Heimat* means to them. Here, participants spoke about the emotional, personal aspects of *Heimat* as well as the societal aspects of *Heimat*,

which they frequently tied to politics, integration and German identity. These discussions were about *Heimat* at their core but connected to a wide range of other discourses throughout.

Perhaps the most salient of these was discourse on integration, which came up in various ways across all four groups. Participants spoke about many aspects of this topic, especially in the group of second- and third-generation immigrants but across other groups as well: It felt like an undercurrent running through participants' exchanges on various issues. Some spoke about "values," either German values or the ones from their native cultures, and whether and to what extent newcomers need to adapt to a certain set of values to be part of a German *Heimat*. Others spoke about their belief that they are German, but that because of their name or their skin color they feel as if others don't accept them as such. And still others spoke about the feeling of being torn between two different cultures, not really belonging to either as a result.

Another frequent topic was discourse surrounding German identity, including German pride and patriotism, what it means to be German, and whether Germany has a particularly enhanced problem with discrimination and racism given its dark history. Participants often tied their answers about where they see as their *Heimat* to questions of national and regional identity, commenting on the concept of German identity and the difficulties in defining it. One non-immigrant participant alluded to the fraught subject of German pride and patriotism given the country's 20th century history. They said they considered themselves "proud" to come from the town they grew up in, but that they struggle to talk about pride:

> **G4P4:** If we're going to speak about experiences from the past, I would mention that it's really a crime if you say, 'I'm proud to be German.' You're immediately judged, pushed into a bad corner.

In contrast, the group of second- and third-generation immigrants raised the idea that the discrimination they face is a uniquely German problem, wondering the extent to which Germany's 20th century history has impacted the way it struggles to accept people with

different immigrant backgrounds. For them, this debate was nearly impossible to separate from *Heimat*, since it had to do with their feeling of belonging (or not) in Germany.

As for secondary topics, participants understandably brought up various recent developments in the news, either in Germany or internationally, as they related to the points they wanted to make about *Heimat*. One topic that came up in various ways and to varying extents in all three discussions was a recent announcement from the German government that Ukrainian students coming to Germany as refugees would be able to study without providing proof of previous studies or degrees.[110] Participants generally found this new rule indicative of a broader disconnect in German and European refugee policy, saying the speed and ease with which Ukrainian refugees are being accepted stands in stark contrast with the way refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and elsewhere have been treated. One participant in the group of second- and third-generation immigrants said she was incensed by the new policy because she felt it confirmed everything she already believed about Germany's systemic discrimination and even racism:

> **G2P1:** I think this downgrading, it's really just - so supposedly it's based on qualifications, but indirectly this downgrading in everyday life is on the basis of background, or rather which immigration background someone has. And I think this new law that was passed, it justifies all of that - it shows, it gives, it endorses all of that somehow, that it's completely okay that people may be treated differently only because of their immigration background.

That view received consensus from others around the table, and led into a broader discussion (referred to in Chapter 5.2.5. on belonging) about the ways in which German institutions determine who truly belongs and who does not.

Additionally, since the in-person discussions were held on the same weekend as the second round of the French presidential election in April, participants in both the refugee and first-generation group as well as those in the non-immigrant group also mentioned the election

[110] "Studium auch ohne Schulabschluss," *Tagesschau*, April 20, 2022, https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/kmk-hochschulzugang-ukrainer-101.html.

as proof that questions of far-right political success go beyond just Germany. In the group of refugees and first-generation immigrants, one woman put it this way:

> **G3P1:** Today, for example, there are elections in France. I'm excited to see what happens there, you know? Everywhere there's this pressure from the right and in every country it's gotten more difficult.

In the non-immigrant group, participants spoke about a need for the political "center" to win, expressing relief that incumbent French President Emmanuel Macron had defeated populist far-right candidate Marine Le Pen. Only by encouraging the "silent" part of the population to show up to the polls and voice their opinions will countries like France begin to effectively push back against the far right, one participant argued. The issue of far-right politics and what can be done to combat such political movements came up unprompted throughout the groups. Thus, among other topics, participants notably linked *Heimat* and the discussion to issues surrounding refugees and discrimination, to social cohesion and integration, to populist politics across Europe, and even to deeper questions of German pride and what it means to be German. The following sections will discuss some of these topics in greater detail.

5.2.2. Core Concepts of *Heimat*: Areas of Agreement

As has been established in previous sections of this thesis, *Heimat* is a term with many different connotations and interpretations. That wide range of meanings was also apparent in the focus groups, where participants had multiple opportunities to express their views on this topic. During each group, participants were asked a series of questions to elicit their understandings and interpretations of *Heimat*. Although one question addressed this topic verbatim—"What do you think of when I say the word *Heimat*?"—and many of the following quotes came in response to that question, subsequent questions also gave participants a chance to further hone and discuss their attitudes toward the word.

At its core, the concept of *Heimat* represented the same basic things to most participants, regardless of their immigration background or the amount of time they'd been in

Germany. To most of them, *Heimat* meant a place where they feel comfortable, where they can be themselves, and where they don't have to explain themselves. A familiar refrain was that *Heimat* is the place where people accept them as they are, whether culturally, religiously or linguistically. One participant, a second-generation immigrant whose parents came to Germany from Turkey shortly before he was born, put it this way:

> **G1P1:** For example, you all know that feeling when you join a group for the first time, and you're new there. Then you have this kind of uneasiness or insecurity, and as soon as someone comes and says, 'Hi, who are you?' and so on, it immediately goes away. And this has to do with the feeling of being welcome. If something like that doesn't happen… and nobody talks to you, then this state of being lasts. And this state is such an insecurity, a lack of orientation, and a lack of satisfaction with yourself, no? And *Heimat* is exactly the opposite of all that.

Here, he uses a stark contrast to explain what *Heimat* means by also describing and juxtaposing it with what it is not. Another word that came up with regard to *Heimat* was "safety" or "security" (*Sicherheit*), particularly among refugees. To be in one's *Heimat* means not needing to constantly worry for one's safety or the safety of family and friends. One exchange between two refugees, a 32-year-old woman from Syria and a 32-year-old man from Cameroon, showed that clearly: When one participant spoke about how being in Germany makes her feel, the other built on that comment, saying it involves safety.

> **G3P6:** We've found so many good people and had so many good experiences with many people here. And I can say that Germany is now my second *Heimat*. I feel myself so much in *Heimat* at the moment, and hopefully -
>
> **G3P4:** Safety.
>
> **G3P6:** - yes, in safety. And like I don't need to worry so much about my children's future.

As the Syrian participant mentioned, a big part of this feeling of comfort and ease in one's *Heimat* had to do with the people, especially family members. One woman, a young third-generation Turkish immigrant, said when she thinks of *Heimat* she thinks first of Turkey because much of her family still lives there and she regularly visits her grandparents there. Still, she also mentioned she did an exchange year in the United States and felt very cared for and

accepted by the people she met there, which led her to believe *Heimat* has more to do with people than places:

> **G2P3:** If you go on vacation, maybe for a longer period of time, or as I said, spent a year abroad, and you've had nice experiences there and with the people in general and it's so positive… then you can say, 'Okay, here I've also discovered a third and fourth *Heimat* for myself. *Heimat* is, I think, where you not only feel comfortable, but maybe also where you feel love. Because, I mean, that is - or love is - *Heimat* can also be via a person.

This comment echoed the sentiments present throughout many of the contributions on this topic: *Heimat* is deeply connected with emotion, which this participant expressed quite explicitly. One woman, a religious Christian without an immigrant background, said she finds *Heimat* not so much in specific places, but in the communities she spends time in and cares about. They don't even have to follow the same religion as her, she said, if they have a similar way of thinking:

> **G4P5:** For me, it's above all the people who make it *Heimat* for me. I find *Heimat*, basically, through my faith, through people who tick in the same way, who are similar. And the church is a *Heimat* for me, and people who are religious - and the way it is for me now, it doesn't matter what religion.… I just notice that when I can interact with people who have a similar feeling, and having the same religion doesn't seem to be a factor, then I feel comfortable right away.

Here, she essentially uses religion as a metaphor for *Heimat*, evoking the sense of shared purpose and community. Some of that feeling of comfort, participants raised at various points in the discussions, also has to do with language: For many, it was the place where they were not just figuratively but literally understood. For example, a 62-year-old woman in the pilot group, who had a German mother but grew up in the United States and has now lived in Germany for nearly four decades, said she doesn't feel Germany has become a true *Heimat* for her because she is constantly reminded language-wise that she doesn't quite fit in:

> **G1P3:** When I finally open up and talk freely about something, I get totally thrown off course when someone then corrects me - because I didn't pronounce a word correctly, because it only occurred to me in English, or because I mixed up *der, die, das* again. Then my face turns red and I'm afraid to open my mouth again. It makes me seem shy

> - I'm not actually that shy, but in Germany I'm more shy… and that's why, I think that's the reason why I don't have this *Heimat* feeling here.

Several members of the non-immigrant group also spoke about the importance of language. Similar to the American immigrant in Germany, one participant, a 39-year-old woman without an immigrant background, said the feelings of comfort she associates with *Heimat* or *Zuhause* are also connected with an ability to speak her native language and not worry about being understood:

> **G4P3:** For me it has a lot to do with language, but also to do with - that I notice I don't learn foreign languages so easily. And yeah, for me, I've tried to learn different languages, but the one in which I really think and dream and whatnot, that's my mother tongue (German). … actually, that's where I maybe feel at home.

When one associates *Heimat* with a place, participants said this also has to do with having one's life experiences there: *Heimat* can also be connected to where you grew up and spent your childhood and youth, where you have a job, where you've had important life moments. Two participants put it this way:

> **G3P1:** For me, Germany is my *Heimat* because I've lived here for 48 years. I spent my childhood here, I went to school here, then did my training, then my studies. And a whole bunch of other things - of course I've spent this time here physically.
>
> **G2P7:** I connect *Heimat* with the place, so very strongly Gelsenkirchen. Because that, for me, is the place with the most positive points in life, where I say, 'Okay, this is where I belong, here is where my family is.' And regardless of what one experiences outside of that, that you have this and that reference point, that's where you have the most positive points in life.

In other words, participants broadly spoke about *Heimat* as a kind of feeling they have, tied—depending on their own experiences and relationships—to people or a place (or both). But throughout the discussions, they also emphasized that it is a very individual concept, one people must ultimately define for themselves. In addition, it was frequently tied to powerful emotions, such as love, security and comfort; participants explained *Heimat* as a space, physical or mental, in which they were able to be themselves and fully accepted for it.

Another area of broad agreement across the groups was that it's possible to have more than one *Heimat*, or an old *Heimat* and a new *Heimat*. When asked to describe what the term means for them and what places, words or emotions they associated with it, several already used the phrases "old *Heimat*," "new *Heimat*," "second *Heimat*," and "*Wahlheimat*" (*Heimat* of choice) without prompting. All these things inherently imply *Heimat* is something one can have in multiples, or that *Heimat* is not something that is determined solely by one's place of birth. During the activity in which participants placed stickers on a map for their *Heimat* or *Heimaten*, only a handful of people placed just one sticker; most placed two stickers or in some cases, even three, four, or more. For some, this was like the participant who spent a year in the United States on an exchange program and felt welcomed and cared for there, or others who regularly visit family in another city or country, or return to the same place each year on vacation. For others, it had to do with an "old" and a "new" *Heimat*: One Syrian refugee (G4P1) placed two stickers on the map, one in Syria and another in Gelsenkirchen. His explanation was that one represents his past and the other represents his future: "In Syria, it's like we said: It's about childhood and youth, and being born there - and now the war. And in Gelsenkirchen: The future." As will be discussed in the following section, others in the group of refugees and first-generation immigrants used stickers to mark their *Wunschheimat* (dream *Heimat*), or places they aspire to live in the future.

There were some dissenters on this point who thought it was only possible to have a single *Heimat* where one was born and grew up, even if one could feel "at home" (*zu Hause*) somewhere else. And participants did not agree on whether having multiple *Heimaten* is a good thing: In the second- and third-generation group, one woman, an 18-year-old student with one German parent and one Spanish parent (G2P1), said the group's focus on *Heimat* as something about which some participants feel torn is proof it's possible. The word "torn" (as discussed in

the following section) already implies people can have more than one, but that this can have downsides:

> **G2P1:** I think this feeling of being torn, of standing between multiple *Heimaten* - it actually sounds totally great at first, but I think it's both a blessing and a curse in a way. A blessing and a curse at the same time, because when you think about it, you can never be in both places at once.

Her comments received nods and signs of agreement from several others at the table. Therefore, the idea of *Heimat* as something multiple was widespread among participants, but they had varying opinions as to whether this is a good or a bad thing. The exchange highlighted an ambivalence toward the concept of *Heimat*, which was particularly pronounced among those for whom a single *Heimat* is not necessarily clear-cut.

5.2.3. Constructing *Heimat*: Differences Between the Groups

Despite broad agreement among focus group participants about the basics involved in *Heimat*—feelings of comfort, of being understood, of being welcome—and a general consensus that it's possible to have more than one *Heimat* over the course of one's life, there was considerable variation in the way the different groups engaged with the term as it related to their own respective identities. For some, *Heimat* signified a fundamental duality they felt because of the pull between two or more cultures they felt in their lives. For others, it was a reminder of a home and a way of life they had and lost, one to which they cannot return for the foreseeable future. For still others, it was a term they hadn't necessarily thought so much about, or considered with a slight twinge of unease due to its historical connections to the political right. And in nearly all cases, whether right away or over the course of the discussion, participants tied the word to current political issues and questions of belonging and national identity.

Among second- and third-generation immigrants, there was a sense that *Heimat* was something complicated and difficult to determine given the dual cultural influences most of

them experience in their lives. The word mentioned most often was *zwiegespalten*, which translates as "torn" or "of two minds": Participants felt pulled between the *Heimat* they live in or grew up in (Germany and Gelsenkirchen) and their parents' or grandparents' country of origin (Turkey, for most of them). Several participants in the focus group among this demographic said this is because neither Germans nor Turks truly see them as one of them:

> **G2P5:** I wrote "torn," because here [in Germany] I'm the Turk and there [in Turkey] I'm the German. [laughs from other participants] And that's always there… *Heimat?* Yes, my *Heimat* is Gelsenkirchen. But here I'm often, as I said, the Turk. And then it's like - I don't know, I don't want to say *heimatlos* (without a *Heimat*), I'm not that, but sometimes it's a bit like that. I don't know.
>
> **G2P2:** I don't feel 100 percent Turkish, even if I wish I could - but I also don't feel 100 percent German here, because I have this German-Turkish in me.

Another third-generation immigrant said he has long wrestled with the question of where his *Heimat* really is, because ever since learning the term as a child he has struggled to reconcile the two halves of his identity:

> **G1P5:** [G1P3] said, '*Heimat* is where my roots are.' And that's a question that's been on my mind for 20 years… I've asked myself the whole time, am I - is my *Heimat* Turkey or is my *Heimat* Gelsenkirchen? Because - yeah, my roots are in Turkey, but I was born here and grew up here. Technically all I've really seen from Turkey has been on vacation. … It's hard for me to determine, because I live sort of torn: I have a lot of German in me, but also a lot of Turkish in me. And I see that, I feel that.

Here, the participant connects *Heimat* with the idea of "roots," something others did throughout the discussions: This evokes the image of *Heimat* as a tree, this sense of rootedness being prevalent among participants' responses. During the map activity, he ultimately opted to place just one sticker on Ückendorf, the neighborhood of Gelsenkirchen in which he lives; he said this was because Gelsenkirchen is where he actually lives, while Turkey is more where he vacations and visits family.

Among refugees and first-generation immigrants, *Heimat* was a difficult concept because many of them associated it with the countries from which they had fled. This led to painful feelings since these places are something they believe they have lost; many noted it is

not possible for them to return, and they do not know when they will be able to do so. One woman, the 32-year-old refugee from Syria, said she associated *Heimat* with family and with the idea that she doesn't have to constantly worry about them and her children. As a result, Syria, her *Heimat*, became "foreign" (*fremd*) to her when the war broke out:

> **G3P6:** When you don't have those things, you feel foreign in your own *Heimat*. When we came to Germany, we'll continue to have Syria in our hearts forever. But in recent times there's so, so much war and in war we felt like we were in a foreign country, you know? When we came here, we found that we felt at home and we didn't have to worry so much for our family: When they go outside, yeah, it's good, there are no bombs coming, there's no war coming. That's the most important thing for us.

Another participant from the pilot study, a 37-year-old man who had come from Bosnia-Herzegovina in his youth and has now lived in Germany for nearly three decades, contested other participants' overwhelmingly positive feelings toward their *Heimat*. For someone who has had to flee horrors back home, *Heimat* can also be associated with deeply negative emotions, he said, which is part of why he said he now sees Germany as his *Heimat*:

> **G1P2:** When the memories and experiences were positive, then that has a lot to do with *Heimat*. But of course, when they were negative, then that has very little to do with the fact - and it may also be the reason why I, for example, don't really have that *Heimat* feeling toward the country I was born in, because what I remember are unfortunately very traumatic things. The death of our neighbor by some people who killed him, to bombs and bullets that hit our apartment, things like that. Those are all things I remember, although I was eight years old, certainly memories that come back even now. Since these weren't nice memories, I don't see it as my *Heimat*.

Among refugees and first-generation immigrants, the concept of an "old" and a "new" *Heimat* was particularly pronounced. In the refugee and first-generation group, several participants were asylum-seekers from African countries. These individuals often find themselves in legal and bureaucratic limbo because many of them don't meet Germany's relatively high bar for receiving asylum; as a result, they end up being granted a temporary leave to stay but without

the right to work, study or formally settle in the country.[111] (This is, in other words, precisely the group about which Gottfried Curio spoke in his Bundestag speech, analyzed in Chapter 5.1. For these participants, *Heimat* was a difficult topic not only because they missed the *Heimat* in which they grew up, but they also felt Germany's government and institutions had made it clear to them they could not begin the process of making the country their new *Heimat*:

> **G3P3:** I'm happy to be here in Germany, but to be honest, I don't feel comfortable here - because only having a home with a roof over your head or getting financial help from the government isn't the same as freedom for people like me. … For me to feel this is my *Heimat*, I first need to get asylum and to settle the whole situation. And then I can talk about *Heimat*. … The way they are treating us has let us know we are not at home.
>
> **G3P4:** All these processes can't let you feel like you're at home. Because you are constantly in movement, you can't get to the first place to say, 'Okay, I belong to these people, I have to learn from their culture and everything,' so you are not concentrating on all those points.
>
> **G3P5:** Yeah, for me to be in Gelsenkirchen, I don't feel at home. Because… in Germany every time you have a different letter in the mail, your heart beats the moment you see the mail. You can never guess - you wonder, 'What have I done?'

In conversation with each other, the refugee participants built on each other's contributions, each adding experiences inspired by the others' comments (such as the final comment in the above section, about being afraid to check the mail for fear of a bureaucratic letter that could determine their fate in the place they currently live).

Interestingly, when asked to place their stickers on the various maps, it was noteworthy that participants in the first-generation group interpreted the task more broadly than those in other groups: Many of them placed stickers not just on where they grew up or where they lived now, but also in places they would like to live in the future (a *Wunschheimat*, or dream *Heimat*). For some, this was the United States; for others, it was other places in Germany or Europe. Asked why he chose to place a sticker on the U.S., one participant (G3P4) replied: "Because

[111] See, for example, Emily Schultheis, "A Refugee Who Fought Back Against the Hard Right," *The New York Times*, April 30, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/30/world/europe/refugee-germany-asylum-protest.html.

America in the past 30 years was my favorite. I learned English because I applied for a green card, but I didn't succeed - I wanted to study there."

In the non-immigrant group, participants raised many of the same ideas others did about the core meaning of *Heimat*, but the discussion very quickly turned to their belief that the word is negatively connotated. One participant, a 66-year-old woman whose parents came from Pomerania, in what is now Poland, said she primarily associates *Heimat* with two things: Its use by right-wing and conservative politicians, including Seehofer's *Heimat* ministry, but also her parents' conservative, nationalistic use of the term in her childhood:

> **G4P2:** *Heimat* is for me always spontaneously first a negative term… it's a word that - in the past, we didn't use it that way. "Home," sure, but *Heimat* was always a word the right wing used, or right-leaning people… my parents, they came from Pomerania, in what is today Poland. They came to Germany during World War II and came here as refugees, and then they had this kind of *Heimat* Club Pomeranian National Team, which meant as children we always had to go with them, and then it was always discussed in a very revanchistic way. And I think somehow that's why, since childhood, I've had such a negative feeling toward the word *Heimat.*

Two other participants immediately chimed in to agree with her, saying they had also felt a twinge of discomfort when asked to think about what *Heimat* meant to them, primarily due to its history of being instrumentalized by the Nazis and its current use by far- and extreme-right movements:

> **G4P3:** So I basically also wrote down that for me, *Heimat* is a more difficult word than "home." And maybe that's because for me, as a German, saying '*Heimat'* always has a bit of a weird aftertaste. But I also wrote down that *Heimweh* (the longing for *Heimat*) is somehow a core, basic feeling: Somehow, I had the feeling that you - or that I - am looking for a place to be completely at home, I think. *Heimat* is somehow always connected a bit with longing.
>
> **G4P6:** I have to say, I see this similarly to [G4P2]: *Heimat,* for me, is also a more negatively associated term, because the term was so badly misused by the Hitler fascists back then, and then later also really far-right to fascists always throw *Heimat* around. You can see it on the election posters these days from the AfD, every second one has the word *Heimat* on it - which is where I again need to say, that's why I always get a bit of negative goosebumps when I hear the word.

Therefore, although many of the core descriptions of *Heimat* raised by participants were similar across all groups, the three groups did tend to engage with it differently in terms of how positively or negatively it makes them feel and how they associated it with their respective identities. These responses often depended on the respondents' individual backgrounds: Refugees often viewed *Heimat* as a painful subject, since it is something they had to leave behind or a place where they had negative experiences. For second- and third-generation immigrants, *Heimat* was often associated with ambivalence and the idea that they couldn't truly belong in any one place or culture. Finally, non-immigrant Germans struggled with the term for other reasons: They felt a sense of discomfort due to its history and association with the Nazis and the far right.

5.2.4. *Heimat* and German National Identity

There were no prepared questions related directly to how *Heimat* connects to national identity, although several questions sought to address this issue indirectly. However, participants brought up various aspects of German identity throughout the discussions: Although there was hardly a consensus, several participants spoke about how German identity is a difficult concept and discussed the reasons why or raised the contrast between national and regional identities. One participant, a second-generation immigrant whose parents came from Turkey, said he believes that in today's multicultural society it is difficult to speak about a single "German identity." This, he said, is because the country has been influenced by so many things that this identity has become less distinctive as a result:

> **G1P1:** I wanted to say that Germany's identity is shaped by many factors. There's no such thing as - what is "German"? If you were to try and explain that now, it would be different than if someone else explained it. There are certain patterns, to be sure. But there are also an incredible number of influences, also from abroad, that have found access to German culture.

In response to this comment, another member of the pilot group without an immigrant background said he believes Germany's history in the 20th century contributes strongly to its conflicted identity, even to the point of giving the country a "personality disorder":

> **G1P4:** I think Germany definitely has an identity - it's just characterized by very difficult factors, by a great deal of insecurity, by great fear, by complete helplessness. And I believe these are things we've inherited and carried on from the 20th century, from our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents. Because yes, we know German history, something was done by this country. It was unprecedented for us in history, such incredible violence. And since then, you could say that Germany has a complex or a personality disorder. That's how I see it sometimes: I often see Germany as having a personality disorder and most of our neighboring countries don't have that.

Another participant in this group, the 37-year-old former refugee from Bosnia-Herzegovina, largely agreed that Germany has issues with its identity and said that as a result he prefers to think about regional identities, rather than a single national one.

> **G1P2:** I also see that the country of Germany has major problems with finding an overall identity, and that there's a much better opportunity to build regional identities. People feel much better off in regional identities. Gelsenkirchen, for example, defines its regional identity through the *Ruhrpott* (Ruhr valley), through [soccer team] Schalke 04 or other characteristics that stand for it.

Along the lines of his comments, several participants spoke about their reluctance to claim "German" identity, preferring to focus on their region (either the state of North Rhine-Westphalia or the Ruhr region more specifically). In the group of second- and third-generation immigrants, one participant noted that Germany is such a large and diverse country that she really only feels connected with her region and state, not necessarily with parts of the country that are culturally quite different:

> **G2P4**: For me, it's very simple: I feel *Heimat* is Gelsenkirchen and, in a broader sense, *Heimat* for me is [North Rhine-Westphalia]. Never Germany or Turkey, it's very interesting. … When I really consider it, it's really quite objective for me to think about my *Heimat* and [North Rhine-Westphalia]... *Heimat* for me isn't Bavaria. Honestly, I also have a hard time saying Germany is my *Heimat.* It doesn't fit.

And in the group of non-immigrants, a participant said the stickers weren't sufficient to mark her *Heimat* on the various maps because she considers her *Heimat* to be the entire state rather than any one city:

> **G4P3:** I would have loved to have a pen to draw on North Rhine-Westphalia somehow. I put a sticker on where I grew up, but actually that sticker is for the whole of North Rhine-Westphalia.

Still, participants often discussed their *Heimat*—at least as it relates to their identity—in national terms without consciously thinking about why they did so. At one point during the group of second- and third-generation immigrants, one participant pointed this out, saying she believes it's problematic that people often think about others in terms of nationality and religion. The comment sparked an exchange among several participants about how unconscious thinking in national terms can be, which prompted others to agree with and add to the first participant's observation:

> **G2P8:** But we also consider - we too, I think, many of us - we also think about things in terms of religion or nationality, right? So that's one of those things.
>
> **G2P4:** That's exactly what I wanted to say. I also wanted to ask: Germans? Or Muslims? Or Christians? So I'm German and I'm Muslim, I'm a Muslima, but I'm German. … so just like [G2P8] said, religion and nationalities.
>
> **G2P6:** But that comes back to education again: That what you actually mean by that is that we're taught it that way, or we're always confronted with it and then we start at some point to talk about it that way subconsciously. For example, they don't really mean it that way, but it just happens subconsciously, because you're told it again and again, you're confronted with it again and again, or it's like that everywhere, because it's so hyped up.
>
> **G2P5:** I think I was in tenth grade, 18 or so, and that's when I was confronted with the fact that there are Turks who aren't Muslim. And that to me was completely - my god - [laughter] Right? Those exist? That was the Aramaians: They're Christians, they spoke fluent Turkish to us, and that was all. But that was how it was for me, it didn't fit in the picture: a Turkish woman who is a Christian but who speaks Turkish? And that was the case because we - because it's drilled into us, we just don't know it any other way. Turks are Muslims and that's how I knew it.
>
> **G2P7:** It's hard - pigeonholing people, that's very, very - you quickly fall into it.

> **G2P1**: But the problem is, we always try to give everything a term. We always try to pack everything into one group -
>
> **G2P7**: This simple -
>
> **G2P1**: - just so we sort of have an overview. But when we do that, we actually lose the whole overview, because then we just see people as exactly the same or something, even though they aren't. But we still put them in the same box. Well, we always have all these generic terms that we kind of want to use to put people into groups, even though those groups might not even fit together. And I think it's just difficult to get away from it somehow.

Thus, the concept of German national identity—and the idea of national and religious identity overall—was a subject with which participants engaged throughout the discussions, even if there was no clear consensus on the issue and none could pin down a precise meaning for it.

5.2.5. *Heimat*, Belonging, and Exclusion: Narratives of Exclusion

To understand the extent to which participants connected *Heimat* with feelings of belonging, either within their own communities or a national community, they were asked who gets to define what is a person's *Heimat* and what isn't, as well as whether they had had any specific experiences related to this topic. For the non-immigrants, this question produced comparatively little discussion, and participants moved on more quickly to the two quotes from politicians and a direct debate about *Heimat*'s role in politics. One non-immigrant explained it this way:

> **G1P4:** This question that was posed just now, who decides where your *Heimat* is - in my case I have to say, yeah, nobody. I was born here. My parents were also already here, nobody decided that either. So where else, then, is my "at home" (*Zuhause*) or my *Heimat*?

In the discussion with refugees and first-generation immigrants, the question was a bit harder to explore because most of them interpreted it literally: In the course of their asylum procedures and settlement in Germany, all of them mentioned they had been told where they would be sent within Germany and had little or no say in the matter. As one participant, a 32-year-old refugee

from Cameroon, explained that he has been moved between multiple locations and as a result hasn't been able to settle down in any of them:

> **G3P4:** I think the government decides for us, whether you are at home or not. Because as an asylum-seeker, you are being sent in a place where you don't like to stay. Many of us are coming from the big towns and when you arrive here, they send you to the village. And before you know, they will still transfer to another place. So they are still moving you from place to place.

For this group, additional follow-up questions about societal perceptions they face led to several participants saying they also have struggled to feel accepted by the general population in Germany. One refugee from Syria, who has studied to work as a caregiver, said several young classmates in his training program made it clear to him that he will never fully belong:

> **G4P1:** Especially young Germans, they always say - yeah, for example, I said, 'I've applied for a German passport, I want to be German.' But yes, especially at school, [they said]: 'You weren't born here, you have a different skin color.'

Such typically racist comments led the participant to feel excluded from German society because he will never fit the blond-haired, blue-eyed stereotype of what a "typical German" looks like. While he has met many kind people since arriving in Gelsenkirchen, he said there are also those who seek to remind him that Germany isn't his *Heimat.*

By far the most intensive debate about these topics took place in the groups in which second- and third-generation immigrants were present, either the pilot study or the group devoted specifically to this demographic. In the pilot study, the former refugee from Bosnia-Herzegovina said there will always be two levels on which *Heimat* is defined, the individual and the societal:

> **G1P2:** Who defines what *Heimat* is, then? Or rather, who can define that? I think when you look at it, who is allowed to do that and whose standard should be decisive, in my view there are two entities: On the one hand, my own standard, and on the other, the standard of society.

This idea of a dual self- and other perception of *Heimat*—how participants viewed their own *Heimat,* and how society assigned them to whichever *Heimat* it felt they belonged to—was a

common thread among participants from this demographic. All of these participants felt *Heimat* is something they should be able to decide for themselves, but nearly all of them felt this right was often denied them by German society:

> **G2P6:** When I think about it again, that you sometimes get comments like, 'Yeah, go back to where you came from' - to say, in Gelsenkirchen, go back where you came from? [laughter] Okay, the others may think *Heimat* is back where your roots are. But for me the definition of *Heimat* isn't just that, but rather where I've lived, where I've felt comfortable and all the other things we already talked about.

In many cases, this feeling of not being fully accepted by Germany—and the belief expressed by others that it's not actually their *Heimat*—had to do with bureaucratic and institutional issues, whether it was language tests, translators or various forms asking for their nationalities, native languages, and other facts that are complicated for those with immigrant backgrounds. That same participant said she sees "official definitions" as de facto arbiters or gatekeepers of where one's *Heimat* can truly be:

> **G2P6:** [*Heimat*] is something that shouldn't be decided for you, but it happens even if you don't want that. Then it's difficult, if you have to conform to official definitions for example at government offices, or when it's about languages and language tests.

In response, another woman tied these feelings of non-belonging to prejudiced attitudes toward Islam, and a lack of full acceptance of the religion and culture in Germany:

> **G2P2:** We can, we should, decide ourselves about our *Heimat*. But sometimes these political facts, like the law - we also mentioned, that some people wear a headscarf and things like that. And in our *Heimat* we should be allowed to be as we are, to live our religion freely. … And if I feel at home here and say this is my *Heimat* and then somehow people aren't convinced by that and then also have an opinion about it, then where am I really at home? Actually, it's here [in Gelsenkirchen, in Germany]. But somehow, they stand in the way of that, so to speak.

The topic of the headscarf—a prime example of symbolic politics, and one frequently instrumentalized by right-wing politicians—was a frequent topic of debate in the group of second- and third-generation immigrants. Additionally, several participants responded with experiences in which, once people in government agencies or various other official settings

discover their immigrant background, they immediately begin to treat them as if they were not born in Germany:

> **G2P2:** I had a situation last week, I was invited to testify and in the letter it included my personal details, it said I was born in Gelsenkirchen. But at the bottom it asked if I needed an interpreter. I've been on the phone with them quite often before, and they know that I speak German. And I don't think that's always there: If my name were Lisa, I don't think it wouldn have been there. But I was very surprised by that. And then I said straight away, 'No, I don't need an interpreter.'

This participant's experience speaks to latent stereotypes that exist in German society, and the belief that if someone looks different or has a non-German-sounding name, they must not be "truly" German. Another participant built on these observations, speaking about how she often handles bureaucratic tasks for her parents, since her mother doesn't speak perfect German. She, having grown up in Germany herself, speaks fluent German. She said bureaucrats are always friendly to her on the phone until she tells them her very Turkish-sounding last name, at which point they begin to treat her differently:

> **G2P5:** Whenever I call a government office or a company… I often hear, 'Ah, but you speak good German!' And I in turn think: Why would I not? I would never tell anyone that in that regard, 'Yes, but you speak good German.' So why? And then, at first they don't even notice that I'm Turkish, until I get to my last name. When I say [G2P5], [they say], 'Oh okay, I don't know how to write that now, you're not really German, are you?' They are totally overwhelmed.

She also spoke about how, because of her physical appearance, people make assumptions about where she comes from: That she's Iraqi, or Spanish, or Moroccan. That concept of whether someone looks typically "German"—which participants broadly defined as blonde hair, blue eyes and light skin—was a frequent topic among participants as a key determinant of whether one will be treated as truly belonging to a German *Heimat*.

5.2.6. Responses to Quotes: *Heimat* and Politics

Although participants were not asked directly about *Heimat* and its use in German politics until the last question, as has been demonstrated in the previous sections, the topic of

politics came up in various ways far earlier in the discussion. This suggests participants recognized *Heimat* is inherently political, even if it is also a term they might use to refer to everyday experiences and emotions in their own lives. Still, by far the most explicit discussion of politics occurred after that final question, in which participants were presented with two quotes representing the two primary discursive uses of *Heimat* in German politics (analyzed via the two Bundestag speeches in Chapter 5.1.).

On the question of whether the term should be used in politics at all, participants had varying opinions. The overarching consensus in the group of second- and third-generation immigrants was that it very much depends on who is using it, and that the term needs to be part of making sure all sectors of German society are adequately represented in politics:

> **G2P8:** So I think we have to somehow recapture the concept of *Heimat*, precisely because it was again brought into this nationalistic corner through [Horst] Seehofer's *Heimat* ministry and so it was somehow used again to exclude people. The term isn't clear anyway, but it's no longer value-free, really. *Heimat* is actually something nice, but if - I don't know. Depending on who asks about it, I don't even want to talk about it.
>
> **G2P2** It's very important who's talking about it. Politics? Sure, of course, definitely. But which politicians? If - sorry, let me put it this way - 20 Germans sit down, then they can talk about *Heimat*. And I think in many areas, it … I just don't think it's diverse, broadly speaking. It's always the same groups that talk about issues, where they may not come to the right conclusion because everyone there thinks the same. And that's because this diversity is simply not there in politics.
>
> **G3P1:** It belongs to all of that [in politics], I think - because *Heimat* determines your life, in the broadest sense.

To this group, *Heimat* functioned in much the same way Özdemir approaches it: Rather than abandoning the term entirely, participants believed it should be picked up and reframed by a more diverse range of politicians and voices in the political sphere.

While the quote from the AfD politician was almost unanimously rejected by participants—when a hard copy of the quote was passed around the table, some participants joked they didn't even want to touch it—many in the different groups were also critical of the

more inclusive vision of *Heimat* presented in the SPD politician's quote. Broadly speaking, participants felt the quote was *too* inclusive, dismissing it as a typical politician's statement intended to make a political point or project a certain attitude without actually backing it up:

> **G3P1:** At first I felt really good about that sentence. But when you analyze each part of it internally, maybe it's also just a sentence that this woman is maybe saying for the four years she's in the government.

Still, participants were relatively in agreement that *Heimat* can be used in German politics, but that it should be used by the full range of people living in Germany, not just by conservatives and far-right politicians. Some felt the use of this word by a more diverse set of politicians would help increase the inclusiveness of German politics, and therefore also of German society.

5.2.7. Areas of Disagreement: Who is Allowed to Be Part of a German *Heimat*?

In general, the groups were quite collaborative and friendly. Due most likely to the grouping of people from certain backgrounds together and all participants' willingness to join such a discussion in the first place, there was relatively little conflict (and when disagreements arose, they were expressed politely). These moments of disagreement centered largely around the core questions this thesis aims to ask: Who is allowed to be part of the German *Heimat* and how should the boundaries of this "imagined community" be defined? The discussions underscored how difficult and fraught a topic this is, regardless of which demographic participants come from.

One particularly interesting and relevant exchange occurred during the pilot study: One of the first-generation immigrants, who came from Bosnia-Herzegovina nearly three decades ago, debated with a second-generation immigrant about the question of integration and what kind of "values" one should have or adopt when claiming Germany as his or her *Heimat*. The man Bosnia-Herzegovina said that since he now associates *Heimat* with Germany, not the country in which he was born, he believes it has more to do with overarching values than where

one was born. He said he believes those values should be universally adopted by those claiming Germany as their *Heimat*, citing the United States as an example of a country that successfully assimilates immigrants:

> **G1P2:** I'm basically of the opinion that a certain sense of meaning can come from discarding certain values and adopting other values, or perhaps also thinking about whether you can carry two values permanently or carry two different things around with you somewhere without choosing a side. … I know that people find it difficult, of course, to deal with it and that they want to keep the values from their home countries, where they come from, for as long as possible. I'm just saying that it's very, very difficult to reconcile these two values in a sustainable way, especially when they're at times diametrically opposed.

However, another participant—a second-generation Turkish immigrant—pushed back on this idea, saying people should be able to keep their values and beliefs and combine the best from both cultures. He also said integration is a two-sided issue, and that it's not only immigrants' responsibility to ensure integration happens, but also the German host society's responsibility to meet them in the middle:

> **G1P1:** The topic of assimilation, that's what I tried to explain - what *Heimat* is, that being different is seen as enrichment. And yes, where to assimilate? Not all - there is no homogeneous Germany. For example, let's say there is a group of social benefit recipients who interact with each other and who are German. Do I have to behave like them, socially disadvantaged Germans? Then there are academics who behave differently. Do I have to - is that German? What is German now? One would have to define that. And that is always going to fail. … Assimilation is really a difficult field. And that's exactly the point: Do I have to give up a piece of myself to be like the others? I think that's problematic. I respect everyone who sees it like you [G1P2] do, we live in a free country. But I don't think many sociologists would share this stance.

The disagreement between these two participants centered on how much of one's values—in effect, parts of one's identity—one must give up in order to fit within a German *Heimat*. The first participant argued that at least a certain amount is necessary in order to fully belong in Germany, while the second said the idea of a unified "Germanness" is already so difficult to define that people should be able to live their own values and cultures within Germany.

Interestingly, neither participant explained precisely what they mean by "values," although they hinted at this throughout the discussion. The man from Bosnia-Herzegovina spoke about values in the context of laws and rules but did not clearly elaborate what he sees as the German values he has adopted since arriving in the country. At one point, he mentioned that when he travels abroad, people remark on the fact that he is "considerate," "empathetic," "communicative" and "able to relate to others." Those characteristics are partly due to his own personality, he said, but "this personality was of course largely shaped by my *Heimat*, and that's Germany." In this way, he seems to imply that Germans are considerate, empathetic and communicative, and that these traits are specifically aligned with what it means to be German or grow up in Germany. Meanwhile, the second-generation Turkish immigrant spoke about combining "the best values of both" cultures and nationalities without explicitly naming those values. However, during the course of the exchange, he told the story of a German friend who never visited their grandparents even though they lived on the same street; such a thing, he continued, would be unthinkable in Turkish families. As a result, he clearly implies that commitment to family and close family ties are among the values he means when he speaks about retaining the values of his Turkish roots.

This subject came up in the discussion of non-immigrants as well. When one participant said she feels the positive aspects of immigration and refugee arrivals should be more discussed in the German public sphere, another participant pushed back, saying she believes there should be boundaries:

> **G4P5:** That's the question: That in discussions, you have to bring up things that are different in different cultures to find a consensus - not to exclude anyone, but rather to look at what should then apply to us here. What rules can we set up for ourselves to simply discount the arguments from the far right and left? And then you have to somehow just find a new feeling of togetherness. … I think there should be certain rules and also bans, and boundaries are needed - which then of course exclude people again. It's a double-edged sword, but [necessary] to guarantee freedoms for everyone, or the most possible freedom for everyone, no?

She mentioned an incident while working in refugee aid, where a young male refugee told her women "aren't worth anything" and that all women were stupid. Despite pushing back on this belief and telling him women are an equal part of society in Germany, even pointing out examples of teachers or doctors he had interacted with, he stuck by his statement. To her, this proved that a German *Heimat* can be inclusive, but only to a point, a statement one other participant chimed in to agree with:

> **G4P5:** [The refugee] stuck to his position, until eventually I said, 'Your story of fleeing moves me deeply - I'm so sorry you've had to experience that. But on this point you're wrong. When you don't recognize our values - when you don't recognize our values, then you need to find a country where your values are being lived.'
>
> **G4P6:** Exactly, of course.
>
> **G4P5:** Yes, and that's when I got really pissed off. And I passed that along to politicians, because I really said, this doesn't work. Right? There are instances of abuse, and we just have to be very honest with ourselves about that, too. Naïveté doesn't help when I see something like that. It doesn't matter whether it's a German or whatever other origin - there are probably similar problems with the [extreme right movement] *Reichsbürger* and whoever else. But there need to be clear lines, and they need to apply to everyone. And just because someone has a refugee story and I feel for them, I can't overlook the fact that our boundaries are being crossed.

Here, the participant gets a bit closer to defining some of the values around which a German *Heimat* should be centered: The belief that all people are created equal (including men and women), that people are free up to the point that their freedom infringes on others' freedom, and that the German constitution should be upheld as a codification of those values.

In other words, the relatively rare moments of disagreement and tension in the focus groups often centered around this question of how to define the boundaries of who belongs in a German *Heimat* and who doesn't. However, participants often fell into the same argumentative trap that politicians do when they speak about this topic: They stressed the necessity of focusing on shared "values," but very rarely elaborated on what these values actually are. In this context, the word "values" could be deemed an empty signifier along the lines of Laclau and Mouffe's concept: The word is brought in at so many different points to

mean (presumably) many different things that it no longer really means much at all. The participant who spoke about a misogynistic Syrian refugee comes perhaps closest to a more elaborate conception of shared values, belief in individuals' equal worth, and respecting individuals' freedom without infringing upon that of others. Still, greater specificity—to the extent participants can elucidate their views on it—would be helpful in further exploring this topic. Additionally, participants based their argument on the assumption that "all Germans" have the same values, which of course is not the case; this falls within the fallacy of generalization, grouping an entire population together under one category even if its individual members might have diverse views.

5.3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As stated in the methods and methodologies chapter, the two genres of texts analyzed in this thesis come with very different uses, benefits and drawbacks. Brief political, strategically planned speeches prepared for and delivered on the floor of the German Bundestag serve a very different purpose than the semi-public, spontaneous statements made in a small-group setting like a focus group. Because of this, of course, it is impossible to compare the two sets of data directly. However, bringing them into conversation with each other, as I intend to do now, helps to better illuminate the debates *Heimat* raises about identity, belonging, inclusion and exclusion, and possible future visions for Germany. This thesis originally asked three research questions with regard to *Heimat* and its place in contemporary political and social debates. This section, split into three parts, refers back to the theoretical framework and combines them with the empirical results of this thesis to provide some answers to these questions.

5.3.1. Discursive Uses of *Heimat*

The first research question upon which this thesis focuses concerns the way *Heimat* is used discursively by German politicians. The first portion of the empirical research in this thesis, the discourse analysis of two speeches in the Bundestag, provides ample answers to this question. In short, *Heimat* is primarily used by conservative and far-right political forces as something under threat that needs to be defended from some nefarious influence, whether refugees and immigrants or out-of-touch political elites. This *topos of danger* is used primarily by members of the populist far-right AfD, which explicitly connects a loss of *Heimat* and way of life with immigration, but can be seen in slightly less explicit form the conservative CSU as well.

Gottfried Curio's speech in the Bundestag is a prime example of this. As discussed in the speech analysis, AfD politicians tend to be very explicit about this: Curio, like many of his colleagues, speaks about a horde of asylum-seekers who have come to Germany to abuse the country's social system and take money and a *Heimat*, or a way of life, away from the good, hard-working "real" Germans. Here, he sets up the fundamental "us" vs. "them" contrast that Mudde, Wodak and other scholars of populist far-right rhetoric have outlined in their work. By tying the discussion about *Heimat* to discourses surrounding law and order, security and finances, Curio makes a typical populist far-right argument about themselves as a savior and protector of the country's "true" people or "imagined community." In this way, the right-wing discursive usage of *Heimat* also draws on the tenets of constructing national identity outlined by Wodak et al[112]: He implies there is a common culture and a shared "national body" that is being harmed by the influx of newcomers to the country.

The second use of *Heimat,* the one coming primarily from the Greens but also other left-leaning politicians including the center-left Social Democrats (SPD), is a direct reaction to

[112] Wodak et al, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, 30.

the right-wing use of the word and a deliberate attempt to reclaim it in the name of non-nativist political movements. In his speech, Özdemir ties *Heimat* closely to German national identity, which he defines in a far more open and diverse way than AfD politicians: He argues the things for which Germany is respected around the world are its memory culture—its ability to own up to its past—and the diverse range of backgrounds of those who have a claim to being German. In his view, then, *Heimat* is something that belongs to anyone who sees themselves as German, citizens of the country whose parents or forefathers come from any range of other countries—he names Anatolia (Turkey) and Russia explicitly—so long as they consider themselves German and are proud to be so. According to Özdemir and others who use the word similarly, this version of *Heimat* needs protecting too—but from the AfD, not from outsiders.

5.3.2. *Heimat* as Shorthand for a Worldview

The second research question concerns the way in which these discursive uses, discussed in the previous section, condense differing ideas about inclusive and exclusive societies. Again, the analysis of speeches in the Bundestag as well as a general overview of *Heimat* in campaign materials and slogans offers significant material to answer this question. Considering the uses of *Heimat* in each of these two speeches illustrates why the word fits the description of Laclau and Mouffe's concept of a "floating" signifier: Both Curio and Özdemir use the same word prominently in their speeches, but fill it with completely different meanings to meet their political, ideological, and rhetorical ends.

For Curio, *Heimat* is something that represents the traditional German way of life and belongs to the "true" Germans, an "imagined community" that is quite exclusively defined and does not include those with different backgrounds or customs. In Curio's telling, the *Heimat* is being eroded by masses of asylum-seekers who come to Germany solely to abuse the social system and cash in for lucrative benefits; the politicians running the country either don't care

about this erosion or are cheering it on ("The [governing] coalition wants to keep most of the illegals in Germany. Through this, the division of society will be pushed even further."). These dire portrayals of chaos and insecurity in Germany are a direct contrast to what such politicians see as the correct future for the country: A return to traditional values and the rejection of any who do not conform to them, which they believe will ensure a solid way of life for the "real" Germans. This political argument in favor of an idealized past, whether former U.S. President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan or the AfD's claim to protect the *Heimat,* falls under what the sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman refers to as "retropia."[113] The more inclusive vision of *Heimat,* one in which anyone regardless of background is allowed to be part of the German "imagined community," is primarily used by Özdemir's Greens and the SPD. This vision draws on the idea that diversity should be considered an enrichment rather than a downside, and that Germany is a country of immigration that should recognize and celebrate the demographic shifts in its society.

5.3.3. *Heimat* Among Everyday Germans and German Residents

The third and final research question concerns how the above understandings of *Heimat* in the top-down political sphere correspond to those used by regular Germans and German residents. As the results from the focus groups demonstrate, answering this question is far from simple, in large part because the answer is highly individual: Each participant had their own interpretation of and relationship with the term *Heimat.* These interpretations were based on their own experiences and emotions, with many similarities and overlaps but plenty of differences nonetheless. Broadly speaking, it is possible to conclude that the participants constructed *Heimat* in two different ways: A core, personal, emotionalized meaning of the word, and one that corresponds more directly to their place in German society and thinking on

[113] Bauman, Zygmunt, *Retropia* (Oxford: Polity, 2017).

national and religious terms. Although participants often began by speaking about the emotional and general meaning behind *Heimat*, they very quickly broadened these constructions to include the societal and political aspects of the word. This message was perhaps best described by one participant (G1P2), a first-generation immigrant who came to Germany three decades ago: As mentioned in Chapter 5.2.4., he said there are two entities that can define *Heimat*, "on the one hand, my own standard, and on the other, the standard of society." In today's Germany, it seems it is impossible to separate *Heimat* from its political context.

When it comes to the former, the more personal meaning of *Heimat*, these answers can be understood in the sense of theories related to 'belonging': Participants often mentioned that *Heimat* is the place one feels comfortable, where one knows people, where one is accepted. The way participants described this basic feeling of *Heimat* tracks with Tajfel's idea of having a positive social identity.[114] Broadly speaking, the participants believed *Heimat* was something a person can have in multiples, whether it is more than one *Heimat* at the same time or the idea of an old and a new *Heimat*; in this way, one can technically belong to more than one group at the same time. Still, some questioned how positive an experience it really can be to have more than one *Heimat*, since belonging to multiple groups and places can mean never fully belonging to any one of them.

The second construction of *Heimat*, the one that situates them within (or, in some cases, outside of) society, is when participants' attempts to explain their place in a German *Heimat* brought far more complexity to the discussion. When speaking about this side of *Heimat*, they very much constructed it in the style of Anderson's "imagined communities": National-level communities in which, depending on their heritage, skin color or the amount of time they have

[114] Tajfel, "Social categorization, social identity and social comparison," 255.

lived in Germany, they either do or do not feel they belong. Here, Tajfel's definition of minorities and Berry's acculturation theory play a role: In both the second- and third-generation group and the group of refugees and first-generation immigrants, debates about merging values between a home country or culture and German values and culture were prominent in the discussion. Those questioning whether or to what extent they belong in Germany said some of this feeling comes from themselves; however, a great deal of it comes from institutions and other individuals who, in their view, question whether Germany can be a *Heimat* to people who don't fit the cultural norm. Suggestions that second- or third-generation Germans need an interpreter solely because of their Turkish-sounding names, or a Syrian refugee being told he can never truly be German because of his skin color, were potent examples of the ways participants saw belonging in a German *Heimat* as dependent not just on themselves, but on the views of the state and of others in the community.

In light of these experiences and the context in which they were shared, one could say both the group of refugees and the second- and third-generation immigrants, particularly those with Turkish roots, fit Tajfel's description of a minority[115]: They were aware that they had traits that were undesirable to the majority group (darker skin and foreign-sounding names, among others), those traits had put them at a disadvantage in German society (being treated with less respect, being offered a translator, or having people imply they aren't truly German), and they were very aware of this minority status. For many, these differences were part of the reason they do not feel Germany to fully be their *Heimat*, even if Özdemir claims in his speech that they are and should be: If German law mandates when a Muslim woman can or cannot wear a headscarf, for example, they asked how such rules fit with the idea of being one's self in one's *Heimat.* As a result, discussions about integration—both what the term means, and to what

[115] Tajfel, "The social psychology of minorities," 312.

extent one must successfully integrate into "German" society—were frequent topics across all groups.

Interestingly, such topics were also the source of the strongest and most fundamental disagreements between participants in the different groups. As explored in Chapter 5.2.7., two exchanges illustrated this dynamic quite clearly: One during the pilot study, related to retaining or giving up one's home-country values, and another during the group of primarily non-immigrant participants, about a Syrian refugee's complete disrespect of women and whether he should be allowed to hold such beliefs and build a life for himself in Germany. These exchanges demonstrate just how unsettled and difficult these topics remain: Participants showed a range of different opinions about whether and how to include newcomers and those with different backgrounds while maintaining some sort of boundaries for a German *Heimat.* Drawing on Berry's four strategies for acculturation[116], some participants argued in favor of assimilation, or the idea that individuals should adopt their host culture and reject their native culture: The participant from Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, said he himself had done this and expected other newcomers in Germany to do the same. He and others advocating for narrower boundaries for a German *Heimat* and culture suggested at various points that people with an immigrant background more often practiced separation, which is the rejection of the host culture in favor of retaining one's native culture. Meanwhile, others in the group advocated for and saw themselves as adopting the integration strategy, meaning they both adopt their host culture and retain their native culture. Several participants spoke about this in terms of combining "the best of both" cultures.

With regard to the connection between *Heimat* and the nation, the focus groups were an interesting exercise in applying Fox and Miller-Idriss's "everyday nationhood"

[116] Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," 5-68.

framework[117] and their focus on seeing how and in what contexts individuals engage with the concept of the nation. Focus groups involve a limited time span and several participants, making it imperative to eventually steer the discussion toward certain topics in order to get the necessary information. However, it was notable that participants *did* fill the word *Heimat* in many cases with national meaning without being prompted to do so. As discussed in Chapter 5.2.4., one participant stepped back during the discussion and pointed out the problematic nature of thinking in national terms; a back-and-forth exchange among participants ensued based on that comment, with several participants remarking on just how ingrained national frames are within their respective understanding of questions about identity and belonging.

That said, explicit discussions of German identity produced complicated and often conflicting results: Many participants felt that "German identity" as such does not exist, or that it is slippery and difficult to define. One non-immigrant participant described Germany as having a "personality disorder" due to its 20th century history, which was a particularly potent illustration of these conflicting views among participants. Another, a second-generation Turkish immigrant, asked, "what is 'German?'" because the country has been shaped by so many different influences including those from abroad; his view sounds far more like the one Özdemir expressed in the Bundestag, a country whose strength lies in its modern diversity. Like Confino's exploration of the links between local and regional *Heimat* and creating a German national identity[118], many participants still identified more with their city or region than with a German national *Heimat*; they saw significant differences between their region, North Rhine-Westphalia, and other, less urban and less diverse parts of Germany (Bavaria was the most common contrast mentioned by participants).

[117] Fox and Miller-Idriss, "Everyday nationhood," 540.
[118] Confino, "The Nation as a Local Metaphor," 42-86.

As for how focus group participants related *Heimat* to politics, many saw the word's negative undertones and felt uncomfortable, preferring to avoid it entirely. Others took an approach like Özdemir's and other left-leaning politicians who aim to reclaim the concept from an exclusively right-wing meaning: Especially in the group of second- and third-generation immigrants, participants largely agreed that *Heimat* should be used by a diverse range of people whose idea of the concept might differ from the traditional, right-wing meaning. In fact, the focus groups already gave some indications of how to reframe *Heimat* more inclusively: In addition to the idea that more diverse voices should be invoking it, participants also unconsciously offered up alternatives to the dominant political uses of the word. When members of the refugee group spoke about their *Wunschheimat* (dream *Heimat*), or participants across the different groups discussed their "old" and "new" *Heimat,* this already implies a more open, inclusive understanding of the word.

At the same time, their discussion of *Heimat* complicated the perfectly open, inclusive version of the word politicians like Özdemir envision for the country. Although there were no strong AfD supporters involved in the groups and Curio's exclusive, "real"-Germans-only vision of *Heimat* hardly resonated with participants, discussions in all four groups shed light on all the ways an unquestioningly inclusive *Heimat* isn't realistic, or perhaps even desired. As one participant in the non-immigrant group put it, there should be boundaries somewhere in order to center Germany around a set of core values; by setting those boundaries, she acknowledged it would be impossible not to exclude some people (a "double-edged sword," she called it). And even if politicians call for a fully inclusive *Heimat*, that doesn't mean it will be experienced as inclusive by all those living in it: That fact was illustrated well by the range of experiences shared by participants during the discussions, in which they were made to feel that because of their name, skin color or culture that they are unwelcome in Germany. Litigating these questions outside the Bundestag chamber is far from simple, as participants'

observations and perspectives demonstrated: *Heimat* is something that will continue to be interpreted and reinterpreted, including some and excluding others, no matter what comes next in German politics.

6. CONCLUSION

This thesis sought to explore the complexities of the concept of *Heimat* in German political and social discourse since 2015. After a discussion of relevant theory, a brief conceptual history of the term *Heimat* and a description of the current political and social context in Germany, it used two methodologies—an analysis of two speeches delivered in the German Bundestag, and four focus groups conducted in one city in western Germany—to bring top-down and bottom-up constructions of *Heimat* in conversation with each other. My objective was to better understand the role the concept plays in contemporary German social and political discourse.

6.1. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although both the speech analysis and the analysis of focus groups shed helpful light on different aspects of *Heimat*, neither is representative and the generalizability of these results is limited. The selection of two speeches, one representing an exclusive conception of *Heimat* and the other representing an inclusive one, is by its nature a subjective exercise: While I have done my best to select speeches in which the prevailing discursive use of *Heimat* is as similar as possible to the kind of rhetoric used by party members more generally, there are many other speeches that could have been selected instead. Focus groups, like any small qualitative study, can never be broadly representative: They represent only the views of the individuals who participated and therefore cannot be generalized to a broader population. What's more, participants are self-selected in that those who are willing to take 90 minutes to two hours of their time without financial compensation are likely the ones with stronger opinions. Additionally, the focus groups were conducted in just one location, which could have characteristics that produce different results than one might find in other communities around Germany (for example, in rural areas or in eastern Germany). However, they are nonetheless an extraordinarily useful source of data in qualitative studies like this one, providing a rich set

of personal and narrative experiences that illuminate the topics at hand in ways quantitative data cannot. Focus groups are a snapshot or a microcosm of the way these issues are considered and discussed among the German population. In a bigger research project, conducting additional focus groups at other locations would be a way to move beyond Gelsenkirchen as a case study and represent the range of experiences with *Heimat*.

6.2. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In December 2021, a new German government took office, and the Ministry of Interior, Construction and *Heimat* received a new leader to replace Horst Seehofer at the ministry he had renamed. Upon taking over, his successor, the SPD's Nancy Faeser, opted to drop "Construction" from the ministry's name—but kept *Heimat*, with the explicit goal of reframing it to be more inclusive. Since then, Faeser has spoken out regularly about the meaning of *Heimat* and the idea that it should be used to hold society together, rather than drive its members apart. (In fact, one past comment of hers from shortly after she took office is the quote that was used to spark discussion in the focus groups.) Shortly before this thesis was completed, Faeser wrote again about *Heimat* on Twitter in what is ultimately a succinct encapsulation of the efforts of left-leaning politicians described in this thesis: "We have to reinterpret the term home positively and define it in such a way that it is open and diverse."[119]

Of course, like Seehofer's initial decision to rename the ministry, Faeser's comment drew significant criticism: Politicians from various conservative and right-wing parties bristled at the suggestion that *Heimat* is negatively connotated, while others took issue more fundamentally at the idea of an open and inclusive meaning of *Heimat*. Faeser's decision to keep *Heimat* in her ministry's name demonstrates two important facts about the concept in German public life and society since 2015: First, that the word continues to retain its relevance

[119] Nancy Faeser, Twitter post, May 17, 2022, 8:56 p.m., https://twitter.com/NancyFaeser/status/1526637717752274946.

and power, and second, that it is a term that is and will likely remain deeply contested. As this thesis has described, right-wing political forces have long used *Heimat* to denote who was allowed to be part of a German "imagined community"; in recent years, especially since the arrival of refugees in 2015 and 2016, more left-leaning politicians have made efforts to push back against the right's co-opting of the term. The findings from the focus groups demonstrate that such views are also present among the German population, particularly among those who do not neatly fit into the version of *Heimat* proposed by the AfD.

At first glance, a hard-to-translate German word may be an odd choice for a thesis project such as this one: Surely, such a concept could be relevant only within the linguistic and national spheres in which the word is used and understood. In other words, why does it matter how populist far-right politicians construct the concept of *Heimat*, and how left-leaning parties seek to reclaim and redefine the term? Although the term *Heimat* does not exist in all languages, I contend that the sentiments and discursive strategies behind it transcend linguistic boundaries. As a result, understanding the ways in which the concept is used discursively in German politics helps us to better understand the strategies at play in broader discourses of belonging. This study sheds light on the discursive ways politicians in today's age of populism and migration use *Heimat* in order to seek to define their respective national "imagined communities"; as populist far-right movements and parties contest and even win elections across the globe, understanding *Heimat*'s role in German politics and society can help us understand issues I believe are universal in understanding the rise of these parties and their impact on political discourse. As far-right parties typically rely on "us-versus-them" rhetoric, understanding how they and others in a given society construct the "us"—which, in the German-speaking context, they often do through the concept of *Heimat*—can shed light on the societal divisions that fuel these parties' support.

What is *Heimat*, exactly? Is it a place, or an ideology, or a feeling? As the analysis of Bundestag speeches but especially the focus groups conducted for this thesis demonstrate, it is all of these things at once, appearing however the listener wants to perceive it. Celia Applegate writes that *Heimat* "has never been a word about real social forces or real political situations. Instead, it has been a myth about the possibility of a community in the face of fragmentation and alienation."[120] The word is constructed to refer to group belonging in different ways, depending on how it is being used—and to indicate support for different visions of German society and identity in the process at a time when the country's future is very much a source of fierce debate. Given that these questions about Germany's future and identity are hardly resolved, the concept will likely play a role in political discourse for years to come.

[120] Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, 19.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Questions:

1. Please briefly introduce yourself and tell us how you or your family ended up in Gelsenkirchen. / *Stellen Sie sich bitte kurz vor und erzählen uns, wie Sie oder Ihre Familie in Gelsenkirchen gelandet ist.*
2. Let's start with a big-picture question: What does it mean to feel at home somewhere? Please don't speak out loud yet, but write down an answer. / *Wir fangen an mit einer größeren Frage: Was bedeutet es, sich irgendwo zu Hause zu fühlen? Bitte sprechen Sie es nicht sofort aus, sondern schreiben Sie einige Gedanken auf.*
3. What comes to mind when I tell you the word Heimat? Please take a moment to write down a few thoughts. **Follow-up:** What are the words that come to mind? / *Was fällt Ihnen ein, wenn ich das Wort 'Heimat' sage? Bitte schreiben Sie kurz einige Gedanken. Was sind die Wörter, die Sie mit Heimat assoziieren?*
4. **[Visual aid: A world map, a map of Germany and a map of Gelsenkirchen]** Some of you have mentioned geographic places. I've brought a map with me today, and I'd like for us to do a short exercise: Can you please place a pin on the map for where you consider your Heimat? **Follow-up:** How did you choose that place, or those places? If you only had a single one, was it hard to choose? / *Einige von Ihnen haben geographische Orte erwähnt. Ich habe einige Karten mitgebracht und habe eine kurze Aufgabe für Sie: Können Sie eine Nadel an Ihrer Heimat positionieren? Wie haben Sie diesen Ort, oder diese Orte, ausgewählt? War es schwierig zu entscheiden?*
5. Is it possible to have multiple Heimaten? / *Was ist notwendig, damit ein Ort Heimat wird? Kann man mehr als eine Heimat haben?*
6. **[Visual aid: Quotes from AfD/Greens speeches, printed out in large font]** I'm going to show you quotes from two different politicians. What do you think of these? / *Ich werde Ihnen zwei Zitate von verschiedenen Politikern vorlesen. Was sagen Sie dazu?*
7. Who decides if a place can be someone's Heimat? **Follow-up:** Have you had experiences with this yourself? / *Wer entscheidet, ob ein Ort Ihre Heimat sein kann? Hatten Sie selber Erfahrungen damit?*
8. Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't yet discussed? / *Gibt es noch etwas, dass Sie dazu sagen möchten, oder dass wir nicht diskutiert haben?*

APPENDIX B: TRANSCRIPTS OF PARLIAMENTARY SPEECHES

Appendix B.1: Translation of Cem Özdemir speech, Feb. 22, 2018

Madam President! Dear colleagues! One has to realize what we're actually talking about here today. We are talking about the work and the articles of a German journalist. This is something we only really know from authoritarian countries. The German Bundestag, on the other hand, does not grade the work of journalists. In the Federal Republic of Germany, there is no supreme censorship authority in parliament. There are in the countries you admire. Germany is not one of them. Because in Germany, in our country, in the Federal Republic of Germany, there isn't any of the conformity you dream about at night. We have freedom of the press, a word that is obviously not in your vocabulary, ladies and gentlemen! And we will defend this freedom of the press as much from you as from your comrades in Turkey who stole a year of Deniz Yücel's life.

We are glad. We are glad that Deniz Yücel is free. I want to say this so there's also no misunderstanding here: We would be just as happy if his name were Gustav Müller or something else like that, because every citizen of this country deserves that this country stands up for him. It should be self-evident. Everyone knows this except you. And all of us - the democratic part of this house - are also working to ensure that the other journalists who are also in prison but do not have a German passport, and who deserve it just as much, are released. Because, ladies and gentlemen, journalism is not a crime.

But unfortunately, the truth is that the country has changed dramatically during the year Deniz Yücel was in prison - and this debate is proof of that. When there are members of this house, who I can only describe as racists! Anyone who speaks like that is a racist, ladies and gentlemen. And these ladies and gentlemen here [applause]—and these ladies and gentlemen here [shouts from AfD]—I have the microphone and thank God you can't take it away from me. Thank God you can't do that here, you won't succeed. Believe me.

You want to determine - you want to determine who is German and who is not. That is, how can someone who despises our shared *Heimat* as much as you do determine who's German and who isn't? I'll say this: If you, if you were to determine it, that would be like if we gave racists the exit phone for neo-Nazis. That's what it would be like, if you were to determine who is German and who is not. By the way, if you need the neo-Nazi exit phone number, I have it and I can gladly provide it to you. [comment from Bundestag president] No, I won't allow an interjection [boos from AfD].

All of you sitting there from the AfD, if you're being honest, you would admit that you despise this country. You despise everything - you despise everything for which this country is respected around the world. That includes, for example, our memory culture, which I'm proud of as a citizen of this country. That includes the diversity of this country, which I'm just as proud of. That includes Bavarians, Swabians, but also people whose ancestors came from Russia. And that includes people whose ancestors came from Anatolia and today are just as proud to be citizens of this country. And that includes, and that includes–I must say, as a football fan I feel personally addressed–and that includes our great national team. If you're being honest, you're crossing your fingers for the Russians and not for our German national team. You're proud of it. You despise this house, this house, as much as you despise the values of the Enlightenment. You're cut from the same rotten wood as those who had Deniz Yücel imprisoned. You're cut from the same rotten wood as Erdogan, who imprisoned Deniz

Yücel for a year of his life. I'll put it in one sentence: The AKP has offshoots in Germany. It's called the AfD and it sits here, ladies and gentlemen.

Let me say this in conclusion - let me say this in conclusion: You recently had your political Ash Wednesday. That reminded me more of a speech at the Sportpalast, ladies and gentlemen. And I want to call out to you: Our Germany, this Germany is stronger than your hatred will ever be. On Ash Wednesday, your raging mob - your raging mob - your raging mob wanted to deport me. It's easier than you think. On Saturday, I'll be back in my *Heimat*. I'll fly to Stuttgart, then take the S-Bahn, and I'll end up at the last station, Bad Urach. That's my Swabian *Heimat* and I won't let you destroy it.

Appendix B.2: Translation of Gottfried Curio speech, June 7, 2019

Dear Mr. President! Ladies and Gentlemen! Many hundreds of thousands of rejected asylum-seekers continue to receive full support. For this, the absurd status of an authorization for the unauthorized was invented: The *Duldung* [delayed action for denied asylum-seekers]. However, many can still be deported even after this perverted legal understanding. But what happens? The number of deportations continues to fall, while the number of people who are obliged to leave the country is increasing. Every other deportation fails. People go underground, they resist, they attack the police or someone suddenly calls for a doctor, they don't feel well. And these people continue to collect. The citizen who hears that feels even less well. Ladies and gentlemen, how is law and order, how is the tax money he has earned, being dealt with?

The coalition has now turned a few small screws in many small areas. That's over 50 pages of draft legislation. That's how hard it is to enforce the law under this government. The draft was recently expanded: The police can now even enter the apartment of the deportee for the purpose of arresting him. What a clarification. Yes, when necessary, you're even allowed to search the apartment. What tough guys we have in the interior ministry. In Berlin, the SPD simply no longer allows deportations to be carried out properly. Accommodations may no longer be entered, coercion should be avoided. The police will probably invite the asylum scammer to participate in the deportation process. Culturally sensitive, definitely not racist, it probably even strengthens the cohesion between these gentlemen and their prey, the German welfare state.

However, there is a lack of political will to actually get these hundreds of thousands of unauthorized people out of the country. Instead, the new *Duldung* law leaves those who've been rejected by changing lanes in the country. One is then in training programs and the deportations often fail because the people are warned. Reaction in the draft law: Extensive impunity for missing the deadline. This law leaves his own thwarting unpunished. In fact, there's no need to say any more about it. If deportation is so difficult, perhaps the border should be protected instead of letting in hundreds of thousands more unhindered. Even the call to 'strengthen Frontex' doesn't bring border protection. There they just register and wave you through.

In truth, the grand coalition wants to keep most of the illegals in Germany. Through this, the division of society will be pushed even further: On the housing market, where there is not enough affordable housing for German low earners. On the labor market: competition, wage-dumping. With the beloved *Heimat,* and with so many thousands of culturally foreign immigrants, living space inherited long ago is being irretrievably lost. With the associated defamation of anyone who doesn't think the whole thing, including the loss of *Heimat* and financial robbery, is great. We say: Stop this!

With this law, the ability to work can once again be feigned. But what contortions and what regulatory acrobatics, instead of simply saying the border can now be secured, 16a of the Basic Law applies again, the war in Syria is over. In the case of crime: Expulsion. For the vulnerable: Payment in kind. Integration in the direction of the *Heimatland*. But none of that. A fundamental turn toward the effective is not desired. Instead, this little swap is being made between coalition buddies: A bit further to the right in the deportation law against injustice in the *Duldungsgesetz* [law governing delayed action for rejected asylum-seekers]. All paths of this programmed failure lead to the right to remain long-term, including family reunification, including mostly state alimony. An annual grave of tens of billions.

No, ladies and gentlemen, the continuation of this coalition agreement is just a tragedy. So it's time to stop it. A permanent grand coalition is a grand coalition of mourning. A year and a half of trying to form a government is enough. Democratic legitimacy is gone. Give the decision back to the people.