

**REFUGEE SOCIALITY, TIME AND THE STATE: SOCIAL TEMPORALITIES OF
DISPLACEMENT IN THE GERMANY-TURKEY CHRONOTOPE**

by

PALADIA YOLANDA ZISS

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Abstract

Time has become a central tool of refugee governance, through the imposition of temporary legal statuses, arbitrary delays and accelerations at border crossings and in asylum procedures, and the production of uncertain futures. But how does temporal governance shape the social lives of refugees? This thesis builds on the growing literature on temporalities of migration and refugee socialities to argue that state governance of time not only shapes refugees' temporal experiences of the present and the future but also their social relations with people near and far. Methodologically, it draws on a multi-sited connected case study, conducted through seven months of ethnographic fieldwork in networks of refugees and non-refugees in Frankfurt and Istanbul in 2021 and 2022. The thesis employs Bakhtin's notion of the "chronotope" (Bakhtin, 1981) to understand social temporalities of displacement as dialogical, affective and multiscalar. In different "chronotopes of displacement", state temporalities of refugee governance interacted with social temporalities of refugees' social lives to shape lived experiences of time. Refugees' biographical times were negotiated within shared times with family and friends, and collective times as members of social groups. Chronotopes of displacement contained particular rhythms, tempos, sequences, and narratives of pasts and futures in particular localities and were coloured by distinct emotions.

The thesis first shows how "Germany-Turkey" constitutes an uneven and overlapping chronotope in which refugee governance employs time to maintain refugees in conditions of legal and symbolic temporariness and connected histories of migration shape state governance of displacement today. Second, the thesis

discusses “chronotopes of survival” in Turkey, a collective temporal experience of displacement in which refugee governance interacted with economic crisis and capitalist exploitation to dispossess refugees of their future, affecting the possibilities to live “normal” social lives. Third, refugees’ transnational family lives across Germany-Turkey were shaped by “chronotopes of separation”: legal temporalities like status duration or age prevented refugees from sharing futures with the people they loved in the spaces of their own choosing. Fourth, across the localities of Frankfurt and Istanbul, refugees actively built “chronotopes of connection”, based on shared experiences, affinity, mutual obligation and reciprocity. How refugees experienced displacement in the present was contingent on possibilities to *share times* with others as members of social collectives both in the Now and in the future. Simultaneously, by sharing times, refugees *made* new times within and against state-imposed temporalities.

Through the concept of chronotopes of displacement, the thesis argues that time is socially and collectively experienced, shaped by multiscale relations of temporal power, and a central tool to understanding whether and how refugees are included or remain excluded from social collectives. By advancing our understanding into how displacement is simultaneously an existential and social experience of time, how refugee governance works across transnational social fields, and how state temporalities of governance are negotiated within refugee social networks, the thesis makes a significant contribution to refugee and migration studies, the sociology of forced migration and the sociology of time.

In memory of Ali and his family

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List of acronyms

AfD	<i>Alternative für Deutschland</i> [Alternative for Germany]
AKP	<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> [Justice and Development Party]
AsylG	<i>Asylgesetz</i> [Asylum Act]
AufenthG	<i>Aufenthaltsgesetz</i> [Residence Act]
BAMF	<i>Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge</i> [Federal Office for Migration and Refugees]
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
EU	European Union
GG	<i>Grundgesetz</i> [Basic Law]
HDP	<i>Halkların Demokratik Partisi</i> [Peoples' Democratic Party]
IASFM	International Association for the Study of Forced Migration
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LFIP	Law on Foreigners and International Protection
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PMM	Presidency for Migration Management
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA	United States of America

1 INTRODUCTION

Ameena and Rania were two of six siblings born in Aleppo, Syria, in the 1970s under the rule of Hafez Al-Assad, father of contemporary dictator Bashar al-Assad. Ameena is three years older than Rania. The two sisters were always close, to each other, to their parents and their other siblings: close in multiple senses, both emotionally and spatially. When both married in their 20s, they continued living in the same neighbourhood, together with a large extended family of uncles, aunts and cousins, as well as neighbours and childhood friends. Ameena worked in a state hospital as a nurse and gave birth to four boys and one daughter. Rania became a housewife and took care of her two girls and three boys while her husband, Ibrahim, was working as a carpenter in Aleppo and sometimes Cyprus. When Bashar al-Assad and his army started bombing Aleppo in 2012 to crush the Syrian revolution, Rania, her husband and children, escaped to Lebanon. Ameena and her family left for Turkey shortly afterwards. Their parents, one sister and brother stayed in Syria, internally displaced to a camp in Idlib in the northwest of Syria; another sister eventually made it to Sweden.

For various reasons, Lebanon became unsafe and unliveable for Rania and her family. In 2020, UNHCR resettled her, her husband and three of her five children to Frankfurt, Germany. Having arrived through resettlement, she sidestepped the lengthy asylum procedure and quickly received a three-year renewable humanitarian permit – she could likely stay in Germany permanently. She had experienced persecution in Syria and Lebanon and was expecting to finally feel safe, stable and to settle down. When we met in 2021, Rania, her husband and her three teenage children were sharing one damp basement room in a temporary shelter in Frankfurt.

Rania hated the shelter. The building conditions made her ill. The social workers did not treat her well and did not care about Rania's past suffering. Her family had problems. Her eldest son had travelled to Germany irregularly in 2014 but he was living in a different city and was not allowed to visit. One teenage son had become involved in petty crime. Her daughter struggled with school. She missed her oldest daughter and grandchildren who had remained in Lebanon. Rania's co-residents were nice enough but she did not feel close to anyone. She had made some friends during the resettlement process, but they lived far away, and she rarely saw them. She had health problems and was struggling with depression.

Meanwhile, Ameena and her family were living in a three-room apartment in a working-class neighbourhood in the west of Istanbul, near other relatives in the same building and across the street. She was living with a temporary protection ID, provided by the Turkish government to Syrian refugees. Ten years after the start of the Syrian revolution, the Turkish public vocally debated whether Syrians should be returned to Syria. Ameena could not see herself living in Turkey permanently under the current living conditions, but she could not return to Syria under Assad. Her two youngest children were going to a Turkish school; three older sons had dropped out of education. Two of them were working 12-hour shifts in textile workshops, 6 days a week, to support the family. Another son had a neurological condition and slowly lost his ability to move. Ameena wanted to get treatment for him, and a better education for her other children, so she was waiting for resettlement through UNHCR.

Although they had not seen each other in person for ten years, Ameena and Rania videochatted on their phone almost every day, often joined by their sisters in Sweden and Syria. Rania rarely talked about her struggles in Germany, not wanting

to burden Ameena more, and embarrassed about her disappointed hopes for resettlement. Ameena sensed something was off but did not press. They talked about their children, their relatives, what they cooked and the constantly rising prices in Turkey. They shared sad times: when their father died of COVID-19 in late 2021, they cried on the phone. Together they mourned their loss, the fact of not seeing him again before his death and that Rania could not join in the mourning ceremony that Ameena hosted with three dozen relatives and neighbours in her flat. They shared happier times: when their niece left Syria to join her husband in Germany, Ameena housed her while she was waiting for her family visa in Istanbul in late 2021. Eight months later, Rania organised her wedding party in Frankfurt.

Ameena and Rania joined millions of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and other places who fled autocratic regimes, war and oppression to build a life in Turkey and Germany. Refugees in both countries strive for a future in which they can feel safe, comfortable, healthy and in which their children can have an education. These futures are impeded not only by the violent strife they left behind but also by present-day state governance. Regimes of legal, political, economic, and institutional conditions, including legal status, residence requirements and the labour market, open up and close down possibilities for realising desired futures. As Ameena's and Rania's story illustrates, refugee regimes govern through *time*: Refugees like Ameena live in conditions of temporariness, with temporary legal statuses, precarious work conditions and uncertainty over whether they can stay, and when and how they can live a life to their choosing. Even if refugees expect to stay in a place permanently, as Rania did, local regimes of reception often thwart future expectations through delays, postponement and deferral to a future date. Refugee

governance is inherently temporal: it imposes temporariness and uncertainty, particular rhythms and speeds of life, and directs life courses in the present and the future. All ignore refugees' pasts, hinder safety in the present, and deny autonomy over their futures.

Importantly, Ameena's and Rania's story shows how refugees struggle to live their lives together with others in the present and for the future, whether family members, neighbours, or friends. Refugees share *past* memories with others, they share *present* experiences of displacement, and they have shared expectations, hopes or fears for the *future*. Displacement forces people to separate from established networks, sometimes temporarily, but often in the long-term. This separation within and across borders means that refugees live in different legal, political, economic, and institutional regimes that shape how refugees live lives as social beings. Refugees' struggles are thus not only about settling *individually in place*; they are about settling *together in time*. Displacement reconfigures social relations, sometimes in ways experienced as painful, sometimes resulting in conflict and at other times opening opportunities for social relations not previously conceivable.

In this thesis I explore the various forms, mechanisms and effects of how refugees' social experiences of time relate to *temporal* forms of state governance across the transnational social field of Germany-Turkey. I bring together two mostly separate bodies of literature, the literature on time and temporalities in migration and displacement (Cwerner, 2001; Griffiths, Rogers and Anderson, 2013; Horst and Grabska, 2015; Ramsay, 2017, 2018; Stock, 2019; Ramsay, 2020b; Griffiths, 2021; Sakti and Amrith, 2022; Stierl, 2023), and the literature on transnational and local

social effects of displacement (Colson, 1971; Marx, 1990; Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019; Strang and Quinn, 2021; Alkan, 2022; Suerbaum and Richter-Devroe, 2022).

I start from the premise that displacement reconfigures social networks and the practice and function of social relations in various and ambivalent ways (Colson, 1971; Marx, 1990; Lokot, 2020; Christ and Etzold, 2022). Separation from loved ones often has negative effects on refugees' affective wellbeing (Brunner, Hyndman and Mountz, 2014; Lokot, 2023) and may hamper abilities to "integrate" into legal polities and employment markets (Ager and Strang, 2008; Strang and Quinn, 2021). As newcomers to a place who may or may not stay in the future, refugees work to maintain existing social ties across borders (Tiilikainen *et al.*, 2023), and build social ties in new communities (Alkan, 2021; Bernhard, 2021). In turn, the "temporal turn" in migration and refugee studies has shown that states' refugee and asylum regimes govern human mobilities through time, including through imposed delays or accelerations at border crossings, prolonged asylum procedures (Haas, 2023), irregular or temporary legal status (Griffiths, 2014), and protracted residence in camps (Papoutsi, 2021). These state temporalities are connected to specific experiences of time such as uncertainty (Biehl, 2015), waiting (Jacobsen, Karlsen and Khosravi, 2020), and a sense that an expected life course is delayed or life time is lost (Bhatia and Canning, 2021).

Throughout this thesis, I argue that temporal governance of refuge and asylum not only affects *individual* refugees' present lives and future hopes, dreams and expectations. Rather, disruptions of refugees' desired or expected temporalities, and their struggles against this disruption, are a *social experience with others*. While

emergency situations of flight often cause separation in the short term, in the longer-term process of settlement the temporalities of state governance shape how refugees connect with others, and how they experience this connection in space and time. In other words, temporalities of displacement are *social temporalities*, relationally and interactionally experienced. Temporal state governance affects the ways refugees maintain connections with others across borders, and how they build new connections in the localities of residence. In turn, I argue, refugees navigate this temporal governance by *sharing time* with others: by making time for each other in the present, sharing emotions and support, and producing alternative visions of collective futures.

“Migration governance” involves multiple levels of institutions, legal frameworks, actors, discourses and practices (Betts and Betts, 2011; Panizzon and van Riemsdijk, 2019; Adamson, 2023), such as national or local migration policies referring to the rules of entry, leaving and settlement, the everyday practices of bureaucrats and police that interpret and enforce these rules, multilateral frameworks as in the Common European Asylum System of the European Union, the interplay of global, national and local discourses on migration and migrants, collusion or contestation of these discourses and practices by civil society actors, and the mobilities and practices of migrants themselves (Hillmann and Samers, 2021).

When I refer to “temporal state governance”, I mean to describe the multiple, overlapping forms of state power distributed across a range of discourses, practices, actors, institutions, and subjects, that explicitly or implicitly use and produce time as a technology of bordering, ordering and othering (cf. Van Houtum and Van Naerssen, 2002). In this I draw on constructivist and practice-based approaches that consider

“the state” and “governance” not a unitary sovereign or homogenous actor but rather as a combination of practices, imaginations and embodiments (Sharma and Gupta, 2008; Thelen, Vettters and Benda-Beckmann, 2014), “an idea that is imagined, shared, and performed by a set of institutional actors with powerful material consequences, including new spatial [and, I would add, temporal] dimensions of exclusion” (Mountz, 2010, p. xxiii). This builds on a Foucauldian notion of power as distributed, embodied in a variety of subjects and discourses, not exclusively imbued in an all-powerful “sovereign” (see e.g. Foucault, 2020). At the same time, it means recognising that different subjects within a given social figuration have unequal means to change their condition, and states are still seen as sovereign by most people living in them (Mountz, 2013).

Refugees, “locals” and the bureaucrats and civil society employees in my research all imagined, experienced and thus contributed to rendering “the state” as more or less sovereign and powerful. The material and violent effects of legal designations, policing of mobility, and everyday social harm, disproportionately affected refugees who also had less room to manoeuvre within or avoid them (Mountz, 2010). In my use, temporal state governance does not necessarily describe *intentional* practices of exclusion but a conglomerate of the practices and discourses of multiple actors and institutions that together produce specific forms of exclusionary temporalities. Temporal governance is thus simultaneously a cause and effect of the discourses and practices of various institutions, actors, frameworks, and people, including “refugees”, “migrants” and “citizens”.

In the context of the German and Turkish states, temporal governance was constituted by legal frameworks that frequently drew on temporal narratives to

regulate refugees' presence and mobilities, their interpretation and implementation by officials and sub-contracted civil society employees, the encounters of refugees and non-refugee "locals" with legal documents, the decisions and practices of officials, bureaucrats and NGO staff, and broader public discourses of belonging, social exclusion and othering. Although I focus on the role of time in localised embodiments and practices of governance within the context of (interconnected) *nation-states*, temporal governance was also embedded within wider bordering practices of the multiple institutions, discourses and actors of the "EU migration apparatus" (Feldman, 2012), capitalist and neoliberal forms of differential inclusion of refugees as exploitable workers (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Rajaram, 2018) and the rise of nativist populism (De Genova, 2016). Some research in migration studies has started to explore the social effects of these temporalities of migration governance through investigations into how separated families navigate life not only across space but also across time (Acedera and Yeoh, 2019; Yeoh *et al.*, 2023), how migrants (re)imagine collective histories and futures across space (Leutloff-Grandits, 2017), and the relationship between temporalities of capitalist relations and migrants' collective agency (Gardiner Barber and Lem, 2018). In my study, I am particularly inspired by recent ethnographic work on the interplay of displacement and time of Georgina Ramsay with Central African refugees resettled to Australia (Ramsay, 2017, 2018, 2020b, 2020a), Kari Anne Drangslund on the legal pathway of *Ausbildungsduldung*¹ in Germany (Drangslund, 2020c, 2020a, 2020b), and Shanthi Robertson on the temporalities of middle-class migrants in Australia (Robertson,

¹ Lit: "vocation toleration". Under this law, rejected asylum seekers can take up vocational training in a field with significant labour shortage in Germany. For the duration of the vocational training (usually two or three years) deportation is suspended, and upon successful graduation the person may apply for a proper residence permit.

2021). Ramsay and Drangsdal are primarily concerned with understanding how states use time as a tool to control refugees, but they also show how refugee temporalities are experienced in relation to children and family members abroad. Robertson focuses on the variety of temporal experiences of migrants that are produced by “time regimes” and argues that we must pay attention to both individual migrant temporalities, as “biographical time”, and the times imagined and lived with love interests (“times of the heart”) and in locations of residence (“times in place”).

Although the centrality of time and temporalities for the condition of displacement has been established, so far very little is known about the relationship between these temporalities and the specific socialities of *displacement*, especially how temporal governance shapes the wider social connections that refugees maintain both across borders and locally, whether family, friends or other people. I heed the call of Gardiner Barber and Lem (2018, p. 10) to explore in depth how “migrants contend with and contest the ordering of time in their social relations”. This thesis is concerned with this intersection of temporal governance and the social lives of refugees.

As alluded to in Rania’s and Ameena’s story, Germany and Turkey form ideal sites to explore the relationship between temporal governance and refugee sociality. Both countries are amongst the most important countries of refugee reception, between them hosting several millions of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and other places². Germany’s asylum law, its implications on refugees’ lives, and the wider political-economic and social conditions of settlement are very different from Turkey’s

² My fieldwork was conducted before the breakout of the war in Ukraine, and I focus on non-Ukrainian refugees in my analysis.

at the outset. Germany emphasises granting individual asylum based on political persecution, while Turkey grants *prima facie* temporary protection to Syrians as a group, or (uncertain) options for resettlement to non-Syrian refugees. While in Germany refugees are usually prevented from finding housing and employment independently in the initial stages of settlement, in Turkey refugees are obliged to if they want to survive. Despite these differences, both countries increasingly use time to govern refugees. In Germany, legal statuses are increasingly temporary and differentiated, leading to a bewildering variety of possibilities of whether, when and how opportunities for permanent residency and associated rights are granted. Regulations at federal state (Länder) level and practices by municipalities intersect with federal regimes of implementation, all of which create temporal uncertainty as well as flexibility in implementation (Maas *et al.*, 2021). Even if refugees receive permanent residence or even citizenship, they negotiate a historically racist conception of a homogeneous “society” that privileges those understood as “Germans” over non-whites and non-citizens. In Turkey, the temporary protection regulation grants limited territorial security and some public services to (some) Syrians but does not apply to non-Syrian refugees and can be easily revoked. Refugee governance here intersects with national and regional hierarchies that construct the Turkish nation as ethnically Turkish, Sunni Muslim and male, and morally and symbolically superior over other ethno-linguistic³, religious and gender groups.

³ In both contexts, temporal politics overlap with the social construction of ethnic boundaries (Barth, 1998; Lamont and Molnár, 2002; Wimmer, 2008a, 2008b; Türkmen, 2018; Fischer, Achermann and Dahinden, 2020). When I refer to “ethnicity” or “ethnic origin”, I do not describe essentially different groups but I refer to how individuals identified their own ethnic background. Ethnicity was often linguistically connotated, including “German”, “Arab”,

Importantly, Germany and Turkey also maintain long-standing political, economic, and cultural connections. The German and Ottoman empires were unlikely allies during the first world war. The passage between Germany-Turkey has been an important migration corridor for decades. Before the Syrian revolution of 2011, and later the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021, Turkey was a point of transit for displaced persons from the Middle East, including Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, to Germany and other central European countries (Kirişçi, 2007; Düvell, 2014). Since the 1961 labour agreement, so-called “guest workers” and their descendants have moved between Turkey and Germany, followed by Kurdish and leftist refugees in the around 1980, and the armed conflict between the Turkish army and the PKK in the 1990s (Gieler, 2017). Together, the three million descendants of migrants from Turkey form the largest single group “with migration background” in Germany, approximately 1.5 million of whom retain Turkish citizenship. Many of them, and other recent migrants and refugees, retain personal connections to Turkey through family members, friends, business organisations and political ties, rendering Germany and Turkey a multiscale “transnational social field” (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004), “entangled” in historical, post-imperial and geopolitical configurations (Adamson, 2023). Additionally, as a hegemonic power within the European Union, Germany has been a key player in negotiating with Turkey to regulate migration across EU borders, culminating in the EU-Turkey Deal of 2016 which is still active as of writing (2023). As I argue, this combination of past and present political and economic ties, and long-standing networks of migrants, constructs “Germany-Turkey” as a common but uneven *chronotope* in which refugee governance and symbolic

“Turkish”, “Kurdish” or “Turkmen”. This overlapped but did not map directly onto religious affiliation (Christian, Sunni Muslim, Alevi, Alawi) let alone formal national citizenship (German, Turkish, Syrian, Afghan).

narratives of nationhood and membership are mutually implicated with overlapping effects on refugee residents.

I address the following overall research question: **How does temporal governance shape social temporalities of displacement in Germany-Turkey?**

More specifically I pursue the following sub-questions:

RQ1: Which forms of temporal governance within and across Germany and Turkey affect the social lives of refugees?

RQ2: How do refugees negotiate temporal governance of displacement, in interplay with other temporal structures of power, and how are these negotiations shaped by gender and class?

RQ3: How does temporal governance affect transnational family life and the social temporalities of refugees across borders?

RQ4: How do refugees negotiate social connections beyond family ties within and against the state temporalities of the Germany-Turkey chronotope?

To explore the forms and mechanisms of how temporal governance affect the social lives of refugees I conducted a multi-sited and connected qualitative ethnographic case study across the transnational social field of Frankfurt, Germany, and Istanbul, Turkey, over the course of seven months of fieldwork (May to December 2021) (Marcus, 1995; Falzon, 2009b; Mazzucato, 2009). In Frankfurt, I interviewed refugees living in three temporary shelters, such as Rania introduced above, non-refugees in the neighbourhood, and local stakeholders within the municipal refugee reception infrastructure. In Istanbul, I connected to four family members of interlocutors in Frankfurt, including Rania's sister Ameena, all of whom

were living in middle- and working-class districts on the western European side of Istanbul. I spent time with and talked to them and explored the wider reception and settlement of refugees in their residential areas. In total, I conducted interviews with 62 individuals (see 0Annex 1: Research participants and interviews), complemented by uncountable informal conversations, discussions, and diary records of ethnographic participant observation.

Throughout the thesis, I show how the interplay of asylum and refugee governance, through legal status or bureaucratic categories (Turkey and Germany), with political economic conditions of the labour market, class relations (Turkey), the housing market (Germany), and refugees' social expectations, memories and hopes produced specific time-space configurations, which I call "chronotopes" following literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1981). These chronotopes contained characteristic rhythms and regularities, tempos, and narratives of pasts and futures rooted in specific spaces and places, and they produced common temporal experiences for refugees in particular locations, as existential "human time" (Ricoeur, 1983; Stonebridge, 2021) or "biographical time" with coherent pasts and futures (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 116). In using the term chronotope to describe these time-space configurations, I draw attention to their relational, affective and contingent nature, what Bakhtin refers to as "dialogical" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 252). That is, refugees experienced temporalities within "Germany-Turkey" not (only) individually but in relation to other people near and far with whom refugees shared emotional connections, memories and envisioned sharing lives in the future. The chronotopes of the Germany-Turkey transnational social field produced *social temporalities of displacement*. These were multiscalar: human and biographical times of refugees

intersected with state times, rooted in refugee regimes and global histories of colonialism and capital exploitation, to shape how refugees *made shared times* in their relationships, by freeing up time for each other, refusing to abide by determined life courses and working towards alternative individual and *social* futures.

This dialogical and relational approach to chronotopes of displacement highlights how state temporalities of migration governance (what I refer to as “temporal governance”) interacted with interlocutors’ social practices and experiences of time in non-linear, ambiguous ways. While interlocutors had little power to actively shape dominant temporal discourses and practices in migration governance that constructed them as temporal others, they often engaged in unexceptional, ordinary forms of “resistance” and “autonomy”, understood as “practices that give birth to the political subject whose existence is in contradistinction to the existence of the governmental realities of this world” (Samaddar, 2005, p. 10). As they imagined alternative futures for themselves and actively worked to sharing futures with others, they maintained possibilities for alternative forms of connection and togetherness, both for themselves and for others, refugees or otherwise. In this, I build on theorisations of resistance and autonomy as characterised by embedded “ambiguous, unremarkable, [and] (un)intentional” (Hughes, 2020, p. 1156) practices of *potentiality*, including endurance in conditions of hardship that ambivalently maintain open possibilities for alternative futures (Povinelli, 2011; Hughes, 2020). In describing various chronotopes of displacement, I emphasise the social and interactional nature of ordinary temporal autonomy in which imaginations of and working towards shared futures had uncertain outcomes within the constraints of

temporal state governance but nevertheless maintained a lifeline for social existences against and beyond temporal exclusion.

1.1 A note on terminology: who is a “refugee”?

In studying displacement, we take decisions about how we write about mobile people. According to the UN’s Refugee Convention (United Nations, 1951), a “refugee” is someone who has crossed a state border “owing to a well-founded fear of persecution” and claims “protection” in another state, understood as temporary residence and some access to social welfare. Humanitarian institutions and migrants themselves may draw on the “refugee label” for claims to political rights and economic resources (Zetter, 1991; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013; Sigona, 2014). Yet, “refugee”, like “migrant”, is not a neutral designation. Both are primarily state-imposed categories that follow a “juridical or scalar [hierarchical] logic” in distinction to “citizen” (Squire, 2010, p. 13) and regulate both access to and exclusion from material and symbolic resources (Menjívar, 2023).

Through labels like “refugee”, we risk legitimising those distinctions, reproducing narratives of refugees as more deserving than “mere” “[labour] migrants (Zetter, 1991, 2007; Long, 2013; Crawley and Skleparis, 2018), or as “pure victims” lacking choice and agency (Malkki, 1996, p. 378; see also Sigona, 2014; De Genova, Garelli and Tazzioli, 2018). We also risk naturalising the idea that refugees are pathologically “out of place”, and outside the “national order of things”, the relatively new notion that persons are citizens that properly belong to a specific national state territory (Malkki, 1992, p. 25). Similarly, the citizen-migrant binary relies on ostensibly self-evident state border control to reinforce social boundaries and de-legitimise some individuals’ mobility over others (Scheel and Squire, 2014; Sharma, 2020a;

Scheel and Tazzioli, 2022). This ignores how national borders, state citizenship, and migrants as people crossing those borders, are historical and social constructions, produced through past and ongoing violent practices of imperial and national bordering (Van Houtum and Van Naerssen, 2002; Bhabra, 2017; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018; Sharma, 2020a; Van Houtum, 2021). Accordingly, some scholars prefer to use “border crossers” (Bhatia and Canning, 2021), “mobile peoples” (Isin, 2018) or “nomadic subjects” (Ong, 1999, p. 3) emphasising the normality of mobility over the territorial “sedentarism” associated with the nation state.

In my study, only a small number of interlocutors were “refugees” as legally defined by the Refugee Convention (see Annex 1: Research participants and interviews). In Germany and Turkey, most interlocutors had time-limited protection statuses that might or might not be renewed. Others were waiting for their asylum outcome; had been rejected and were filing legal appeals or were technically deportable (Germany). Some were undocumented (Turkey). Some used to be recognised refugees but were now permanent residents or naturalised citizens (Germany and Turkey). Others had been displaced within Turkey, or both within Turkey and to Germany. Using one label to subsume all the experiences of displacement and settlement is a somewhat arbitrary choice, as evident even within my small sample. My interlocutors’ legal statuses said little about their experiences with refugee governance, and their experiences of time and sociality.

Despite all these caveats, throughout the thesis I still use the label “refugee”, if hesitantly, awkwardly and uncomfortably (Pillow, 2003, p. 188), as a shorthand to describe people who have experienced forced displacement and who are not yet fully accepted members of society in legal, social and political terms. In this, I follow

Nguyen (2019, p. 111) to understand “refugeeness” as a condition in which ongoing political and economic marginalisation and exclusion produced through interaction with international refugee regimes become embodied in everyday life, overlapping with other distinctions of legal status, class, gender and racialisation.

For most individuals in my study, involuntary migration was important in how they understood their past, present and future. They fled bombs, war and political persecution. They also took active decisions as to when, how, with whom and where to leave to, whether to stay in the country of first asylum or not, or how to plan for a near or distant future. Displacement thus constituted what Hage (2005, p. 469) has called “significant movement”, and some identified as “refugees” to stake claims on particular rights (Zetter, 2007). Others did not, and referred to themselves by their “national” (e.g. Syrian, Afghan), “ethnic” (e.g. Kurdish) or other identities.

Having experienced displacement did not necessarily define how interlocutors lived their presents, how they viewed their social relations, or where and how they felt they belonged. What *did* shape those experiences was local context of migration governance, that is, the state legal framework, its bureaucratic implementation, current power distribution and shifts in the political economy, local practices of welcoming or disinterestedness, societal discourses, and experiences of exclusion and racialisation. Above all, the question loomed where they could feel safe, both now and in the future. I understand refugees not as people “out of place” that do not properly “belong” to the state of residence (Malkki, 1995b) but rather as people who resist being constructed as “out of time” (Griffiths, 2014). In this, I follow recent research that conceives displacement as a temporal phenomenon in which refugees sense that a “normal” progression from their pasts to an expected futures has been

disrupted (Ramsay, 2018; Sakti and Amrith, 2022). For me, the term “refugee”, as opposed to other awkward terms such as forcibly displaced persons or forced migrants, acknowledges ongoing temporal displacement while highlighting the importance of unequal power relationships between the individual and the “state”, that defines itself and is defined as holding the power of categorisation and of most violent force (see also Scheel and Squire, 2014). I use the label “refugee” to acknowledge how state governance continues to shape the lives of the people that I spoke to, with effects for their futures, and that this governance *could* be otherwise.

1.2 Thesis outline

The thesis proceeds as follows: In Chapter 2, I summarise the existing literature on temporalities of migration and displacement, and I put it into conversation with the literature on social networks of refugees and literature within the larger sociology of time. I show that most literature on time and displacement has focused on the interaction of state and individual refugee temporalities but neglected the temporalities of refugee sociality. I then describe the theoretical framework and explicate how I employ the concept of chronotopes to understand how displacement shapes multiscale temporal relations at individual, interactional and state scales. In Chapter 3 I outline the methodology. Embedded in a relational epistemology inspired by feminist and critical theory, I followed a multisited ethnographic approach, adapting Mazzucato’s (2009) “simultaneous matched sample” methodology to localities in Frankfurt and Istanbul that were connected through the networks of refugees. I outline the qualitative methods, including semi-structured and narrative interviews partially supported by visual methods, informal conversations, and participant observation. Throughout the course of my fieldwork, the world was still

grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic; I discuss how the pandemic and other security concerns affected my research in multiple ways.

In Chapter 4, I adopt a birds' eye view to establish how temporal governance of displacement works across the Germany-Turkey transnational social field. I argue that Germany-Turkey form an uneven but connected chronotope itself, through histories of transnational migration and their importance in shaping narratives and boundary-making practices of nationhood, as well as contemporary migration governance structures. As a result, within and across the two states, recent refugees, from Syria and elsewhere, constantly and ambivalently negotiate being discursively and legally constructed as new and temporary, and thus outside the temporality of the nation-state. This has implications for leading social, embedded and connected lives in the present and in the future.

In the three subsequent chapters, I delve into the case study to show how refugee interlocutors and their relations experienced time with others in particular localities. In the chronotopes of displacement in Germany-Turkey, individual, shared and state times collapsed and folded into each other in which phenomenological experiences of time were relationally experienced and shaped by the possibility to "share time". Across the three chapters, I variously focus on a different type of relationship in which temporal governance was most relevant for my interlocutors, namely living adequate social lives despite having little time, maintaining family relations across borders, and embedding oneself into local neighbourhood contexts.

Building on the insights into the temporal governance practices of Chapter 4, in Chapter 5 I zoom in on Turkey to discuss how the legal framework intersected with a

specific period of economic crisis to produce a temporal experience of precarity that I term “survival time”. In survival time, refugees – and I focus on Syrians here – spent almost all their time working or thinking about livelihoods, with detrimental effects for both their individual biographies, and their expectations for a social life in the present and the future. In Chapter 6, I describe refugees’ family life across the transnational social field of Germany-Turkey. I show that transnational families negotiated temporal bordering practices, the legal regulations and bureaucratic decisions by the German and to a lesser extent Turkish state that separated families in space and, more importantly, in time. Some of these temporal borders related to refugee law, such as the differentiation of protection statuses, each associated with a particular timeframe and duration. Others were general legal categories that had refugee-specific effects, such as age of maturity that shaped the ability for family reunification with elderly parents, siblings and children above 18. Temporal bordering produced what I term “temporal separation” across and within territorial state borders, the desired but negated possibility to share a future.

Turning to a discussion of non-family relations, in Chapter 7, I focus on how refugees negotiated “local” social relations to people who lived nearby, either in temporary shelters (in Frankfurt) or in neighbourhoods (in Istanbul). State regulations interacted with the individual expectations and rhythms of refugees to produce “shared times”: an affective feeling of building long-term friendships. In Frankfurt, shared times were both facilitated and interrupted by the refugee reception infrastructure, including the extreme spatial proximity of the temporary shelter and precarious legal status, which contributed to a sense of temporal isolation as well as temporal connection. In Istanbul, I show that practices of *temporary* hospitality,

combining social values of hospitality with a temporary protection framework and historical anti-Arab sentiment, dialectically interacted with Syrian and Turkish efforts to become *neighbours*, understood as pragmatic and temporally indeterminate acceptance of mutual presence for now.

The final chapter draws the different themes together. I argue that temporal refugee governance across the Germany-Turkey chronotope produces particular hegemonic state temporalities, through a range of legal mechanisms, political economy and temporal cooccurrences. These impose ways of how refugees spend time in the present and envision their future, as individuals and as members of social networks with different types of relationships locally and across borders. At the same time, by refusing to resort to isolation and maintaining connections to family members, making friends, or just spending a nice time with others, refugees wrestle back temporal autonomy and the countertemporalising capacity to make individual and collective futures as social beings.

2 INDIVIDUAL, SHARED, STATE TIMES: SOCIAL TEMPORALITIES OF DISPLACEMENT

2.1 Introduction

Migration is often conceived as a spatial occurrence: a person moves from place A to place B, usually across state borders. But time also plays a crucial role in defining migration and distinguishing it from other forms of cross-border mobility. A person becomes a migrant, as opposed to a business traveller or tourist, once they reside in another country for some duration (King *et al.*, 2006; Griffiths, Rogers and Anderson, 2013), or 12 months to be precise, at least in the definition of the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) (IOM, 2019). As Bauböck (1998, p. 321) elaborates: “migration in this sense is different from mere travel in its temporal rather than in its spatial dimension. It is a spatial movement whose consequences considerably outlast its duration.” Migrants are migrants, and not citizens, as long as they are considered to properly “belong” to a different state to which they can (and implicitly should) eventually “return” to. They are considered *temporary* on state territory (Carens, 2013; Baas and Yeoh, 2019; Stronks, 2022). Time also features prominently in defining forced displacement: Refugee status is understood as a temporary legal category that is expected to end sometime in the future when a “durable solution” has been found: return to the state of origin, resettlement to a third country or integration through the acquisition of a new passport (Loescher *et al.*, 2008; Brun, 2015; Nguyen, 2019).

Time also matters for *processes* of migration, displacement and settlement. Recent research in migration studies, refugee studies and geography has undergone a “temporal turn” (Carling and Collins, 2018): migrants’ experiences of time in the

present, memories of the past, and the “relation between the present or actual and the future or potential” (ibid. 2018, p. 919) is increasingly understood to matter for why people move in the first place and how they experience both moving, arrival and longer-term settlement processes. This understanding was foreshadowed by Cwerner (2001) who argued that migrants experience various “times of migration”, as they seek to adapt their expectations and aspirations, and past experiences, to temporal structures of a new society.

Migration and displacement, and thus the times of migration, are social experiences. Where to, how and when to move; accessing material resources for moving and while settling; and the feelings that moving and settling induce – all these aspects of migration as a process are crucially shaped by a migrant’s past networks, connections they make on the way, and seek out for their future (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993; Ager and Strang, 2008; De Haas, 2010; Belloni, 2016; Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019; Etzold and Fechter, 2022). While legal status in Europe is usually applied to individuals, as individual refugees or individual migrants, or at best to their immediate nuclear family of spouses and minor children, a persons’ wellbeing also depends on whether their friends and family are deemed safe and well, both now and in the future.

In this overview of the literature on refugees’ social relations, time, governance and displacement, I first outline sociological approaches to time as comprising an individual, existential experience (human and biographical time), a social practice and element in group formation (social time), and as a tool of state-making and governance (state time). I then show how these different *temporalities* have been considered in the literature on time and migration. I outline how migration and

displacement produces typical individual time experiences, such as existential uncertainty, waiting and stuckedness, all of which are related to how migrants conceive of their futures and biographies. These existential and phenomenological experiences are centrally implicated by state practices of temporal governance and temporal bordering. In my use, “temporal governance” refers to the temporal mechanisms of asylum and immigration legislation and regulations, the bureaucratic implementation of those frameworks, and the practices of bureaucrats and officials to interpret and enforce these regulations, while “temporal bordering” describes how time is employed to create symbolic and material boundaries within and around groups. Thus, states use time to regulate mobility and membership by differentially shaping the speed of border crossing, the duration of migrants’ presence, and ordering of membership along imaginations of the past and the future through notions of temporariness and permanence.

Afterwards I sketch how the sociology of forced migration has understood the function and meanings of refugee sociality, focusing on “meaningful” relationships to family, friends and neighbours. I discuss how they build and maintain social connections locally and across borders, and what role time may play here. Bringing the two strands of literature together, I show that researchers have only recently started to explore the temporal effects of refugee governance on the social and collective lives of migrants and refugees, and thus paid limited attention to the social dynamics of time.

In the last section of this chapter, I outline the theoretical framework in which I employ the notion of the “chronotope” (Bakhtin, 1981) to *simultaneously* consider

how individual, interactional/social and state temporalities interact to shape social temporalities of displacement.

2.2 Sociologies of time and temporalities

What do we mean by *time* and *temporalities*? *Temporality* in the phenomenological philosophical tradition describes how humans, individually and existentially, live in and experience time as different rhythms and speeds of daily life. Human temporality is a phenomenon in which past memories, present understandings and future imaginations collapse into each other into what Bergson has called “duration” through the flow of consciousness (Hodges, 2008; Schatzki, 2013). Humans do not experience time as a linear series of discrete moments but rather as fast or slow, as present-focused or deeply laden with memory, or characterised by anticipation. Moreover, pragmatist and practice-theoretical thinking teaches us that humans not only *experience* but *make* time (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 206). Human agency is temporal, in that any action consciously or unconsciously draws on the past, and is motivated towards anticipated futures (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). By remembering, making plans, having dreams, and sometimes just being in the moment, humans shape time itself. As Ricoeur (1983) argues, drawing on Hannah Arendt, human beings make sense of the world and of their own mortality through time, by constructing their life as a narrative or story. Considering temporality as the *individual* experience, practice and narration of time has variously been termed “individual time” (Hareven, 1977, p. 58), “human time” (Ricoeur, 1983, p. 63; Stonebridge, 2021), or “biographical time” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 116).

While phenomenological approaches emphasise the individuality and autonomy of human time experience, sociologists have highlighted the role of temporality in

making and unmaking social contexts, through shared practices and symbolic meaning-making around shared or different rhythms, speeds, durations, synchronicities and asynchronicities, and pasts/presents/futures (Virilio, 2006; Griffiths, 2021). As they interact with others, humans draw on implicit and explicit understandings of shared pasts, such as norms for appropriate behaviour (Bourdieu, 2000), and aligning or (misaligning) expectations and anticipation of the future (Tavory and Eliasoph, 2013; Bazzani, 2023). The depth and value of time, what Tilly (1994, p. 276) calls “strong time”, is related to the irreversibility of the sequence preceding it, such as growing up together and mutual care in the past. Temporality is not (only) an individual experience but *shared* in social interaction (Rosenthal, 1996).

At larger sociological scales, social groups are characterised by varying “social times” (Sorokin and Merton, 1937; Lewis and Weigart, 1990; Nowotny, 1992). Families spend time together and consider themselves as social units through the memories, rhythms and expectations of “family time” (Hareven, 1977). Nation-states come into being and construct themselves as sovereign through foundational/constitutional events and the imposition of social rhythms (e.g. schooling, military service) within “the time of states” (Tilly, 1994). Collective memories and social events are negotiated in “historical times” (Hareven, 1977; Pickering, 2004). How time is individually experienced is thus mediated by the temporalities of social practices, collective identities and social differentiation. Time is relationally produced in interaction between individual humans, and social and institutional structures, all of which are varyingly characterised by change and stability (Bourdieu, 1977; Lewis and Weigart, 1990; Nowotny, 1992; Adam, 1994, 2004; Schatzki, 2013; Bastian *et al.*, 2020).

Social time, as an umbrella term for these sociological temporalities, “refers to the experience of inter-subjective time created through social interaction, both on the behavioural and symbolic plane” (Notowny 1975, p. 326 in Nowotny, 1992). Social groups coordinate social life through periodicity and rhythms that orientate the present, such as coordinated harvests, working times, seasonal festivities, opening hours and school holidays. Social groups also cohere through collective memories of the past, especially traumatic events like natural catastrophes or wars (Sorokin and Merton, 1937; Zerubavel, 1985; Edensor, 2006), and the coordination of collective action towards the future, like social projects, national growth targets or international targets to tackle climate change (Tilly, 1994; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Mische, 2009, 2014; Tavory and Eliasoph, 2013; Tavory, 2018; Bazzani, 2023).

The symbolic and institutional temporal arrangements that produce social times are always changing within and between contexts, and contain multiple and often contradictory rhythms, speeds and understandings of pasts, presents and futures (Greenhouse, 1989; Gurvitch, 1990; Nowotny, 1992). In Jacques’ (1990, p. 21) words, “no two men living at the same time live in the same time”. Thus, social groups adopt “cultural strategies for managing the multiple forms of time that are simultaneously available in any single social context” (Greenhouse, 1989, p. 1633), for example using technologies like clocks, calendars and working hours to both coordinate collective action and to regulate differences between people’s intentions and motivations. Conversely, asynchronicity of rhythms or diverging narratives of pasts and futures can contribute to interpersonal and intercommunal conflict (Schatzki, 2013).

These social practices of time are inextricably spatial. Social rhythms, regularities and discontinuities make sense to humans in particular localities; at the same time, social relations and practices *produce* these spaces as recognisable space-time (Massey, 1992, 2005) or social *timespaces* (May and Thrift, 2001; Page, Christou and Mavroudi, 2017). In cities, for example, streets, public transport, shopping areas, and offices or factories, are each characterised by specific rhythms during which particular people make use of the space for particular purposes and thereby create the space itself (Lefebvre, 2017). In this sense, space and time mutually implicate and produce each other, just as change and stability are mutually constitutive (Massey, 2005).

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In other words, time produces and mediates both social commonality and social difference. Temporality is therefore a key feature in social and political relations and both a tool and an outcome of power (Bourdieu, 2000). Power differentials shape the varying tempos/speeds at which individuals are able to lead their lives (Bourdieu, 1977), whether people have autonomy over decisions of how to spend their time (Standing, 2013), and how people are able to envision and shape their future (Suckert, 2022). For example, bureaucrats practice powers and control endowed by the state by making the poor and less powerful wait, for papers, welfare and healthcare, producing uncertainty as to whether resources and events are actually attainable (Hage, 2009; Jeffrey, 2010; Auyero, 2011). Power differentials also generate boundaries between those who follow dominant rhythms and others who are left in asynchronicity (Griffiths, 2021). Thus, the maintenance of the rhythms and speeds of some privileged bodies (such as business travellers) relies on the

deceleration, diversion and calibration of the times of others (such as taxi drivers or cleaners working night shifts) (Sharma, 2014). In Bastian et al.'s (2020, p. 291) terms, "time [is an] uneven and unequal relationality". Multiple temporalities in and between social and institutional contexts are sites of tension, conflict and struggle over power.

The differential rhythms and speeds of political, economic and legal institutions reproduce social power inequalities and impose social discipline through the reproduction of normative temporalities (Bourdieu, 2000; May and Thrift, 2001; Robertson, 2021). Individuals internalise collective temporal norms, and align their behaviour accordingly (Lewis and Weigart, 1990; Bourdieu, 2000), for example regarding life-course expectations of whether and when to marry, when to have children and how to raise them, or social norms and valuation surrounding "old age" (Hareven, 1977; Elder, 1998). Temporal norms also shape individual and social aspirations. Bourdieu (2000) argues that aspirations for the future are shaped by unequal life chances and differential distribution of social, economic and symbolic capital. Conversely, capitalist commodification of clock time stigmatises lack of 'productivity' as laziness and moral failure, norms that are both reproduced through public media and welfare regimes, and internalised and embodied amongst many labouring individuals (Bear, 2014, 2016).

Social temporalities are therefore a result of "chronopolitics" (Wallis, 1970; Klinke, 2013; Mills, 2020; Kirtsoglou and Simpson, 2021). In Mills' (2020, p. 298) words, "the social life of time [is] intimately entangled with the political life of time". Social times are inextricably connected to how social groups view themselves and to how they produce collective identities (Rosenthal, 1996), and as such have a significant

potential for effecting both *inclusion* and *exclusion*. The temporal orders or “time regimes” (Robertson, 2021, p. 10) produced by the contemporary system of nation states, or “state times”, constitute a specific type of temporal in/exclusion. States construct themselves as entities that control and discipline residents, and regulate membership and inclusion, *through time*. According to Tilly (1994), the introduction of temporal technologies of distinction and ordering, such as time-discipline and scheduling in military conscription, compulsory schooling, and the regulation of industrial worktime, was crucial to the emergence and functioning of modern nation states, their bureaucracies, and the symbolic value that they represent. Nation states discursively designate themselves as the protectors of political and social national communities, imagined as living on a bordered territory and sharing an eternal past (Anderson, 1983; Bauböck, 1998). Nation states also construct themselves through – usually implicit – understandings of shared futures (Bryant and Knight, 2019; Misago and Landau, 2023). Thus, “collective identities are produced as much through temporal boundaries as they are through spatial ones” (Klinke, 2013, p. 675). Temporal logics distinguish between those who are considered legitimate members of the national body politic and those who are not (Cohen, 2018). Who counts as a citizen is often defined by temporal cut-off points, such as a population’s presence on a given territory at the date of the state’s foundation, in both liberal democracies (Cohen, 2018) and more authoritarian states (Lori, 2020). In a “conceptual link between time, settlement and rights” (Stock, 2019, p. 11), territorial presence and shared presents are central to citizenship regimes, such as when and how someone can naturalise or access certain rights as “citizen”.

Time is also explicitly used to exclude and hierarchically order differences within and across states. In Europe, the USA and elsewhere, narratives of progress and modernity are infused with racial and economic temporal hierarchies between the so-called “West”, construed as modern and “advanced”, and the “Rest”, considered temporally backward (Fabian, 1983; Povinelli, 2011; Landau, 2021; Freemantle and Landau, 2022). Exclusion of racialised minorities and migrants and their denial of rights and social welfare is legitimised through their presumed “cultural backwardness”, obscuring how global and national inequalities and wealth were and continue to be predicated on active dispossession, whether through imperial capitalist exploitation of colonised peoples (Chakrabarty, 2000; Mills, 2020), or the denial of welfare and social rights to internal “others”. In “state times”, power and social control operates by rendering *some* individuals’ and groups’ times as more valuable while devaluing the times of those marginalised in terms of class, gender, age and racialisation (Kirtsoglou and Simpson, 2021). In this view, nation-states constitute themselves as sovereign protectors of the nation, simultaneously through meanings, imaginations and practices of space, *qua* bordered territory, and time, *qua* shared pasts, presents and futures in collective memories, national holidays and legal-political-economic bordering regimes. In highlighting how states use and produce temporalities in their constitution we can move away from a territorial conception of sovereignty towards a *spatio-temporal* conception of state governance, that asks “*when* is the state?” in addition to “*where* is the state?” (see also Mountz, 2013).

2.3 Time, migration governance and borders

The sociology of time teaches us that temporality is both a human phenomenological experience and at the same time socially mediated. Individual temporal experiences, as “human time/biographical time”, intersect with the “shared times” of social interaction, the “social times” of broader social collectives, and the “state times” produced by temporal governance. All these dynamics between individual/human/biographical times, social times and the temporalities of the state play out in the field of migration and displacement. Actors, such as officials, police, migrants, the media, and “citizens”, constantly contribute to reshaping, reimagination and reworking not only of migration but of the state itself. Taking a temporal lens means to acknowledge how discourses, practices and experiences of how time relates to space play a crucial role in the imagination, materialisation, constitution and reconstitution of migration governance and the state itself. Various actors and institutions engage in the rhythmical repetition, routine and interruption of discourses and practices (Sharma and Gupta, 2008; see also Lefebvre, 2017) that define the legitimate in/exclusion of refugees not only in the territorial space but also in the time of the nation-state. In what follows, I argue that most emergent research on the relationship of time and migration or displacement has focused on the interaction between individual migrant temporalities and state times, but neglected how these temporalities are socially mediated.

2.3.1 *Existential uncertainty and waiting*

Much literature on the relationship between migration/displacement and time has focused on the individual, phenomenological temporal experiences of migrants and refugees throughout their journey, often expressed through the notions of *uncertainty*

and *waiting*. When exposed to war or destitution, refugees negotiate “radical uncertainty” about their past, present and future, balancing out incomplete information with uncertainty about the outcome of their decisions (Horst and Grabska, 2015). Throughout their subsequent lives, refugees may continue to navigate “protracted uncertainty”: whether and how they can cross borders, where and how they can live, stay, or return home (Horst and Grabska, 2015; see also Yahya, 2021). Sometimes this uncertainty is expressed as an absence of temporality: Asylum seekers in the USA are described as living through “existential limbo” (Haas, 2017), in Sweden as experiencing “paused time” during the asylum procedure (Brux, Hilden and Middelthon, 2019), and in Libya as living through suspended or interrupted lives while “waiting to move on” to cross the Mediterranean into Europe (Achnich, 2022).

Not all uncertainty is necessarily negative (Schiltz *et al.*, 2019). Uncertain futures also include opportunities for hopes, dreams, change and potentiality, both individually and for social collectives (Bloch, 1986; Povinelli, 2011; Hage, 2016). Uncertainty becomes harmful if we notice a mismatch between our or others’ expectation and actual chances of realising them (Bourdieu, 2000), or if the future is affectively charged with worry and despair (Allsopp, Chase and Mitchell, 2015; El-Shaarawi, 2015). Hage has described the existential feeling of being held back and not getting to where we want as “existential immobility”, or “stuckedness” (Hage, 2015). Cwerner (2001, p. 21) terms this existential experience of uncertainty “heteronomous times”, in which “one’s time will be perceived as lying beyond one’s immediate control”. This also resonates with Ramsay’s argument that displacement is not rooted in refugees’ physical dislocation from “home” but rather in an existential

condition in which the future is overshadowed by the present, “a sense of existing in the present towards an uncertain or seemingly impossible future” (Ramsay, 2018, p. 203). Displacement is thus about an experienced mismatch between the present and the future, about the existential experience of structural uncertainty to the detriment of self-actualised futures.

Asylum seekers, irregularised persons and refugees often experience this uncertainty, and forced deceleration, as a form of existential “waiting” (Conlon, 2011; Brun, 2015; Drangland, 2020c; Jacobsen, Karlsen and Khosravi, 2020). Prospective migrants may wait to move as soon as they have sufficient money or an opportunity arises (Khosravi, 2020). Migrants may wait at borders, uncertain when or whether they can cross depending on smugglers, border officials and cash (Andersson, 2014; Achtnich, 2022). Asylum seekers and irregular migrants wait to apply for immigration status (Hughes, 2022), for an end of the asylum determination process (Rotter, 2016; Haas, 2017), for regularisation or deportation (Griffiths, 2014; Brux, Hilden and Middelthon, 2019) or for permanent status (Back and Sinha, 2018; Hughes, 2022). Refugees may also hold on to narratives of waiting for return (Malkki, 1995a; Brun, 2015; Biner and Biner, 2021), or for future resettlement (Grabska, 2006; Biehl, 2015; El-Shaarawi, 2015). All these forms of waiting are connected to uncertainty about the future, such as when status will be granted, what implications this may have, such as a sense of safety or socioeconomic security, and whether and how migrants can use their available capabilities to shape, accelerate or negotiate the process towards a hoped-for outcome.

“Waiting” is not equal to doing nothing. Experiences of enforced passivity may be interspersed or paralleled with potentially active daily schedules, making time useful

by learning something new, making home, or engaging in political activism (Griffiths, 2014; Brun and Fábos, 2015; Rotter, 2016; Brux, Hilden and Middelthon, 2019; Biner and Biner, 2021; Kallio, Meier and Häkli, 2021; Meier and Doná, 2021). For Brun, internally displaced persons from Abkhazia in Georgia live through a state of liminality without any immediate prospect of return but retain potentiality and activity in their everyday lives (Brun, 2015). In her study of a temporary shelter for Guatemalan refugees in Mexico, Gil Everaert (2021) terms this practice “inhabiting the meanwhile” in which migrants adorn homes and beds, and actively restore predictability in their everyday lives through scheduling and regular practices. These practices of agency counter uncertainty and unpredictability in the bureaucratic and migration process.

Emphasising this productive moment, Khosravi (2020) explains the phenomenology of waiting as a “state of consciousness” that has a particular heightened characteristic of wakefulness. Persian and Arabic languages distinguish different forms of waiting through their relationship to the future: *entezar* / انتظار which connotes positive anticipation, and *sabr* / صبر usually translated as patience, and related to sufferance or endurance of a negative condition. In Greece, many refugees refuse being put in the “waiting room” of encampment and independently move on within and beyond the official pathways laid out to them (Papatzani *et al.*, 2022). Kallio, Meier and Häkli (2021) show how apparent passivity and withdrawal of racialised refugees in white-dominated activist networks can be read as a hopeful form of engaging with the present. These studies hark back to pragmatist and practice-theoretical notions that understand time as produced or *made* through human agency and action (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Bourdieu, 2000).

At the same time, Hage (2009) cautions against romanticising “waiting out” over understanding actual political possibilities. An emphasis on agency in “waiting” may confuse endurance with passivity and oppression. Moreover, describing uncertainty and waiting as an abnormal form of “human time” implies that there are “normal times” that can be restored by obtaining papers, (re)settling or returning (Ramsay, 2018; Stock, 2019). These may not be sufficient to overcome economic and political conditions that produce uncertainty, including structures of neoliberal exclusion and dispossession shared by marginalised non-migrants such as regarding housing, livelihoods, and possibilities for plans or expected life courses (Bourdieu, 2000; Çağlar, 2018; Ramsay, 2020b). To understand how migrants enact temporal agency within structural constraints, it is essential to not just identify conditions of and reactions to waiting but rather analyse the interplay of various institutional and structural conditions, what I refer to as *state temporalities* or *state time*, that produce waiting and uncertainty with the temporal practices of individual and groups migrants that challenge these and open up potentialities for alternative futures (Povinelli, 2011, 2012).

2.3.2 *Temporal governance and temporal bordering: discipline and differential in/exclusion through time*

Migrants’ and refugees’ existential experiences of time as characterised by uncertainty and waiting are not inevitable. As another important strand of literature on migration governance shows, migrant temporalities are *produced* through what I have termed “state time” above: discourses and practices of states, bureaucracies, and actors that employ time to govern human mobility (Tazzioli, 2018; Griffiths, 2021). In an attempt to typologise how time and temporality works in migration

governance, Griffiths (2021) identifies multiple mechanisms: “temporal conditionalities” such as qualifying periods or age limits, “temporal safeguards and windows” like windows for appeal or notification of deportation, “temporal barriers” like accruing time periods for residency, “temporal punishments” such as return bans and “temporal rewards” like temporary visa. She argues that these different mechanisms work through regulating migrants’ rhythms, speed, (im)permanence, past/present/future and (a)synchronicity (Griffiths, 2021). “Temporal governance” thus describes the temporal mechanisms of migration governance frameworks, through law, bureaucratic implementation and border enforcement, but also through the interpretations and practices of people involved in migration governance. They operate throughout migrants’ and refugees’ mobility trajectories, from shaping when to leave, how to cross borders, when and with whom to settle, or how to move on or elsewhere.

State institutions and agencies , e.g. UNHCR, Frontex, or NGOs, govern migrants through the production of uncertainty, ambiguity, and “expected unpredictability and normalized inconsistency” (Cwerner, 2004, p. 73). Uncertainty and ambiguity may relate to border crossings that open at arbitrary times (Andersson, 2014), in ever-changing application procedures for legal status or asylum with undefinable durations as to when status will be granted, what happens if refugees are rejected or remain irregularised, whether status is connected to better rights and opportunities, whether it will be renewed, whether and when migrants can bring their family, and so on (Griffiths, 2014; Brux, Hilden and Middelthon, 2019; Hughes, 2022). In the Global South where asylum procedures are usually not available or do not lead to permanent residence, uncertainty often stems from a lack

of rights, including to education, work or housing (El-Shaarawi, 2015). Biehl (2015) suggests that the Turkish state “governs through uncertainty” by maintaining refugees in limbo both legally and structurally such as through the restriction of access to legal employment and preventing long-term settlement.

In the context of asylum regimes in Europe and elsewhere, migrants are subject to everyday forms of power through dual tactics of deceleration and acceleration (Meier and Doná, 2021). Griffiths (2014) highlights that asylum seekers experience “dual temporal uncertainty” in which time periods where everything slows down and where nothing seems to happen alternate with rapidly changing rhythms and speeds, such as court dates or deportation. This oscillation between “sticky” and “frenzied times” are threatening precisely through their immanent unpredictability (Griffiths, 2014). Forced acceleration occurs most notably during pushbacks at sea, deportation, police raids, or extremely short deadlines for legal appeal during asylum procedures (Griffiths, 2014; Rozakou, 2020; Stierl, 2023).

Local state actors, such as officials or judges adjudicating asylum procedures, or bureaucrats in foreigners’ offices using discretionary power to grant residence permits with a certain duration, themselves navigate uncertainty. They respond to changes in federal policies, changing numbers and composition of asylum seekers, and public discourses welcoming or rejecting migrants. This uncertainty can result both in increasing punitiveness, e.g. expanding detention, and allowing for flexibility and goodwill, e.g. in municipalities declaring themselves as “sanctuary cities” (Maas *et al.*, 2021). In many cases bureaucrats may unintentionally reproduce uncertainty for asylum seekers and refugees through arbitrariness, differentiation in local conditions, and structural constraints. At the same time, the production of

arbitrariness and uncertainty are intentionally used to discipline migrants' behaviour at border crossings (Andersson, 2014), or as a tool of deterrence (Stierl, 2023). As Stel (2021, p. 2) argues "the strategic reproduction of institutional ambiguity is a shared tenet of refugee governance across geographies and regimes", including in Europe and Lebanon, and, we could add, Turkey and the Americas.

Uncertainty about the future thus works as a form of Foucauldian governmentality: migrants' collective political claims are kept under disciplinary control that is simultaneously imposed and self-imposed (Drangland, 2020c). This control is enacted through a relation to the future: by rendering the future unpredictable, refugees' expectations, desires and behaviour are regulated and disciplined. Refugees and migrants are denied autonomous control over their futures, including decisions over how and where to move, whether and where to stay, and how and with whom to live. Through the simultaneity of deterrence, containment and control, migrants' ability to plan for the future is restricted but not redirected elsewhere (Khosravi, 2021).

In addition to disciplining migrants' movements and bodies, temporal governance enacts power over migrants through differentiation and hierarchisation. Some migrants breeze through asylum procedures or border crossings while others stumble and are constantly obstructed (Tazzioli, 2018). Time is also a mechanism to differentiate between deserving/undeserving and legitimate/illegitimate migrants (Philipson Isaac, 2022). For example, in her study of Swedish asylum interviews, Philipson Isaac (2022) argues that state officials mobilised time to undermine asylum seekers' credibility. One Iranian refugee who had converted to Christianity lacked credibility because they *waited too long* before conversion; an Afghani refugee

lacked credibility because they left too early to didn't *wait long enough* to legitimately flee the Taliban (Philipson Isaac, 2022). This categorisation of migrants' worth and deservingness through time again functions as a political tool of control. These practices that manage mobility through control *over* migrants' time, and control *through* time, have also been called forms of "temporal bordering" (Tazzioli, 2018). That is, the institutions, actors, frameworks and everyday practices that regulate migrants' mobility through time discursively and materially regulate social belonging and construct and reify the borders of nation-states themselves (Hurd, Donnan and Leutloff-Grandits, 2017; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy, 2019; Meier and Doná, 2021). By effecting material in/exclusion in national territories, symbolic in/exclusion in national societies, and order access to rights and resources associated with state "citizenship", temporal borders "stratify the space of citizenship" by defining migrants as objects of (temporal) difference (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013, p. 155).

In one reading, temporal bordering is related to the labour needs of capitalist markets that maintains a disposable but disenfranchised migrant workforce through "differential inclusion", the tendency for capitalist states to regulate people's mobility while retaining their labour power (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). In this view, refugees are indistinct from other migrants in that they form part of a "surplus population" that is differentially included and excluded according to market needs (Rajaram, 2018; Nimer and Rottmann, 2022). The literature on the relations between capitalism, time and migration argues that migrants have invested time in education, raising money for travelling and building networks, time that is appropriated by employers and states that support them. As Khosravi (2018, p. 2) argues "capital grows through stealing of time" (see also Bhatia and Canning, 2021). Temporal

regulations and temporary inclusion into markets ensure that migrants' individual and social temporalities, their plans, projects and memories, are subordinated to the temporal needs of the neoliberal market (Gardiner Barber and Lem, 2018).

States also differentiate rights and resources along lines of presumed temporariness and permanence, for example through visa regulations, citizenship legislation and racializing narratives of belonging. Historically, guest worker programmes were explicitly designed to access cheap and disposable labour while designating migrant workers as temporary and thus outside the political community (Cook-Martín, 2019). Contemporarily, if visas are granted they are usually time-limited, with high hurdles to transforming them to permanent residency. These, in turn, are stratified by class, gender and age (Yeoh, 2017; Baas and Yeoh, 2019; Merla and Smit, 2023), and legal status - the most common cause for irregularity is overstaying a temporary visa (Bauböck, 1998; Cwerner, 2001; Brux, Hilden and Middelthon, 2019). In the field of asylum, the expansion of temporary protected status to designate certain refugee groups has been used to settle political debates over whether or not refugees should be taken in or not (Mountz *et al.*, 2002; Baban, Ilcan and Rygiel, 2021). This practice is also common in my field context of Turkey and Germany (see also Chapter 4). Through the temporary protection regime Turkey maintains Syrians in permanent temporariness without an official pathway towards formal membership, whether permanent residency or citizenship (Şahin Mencütek, 2020; İçduygu and Aksel, 2022; Sengul, 2022). The German state is ever expanding the number of temporary legal statuses that asylum seekers and migrants can apply for, each with different durations, rights and obligations, and various conditionalities

for transforming temporary status into more secure residence permits (Will, 2018, 2019; Fontanari, 2022a, 2022b; Schütze, 2023).

The proliferation of temporary statuses is rooted in the temporalities of state membership and citizenship, briefly mentioned above. As nation states see themselves as protectors of a national collective with a shared past, they differentiate between “citizens” and “aliens” or “migrants” based on their presumed *future* on state territory - whether they are considered temporary or permanent residents (Latham *et al.*, 2014; Stronks, 2022). According to Bauböck (1998, p. 334), some discrimination of temporary migrants is justifiable if they have no intention of staying: “From the perspective of societal membership, temporary migrants of this sort live in a short present tense. They cannot base their claims to rights and recognition on past affiliations and contributions or on prospects of a shared future destiny”. In this logic, temporary migrants should accrue both social and political rights over time (Carens, 2013). Temporary migration can be a choice, for example amongst elite or “expat” migrants who explicitly retain temporariness in efforts to minimise state claims on their wealth (Latham *et al.*, 2014), or amongst Palestinian “refugees” in Jordan who stay in ostensibly temporary refugee camps to maintain rights claims (Oesch, 2019). Yet, even privileged migrants who do not intend to settle permanently may be affected by uncertainty through bureaucratic delays in visa renewals (McNevin and Missbach, 2018; Axelsson, 2022). Moreover, circumstances and plans for temporary stays change as migrants make new connections, fall in love or just like a place (Amrith, 2021; Robertson, 2021; Merla and Smit, 2023). Migrants’ intentions to remain in place or leave therefore may or may not accord with their migration status

(Triandafyllidou, 2022). Exclusion works through *involuntary* temporariness, and the lack of choice over whether to stay permanently or leave, even if intermittently.

The integrationist paradigm underlying much migration research and policy discourses in Europe is underscored by implicit and contradictory assumptions about the teleological relationship between time and belonging (Çağlar, 2018). Migration is assumed to be a one-off, linear occurrence from long-term settlement in one place to long-term settlement in another. Over time, migrants are assumed to become part of the new nation-state with an increasing duration of residence. As Cwerner (2001, p. 12) eloquently highlighted “assimilation to the social order implies a perception of time as continuous”. However, this period is indeterminate and related to an implicit notion of an ideal future when the migrant is “fully integrated”.

Instead, human mobility is more often non-linear, with migrants often moving across various borders and back, repeatedly “settling” before moving again (Crawley and Jones, 2021). Conversely, national belonging in multicultural societies articulated through promises of “integration” (Çağlar, 2018; Drangsdland, 2020c, 2020a), or “citizenship” (McNevin, 2020), is often conditional on fulfilling certain explicit or implicit criteria of deservingness, such as employment and speaking a language. Simultaneously, states actively disrupt the assumed teleology of “integration” by obstructing possibilities to get legal or permanent status (Schütze, 2023). In working towards fulfilling “integration” or “citizenship” criteria, migrants “wait to belong” (Pardy, 2009, p. 140) but fail in the face of larger exclusionary structures of racialisation that question migrants’ loyalty and emphasise their difference at unpredictable instants (McNevin, 2020). Even if migrants become citizens, e.g. after a defined minimum period of uninterrupted time of residence and fulfilling all conditions of employment

and language, they are still often not considered legitimate parts of the body politic, due to racialised understandings of membership – leaving them in in a “perpetual state of integrating” (Çağlar, 2018, p. 26).

Citizenship as an institution regulating the relationship between a subject and a state has itself become revokable and potentially temporary, and thus more precarious, insecure, or “irregular” (Nyers, 2010). In Western countries and elsewhere, legal citizens whose unfettered loyalty is questioned, e.g. because of dual nationality or because of racial imaginations and colonial history, are increasingly deportable and “migrantised”, as seen during the Windrush scandal in the UK (Nyers, 2010; Anderson, 2020). As a result, the boundary between migrants as temporary residents with restricted rights and citizens as permanent members of a political community with full rights is increasingly blurred. While naturalisation and citizenship, or permanent residence, are no guarantors of rights, or even of territorial security (Isin, 2002; Nyers, 2010; Gonzales and Sigona, 2018), in many cases they do provide improved options to travel and come back again and thus have some instrumental value (Harpaz and Mateos, 2019). As a result, temporary legal status, and the symbolic and narrative construction of refugees as temporary guests, is associated with enforced immobility and de facto territorial permanence, precisely by precluding alternative options of leading mobile and transnational lives.

Importantly, temporal governance and temporal bordering are chronopolitically negotiated. They impose certain temporalities such as temporal othering, and involuntary temporariness but are simultaneously resisted by migrants and refugees, and, within this struggle, transformed (see e.g. Scheel, 2015; De Genova *et al.*, 2022). The growing literature on the autonomies of migration emphasises this point

of the relational character of bordering practices that delay and redirect but never fully manage to control human mobility (Tsianos and Karakayali, 2010; De Genova, Garelli and Tazzioli, 2018). Bordering practices that exclude migrants from national spacetimes are often overtly and subtly challenged by migrants and their supporters, both at borders and within nation-state territories (Genç, 2017; Picozza, 2021). Against charges of romanticising endurance within power inequalities between often violent state institutions and migrants with few resources or networks, these resistances often remain ambivalent in both their forms and outcomes (McNevin, 2013; Raeymaekers, 2019).

2.3.3 Biographies, the life course and social futures

Temporal governance and temporal bordering differentially in/exclude migrants and refugees by working on their futures: by rendering the future not only uncertain but uncanny and existentially threatening, or by constructing their presence on state territory as formally or symbolically temporary, even if their physical presence suggests otherwise. This suggests that temporal governance restricts refugees' autonomous control over how they design or build their futures, constraining possibilities for constructing life as a coherent narrative in "biographical time" (Bakhtin, 1981; Ricoeur, 1983).

The field of migration studies has extensively discussed migrants' futures through the notion of aspirations and desires, either "*for migration [or] aspirations and desires pursued through migration*" (Boccagni, 2017; Carling and Collins, 2018, p. 917). Within the context of forced displacement, research on refugees' imagined futures has analysed educational and occupational aspirations (Schneider, 2018; Mozetič, 2021), onwards mobility from first places of refuge (Rottmann and Kaya, 2021;

Ustubici and Elci, 2022), or return to countries of origin (Kayaoğlu, Şahin Mencütek, Zeynep and Erdoğan, 2022; Müller-Funk and Fransen, 2022). I am less interested in mobility aspirations here but rather how the temporal structures of refugee governance shape future imaginations, whether in terms of active aspirations, life projects, or broader hopes and dreams.

According to the literature on refugee futures, temporal governance appears to shape refugees' futures in three ways. First, state temporalities of asylum frustrate expectations and prevent refugees to work on their hopes and dreams (Allsopp, Chase and Mitchell, 2015; Brun, 2016; van Heelsum, 2017; Stock, 2019; Gatter, 2022). Humanitarian NGOs often emphasise the present survival of refugees over their futures, although humanitarians themselves feel ambivalently stuck in an eternal present (Brun, 2016). Longer-term perspectives, such as in the promotion of refugees' "employability", often ignore both refugees' preferences and structural exclusion (Gatter, 2022). In the Netherlands, aspirations of Syrian and Eritrean refugees regarding working and becoming part of the community were frustrated through delays in asylum procedures, labour market restrictions for asylum seekers and slow progress in learning Dutch (van Heelsum, 2017). Work in the UK shows how struggles to gain or renew status, or establish permanent residency, affect young refugees' and asylum seekers' ability to engage in education, employment and social lives (Allsopp, Chase and Mitchell, 2015; Back and Sinha, 2018; Hughes, 2022).

Second, migration in general, and forced displacement in particular, is often considered to disrupt a "normal" life course, understood as a more or less linear succession of socially defined time periods such as childhood, adolescence,

adulthood and old age (Elder, 1998; Collins and Shubin, 2015; Robertson, 2021). Each period is associated with temporal norms regarding the past and the future – what education one should have completed, when to be employed, when and whom to marry and have children, when and where to retire etc. Migrating may affect the life course, for example when young people delay or abandon marrying when abroad for a period of time (Cwerner, 2001; King *et al.*, 2006; Shubin, 2015), at times indefinitely maintaining people in “adolescence”, itself a socially constructed concept (Allsopp, Chase and Mitchell, 2015; Collins and Shubin, 2015; Ryan, 2018; Robertson, 2021). In Hughes’ study with young migrants in the UK, education pathways and perceptions of adulthood were affected by bureaucratic and financial struggles to regularise (Hughes, 2022). At the same time, life course expectations are not fixed, but shaped by gender, class and other social stratifications, and change over time and space. Thus, young men and women may have different expectations regarding the meaning of starting a family, and how this is enabled or hindered by migration (Brux, Hilden and Middelthon, 2019; Rottmann and Kaya, 2021). Simultaneously, disruptions to the temporal expectations of the life course may be experienced as liberating, if migrating enables escaping or transforming socially preconfigured role expectations (Griffiths, 2014; Shubin, 2015; Yeoh *et al.*, 2020; Robertson, 2021).

In this context, and this is my third point, a small but growing body of work shows that refugees’ future imaginations are not individually but interpersonally, intergenerationally and collectively produced. Emerging research with refugee mothers shows that their hopes often lie not in their own futures but within the futures of their children, for example among Central African mothers resettled in Australia

(Ramsay, 2017) or Syrian mothers resettled to Canada (Omar, 2023). Refugee futures may also include hopes or fears for their social group, relating to past and present experiences of violence and displacement. For example, Malkki (2001) suggests that Burundian refugees in Canada draw on dystopian, painful images to describe collective futures, resulting from experiences of large-scale violence and erosion of trust. Discussing how Palestinians in the West Bank and Lebanon view a future Palestinian state, Feldman (2016) argues that reactions to external events and hopelessness in the present coincide with experimentations of alternative visions for a collective future.

Individual “horizons of expectations” regarding the future (Koselleck in Pickering, 2004) are shaped by connections to others living near and far. These collective futures can create a sense of shared fate and connection (Ramsay, 2017; Omar, 2023). They may also be imbued with potential for conflict, “asynchronicity” (Cwerner, 2001; Griffiths, 2021) or “misalignment” (Menjívar, 2023, p. 7) due to varying expectations or limited possibilities to make common lives possible. This misalignment can take multiple shapes. In her study of the legal status of *Ausbildungsduldung* in Germany, Drangland (2020a, 2020b) argues that rejected refugees are forced to negotiate between the temporal expectations of the German state, promising some undefined future inclusion into the labour market if they attend vocational training, and the temporal expectations of family members living elsewhere to support them *right now*. Amrith (2021) shows how, before migrating, Filipino care workers imagined their lives to progress in a more or less linear fashion from departure to settling somewhere in the “West”. In later life in Singapore and Spain, care workers experienced physical diversions, temporal uncertainty related to

tensions between employment and regularisation, and tensions with family members whose lives have progressed in other ways. In this sense, temporary legal status and economic precarity has long-term effects on migrants, including the reconfiguration of relationships as many are forced to live in the “Here and Now” at the expense of relating to loved ones in other places (Sakti and Amrith, 2022, p. 457).

To sum up, states employ strategies of temporal governance through legal frameworks, regulations and practices, that ambiguously delay and accelerate migrants and refugees at borders, and in asylum, immigration and naturalisation procedures. Temporal governance affects refugees’ lives through the production of uncertain futures, and by constructing migrants and refugees as temporary, outside the social collective and therefore legitimately deprived of rights. These practices of temporal governance reinforce and make temporal borders, differentiating and shaping hierarchies between different groups of migrants, and migrants and citizens. Together, practices of temporal governance and temporal bordering not only have individual effects on migrants but also social effects, as shown in the burgeoning literature on life course expectations and collective futures. Before I move on to explore these social temporalities of displacement further, and how they relate to temporal governance, I will briefly turn to a mostly separate strand of literature, on networks and social relations of refugees.

2.4 Refugees, social relations and the state

Displacement often affects the social relations and networks of refugees. According to a classic article by Emanuel Marx (1990, p. 190), the disruption of social networks is the defining feature of displacement itself: “a refugee is a person whose social world has been disturbed”. With “social worlds”, he mostly meant connections

to family, friends and acquaintances. Marx also usefully highlighted how state policy, legal frameworks and their implementation affected networks. Depending on why and how refugees flee, and how they are able to reestablish themselves in a new context, social worlds may “collapse”, lose some connections but establish new contacts in new locations, transfer networks to a new context, or insert themselves into completely new networks (Marx, 1990).

How refugees maintain relationships or build new ones, in communities of origin and new locations of residence, is therefore key to understanding why and how people flee, and how the process of settlement unfolds. In Ryan and Dahinden’s (2021, p. 7) words, “the social embeddedness of actors in a web of specific relationships says something about their position in society, about their agency and their view on the world”. In the following paragraphs, I outline to what extent research has discussed the questions of whether refugees can maintain and build social worlds in new contexts after leaving “home”, what shape and meaning these social worlds attain, how they differ from non-refugees, and how these social worlds are shaped by policies, legal frameworks and other structural conditions, focusing on networks in displacement situations between the Middle East and Europe.

2.4.1 Functions and values of refugee networks

A first body of literature focuses on the instrumental functions of refugees’ social ties. In the context of displacement from the Middle East, family networks have been identified as key in the organisation of the Syrian anti-Assad uprising, especially in the absence of pre-revolutionary civil society structures (Leenders and Heydemann, 2012; Pearlman, 2021). Connections to family members or acquaintances, some of who used to work abroad, also contributed to choices over where to move to

(D'Angelo, 2021; Tobin, Momani and Al Yakoub, 2022). Syrians joined friends and family in Jordan, Lebanon or Turkey (Zuntz, 2021), although physical proximity to a border and mere chance also played a role (Tobin, Momani and Al Yakoub, 2022).

Refugee networks are considered key to access resources in the new country of residence, whether jobs, information, healthcare services or education (Ryan, 2011, 2023; Erel and Ryan, 2019). In the Global North, access to resources are often assumed to relate to “bridging” ties with the majority society, contributing to “social capital” or “social integration” (Haug, 2007; Ager and Strang, 2008; Strang and Ager, 2010; Cheung and Phillimore, 2017; Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019; Bernhard, 2021). “Bridging ties” may also facilitate political participation in organisations (Morales and Giugni, 2011) or in activist networks (Rosenberger and Winkler, 2013).

Empirical research has shown that refugees’ *family* networks often provide most support, whether financial, emotional or moral (Belloni, 2016; Lokot, 2020; Tobin, Momani and Al Yakoub, 2022). This has practical reasons: In conditions of urban informality in the Global South, where formal asylum and welfare systems are often unavailable, networks with other refugees such as family, friends, religious communities and people from the same country of origin, are crucial resources for survival (Campbell, 2006; Grabska, 2006; Koser Akcapar, 2010; Landau and Duponchel, 2011; Palmgren, 2014; Lyytinen, 2015; Mpanje, Gibbons and McDermott, 2018). Thus, Landau and Duponchel (2011, p. 13) argue “social networks and group membership, not legal status or welfarist interventions, are the lynchpin of protection”. Moreover, in contexts of dictatorship and state surveillance, such as under Assad in Syria, trusting non-family individuals could be dangerous where the military intelligence infiltrated most civil and organisational life (Pearlman, 2021). As a

result, Syrian refugees often relied on family members for support, or at most other Syrians from the same city or province of origin (Lokot, 2020).

In some situations, refugees appear disadvantaged to access support and resources through networks compared to non-refugee migrants, especially regarding networks to members of the majority society. For example, legal insecurity seems to hamper the ability to form supportive networks (Sigona, 2012). In the European context, physical isolation of asylum seekers through housing in reception centres or temporary shelters negatively affects building social networks during the asylum procedure (Kearns and Whitley, 2015; D'Angelo, 2021; Strang and Quinn, 2021), which can translate into fewer supportive networks upon acquisition of refugee status later (Cheung and Phillimore, 2017; Kosyakova and Bruecker, 2020). In a study of refugee networks in Germany, Bernhard (2021) argues that various conditions, including time of arrival, the settlement process, duration of residence, and individual factors like gender and university education shaped the ability to form supportive relations. Some refugees remained isolated, others built fleeting support relationships, while a third group was able to establish longer-term egalitarian and reciprocal relationships.

At the same time, networks do not automatically translate into resources or sources of support. Bourdieu (1986) asserted that networks can only provide capital if capital is available, whether financial, political or symbolic. Thus, Koser Akcapar (2010) argues that Iranian refugees in Turkey could not draw on local networks for support as acquaintances had little to share. Economic precarity, often connected to legal insecurity and informality, could also harm existing ties to friends and family. For example, Menjívar (2000) showed that, amongst Salvadorean migrants under

temporary protection in the USA, family relationships became strained when migrants could not pay back loans provided by relatives. A similar point is noted by Stevens (2016) discussing Syrians in Jordan. Moreover, pre-existing political polarisations and mistrust can also prevent refugees from drawing on existing networks, especially if refugees fled dictatorships with high levels of state surveillance and repression, as amongst Syrian refugees in Jordan (Lokot, 2020) and Iranians in Turkey (Koser Akcapar, 2010).

2.4.2 Families in displacement: separation and transnational ties

Beyond the functional and instrumental value of networks, another body of research focuses on how displacement affects family networks. War and political violence often cause the dispersal and separation of individuals and families across borders (Tiilikainen *et al.*, 2023). In some cases, this happens unintentionally as part of the uncertainty, chaos and rapid decision-making in war, armed strife and smuggling (Chandler *et al.*, 2020; Christ and Etzold, 2022). Families also take intentional decisions on who should leave with whom and when, depending on the availability of financial resources, passports and visa, what FitzGerald and Arar (2018, p. 388) term the “household decision-making” model. If financial resources are insufficient to pay transportation or smuggling fees for all family members, refugee families may send one or several persons ahead to send remittances or to apply for family reunification (Dubow and Kuschminder, 2021). Conversely, some family members may purposefully remain in place, as amongst elderly parents of Syrian refugees, because they felt less at risk from political persecution, because they felt too old to start afresh, or to protect “illiquid assets” like countryside homes (FitzGerald and Arar, 2018, p. 395).

The special role of the family in displacement is enshrined in international refugee law that has provisions to protect “family unity”, understood as physical co-presence of loved ones (Jastram and Newland, 2003). Depending on the location and conditions of asylum and refuge, some refugees may live with or near family members. In addition, most seem to live transnational lives, separated from either close loved ones or extended families (Alkan, 2022; Christ and Etzold, 2022). Transnational family separation can affect families in multiple, not always negative ways. Pre-migration intra-family dynamics regarding emotional proximity or conflict before separation feed into later relationships across borders (Zentgraf and Chinchilla, 2012; Kallio, 2019). The literature on transnational care, mostly amongst adult heterosexual couples or labour migrants separated from “left behind” children, has shown how support and resources can be exchanged and circulated in kinship networks across borders and despite distances (Kofman *et al.*, 2011; Zentgraf and Chinchilla, 2012; Baldassar and Merla, 2013; Mazzucato and Dito, 2018; Acedera and Yeoh, 2019; Bonjour and Kraler, 2019; Waters and Yeoh, 2023). Thus, separation is made easier by frequent contact and instant messaging or videocalls that enable “ambient co-presence” (Madianou, 2016) and emotional care (Baldassar and Merla, 2013; Baldassar and Brandhorst, 2021).

Nevertheless, transnational contact does not necessarily reduce the desire or need for physical proximity (Boccagni, 2012). As Boccagni (2012, p. 123) suggests, “at the very core of migrant transnationalism lies the simultaneity of physical absence and social presence”. Regular migrants often incorporate intermittent visits to maintain intimate connections across borders (Leutloff-Grandits, 2017; Acedera and Yeoh, 2019; Merla, Kilkey and Baldassar, 2020). However, refugees, just like

irregular migrants, usually lack passports or permits to travel outside the country of asylum, let alone to their country of origin. They thus lack options for future return, cannot travel to visit family and friends (Abrego, 2014; Amelina and Bause, 2020; Tiilikainen *et al.*, 2023), or live family life “elsewhere”⁴ (Edwards, 2005). Compounding factors are the economic costs of travelling and digital contact (Merla, Kilkey and Baldassar, 2020). The maintenance of digital communication can be costly and difficult, especially if internet connection is patchy in situations of ongoing conflict and warfare. Thus, for refugees “separation by distance is less of an issue than ease and cost of contact” (Williams, 2006, p. 871).

The experience of transnational family life and family separation thus is influenced by state policies and refugee governance. The ability to provide proximate care is shaped by “immobilising regimes”, policies of states of residence and origin that restrict cross-border mobility (Merla, Kilkey and Baldassar, 2020). As a result, refugee family separation appears an inherent, not exceptional, feature of nation-state migration regimes (Lee, 2019), and refugees may take up significant risks to be with family members, including smuggling (Alkan, 2022). The importance of physical proximity to family members may be enhanced for refugees from countries with strong normative kinship institutions, such as Syria (Joseph, 2018; Alkan, 2022; Suerbaum and Richter-Devroe, 2022).

Family separation is considered to negatively affect the emotional, physical and economic wellbeing of refugees (Wilmsen, 2011, 2013; Chandler *et al.*, 2020; Löbel, 2020; Löbel and Jacobsen, 2021; Tiilikainen *et al.*, 2023; Tuzi, 2023). While some

⁴ The European Court for Human Rights calls this argument the “elsewhere approach” (Edwards, 2005).

refugees can apply for family reunification, state regulations define who legitimately counts as kin (Welfens and Bonjour, 2021). Bureaucratic and legal categories, including categories like “refugee” and “dependant”, often prioritise a certain notion of the “nuclear” family with minor children over broader understandings of family and kinship as flexible, multiple and changing. As Kofman et al. (2011, p. 13) argue, “immigration regulations have sought to contain [the] geographical reach and structures [of family migration]; they define the composition of the family and restrict its flexibility, frequently reinforce gender inequalities and truncate the cohabitation of generations”. Thus, refugees may not be allowed to “reunite” with the persons that they feel closest to, including siblings, cousins, elderly parents, foster relatives or non-kin.

2.4.3 New socialities of displacement: friendships and neighbours

The focus on family ties highlights the importance of emotional and affective connections beyond their instrumental function, but also beyond “biology”. Kinship and family are not only positive sources of support for migrants but also sites of power inequalities and patriarchal and generational hierarchies (Joseph, 2000; Andrikopoulos and Duyvendak, 2020). Through their encounter with state regulations and bureaucracies, migrants reconfigure the meanings and membership of family and kinship relations, forge new forms of sociality and intimacy (Carsten, 2020), and may engage in “de-kinning” (Suerbaum and Richter-Devroe, 2022, p. 729). Kallio (2019) terms this broader conception of intimacy, emotional connection and relatedness as “familiality”. To understand the various social temporalities that refugees are engaged in, we should pay attention to emotionally and instrumentally

meaningful relationships and sociality with *non-kin*, including with friends and neighbours.

Research on the specificities of *refugee* friendships is in its infancy and has often focused on relations to “hosts”, or members of the majority society. For example, Askins (2015, 2016) suggests that friendships forged between “local” volunteers and refugees or asylum seekers in the UK as part of “befriending” projects may become sustained over time, develop into emotional bonds and thus may have local transformative political effects. In the broader field of migration studies, Kathiravelu and Bunnell (2018) discuss urban migrant friendships as important “communities of convenience” that combine reciprocal instrumental support (material, financial, information, connections) with emotional and affective ties. Yet, marginalisation, informality and structural exclusion often means that “only very select friendships assume an enduring quality based on long-term trust and reciprocity. Friendship is, ultimately, an achievement” (Werbner, 2018, p. 664). As a result, migrant friendships in the urban sphere are often ambivalent (Amrith, 2018).

While literature on both refugees’ networks and transnational families emphasise the possibility for de-territorialised social relations, some migration scholars highlight that place and physical proximity still retains importance for developing meaningful relationships in the context of how newcomer migrants embed themselves in new localities (Rogers and Vertovec, 1995; Coleman, 2010; Werbner, 2018; Alkan and Maksudyan, 2020; Phillimore *et al.*, 2021). Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2016; 2018) argue that migrant newcomers develop what they term “proximal relations”: significant individuals in migrants’ neighbourhood, workplaces or other locations that become important sources of material and immaterial support. While most of these

relations may be fleeting and functional, some may develop into meaningful “sociabilities of emplacement”, structured around a sense of equality, humanity and commonality, including through an understanding of shared exclusion and dispossession (Glick Schiller and Schmidt, 2016; Çağlar and Glick Schiller, 2018).

The focus on physical proximity is also expressed in a renewed interest in how migration affects social relations in urban neighbourhoods, understood not as spatially bounded spaces, but as multiscale and partially overlapping resident networks (Wellman, 1979; Gidley, 2013; Alkan and Maksudyan, 2020). Classic urban theory associates *neighbours* specifically with ambivalence between strangeness and unfamiliarity (Simmel, 2009, p. 568), and the potential for both support and conflict (Karner and Parker, 2011; Ruonavaara, 2022). Thus, “the notion of neighbourhood immediately connotes proximity; but it also invites the question of how to manage that proximity, how to establish boundaries” (Alkan and Maksudyan, 2020, p. 6). Often migrants and refugees embed themselves in social contexts in which “neighbours” have important social and symbolic meanings and economic and material functions, including across the Middle East (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh, 2018). In Turkey, for example, men often converse on streets and in cafés, while women engage in unannounced visits, coordinate important life events such as weddings and funerals and provide mutual childcare. In this sense, non-family neighbours are expected to provide reciprocal care in absence of state-based welfare provision and have symbolic importance in terms of regulating and performing respectability (Rottmann, 2019; Alkan, 2020). Related to these moral norms surrounding neighbourliness, refugee reception in the Middle East is often framed within norms of hospitality towards strangers and guests (Chatty, 2010;

Mason, 2011; Fábos, 2015; Berg and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2018; Wagner, 2018; Carpi and Şenoğuz, 2019). Hospitality discourses in the region often draw on long-standing Islamic narratives. The Quranic story of “*Al-Ansar*”, the Medina community that welcomed Prophet Muhammad after his flight from Mecca, was an important self-designation both for Pakistanis receiving Afghan refugees in the 1980s (Shahrani, 1995), and Turkish Sunnis welcoming Syrians in the 2010s (Carpi and Şenoğuz, 2019). Both neighbourliness and hospitality refer to moral social and political worlds in which proximity, distance and boundaries are negotiated.

To summarise, the literature on refugee social relations argues the following points: First, refugees simultaneously draw on both old and new networks for instrumental support and survival and for the human need of affective connection and sociability. Second, refugees maintain and develop ties both locally in place and across borders, including to family. Existing networks and ties are reconfigured both in the process of displacement and through institutional refugee regimes. Connections can also be characterised by conflict, distancing or dissolution, especially if obligations and expectations for reciprocity remain unfulfilled. Finally, ties, whether to friends, family or neighbours, are political. Through the interaction with refugee regime institutions and bordering practices, both family and non-family relations are sites where power inequalities, patriarchal relations and social boundaries are negotiated. I will now return to how we can understand these social dynamics through the prism of time.

2.5 Social times: Relational temporalities and temporal relationships

Most literature on time and migration or displacement considers the relation between individual temporalities, or “human/biographical times”, and state temporalities, or “state times”. This approach obscures how refugees are parts of social networks, families and collectives, as shown by the literature on refugees’ social relations. Some authors have started to explore how individual migrant’s temporalities interrelate with the times and temporalities of families and other important relationships (Zhou, 2015; Acedera and Yeoh, 2019; Yeoh *et al.*, 2020), and how these relationalities are shaped by institutional temporal governance and temporal borders (Hurd, Donnan and Leutloff-Grandits, 2017; Drangland, 2020b). Research on life course temporalities implies that refugees’ temporal experiences of migration and settlement, and imaginations of pasts and futures are produced in relation to important kin and loved ones whose lives may move in other spaces and times, and in relation to broader social collectives, with their own temporalities, pasts, rhythms and future constructions (Sheller, 2019; Sakti and Amrith, 2022; Suerbaum and Richter-Devroe, 2022).

In addition, a small but fascinating literature, mostly within the context of urban labour migration, has explored how state temporal governance shapes the temporalities of transnational families (Zhou, 2015; Acedera and Yeoh, 2019; Yeoh *et al.*, 2020; Merla and Smit, 2023). In this literature, the social reproduction of “family” across borders is imbricated with the “recalibration” of intimate temporalities against temporalities imposed by state governance (Leutloff-Grandits, 2017; Drangland, 2020a; Yeoh *et al.*, 2023). Foreshadowing of this field of inquiry, Cwerner (2001) showed that time zone differences affect contact between Brazilians in London and

family members in Brazil. Transnational couples in Singapore and the Philippines work hard to create an "imaginary of nearness" by synchronising communication schedules to counter misaligned work schedules (Acedera and Yeoh, 2019, p. 264). Families negotiate expectations and decisions when and how to talk in the immediate present, and when to next see each other or live with each other in the medium to far future (Acedera and Yeoh, 2019). Struggles to align temporalities between family members and important relationships shape how migration is experienced in the present, and plays a role in decisions to move or settle, for example in order to be close to a potential or actual romantic partner (Robertson, 2021). Critical junctures and family events also influence decisions to leave, stay or return, such as "birth and death, sickness and health, and the milestones marked by birthdays, the start of the school year, examination time, graduation, anniversaries, weddings and the arrival of grandchildren" (Yeoh *et al.*, 2023, p. 20).

The ability to negotiate intimate asynchronicities across transnational spaces intersect with the temporalities of the state including temporary legal status, irregularity, and timings and spacings of economic participation (Merla and Smit, 2023; Yeoh *et al.*, 2023). Thus, migrants with temporary visa may adapt family plans to engage in intimate relationships (Merla and Smit, 2023). Others in insecure legal status and precarious employment may struggle to maintain transnational marriages, for example, as they cannot uphold a theoretical *possibility* to visit in case of conflict as wealthy migrants with secure status may (Acedera and Yeoh, 2019). Time also features in mediating conflict and power inequalities within transnational families, contributing to "friction" (Merla and Smit, 2023) or "rupture" (Yeoh *et al.*, 2020). Indonesian and Filipino families with mothers working abroad contest *and* reproduce

gendered and age-based temporal expectations regarding when and how *mothers* (and not fathers or grandparents) should be around to care for children (Yeoh *et al.*, 2020). Finally, Robertson's (2015, 2021) fascinating research on "chronomobilities" of young middle-class migrants highlights how temporal orders (time regimes) intersect with temporal meanings (time logics). She argues that migrants' "biographical times" are a constant negotiation between their individual plans and trajectories, social life course expectations, and the relationships with family members and friends both locally and in other places, in what she calls "shared/care time". These biographical and shared times are shaped by legal and political frameworks, and global capitalist relations, that influence whether, how and where people can cross borders and reside, and how they can access resources such as formal employment (Robertson, 2021).

For refugees, social temporalities have been foregrounded within the context of transnational separation and family reunion, for example when refugees (and citizens) need to jump high bureaucratic hurdles and wait for reunification (Brunner, Hyndman and Mountz, 2014; Phillimore *et al.*, 2023; Tiilikainen *et al.*, 2023; Charsley and Wray, [forthcoming]). Insecure legal status creates a sense of uncertainty about not only *when* but also *if* families may be able to unify in the future (Abrego, 2014; Palander *et al.*, 2023; Phillimore *et al.*, 2023; Tuzi, 2023). Family separation may also undermine expectations towards linear or calendar time, such as missing the birth or birthdays of children and grandchildren (Charsley and Wray, [forthcoming]). A sense of asynchronicity from the rhythms and expectations of family members living abroad can have intense affective dimensions, and lead to frustration, shame and sadness (Cwerner, 2001; Williams, 2006; Hurd, Donnan and Leutloff-Grandits, 2017; Acedera

and Yeoh, 2019; Papoutsi *et al.*, 2022). Finally, both norms of reciprocal care and respectability amongst migrant neighbours, and hospitality norms towards refugees, are imbued with narratives about the past and imply a relation to the future. Neighbourly relations rely on equality and durability while the refugee guest is expected to leave and thereby remains both different and temporary (Nowicka, 2021).

Considered together, the growing literatures on time, migration and forced displacement on the one hand, and on social networks and ties in displacement on the other, make three important points. First, experiences of migration, and in particular forced displacement, are connected to specific temporal experiences, or temporalities, that are characterised by existential uncertainty, often in the form of existential waiting and being “stuck” in the present. Second, these experiences are produced by and mediated through the temporalities of the state, which employs temporal governance practices like temporary status, and forced delays and accelerations, to distinguish between those who belong and those who do not - now and in the future, usually based on narratives of the past. Third, refugees’ experiences of displacement are relational. The process of migration through departure, arrival and settlement, albeit non-linear and fractious, is experienced in relation to family members, friends and other social connections both near and far, how their lives progress over time, as well as vague socially produced temporal norms of “appropriate” or “normal” life courses.

2.6 Gap and contribution

Building on these insights, these bodies of literature retain various gaps. First, we would benefit from understanding how *refugees* negotiate temporal governance as

members of social groups. The literature on social relations of refugees is mostly silent on questions of temporality; research on how temporalities of migration are socially negotiated has mostly focused on the usually negative or at best ambiguous effects of transnational family separation (Acedera and Yeoh, 2019; Yeoh *et al.*, 2020; Tiilikainen *et al.*, 2023). Neither has properly theorised how the *social nature of time* shapes experiences and negotiations of *displacement*, as a form of migration shaped by specific interactions with states.

Second, there is limited research on how various state contexts and frameworks *differ* in their use of various forms of temporal governance and temporal bordering, and what the social effects of these differences may be. So far, most literature on temporal governance and temporal bordering describes a more or less universal practice of how migration governance imposes existential uncertainty and waiting onto mobile persons (Ramsay, 2018; Stock, 2019; Jacobsen, Karlsen and Khosravi, 2020; Griffiths, 2021). Growing research shows how temporal governance has different effects *amongst* migrants according to nationality (Tazzioli, 2018; Axelsson, 2022; Fontanari, 2022b) or gender (Ramsay, 2018; Drangslund, 2020b), and how state temporalities are ambivalently resisted through migrant mobilities that insist on both the right to remain temporary and impermanent and claim rights associated with permanence (McNevin, 2013; Raeymaekers, 2019; Picozza, 2021). However, we know little about how differences within state frameworks and varying mechanisms of temporal governance may shape the temporal experiences of displacement, how these forms of temporal migration governance overlap and intersect with political economy and labour markets (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Gardiner Barber and Lem, 2018), and how they interact with and are transformed by the temporal

narratives and practices of migrants and citizens themselves. There is a need to understand more deeply the relationship between temporal governance and refugees' negotiation of social temporalities shaped by intersectional hierarchies such as gender, age, country of origin, legal status, and class.

Avenues of interest include understanding under which conditions temporal governance harms families, especially in the context of forced displacement. We know very little about the interplay between individual temporalities of displacement, such as the need for waiting for a status, and social temporalities of families, including how memories of family relations in the past and hopes for shared future shape the experiences of displacement. Moreover, there is limited research into how temporal governance shapes migrants' and refugees' social relations and shared experiences of time *beyond* family relations. Interpreting some of the literature on social integration and hospitality through the lens of time indicates that relations of migrants with acquaintances, friends and in public spaces, or refugees with "hosts", do have important temporal dimensions related to the dialectic of newness, temporariness and permanence. Thus, the transformation of newcomers as strangers or guests into neighbours implies a degree of durability of settlement and embedding in local moral, symbolic, political and economic orders with scope for changing these orders in the process (Elias and Scotson, 1994; Alkan and Maksudyan, 2020). These processes are imbued with tension (Nowicka, 2021) and shaped by histories of imperial racialisation, deindustrialisation and capitalist restructuring (Gardiner Barber and Lem, 2018). The question thus becomes when "newcomers" or "guests" stop being new and temporary and become established as neighbours, friends, or members of a "community".

2.7 Theoretical approach: social temporalities of displacement as multiscalar, dialogical and affective chronotopes

To address these gaps, I propose a theoretical approach that argues for a simultaneous understanding of how states use time to govern migrants and refugees, and the social effects of this temporal governance. We should consider the *interplay* of individual temporal experiences of refugees, state practices, and the social temporalities of refugees as *members of social groups*, both within immediate networks such as to family and friends, and within larger social collectives, like “communities” and “societies”. In this, I build upon insights that describe how the times of migration operate at multiple “timescales” (Robertson, 2015; Acedera and Yeoh, 2019). I bring this notion of multiscalearity together with literary theorist Bakhtin’s concept of the “chronotope”, which emphasises how time is inextricably bound to space, relational and dialogical, and affectively charged. Thus, I conceptualise the social temporalities of displacement as specific spatio-temporal configurations, emotionally coloured chronotopes in which human/biographical, shared, social and state times overlap and merge.

2.7.1 Understanding social temporalities of displacement as multiscalar

Earlier I have described how the sociology of time distinguishes between human/biographical time, shared times of micro-interactions, and state times. Each of these focus on a different sociological scale, albeit all are implicated with each other. Robertson (2015), and authors drawing on her work (Acedera and Yeoh, 2019; Merla and Smit, 2023), have theorised the temporalities of migration as multiscale phenomena, usually conceptualised as an interaction of micro-, meso-, and macro-timescales of migration (see also Meeus, 2012). These broadly correspond to

individual and shared experiences of time (micro), institutional frameworks like migration governance (meso), and systemic scales such as capitalism (macro). Similar to how I think about human/biographical time, a description of micro-timescales focuses on how migrants conceive of the rhythms, speeds, and temporal asynchronicities of their everyday lives (Merla and Smit, 2023) and how they envisage and practice their pasts, presents and futures in relation to life-course narratives (Robertson, 2021). “Meso-timescales” describe the temporalities of migration regimes and migration governance through temporary migration status and deportation (Robertson, 2015), and thus related to what I have subsumed under “temporal governance” and “state times” above. Finally, authors have usefully highlighted how micro- and meso-timescales are shaped by “macro-timescales” of longer-term global and national political economic dynamics, such as varying rhythms and cycles of capital production, financial flows, and labour demand (Robertson, 2015; Merla and Smit, 2023), and imperial histories and legacies of past migrations (Fabian, 1983; Mills, 2020; Kirtsoglou and Simpson, 2021).

The social, interactional and relational dimensions of time have mostly been neglected in their own right in these timescale theorisations. Recently, Yeoh et al. (2023, p. 4) “foreground the family as an intermediate *relational* timescale” (emphasis added). I follow their lead in conceptualising “social temporalities of displacement” as encompassing various timescales. As sketched in Figure 1, different individual, social and state timescales interact and mutually implicate each other. Individual experiences of refugees are characterised by particular temporalities (“human/biographical times”) comprising past memories, present experiences, past and present hopes, dreams and anxieties about the future. These individual

temporalities are socially produced and in turn shape in specific localities in interactions with others through “shared times” in interaction with family members (family times), neighbours (neighbour times) and friends (friend times), all of whom bring their own experiences, memories, and future imaginations. Temporalities of state governance, the political economy and the specific conditions of displacement in Frankfurt and Istanbul, as in “state times”, in turn mediate these individual and interactional times, if incompletely and ambivalently. At times, these various temporalities produced “collective times” in which mutual, uneven interactions of various timescales (individual, interactional and state) rendered refugees *qua* refugees as temporally “bordered” as a group (highlighted in brown, see Figure 1). While in many cases state temporalities were a backdrop to ordinary, everyday and individual experiences of time, I suggest that within these “collective refugee times”, the rhythms, speeds, durations and narratives of pasts, historical events and futures imposed by temporal governance became dominant and experiences of time characterised by both powerlessness and shared exclusion as refugees. Therefore, sometimes individual temporalities came to the fore, as is assumed in much of the literature on migrants’ waiting. In other times and spaces, shared times with others, state times, or collective times, were more relevant to understanding refugee experiences and how they were shaped by temporal power.

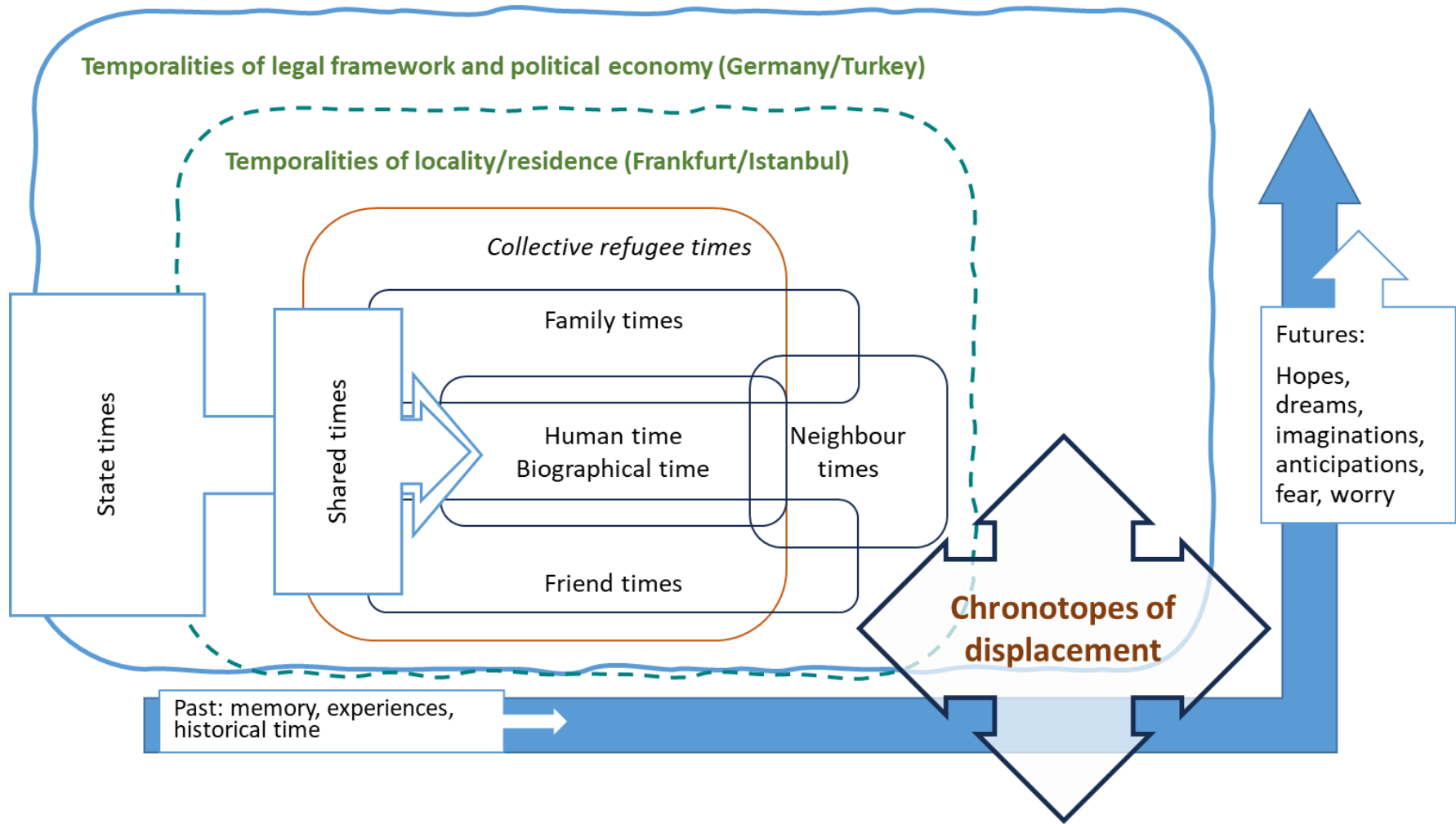


Figure 1 Schematic view of theoretical framework

2.7.2 *Chronotopes as social, dialogical and affective spatio-temporal configurations*

All these different spatio-temporal domains are mutually constituted, overlapping, contain specific symbolic, material and social characteristics, and are rooted in space. Authors use different terms to describe the mutual constitution of time and space e.g. timespace (May and Thrift, 2001), timescape (Adam, 2008) or space-time (Massey, 1994, 2005). I draw on Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope to describe how individual human and biographical time, shared times and state times intersect and interact (Bakhtin, 1981; see also Landau, 2021). For literary critic Bakhtin, the notion of the chronotope describes "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84). Bakhtin is concerned with understanding how literary genres differ from each other, and how they have developed since antiquity. In his conception, genres and their narratives differ in unique ways in how they engage with time as the dominant characteristic of the chronotope, such as the relevance of past histories and memories in characters' actions, the role of the hero's movement across space and time, questions of simultaneity and rhythmicity of various protagonists, and whether and how historical time such as real events become relevant for the story. Thus, some literary genres and narratives focus on the "biographical time" of the individual hero (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 91); others emphasise the "everyday time" of rhythmical regularity of social life (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 111), or the "historical time" of transformation and large-scale events (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 104).

Compared to other understandings of the mutual constitution of time and space, I find Bakhtin's notion of chronotopes useful to describe the interaction of the various temporalities of displacement for three reasons. First, he highlights how past and futures fold into the present in particular localities. Bakhtin argues that "some

minimum sense of time's fullness is inevitable [...] If taken outside its relationship to past and future, the present loses its integrity, breaks down into isolated phenomena and objects, making of them a mere abstract conglomeration" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 146). In this sense, individual and social temporalities achieve meaning through their location in particular places that in turn contain specific pasts and futures. The experience of human/biographical time, and whether and how times are experienced as shared, will depend on localised spatial histories and narratives, and the particular spatio-temporal configurations produced in their interaction.

Second, Bakhtin describes literary chronotopes as *dialogical*, and thus alludes to my understanding of time-space configurations as relational and interactional. In Preen's (2006, p. 69) words: "While time and space are always intrinsically connected, *how* they are connected and how this connection governs meaning varies, making the chronotope a social, cultural, and ideological construction." Bakhtin highlights how protagonists struggle to negotiate biographies and individual lives against and within social times: "Out of the common time of collective life emerge separate individual life-sequences, individual fates" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 214). Importantly, not only literature but *life itself* is chronotopical. Literary narratives "enter the world of the author, of the performer, and the world of the listeners and readers. And all these worlds are chronotopic as well" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250). Thus, literary chronotopes are themselves multiple and they fold in and engage with, are contained within and overlap with chronotopes of individual readers and authors, and social chronotopes of social groups and societies. As Blommaert and De Fina (2017) argue, identities are chronotopical: when people act in groups their cultural practices depend on who is around in space and when interactions take place. This "principle of

chronotopicity” means that time and space are intimately connected with and produced by social lives and social relations (Allan, 1994, p. 208).

Third, Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope usefully points to the affective quality of time: “temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and *always coloured by emotions and values*” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 242). Chronotopes as social temporalities have positive or negative emotional qualities that shape how pasts, futures and presents are understood, and how rhythms and speeds *feel*. This resonates with Bryant and Knight’s (2019) argument for whom collective future orientations, such as anticipation, expectation, potentiality or hope, differ because of varying positive or negative affects attached to them. Similarly, Das’ (2007) research on collective violence and memory in post-Partition India has shown how memories and past experiences of *family* violence were spoken about, whereas collective violence and atrocities during Partition were unspeakable and silenced. In her analysis, this depended on their respective “feeling of pastness” (Das, 2007, p. 97), that is, an affective engagement in which time was given agency to transform the experience of violence into something that was *past*, and not ongoing in the present: “when violence is sayable, time can do its work of reframing or rewriting the memories of violence” (Das, 2007, p. 90). When past violence could not be spoken about, it was not yet *felt* as past but rather as frozen and ongoing into the present.

In the context of human mobility, identities have been described as chronotopic, that is, formed, reformed, mobilised and practiced in specific time-space configurations (Blommaert, 2017; Blommaert and De Fina, 2017). Diasporas form through shared understandings of a particular place, elsewhere, in a particular time - loss in the past and potentially aspirations of return in the future (Pereen, 2006).

Recently, Landau used the idea of the chronotope to describe how migrants from Africa are both *physically* and *narratively* excluded from a future European space, imagined as dominant and white, through a “chronotope of containment” that designates the appropriate place for Africans permanently in Africa. Moreover, migrants in South Africa cannot participate in a Black South African “chronotope of dislocated futures” in which collective grievances of apartheid are mobilised within frustrated expectations for better lives and justice (Landau, 2021). Landau argues "where chronotopes do not overlap or allow some degree of spatio-temporal alignment, shared principles for engagement become elusive. Without this foundation for engagement, there is little chance of subjectively share metrics or methods of justice" (Landau, 2021, p. 659). As a result, while shared understandings and meanings of time contribute to connection, migrants’ chronotopical lives, with their own pasts and futures, are often separated from any potentially shared visions of the future.

I use Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope as an inroad to analyse the social, dialogical and affective qualities of the temporalities of displacement in specific spatio-temporal configurations where individual and shared times of refugees, their families and other important connections interact with state temporalities (Figure 1). As will become clear, these chronotopes describe the specificities of how local conditions interact with legal frameworks and political-economic conditions, and refugees’ negotiations of the temporal characteristics of these specificities. In doing so I make three points: First, experiences of time in displacement are not individual but social and relational experiences. Individual refugees negotiate the interplay of their own temporalities, as rooted in past experiences with family and friends, with

those of important others as well as normative times of new localities. This produces asynchronicities and friction, as individual or social pasts cease to count and futures are not materialised, but also possibilities for novelty and experimentation. Second, the overlap of temporal rhythms and structures in particular periods and localities, through legal statuses and economic situations, with the social temporalities of refugees create specific spatio-temporal configurations, or “chronotopes”, in which time achieves affective meaning. Third, within these chronotopes, the need for a social life is negotiated within temporal mechanisms of power. Inclusion and exclusion work through incorporation into or denial from dominant and hegemonic temporalities. The interactions between the various social timescales mean that these chronotopes of displacement also contain opportunities to make autonomous, new temporalities, or counter-temporalities, through affective connections and the sharing of time.

3 METHODOLOGY

The thesis draws on critical, interpretive, and feminist epistemological traditions. As such, the research questions outlined in the introduction (Chapter 1) were addressed with an empirical strategy employing multiple qualitative methods in multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork within the transnational social field of Frankfurt and Istanbul (see Figure 2 for an overview of research questions and methods). In what follows I first describe my epistemological approach, followed by an outline of the empirical strategy, methods and analytical approach. I then discuss ethical concerns encountered during research, including researcher positionality and risks that shaped my fieldwork.

3.1 Epistemology

The project is epistemologically grounded within a critical interpretivist framework, drawing on intersectional feminist and relational epistemology (Haraway, 1988; Emirbayer, 1997; Hartsock, 2010; Narayan, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Interpretivism is an “anti-naturalist” ontological and epistemological position that understands human subjectivity, experiences and material reality not as objective facts to be discovered but as rooted in individual and collective narratives, cultural practices and historical change (Bevir and Blakely, 2018). Against “methodological individualism” (Kofman *et al.*, 2011, p. 16) or “ontological atomism” (Fay, 1996, p. 30), I also follow relational sociologists in paying attention to how knowledge, reality, social phenomena and power are intersubjectively and relationally produced, constructed, or practiced, in symbolic, communicative and practical interaction between persons, and between persons and their material and discursive environments (Emirbayer, 1997; Mische, 2011). Social phenomena are not fixed and eternal but rather

procedural and changing, while rooted in past practices and often implying a certain notion of the future (Tavory, 2018). These social constructions include both the concepts that I use in this thesis, such as “displacement”, “refugee”, and “state governance”, as well as the geographical designations, such as “Middle East”, “Europe”, “Germany-Turkey” ((see e.g. UNC CMEIS, 2022). Researchers, just as other participants in a discursive field, actively participate in constructing these social phenomena, by interpreting, naming and thereby shaping the situations we encounter. I am critical of “groupism”, a position that attributes individual behaviour and meanings to an ascribed identity, such as being a “refugee”, or belonging to a defined national group such as “German”, “Syrian” or “Turkish” (Nowicka and Ryan, 2015; Yalaz and Zapata-Barrero, 2018). In adopting an interpretivist relational epistemology, I seek to take seriously how individual interlocutors understood and made sense of their situation, while relating their meaning-making to those of other interlocutors, political discourses, and larger local and global histories.

My epistemological approach shapes how I conceive of social temporalities of displacement. As Denzin and Giardina highlight, interpretivism lends itself to explicitly engage with the temporalities of research: “We are all interpretive bricoleurs stuck in the present working against the past as we move into a politically charged and challenging future” (Denzin and Giardina, 2011, p. 12). I am interested in the multi-layered, multi-faceted and negotiated expressions of temporality in various political, economic and social spheres and scales of social life. A focus on time and temporality centres change, contingency and mutability which “involves a quest to understand the dynamics of relationships, interdependencies, and embeddedness. It seeks to connect process to structures, relate macro and micro perspectives of social

change and to understand the nature of their interpenetration” (Adam, 2008, p. 4). Therefore, I centre narratives, experiences and practices of refugees and non-refugees relating to a/synchronicity, tempos and rhythms, and how pasts relate to presents and futures, as constructed in interaction between people and between people and state frameworks.

I am also inspired by critical and intersectional feminist epistemologies that draw attention to how individuals and communities, including researchers and interlocutors, live through and practice unequal power relations rooted in global histories of patriarchy, capitalist exploitation, and empire and colonisation (Haraway, 1988; Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 1990; Yuval-Davis, 2011; Torres and Nyaga, 2021). Researching and writing about a topic like displacement is a political endeavour from the conception to write up (Denzin and Giardina, 2011), and according to Haraway (1988) knowledges are always plural, partial and “situated” in structured power relations. Intersectional theorists highlight how knowledge production should take into account various axes of inequality (gender, legal status, age, class and many others) and investigate how and when positions and identities are marginalised, or rendered invisible and unimportant (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 1990; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Researchers inherently privilege some viewpoints over others by virtue of their positionality, background and choices made during the research process. In seeking to minimise epistemic harm, feminist researchers seek to continuously reflect how our background, design, methods and research practice influence research outcomes and our collaborators. Reflexivity is important in at least two domains: representation (how is a phenomenon represented towards whom) and positionality (who researches and writes, and why). Reflexivity, in this sense, is “a

deconstructive exercise for locating the intersections of author, other, text, and world, and for penetrating the representational exercise itself” (Macbeth, 2001, p. 35).

3.1.1 Representation

Research on and with refugees in the past often represent “refugee experience” as vulnerable, distinct and unitary (Malkki, 1995b). The political claims that displaced people have made and continue to make are thereby taken out of their historical context and depoliticised (Malkki, 1996). Similarly, postcolonial and decolonial scholars have critiqued social research that is conducted on poor others in the so-called Global South and the Middle East from the safe vanguard of Western academia as continuing an intellectual lineage that (re)produces colonial hierarchies of economic and imperial power and violence (Said, 1979; Skenderovic and Späti, 2019; Torres and Nyaga, 2021). Representations of non-white migrants in Europe and elsewhere often continue to employ racialised and gendered language and imagery that bifurcates “the West” and other societies along a temporal and hierarchical axis of civilised Euromodernity vs. the “traditional”, uncivilised and backwards East/Muslim/Other (McClintock, 1995; Mills, 2020). Similarly, research on asylum and migration to the Global North often fails to question how contemporary nation states and border control are rooted in colonial legacies of empire, and labour control after slavery (Bhambra, 2017; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018; Sharma, 2020b, 2020a). Thus, racist demarcations between desirable and legitimate cross-border movers (usually white and highly educated) and undesirables (poor, brown and Muslim) are inadvertently reproduced by representing migrants as essentially different from non-migrants (Dahinden, 2016; Amelina, 2022).

These representational practices also have a long history within the transnational social field of Germany-Turkey, although axes of domination and subordination are complex and muddled. Just as the Ottoman Empire was a part of German imperial economic and political desires (Kaiser, 2012), German writers were actively engaged in creating “orientalising” representations of “Turks” and “Muslims” as backwards, traditional and hypersexualised (Said, 1979), representations that are echoed in discourses about both Turkish migrants and refugees from the Middle East today (Weber, 2016; Mueller, 2018). At the same time, “Turkey [has become one of the] countries that occupy an ambivalent space between postcolonial and colonial agency” (Çapan and Zarakol, 2017, p. 195). Contemporary Turkish nationalists, including President Erdoğan, employ anti-imperial and anti-racist rhetoric while the Turkish state is engaged in neocolonial military intervention in Syria and ongoing “internal colonialism” through Turkification and Islamification of Kurdish, Alevis and other ethno-religious minorities (Çapan and Zarakol, 2017). Similar to Germany, discursive constructions in Turkish media and political and public discourse represent Syrians and Afghans as “backward”, “traditional” and hypersexualised (Onay-Coker, 2019; Ozduzen, Korkut and Ozduzen, 2020; Balta, Elç and Sert, 2022).

In my thesis, I adopt a humanistic stance that takes self-representations seriously and critically reflects upon stereotypical representations and state categories to “investigate what [state-differentiated categories do] for theory, politics and practice” (Anderson, 2019). For example, in order to understand how and why the category of “refugee” is empirically relevant (Dahinden, 2016), I sought to incorporate the perspectives of non-refugees, and understand whether or not “refugeeness” was relevant for participants at all. While perhaps not a fully “decolonial” approach, often

built upon collaboration and sharing of financial resources (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), I sought to avoid harm and deepening epistemic violence (Clark-Kazak, 2017).

3.1.2 *Positionality*

In addition to questions of representation, reflexivity incorporates notions of positionality, the understanding that researchers are not objective observers but come with baggage that shapes research design, conduct and write up. It has become common practice to include positionality statements in articles that list to what extent the researcher shares “identities” with research participants – or not. Sometimes these statements resemble confessions that absolve the researcher of further reflection and ethical conduct. Instead of creating better research practice, they legitimise research outcomes and imbue authority to the author (Pillow, 2003). As Spivak (1988, p. 6) argues “making positions transparent does not make them unproblematic”. Limiting reflexivity to positionality statements can also risk reinforcing the binaries, practices of othering and power hierarchies they set out to undermine (see also Macbeth, 2001; Pillow, 2003). Thus, I may describe myself and be read as a white, middle-class, relatively young woman. I would also identify as “German”, given that I am usually seen as such, despite a family history of migration and displacement across the Polish-German-Salisian borderlands⁵. Nevertheless, in describing myself in these terms, I risk reifying the categories of class, gender, age and nationhood. I conceive of positionality not as essential features of individuals or groups but as relational practices which change according to context and interaction, both through self-mobilisation and ascription (Folkes, 2023). My position within

⁵ My grandfathers’ family spoke German and Salisian; my grandmother’s family was Polish. My mother came to Germany from Poland in the 1960s as “expellees”/*Aussiedler*.

hierarchical categories like gender, age and “race” is not automatic; rather, power is situationally enacted and reproduced.

I do not deny the importance of positional power. As Behar (1996, p. 13) argues, we need to understand “what aspects of the self are the *most important filters* through which one perceives the world, and more particularly, the topic being studied” (emphasis added). In the Germany section of my fieldwork, I was usually seen as part of the majority society, whether by refugees, non-refugees and stakeholders. Many interlocutors asked for my opinion and “expertise” about “German society”. As a white person with a German passport, my belonging to “Germany” was never in question. I did not need to fear the German police. Being a woman meant that I could enter the homes of female refugees more easily than, say, my male research assistant Ibrahim, if the household included observing Muslima who did not wear hijab when I was around. In the Turkey section of my fieldwork, I was still seen as “German”, which often resulted in conversations about relatives or friends who lived there, whether life was better there, and whether it was worth leaving Turkey. My class background made it easier to develop lasting connections to educated and ambitious Syrians and Turks who felt they were being held back by the drudgery of the Turkish labour market. At the same time, in Turkey the authoritarian context was more relevant to my research than gender politics. I was more careful about my own and participants’ safety, including in data protection, where to meet and what I shared about my own background. I was often vulnerable and sometimes afraid. Throughout the thesis, I try to reflect upon how these relational practices of positions and emotions shaped my analysis.

3.2 Multi-sited connected case study in Frankfurt and Istanbul

I chose a qualitative ethnographic multi-sited case study approach in two connected urban localities, Frankfurt and Istanbul (see Figure 2). According to Yin (2018), a case study is an in-depth exploration of a location or theoretical concern in which the population or phenomenon of interest is not separate from the context. To understand social relations of refugees with relatives, other refugees and non-refugees in both their places of residence and across borders, and how these were shaped by temporal governance, I first conducted qualitative fieldwork in several temporary shelters in Frankfurt from May to September 2021. In a second stage, I conducted fieldwork in Istanbul from October to December 2021, starting with connections (relatives and other contacts) of refugees with whom I had talked to in Frankfurt. In both cities, I conducted narrative interviews with refugees and non-refugees, and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders involved in refugee reception. I also conducted some ethnographic participant observation and analysed documents that could illuminate the structure and function of temporal governance. Throughout I explored how time features in narratives and practices of social relations of refugees and local communities locally as well as across borders, such as in temporary legal statuses, crisis events, memories of past displacements, or imaginations of joint futures.

One source of inspiration was Mazzucato's (2009) simultaneous matched sample methodology in which the topic of interest is simultaneously studied through the transnational networks of research participants. This methodology "uses a sample of informants who are linked to each other by being part of the same social network and studying these informants in a simultaneous fashion so that information obtained

from one informant in one locality can be immediately linked up with that obtained from another elsewhere” (Mazzucato, 2009, p. 216). As a lone researcher I conducted fieldwork mostly consecutively, not simultaneously. Moreover, some but not all participants in Frankfurt were “matched” to another participant in Istanbul and vice versa; in both locations I also used entry points beyond the initial participants’ networks to identify interlocutors. I therefore call my approach a “transnational connected case study” in which the two fieldsites were imperfectly *matched* through the networks of interlocutors but still *connected* within the same transnational social field of Germany-Turkey.

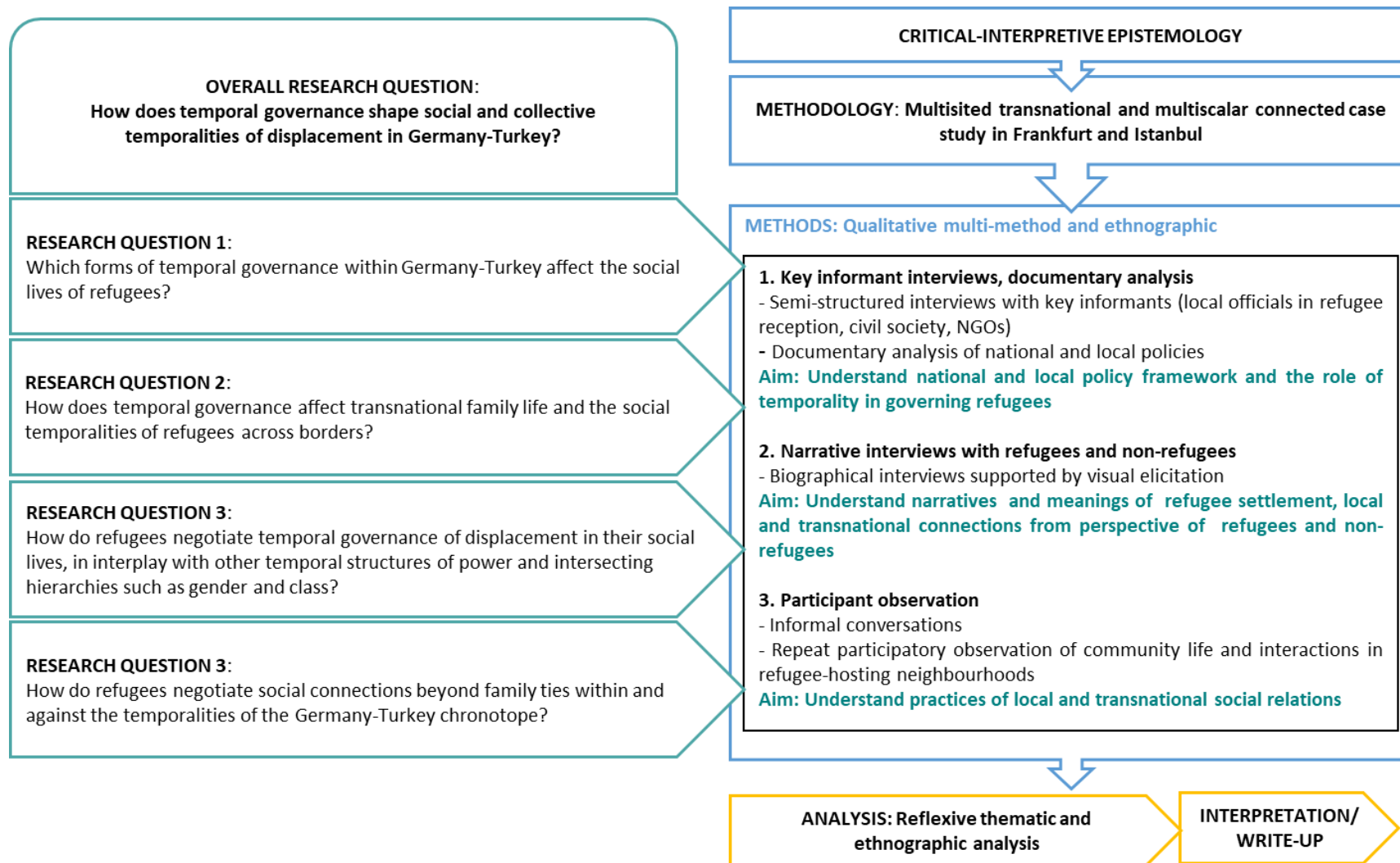


Figure 2 Methodological framework

Multi-sited field research has become a common approach in anthropology, sociology and migration studies, to better understand global networks and cross-border mobility of people and goods (Marcus, 1995; Falzon, 2009b; King, 2018). The idea is to move away from the assumption of distinct local communities with clearly defined boundaries and static cultural practices. Instead, the fieldworker seeks to “follow” her research interest across borders, including goods, discourses, people, or conflicts (Marcus, 1995). Field boundaries are defined by the networks under study; constructing good-enough boundaries, or “satisficing”, may become a significant part of the research process itself (Falzon, 2009a, p. 11; Gallo, 2009). In my approach, I focused both on local connections of refugees and on transnational connections between one metropolitan area in Germany hosting refugees, Frankfurt, and relatives and friends of those refugees, in turn living in Turkey.

Multi-sited fieldwork has been criticised for trading depth for breadth, and quality for superficiality (Candea, 2009). In my view, a multi-sited and transnational approach to study social relations in displacement had at least three advantages: First, against linear teleological assumptions of refugee and migrant integration in which refugees arrive, settle and then “integrate” or embed themselves into local networks, mobility trajectories are usually multiple, interrupted and embedded in complex transnational social networks (King, 2018). Through the transnational approach I could heed the actual lifeworlds of interlocutors in connected “transnational social fields” which were shaped by various regulatory frameworks, institutions and actors (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004; Glick Schiller, 2005). As I explain in Chapter 4, a substantial number of recent refugees in Germany are people from the Middle East who have come through Turkey as the main immigration and transit hub in the region (see Figure 3 Germany-Turkey transnational social field

). Although statistics are unavailable, many maintain some connections there to family members or friends who have settled there or have not (yet) moved on (Brücker, Rother and Schupp, 2016; Bayramoğlu and Lünenborg, 2018; Rottmann and Kaya, 2021). In my study, most refugee participants maintained transnational social networks to family members (e.g. parents, siblings, children, cousins, uncles and aunts), both in the country of origin, such as Syria or Afghanistan, and spread across different places, including within Turkey, Sweden, the USA, the Gulf, and Iran (see Figure 3 Germany-Turkey transnational social field

for a schematic representation of a typical interlocutors’ social network). As I paid attention to the networks located in Frankfurt and Istanbul (marked in red in Figure 3 Germany-Turkey transnational social field

), I could make sense of the variety of social connections and associated temporalities relevant to interlocutors themselves.

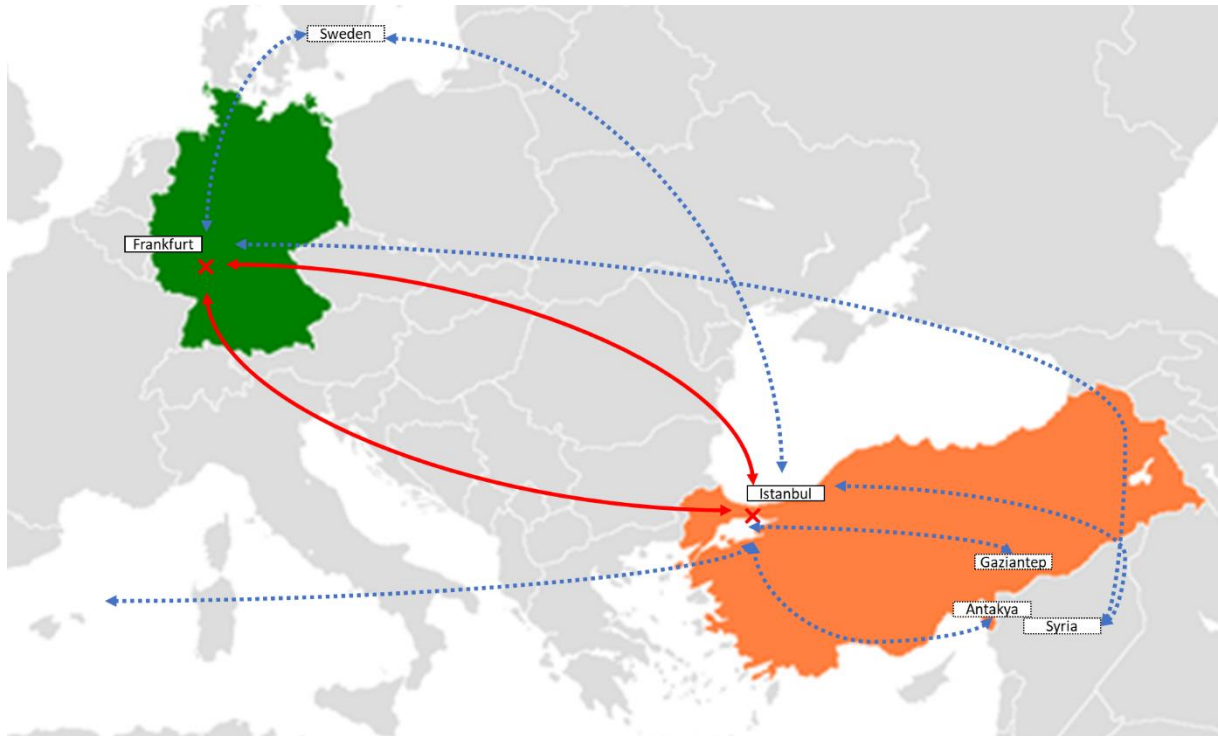


Figure 3 Germany-Turkey transnational social field

Second, these transnational networks connecting Germany and Turkey build upon a long-standing existing transnational social field through the German-Turkish history of labour, forced and family migration (Bilecen, Çatır and Orhon, 2015; Koca, 2019). “Turkish” migrants in Germany and “Germany” as a destination country play important roles in both states in narrative constructions of nationhood, belonging and in/exclusion (see also Chapter 4), all of which affect refugee reception today.

Third, a transnational and multi-sited approach allowed a differentiated insight into how national frameworks and local reception conditions shaped individual and collective experiences of displacement, including how social relations were built and maintained. The intention was not to provide a direct “objective” comparison of two

country cases based on pre-defined criteria (cf. FitzGerald, 2012; Jacobs, 2018). Rather, comparison was achieved through the interlocutors' understandings of how their locality of residence shaped their social connections, either because they themselves had lived in different places or because they had discussed differences with friends or family. Considering refugee settlement in different localities thus helped to critically interrogate *whether* and *how* national frameworks, local reception conditions and individual and social factors, shaped refugees' experiences and practices of social relations, and analyse the sorts of temporalities they produce. In this I sought to avoid "methodological nationalism" that uncritically naturalises the nation-state, its borders and a territorial view of "society" and assumes rather than investigates nationhood and legal citizenship as the core differentiating factor within and between people (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002; Amelina and Faist, 2012).

The transnational connected case study approach also usefully fit within a research framework attuned to temporality that conceives of the site not as spatially but rather temporally bounded (Dalsgaard and Nielsen, 2013). In this I attempted to take Fabian's (Fabian, 1983) argument seriously to allow for "coevalness" of researcher and researched, combining the notion of *simultaneity*, sharing experiences at the same time while not necessarily sharing spaces, and *contemporaneity*, living through the same times without necessarily sharing experiences. I approached the fieldsite not as a bounded space or place but rather a relationally produced network of social practices, discourses and material objects that were constituted in space and time. In this I was inspired by feminist geographers (Massey, 1992, 2005), anthropologists (Feldman, 2012; Çaglar and Glick Schiller, 2018), as well as relational sociologists (Desmond, 2014), all of whom conceive of

“locality” as produced through social relationships. For example, Massey (2005, p. 151) suggests that place is practiced through “throwntogetherness” and a question of living together in multiplicity which is constantly re-negotiated through consensus and conflict. Similarly, Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009, 2011) advocate for a multiscalar view of “locality” which takes into account how localised social practices, governance frameworks at municipal and national levels, and global forces such as capitalist restructuring are implicated in local politics and practices. Cities are good starting points for research on migration and displacement, as sites where migrants and non-migrants share these forces in various ways. Although I conceive of the fieldsite as temporal and networked, in practice I conducted research in two connected cities as localities where most social interactions took place, networks were made and social temporalities were lived.

The empirical strategy of connecting Germany with Turkey, and Frankfurt with Istanbul, was a result of both theoretical and pragmatic choices. In 2019 when embarking on my PhD programme I had set out to conduct ethnographic research on neighbourhood relations of refugees and hosts in different locations in Turkey. I had worked in a humanitarian assistance project with Syrian refugees under temporary protection in Turkey from 2016 to 2018 and intended to delve deeper and more critically into some of the issues that I had observed in practice, such as negotiations of boundaries, practices of hospitality and distinctions between “protracted displacement” and “integration”. However, from the beginning of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic affected how I was able to conduct research. Lockdowns and travel restrictions made it increasingly uncertain whether I was going to be able to conduct in-person research at all, let alone in Turkey. Many peers turned to conducting

research online. Nevertheless, for my purposes and interests, empirical research has multisensorial, atmospheric and affective qualities that rely on “being there”, in-person and face-to-face contact, “an attunement of the senses, of labours, and imaginaries to potential ways of living in or living through things” (Stewart, 2011, p. 452).

Refusing to give up entirely both on in-person research and on Turkey as a case study, I redesigned my project to initially conduct face-to-face fieldwork in Frankfurt am Main, where I was then based, with a reduced number of persons and some participant observation conducted mostly outdoors, with the *potential* to expand to Turkey. With the matched sample approach, I could identify and conduct research with individuals who had journeyed via Turkey and then leave open whether I would talk to family members and friends who had stayed there either digitally or in-person at a later stage (Mazzucato, 2009). The COVID-19 pandemic also meant that the ethics approval process was dragged out as university staff were prioritising processing ethics applications of ongoing research projects. This delayed the beginning of my fieldwork in Germany to the middle of 2021. The delay meant that, in combination with the emergence of the COVID vaccine, the pandemic was slowing down by late 2021, and I was able to conduct in-person fieldwork in Turkey after all.

As described in further detail below (3.5 Case selection and recruitment), amongst 13 refugees that I interviewed in Germany, six had family members living in Turkey. I connected to four of them, all of whom lived in the Western European neighbourhoods of Istanbul (neither of them knew each other). In line with the principle of “follow the people” (Marcus, 1995), I decided to focus the Turkey leg of my fieldwork on the locality of Istanbul. In turn, 16 of 17 Syrian interlocutors living in

Turkey had family members or friends living in Germany, including some living in Frankfurt or adjacent cities. While I did not end up conducting further research with their connections due to time constraints, their perspectives on Germany informed my analysis in turn (see Chapter 6).

3.3 Politics of time in the fieldsites: Frankfurt and Istanbul

As laid out in more detail in Chapter 4, temporal governance works as a bordering device to keep refugees outside “society”. The mechanisms are different in Germany and Turkey. In Germany temporal governance is mainly enacted through temporary status and temporary housing, while in Turkey temporal governance works through an interplay of legal uncertainty and economic precarity. Frankfurt am Main and Istanbul are interesting urban localities to study these mechanisms. Frankfurt heavily relies on temporary shelters to house asylum seekers, recognised refugees and, increasingly, EU and German citizens, allowing for insights into questions of how temporary vs permanent status shapes social lives, how refugees build and experience social relations while living in overcrowded but isolated spaces, and how relationships are negotiated. In Istanbul, economic opportunities overlap with exploitation and irregularity due to the mobility restrictions of the temporary protection regime. These conditions provide insight into how questions of transience and permanence are negotiated and lived in networks.

3.3.1 Frankfurt

In Frankfurt am Main, I conducted research in two purpose-built prefab temporary shelters, in the neighbourhoods that surrounded the shelters, as well as in the broader urban locality. The politics of refugee settlement in Frankfurt were strongly shaped by legal obligations on refugees to reside in temporary shelters, overlapping

with local conditions of the housing market which prevented shelter residents from moving out. While many residents do find private housing eventually, I focused on temporary shelters to understand these social dynamics while refugees become embedded in a new locality.

Frankfurt is a wealthy city but struggles to provide adequate housing for asylum seekers and refugees. Between 2015 and 2021, before the Ukraine war, about 8,000 refugees and asylum were assigned to live in Frankfurt as part of the Federal distribution system. The largest national groups were from Afghanistan (34%), Syria (20%) and Eritrea (20%) (Stadt Frankfurt, 2022a). As an employee of the municipality recounted, by 2021 about half continued to live in temporary and collective accommodation (GK01). There are two reasons for this. First, Frankfurt suffers from an extremely tight rental market. Only 0.3% of flats were available for rent in 2021 (Destatis, 2023a). The social housing stock has been decimated after decades of commodification and privatisation since the late 1980s (Sautter, 2005; Schönig, 2020). The number of subsidised flats continues to shrink while demand has been consistently growing (Schönig, 2020; Stadt Frankfurt, 2022b). Only 15% of eligible applicants were provided with social housing in 2020, down from 43% in 2000 (Stadt Frankfurt, 2022b). Just as in Berlin (Soederberg, 2019), this shortage of subsidised housing has effects on how refugees settle in the municipality. Combined with stigma against government-funded renters and racial bias in the private rental market (El-Kayed and Hamann, 2018), refugees struggle to find both social and private housing. Some are obliged to live in collective shelters due to unclear residency status, but most are actually eligible and waiting for social housing.

The municipality was unprepared to provide shelter to increasing numbers of refugees from about 2013. Until this point, the municipality had not maintained dedicated shelters for asylum seekers since the late 1990s. Instead, it opted for a public-private partnership with the private sector and welfare organisations. An NGO would rent out hotels or private flats on behalf of the municipality as temporary shelters in which asylum seekers were housed together with homeless persons with German and EU citizenship (Interview with municipality employee, GK01). Thus, the municipality would retain flexibility in responding to fluctuating numbers of asylum seekers, ostensibly avoid segregation of asylum seekers, and maintain its commitment to a privatised housing market. This public-private partnership model could not provide sufficient housing during the “refugee crisis” of 2015, however. As a result, in 2015, an executive unit was established to coordinate the management of refugee accommodation. Some refugees and asylum seekers continued to be housed in privately rented accommodation, but most now resided in purposeful temporary shelters run by subcontracted welfare organisations. These included emergency shelters in gyms and office spaces, converted municipal buildings, or newly established prefab or container shelters. In 2020 the municipality again opened these ostensibly temporary shelters to accommodate homeless persons with EU or German citizenship, many themselves racialised, indicating how displacement is an ongoing process affecting marginalised persons from various backgrounds (Vigh and Bjarnesen, 2016; Ramsay, 2020b).

The municipality of Frankfurt distinguished between different types of temporary shelters for refugees, which varied significantly in what stakeholders called “quality” (Interview with municipality employee, GK01). Large-scale emergency shelters

(*Notunterkünfte*) were characterised by overcrowding and lack of privacy such as shared bathroom facilities and camp beds in cubicles. Refugee residents usually referred to these with the English term “camp”⁶, directly drawing on the notion of other emergency refugee camps in the Global South (see also Kreichauf, 2018). *Übergangsunterkünfte*, “transitional accommodations”, were designed for mid-term residence. Refugee residents generally called these “*Heim*” (“home”), a German term also used in residential care for youth and the elderly. Some of these were of “medium” quality: single residents shared rooms but with fewer people; families shared one private room; bathrooms and kitchens were communal. Finally, “high-quality” accommodation included purpose-built complexes “almost” to the same infrastructural standard as social housing (Interview with manager of local welfare association (GK10)). Families were housed in small flats with private bathrooms and kitchens; single refugees shared rooms in bigger “flatshares” with private bathrooms and kitchens. Compared to regular social housing, each resident was still allocated a smaller space (see Chapter 7 for a discussion of the effects of this policy).

Acknowledging the inability to provide uniform standards, the municipality used a trajectory system, referred to as *Kaskadensystem* (cascading system), in which refugees were first assigned to a shelter with lower standards and then eventually move “up” to accommodation with better standards. Both shelters that I conducted research in were *Übergangsunterkünfte* of “higher quality”; I had to abandon research in one which was of middling standards (see section 3.4.3 below).

⁶ The German translation of refugee camp is “Flüchtlingslager” but this is rarely used in official discourse.

All temporary shelters were temporary in multiple senses. First, residents were supposed to live there temporarily until they found their own places to live. Residents held a variety of temporary legal statuses, and some were EU or German citizens. Some were obliged to reside in a temporary shelter by virtue of their status; most were legally allowed to move out but had not yet found a flat on the private or social housing market. As a result, refugees usually resided in them much longer than they had to. The duration of residence in a temporary shelter amongst my interlocutors ranged from 6 months to several years.

Second, shelters were temporarily established on renewable contracts between the municipality and shelter providers, creating uncertainty whether the shelter would continue to operate, contracted to a different provider or reclaimed for a different purpose (Interview with a manager of a welfare organisation that runs temporary shelters, GK10). While the temporary establishment of shelters corresponded with the crisis logic of 2015, by 2021 the municipality had invested significantly in the shelters while retaining their outwardly temporary appearance (GK10). The municipality tried to provide better quality housing and was keen on ending emergency shelters (Municipality employee, GK01). At the same time, it refrained from investing in municipal social housing infrastructure that would have allowed refugees to live independently. Thus, housing continued to be governed by a logic of exceptionality and exclusion of undesired bodies, both of refugees and undesirable EU and German citizens (Mountz, 2013). Through this multiplicity of temporariness, shelters were ideal sites to provide insights into the role of time in governing the social relations of refugees. I sought to understand how refugee residents viewed

their temporary residence in relation to how they embedded socially, and how their temporariness was seen by other local residents in turn.

3.3.2 *Istanbul*

Istanbul is the largest city in Turkey and its economic powerhouse. With almost 16 million inhabitants and 19% of the population, it generates 30% of Turkey's GDP (TUIK, 2022, 2023b). Located on both sides of the Bosphorus strait, Istanbul is extremely diverse, both culturally and economically. Refugees and other migrants, including Syrians, Afghans and individuals from other places, move to Istanbul to find employment (Icduygu and Osseiran, 2022), because of established networks, diversity in lifestyles (Ayhan Kaya, 2016; Kılıçaslan, 2016; Biehl, 2020; Rottmann and Kaya, 2021) and because of its location in the West of Turkey as a point of departure for migrants intending to journey to Europe (Interview with human rights association, TK02).

At least three characteristics of Istanbul are relevant to understand how temporal governance shapes social relations of refugees. First, the ambiguities of the “strategic temporality” inherent in the Turkish refugee regime come to the fore in Istanbul (Şahin Mencütek *et al.*, 2023, see also Chapter 4). Officially, about 540,000 Syrians under temporary protection live in Istanbul, 16% of all Syrians registered in Turkey (PMM, 2023b). In 2017, provincial governments stopped registering Syrians both for temporary protection and for transferral from another province. An unknown but large number of Syrians living in Istanbul are registered in another province. As a result, many live *in Turkey* legally, if formally temporarily, but *in Istanbul* irregularly. A third group never registered in Turkey in the first place. By studying Istanbul, I could better understand how different legal positions shaped how relationships were made

and lived. Second, due to the varying motivations and opportunities of individuals moving to and through the city, Istanbul is a site of both temporary transit and permanent settlement. Consequently, I could understand better how futures in a particular locality were imagined in varying and complex ways. Finally, Istanbul is a site of high cultural and religious diversity. Newcomers like Syrians encountered an already diverse population who may share histories and experiences, including internal migrants from Eastern Anatolia, internally displaced persons from Kurdistan, and migrants from Arab countries like Iraq or Jordan. I was interested in how these localised histories of displacement might feature in how individuals build and maintain social relations and networks.

3.4 Methods

Multiple qualitative methods were employed to answer the research questions. Methods included narrative interviews with some visual elicitation, key informant interviews, and ethnographic participant observation including informal conversations in Frankfurt and Istanbul. All methods were delimited by the transnational social field of Frankfurt-Istanbul. Triangulating multiple qualitative methods allowed for rich data from a variety of theoretical perspectives but might also contribute to compromises in terms of depth (Flick, 2011).

3.4.1 Interviews with refugees, non-refugees and stakeholders

My primary method were in-depth interviews with recent refugees from a variety of origins, legal statuses, genders, ages and backgrounds (see section 3.5 Case selection and recruitment), complemented with interviews with other longer-term residents in the neighbourhoods and networks of refugees, and with stakeholders involved in refugee reception. I do not consider interviews as direct avenues to the

authentic experiences of the interviewee but rather a responsive space where opinions and emotions are shared (Rubin and Rubin, 2005), and meaning is constructed in interaction between the researcher and the interlocutor within the setting of the interview location and the broader social context (Mishler, 1986). In line with my use of literary theory to understand social temporalities of displacement, interviews with refugees and non-refugees took a narrative approach and did not follow a strict format (Ayres, 2008). I invited interlocutors to tell their “story” on a range of topics, meaning they could choose what and how to narrate. Topics included positive and negative experiences in the locality, opinions and thoughts about refugee reception and state and institutional actors, supportive and emotionally important relationships both in their location of residence and elsewhere, how their experiences and relationships had changed over time, and imaginations, hopes and aspirations for the future.

Interviews with refugees focused on experiences and changes since arriving in the present locality. Interviews with longer-term residents focused on changes in the locality since the most recent arrival of refugees and longer histories of displacement and migration. In combination, these interviews enabled an exploration of whether and how refugees as newcomers interacted with “locals”, how this was shaped by the policy context, and how different temporalities such as historical changes and dialectics of permanent and temporary social membership shaped interactions.

Initially I had intended to use two techniques of graphic elicitation to guide the conversation: relational maps and timelines. The idea was to use visual or graphic elicitation methods as interview stimuli to facilitate communication in cross-cultural contexts or where participants are less used to expressing themselves verbally

(Crilly, Blackwell and Clarkson, 2006). Relational maps have increasingly been used to analyse understandings and meanings of migrants' networks (Ryan, Mulholland and Agoston, 2014; Ryan, 2018, 2020). However, I found early in my research that participant-drawn relational maps did not seem to add to the content of the interview, while taking up a lot of time and interrupting the flow of conversation. I abandoned them quickly. I was inspired by Robertson's (2015) call to document critical shifts in migrants' lives, such as interactions with bureaucratic institutions, shifts in legal status, as well as personally important moments like marriage, childbearing, and education. As a result, I invited interviewees to document changes in their lives throughout the interview by drawing timelines (Bagnoli, 2009; Hanna and Lau-Clayton, 2012). This method was taken up by some interviewees who felt it was helpful to visually revisit significant moments in their lives, used the paper to doodle or emphasise their talking points, or explain an important word to me (see Figure 4 for an example). Most interviewees explicitly did *not* want to draw or write out and just preferred narrating their lives. Potentially this was due to a hesitancy towards any kind of physical documentation of their lives and because they felt more comfortable with a conversational setting as opposed to a formalised researcher-interviewee exchange.

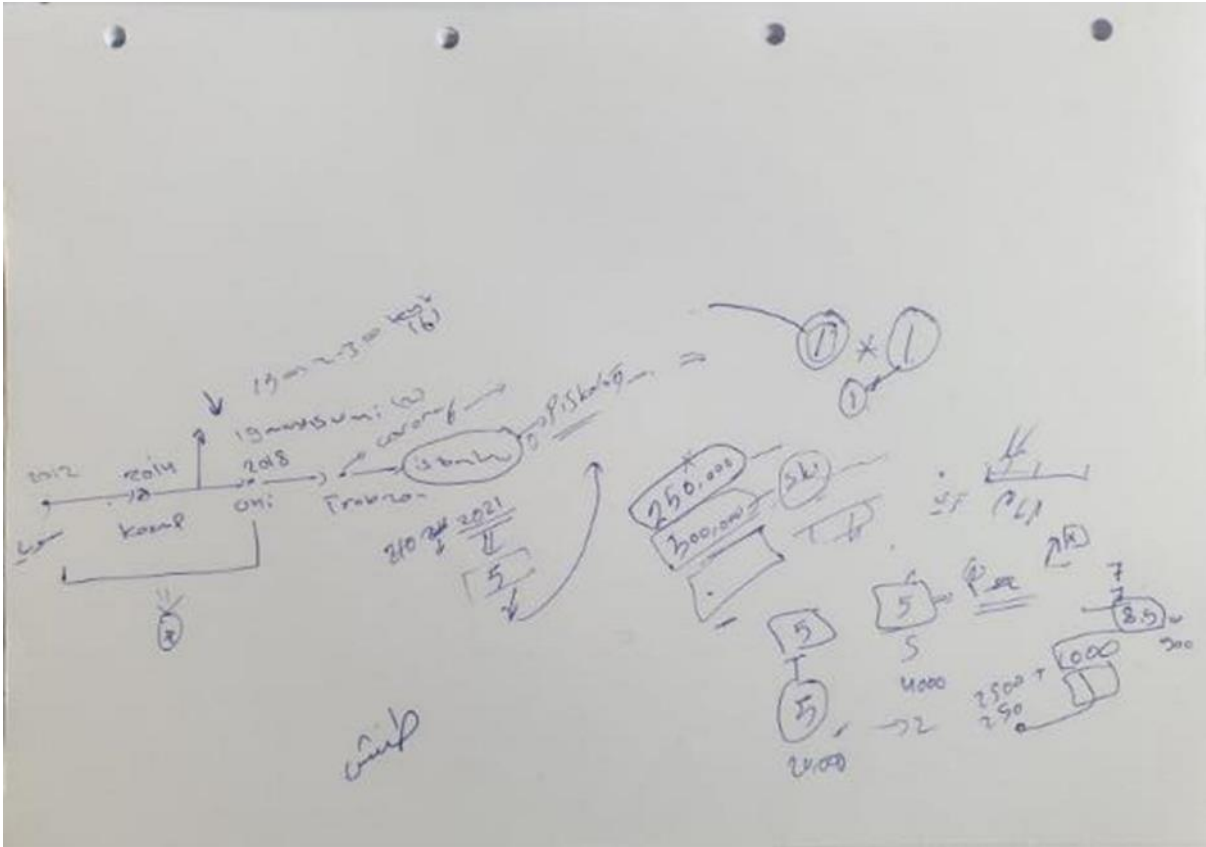


Figure 4 Majed's timeline/doodle: Syria (سوريا) to Istanbul, 2012 to 2021

Interviews are spaces where unequal power relations are negotiated, especially with individuals who may have uncertain legal status or live in precarious living situations (Fontana and Frey, 2000), and political claims may be performed (Ziss, 2015). The location of the interview was thus generally chosen by the participant, in order to allow for a participant-led negotiation of the power relations inherent in an interview (Elwood and Martin, 2000). Both refugee and non-refugee participants would usually invite me to their homes or rooms, often offering coffee or inviting me over for homecooked lunch (Espinoza, 2020). Stakeholder interviews usually took place in their offices, or via Zoom. When participants asked me to suggest a location, I would usually suggest a quiet but public space, such as a park or a café.

Interviews with refugees and non-refugees living in the area were triangulated (Flick, 2011) and complemented with semi-structured interviews with key informants and stakeholders involved in local refugee reception. These interviews served to understand better how refugee governance was imagined and practiced in the local environments of the “main” refugee interlocutors (see Sharma and Gupta, 2008). Interviews covered the local reception context, shifts in the policy environment, implementation of federal laws at local levels, service provision to refugees and longer-term changes in refugee reception and the local community. Throughout I paid attention to how local stakeholders described the role of time in governing refugees, and the absurdities and practical challenges of implementing the legal framework in practice. Interviewees included state officials of municipal institutions, and non-state actors such as NGO staff, religious leaders and leaders or members of community initiatives (see Annex 1: Research participants and interviews).

3.4.2 Language, translation and working with research assistants

Interviews were conducted in a language that interlocutors were comfortable in. Interviews in Germany were conducted by myself in German and English. I speak good Arabic and Turkish, both of which improved over the course of fieldwork. For the initial parts of my research, I decided to recruit research assistants to help with translation. For interviews in Arabic in Germany, I was initially aided by an acquaintance and then recruited a Syrian student via a notice board put up in the local university. For interviews conducted in Dari, Farsi and Pashto, I hired a German student whose parents were from Afghanistan whom I had met in a café. In Turkey, I also recruited two research assistants: Interviews in Arabic were partially supported by a Yemeni friend with whom I had previously collaborated in a different

professional capacity. For interviews in Turkish, I recruited a Turkish student via a Facebook notice. Towards the end of my fieldwork in Turkey, I conducted all narrative interviews with refugees and non-refugees by myself without research assistance but retained assistance with more formal stakeholder interviews.

Working with research assistants has both benefits and drawbacks. In addition to providing support with language translations, research assistants can be helpful in recruiting participants, understand and interpret the terms used by interlocutors, and discuss and contextualise emerging issues. As Temple and Edwards (2002) argue, research assistants should be considered key informants in the research process, especially if they share important characteristics with the interlocutors, such as the language and experiences of displacement. On the other hand, the interview becomes a negotiation between at least three persons, the researcher, the research assistant and the interlocutor, with potentially diverging interests and interpretations of the situation. Perhaps even more so than the lead researcher, research assistants have to straddle awkward positions as simultaneous insiders and outsiders, cultural and political mediators, as well as political, social and economic fault lines (Jacobsen and Landau, 2003). For example, Syrian refugees in Germany may not immediately trust other Syrians who they fear could be affiliated with the Assad regime or intelligence services (*mukhabarat* / مخابرات). Similarly, the Turkish secret service has been reported to threaten Turkish and Kurdish refugees in Germany (Handelsblatt, 2017; FAZ.NET, 2019), and is well known to be engaged in political repression in Turkey. The presumed political affiliation of research assistants may shape how interlocutors respond. I paid careful attention to vetting as part of the recruitment process, and I had to reject two applicants on political grounds.

Sukarieh and Tannock (2019) highlight the increasing exploitation of research assistants in Western-based academia, specifically referring to research on Syrian refugees. Published work often does not acknowledge localised knowledge, research assistants are frequently poorly paid and left alone with the emotional labour imbued in inter-personal research. While I did financially compensate research assistants, with limited resources as a PhD student I do not think the level was adequate. However, I sought to support them whenever they needed assistance, such as in reading their job applications or providing contacts for internship opportunities, and I conducted regular reflective briefings and gave mutual feedback with all research assistants.

During my fieldwork in Turkey, I relied less on the support of research assistants compared to fieldwork in Germany. This had practical reasons at first: On several occasions it became difficult to find a suitable time during which both interlocutors and a research assistant were available, so I started to conduct interviews by myself in Arabic and Turkish. Over time, I found that interview data was richer and more nuanced without a research assistant. This may have been because I was more familiar with both the languages and with the topics I wanted to explore. I found that usually I did not need translation to follow the interlocutors' train of thought, even though I might not understand every single word (Devereux and Hoddinott, 1993). Interviews flowed better as the interlocutors' train of thought was not interrupted through intermittent translation.

Another reason was that the interaction between myself and the interlocutor was different when I came by myself. For example, interlocutors would often address research assistants as "insiders", based on assumed commonality and prior

knowledge. Sometimes they made generalising statements such as “as my brother here knows, Arabs have such and such culture” without explaining exactly what they meant (Berger, 2015). Without a research assistant, I was clearly considered the non-expert and outsider. As a result, interlocutors were very forthcoming in explaining their ideas whenever I did not understand an idea or concept. They often tried to reframe their thinking in different or simpler ways, or explained words that were important to them and narratives became more detailed and nuanced. This is not to argue for old ethnographic prejudice that “outsiders” can “see” better than “insiders” what is taken for granted (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Rather, in my research constellations, interviews with research assistants seemed more formal. I found it easier to build rapport, trust and a mutually pleasant atmosphere when talking to interlocutors as an individual (Fontana and Frey, 2000).

3.4.3 Ethnographic participant observation

Previous research on temporalities of displacement has prominently been conducted through in-depth ethnographic research, mostly in single urban or camp locations (Drangland, 2021; Gil Everaert, 2021) but also across multiple sites and countries (Ramsay, 2018; Achtnich, 2022). In addition to narrative interviews, I conducted some ethnographic participant observation in temporary shelters in Frankfurt and of everyday life of refugees in Istanbul. Participant observation is a useful tool to understand what people do in everyday contexts in addition to what people say (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019) and a core method of “naturalistic” inquiry which focuses on what people do and say in a “naturalistic” context, rather than in a controlled research settings such as an experiment-based study (Saldaña, 2011). In my research, I conducted participant observation to understand how

refugees spent time with other people, either locally or digitally, and how they were in touch with friends and family living elsewhere.

To explore the effects of temporal governance on social relations, I started conducting research as a volunteer in three temporary shelters (*Übergangsunterkünfte*) in various neighbourhoods in Frankfurt. As sites where many refugees live ostensibly temporarily, these temporary shelters provided the contextual frame of initial participant recruitment. They also became sites for participant observation as Frankfurt was emerging from pandemic contact restrictions following the vaccination campaign of early 2021. Two of the three temporary shelters that I conducted research in had experienced a COVID-19 outbreak. Before my fieldwork one of the shelters had been put into full quarantine for several weeks, neither allowing visitors in nor residents to leave. External visitors were possible and welcome again after May 2021, although group-based activities remained limited.

Throughout the summer of 2021, I supported several refugee residents with practicing German language and in their dealings with administration and the bureaucracy. I also attended a few events and parties organised by the shelters which aimed to bring refugee residents together with neighbours. One shelter was very open towards both my study and the idea of ethnographic participant observation. It also had the most diverse set of residents in terms of origin and legal status and was comparatively most active in connecting to the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, this shelter withdrew its research collaboration after the manager who had agreed to our cooperation was sacked two months after I had started to volunteer there. The reasons for the sacking were allegedly long-standing but the new management still withdrew the shelter's participation from my research, in part

because the old manager had not consulted their superiors about this study. I had already connected to some interlocutors through this shelter, Rania and Ibrahim, and continued to develop an intense research relationship with them. We met up weekly in the nearby park to eat together, watch neighbours and other shelter residents on their daily chores, and chat.

Following the Frankfurt part of fieldwork, I conducted research in Istanbul from October to December 2021. While Bilkent University in Ankara had agreed to host me, based on a previous connection to the University of Birmingham, most of my time was spent in Istanbul. In Frankfurt, I had befriended several Syrian families and one Kurdish refugee who agreed to put me in touch with their family members in Turkey. Ethnographic participant observation in Istanbul consisted mainly of hanging out with these “connected” individuals in their everyday lives. I rented a room in a flatshare near Said’s workplace. I spent time with and informally talked to the “connected” individuals, either in their homes or at their workplaces. In the case of Ameena, Rania’s sister, I also spent a lot of time with her family and stayed overnight at her house on several weekends.

Delamont’s (2006, p. 206) defines ethnography as “*long periods* watching people, coupled with talking to them about what they are doing, thinking and saying, designed to see how they understand their world” (emphasis added). In ethnographic theory, there are debates surrounding the question of what constitutes *necessary* and *sufficient* duration of ethnographic fieldwork (Dalsgaard and Nielsen, 2013). I find a useful approach that researchers spend sufficient time in the field so that they shape it: “the relation between ethnographers and their subjects is not merely perspectival but is positional: the behaviour of each depends in part on their

respective positions relative to each other, and to each's recognition of these positions" (Fay, 1996, p. 45). *Full* immersion into my fieldwork context was limited: The pandemic risk of virus infection and of a renewed lockdown was high throughout my fieldwork and could be managed much more easily in individual interview settings. A lengthy ethics review process also limited the time available for actual fieldwork. As a result, my study mostly relied on interviews with individual refugees and other local "non-refugees". However, I did spend a significant amount of time participating in *some* families' daily lives and conducted uncountable informal conversations with refugees both before and after formal interviews. Some of these connections transformed into long-term friendships. My analysis is centrally influenced by ethnographic sensitivity to the daily practices, contexts and affective content of interlocutors' narratives. While I do not claim to have written an "ethnography", my research methods were undoubtedly "ethnographic". Through the combination of interviews, participant observation and contextual information, I was able to explore differences and similarities of social life in various localities and how these were shaped by different scales of temporal governance.

3.5 Case selection and recruitment

In line with a methodological "case study logic" (Yin, 2018), my study did not aim for representativeness or generalisability in terms of its empirical characteristics or analytical inferences (Small, 2009). I was interested in exploring and analysing a range of mechanisms of how time might shape social relations in refugee settlement, and how we can understand this process. Recruitment of participants thus aimed for depth and breadth in describing the nature of these processes. In order to recruit participants, I used "snowball" or chain-referral sampling in which interlocutors were

asked to refer the researcher to other potential participants (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). Snowball sampling is a form of purposive sampling and a useful method to identify marginalised and hidden populations (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981), including in contexts of conflict and authoritarianism (Cohen and Arieli, 2011). In Mason's conception, purposive sampling is based on theoretical concepts and constantly revised throughout the research process, as concepts emerge and shift (Mason 2002 in Emmel, 2013, p. 45 ff). As I was interested in social relations and time, the networked strategy of the snowball sample itself served a theoretical purpose. Who could be reached through networks and referral, and who could not, provided useful insights to understanding the social relations that refugees were involved in (Noy, 2008). Sampling was therefore an important part of the process of data collection and analysis. Moreover, in highly politicised contexts like in refugee reception and authoritarianism, snowball sampling can help with building trust and rapport to respondents (Cohen and Arieli, 2011).

The "sample universe" (Robinson, 2014) was constituted of the temporary shelters in Frankfurt and the surrounding neighbourhood, the networks of refugees that connected to these shelters and their neighbourhoods. Key informants for stakeholder interviews were identified through their involvement in refugee reception in the local area or neighbourhood of interest. In Frankfurt, I contacted individuals or groups who would either be "knowledgeable" about the topic of social relations of refugees, or who had previously supported to refugees within the vicinity of the temporary shelters. Most were suggested by either shelter staff or refugee interlocutors. As the research in Turkey focused more on networks and less on the local area as such, I adopted a broader approach based on theoretical sampling of

who might be able to give insights into the social lives and local relationships of refugees (Coyne, 1997). I approached previous work contacts, including municipal staff, international organisations, civil society organisations and NGOs. I also, again, asked refugee interlocutors to name individuals, officials, initiatives or organisations who had been supportive or could provide interesting insights into local relationships. Recruitment of key informants for stakeholder interviews was straightforward: I recruited them via an introductory email and interview request, sometimes supported by a referral email or text message of staff working in the temporary shelters.

For refugees and non-refugees, I was aiming at variation according to gender, age, educational background, and legal status in order to gain insights into a range of perspectives, and how various scales of temporal governance shaped social relations (Morgan, 2008). To achieve variety within the sample and access as many potential perspectives as possible, it is established practice to use various entry points to initiate “chains“ of contacts and networks (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). I employed different recruitment strategies in Frankfurt and Istanbul, responding to the local conditions of temporal refugee governance in both locations.

3.5.1 Frankfurt, Germany

Research with refugees often relies on locations and networks targeted towards refugees to recruit participants, especially volunteering initiatives and humanitarian organisations (see e.g. Blank, 2021; Easton-Calabria and Wood, 2021). While Frankfurt has a vibrant refugee support scene, most initiatives had not returned to full operation due to COVID-19 restrictions by the time of my fieldwork. Instead, I employed several entry points to recruit participants: The main entry points were refugees who resided in the temporary shelters whom I met while volunteering there.

Other participants were recruited from previous contacts and personal networks. Usually recruitment occurred as follows: I would hang out at the temporary shelter, meet someone or be introduced by a social worker, explain my research, and then ask whether they might be interested in participating in an interview. When obtaining data from participant observation, I would try to ask individuals for their consent to use this information as part of the study, although this was a bit blurry in some cases.

I had initially intended to focus on adults who had “crossed through Turkey” and/or “maintained social connections there” to study the Germany-Turkey transnational social field. However, this limited the potential pool of individuals I could invite to participate. Residents in the temporary shelters in Frankfurt included refugees from a range of backgrounds with Afghan and Eritrean refugees constituting the largest groups. Several people from Afghanistan had probably come via Turkey but I hesitated to invite them for interviews because of the deteriorating situation there and the Taliban taking over Kabul on 15 August. It seemed unethical to ask for interviews when people had their friends and loved ones on their mind. I also struggled to explain my research because I don’t speak Persian or Pashto. I invited Afghan and Iranian participants for an interview only when I was personally referred to by another interlocutor, and once I had recruited a research assistant to assist with interpretation.

I also conducted a few interviews with residents who did not fit my recruitment frame (e.g. an Eritrean woman and an Algerian man), both to better understand the situation in the shelters, because they wanted to share their experience, and to expand my networks within the temporary shelter. I had assumed that in the closed and confined space of the shelter it would be easy to meet people. This did not turn

out to be true. Most families and individuals I met were living rather isolated lives and did not necessarily know their neighbours, which made recruitment via snowball referral more difficult. Over time, however I did meet and built deeper connections mostly with Syrians and with a Kurdish refugee.

Non-refugee participants were also recruited through the networks of the temporary shelters, and through neighbourhood groups and organisations in the areas that refugee participants were living in. All “locals” either resided or worked in close proximity to the shelters. I had also intended to interview individuals involved in refugee support networks (volunteers, NGOs etc), as well as friends and acquaintances of refugee participants. I asked participants to point me to other refugees and locals that they were in contact with, locally and in Turkey. Just as within the temporary shelters itself, snowballing to “local connections” was slow and often ended in dead ends. Several connections were not willing to meet or be interviewed. I can only speculate about the reasons for non-participation. As I introduced my study to be about local and transnational social relations of refugees, including between refugees and “locals”, many seemed to assume that I wanted to ask about racism in Germany and Turkey. Especially non-refugees who had a history of migration did not seem to be keen to talk, at least not with me. Moreover, the interview structure possibly reminded some of the widespread hyper-visibility within racist governance and social structures (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020), an inability to control one’s representation, and bad experiences with interviews in general, including the asylum interview, job interviews and/or interactions with police. Finally, social isolation of refugee participants was widespread and many just did not have

close friends or local networks that they could refer me to (see Chapter 7 for the social and temporal effects of this isolation).

3.5.2 *Istanbul, Turkey*

In Turkey, participants were recruited via two avenues: first, in line with the “matched” sample approach, I met siblings and adult children of those participants in Frankfurt who had agreed to put me in touch, three Syrian families and one Turkish-Kurdish refugee. All were living in the western districts of Istanbul (Küçükçekmece, Esenyurt, Bakırköy, and Bahçelievler). Some Persian and Pashto-speaking interlocutors in Frankfurt maintained connections in Turkey but they lived in different regions. Moreover, it would have been difficult to develop closer connections due to the language barrier. For the Turkey fieldwork I therefore decided to focus on Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens of various backgrounds living in European districts of Istanbul.

Initially, I had intended to ask these “matched” individuals to connect me to other participants. However, due to ethical concerns about negotiating consent and maintaining privacy within the transnational networks (Cohen and Arieli, 2011; Glasius *et al.*, 2018), snowballing within these primary participants’ network happened very slowly (see 3.7.1 Informed consent for details). Building on arguments that emphasise flexibility in qualitative research approaches (Frankel and Devers, 2000), I also asked previously established contacts in Turkey, including friends and NGOs, to suggest other Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens living in the vicinity of the primary “matched” contacts whom I could invite for participation. Some people contacted me directly because they had heard about my project and wanted to share their story. To emphasise the transnational approach of the study, I was

especially interested in participants who maintained connections to Germany. Although I did not ask about transnational connections when inviting participants to meet, all but one Syrian, and several Turkish participants, had family members or friends living in Germany. Two interlocutors had themselves lived in Germany previously.

3.5.3 Description of participants

“Refugee” and “non-refugee local” participants were of a variety of ages; about half were female. Most refugee interlocutors in Frankfurt were in their 30s and 40s, travelling with their family and living in the temporary shelters. A minority was older or younger, single, and lived elsewhere (see Annex 1: Research participants and interviews). “Matched” individuals in Istanbul were mostly siblings with similar ages and social positions, and one adult child of parents in Frankfurt. Participants that I had met and recruited via different avenues were usually younger and fewer were married or had a family. Across the two sites, I conducted formal interviews with 62 individuals: 30 refugees, 11 non-refugees and 21 stakeholders, in addition to uncountable informal conversations (see Table 1 Total participant demographics and Annex 1: Research participants and interviews).

Group	Count	Nationality/Origin	Age	Gender
Refugees	30 13 in Frankfurt 17 in Istanbul	Frankfurt: Syria (6), Afghanistan (3), Turkey (1), Iran (1), Algeria (1), Eritrea (1) Istanbul: Syria (17); Arab Sunni (12), Arab Alawi (1), Turkmen (3), Kurdish (2)	20s to 70s	M: 18; F: 12
Non-refugee locals	11 6 in Frankfurt 5 in Istanbul	Frankfurt: All German citizens, three with history of migration (Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Sudan) Istanbul: All Turkish citizens, two of Kurdish origin	20s to 70s	M: 5; F: 6
Stakeholders	21 10 in Frankfurt 11 in Istanbul	Frankfurt: All German citizens, two with history of migration (Pakistan, Egypt) Istanbul: Turkish (9), Syrian (2)		M: 11; F: 10

Table 1 Total participant demographics

“Refugee” interlocutors in both locations held a variety of legal statuses and came from a diverse range of national and ethno-linguistic-religious backgrounds (see Annex 1: Research participants and interviews and Chapter 4 for a discussion of the politics of legal status in both Germany and Turkey). While I did not ask people directly about their status or ethnic affiliation, the topic would usually come up in conversations and interviews. In Frankfurt, I focused on refugee participants who did not yet have permanent residency to explore what it meant to be temporary. Within the group of “refugees”, none had permanent residency or citizenship: Some were living with “toleration”, others waiting for the outcome of their asylum procedure, and again others had subsidiary protection or refugee status. All “non-refugees” were German citizens, but some were former refugees and naturalised by now or descendants of refugees; the distinction from “refugees” was somewhat difficult to maintain. In Istanbul, I conducted research with Syrians who were undocumented,

held temporary protection in the province of residence or elsewhere, and with some Syrians who had become naturalised Turkish citizens. Some of these were Arab Sunni, others Kurdish, Turkmen, or Arab Alawi. All “non-refugee” participants in Istanbul were Turkish citizens; some were Kurdish and had been internally displaced from the Kurdish regions (see Annex 1: Research participants and interviews).

The characteristics of “stakeholders” differed by location. In Frankfurt, I talked to staff members of the temporary shelters, employees of other organisations that were involved in providing services to shelter residents, and individuals or groups who had previously supported refugee interlocutors including a mosque and neighbourhood volunteer initiatives. Most of the stakeholder interviewees constituted the local universe of formal service provision, informal solidarity initiatives, and municipalities, instead of officials directly involved in policing or regulating the spatio-territorial presence of asylum seekers and migrants (as would have been the case with the foreigner’s offices, police or migration management). This was because I focused on relationships and everyday social experiences of displacement, and how refugee governance was imagined, experienced and explained within those relationships, not on the direct bordering practices of the state as such. Given the dispersed and “acephalous” character of refugee governance (Feldman, 2012, p. 1), these interviews still provided an insight into relevant state practices.

3.6 Data, analysis and interpretation

Audio recordings can render the interview more formal, may restrict free expression (Weiner, 1964), and pose an additional security risk in authoritarian and politically sensitive contexts (Glasius *et al.*, 2018). At the same time, recording interviews can help with remembering details of interlocutors’ narratives, capture

subtle emotional and contextual connotations, and assist *ex post* reflection upon interviewer-interviewee dynamics (Devault, 1990). For my purposes the benefits of recording superseded the drawbacks and interviews were recorded upon permission of the interlocutor. If the interlocutor preferred not to be recorded, detailed bullet point notes were taken during the interview and expanded upon afterwards. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, sometimes soon after the interview but more often a few weeks or months later. I transcribed the interviews in German and English myself. Either research assistants or transcribers recruited via an online freelance portal transcribed and translated the interviews conducted in Farsi, Pashto, Turkish and Arabic. Translations of Turkish and Arabic were double-checked and corrected by myself. Interview transcripts are not a neutral recordings of an interaction but in itself requires a degree of interpretation (Devault, 1990; Bailey, 2008). Because of the variety of languages, contexts and translators, I have included all original quotations in footnotes throughout the thesis.

In addition to interview data, I maintained a written digital field journal in which I recorded what I and interlocutors did and said, and initial analytical ideas on interviews and observations. Directly after each interview or any important interaction, I would usually voice-record my own thoughts and feelings via a dictation software and transfer these oral notes to a written digital journal later. I also used the written journal on my laptop to engage in undirected free writing to clear my head. Sometimes it took a few days before I wrote about an important interaction until I found the mental and emotional capacity. Some interactions were recorded from memory much later.

Interview transcripts were first read broadly and then coded in nVivo 12 to organise the data and identify common patterns (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014; QSR, 2020). Coding itself is not analysis but an exercise to make data manageable (Gibbs, 2007). Drawing on reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2021a) and aided by ethnographic memo writing (Bryman and Burgess, 1994), I analysed my body of data abductively: I was both open to themes generated through coding without preconception (inductive), and I looked at the data through the deductive analytical lens of temporality and the politics of time. This interpretive approach considers knowledge as constructed, not discovered or excavated (Braun and Clarke, 2021b). Field notes provided analytical “hunches” of significant situations or interactions which were then explored in other interviews (Hammond, 2018). When conducting the analysis, I paid attention both to semantic meaning, i.e. what was said, and latent meaning, i.e. what was implied (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Analysis of interviews was also informed by the context in which things were said, and how fieldnotes related to the content.

The analytical body was then reworked, interpreted and reanalysed during the thesis write up, making interpretative choices what to include and what to leave out (Wolcott, 1994). I followed Flick’s (2013, p. 11) advice to first reduce complexity in the data and then “[expand] the material by producing one or more interpretations”. To do this, I wrote memos on specific topics and themes, and biographical sketches of specific interlocutors to gain insight into their narratives and how they related to others. This was important given that my body of data simultaneously seemed too broad and too superficial. I do not subscribe to positivist understandings of “data saturation” which assumes that information redundancy can be achieved (Saunders

et al., 2018; Braun and Clarke, 2021b). Conversely, *qualitative* and case-based data saturation can take a very long time (Small, 2009); and I “disengaged” from data collection both in Frankfurt and Istanbul in a rush and what felt like too early with many open ends (see section 3.7.4). Through the abductive interpretative analysis, I was able to focus on the areas in the data where I felt I did have enough information to say something meaningful and conceptually sound, and thus abiding by quality standards in qualitative research including rigour, transparency, and trustworthiness (Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2008).

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical conduct of research is important in any study that involves human beings; research with refugees comes with specific ethical demands (Hugman, Pittaway and Bartolomei, 2011). According to the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM), “research with people in situations of forced migration poses particular ethical challenges because of unequal power relations, legal precariousness, extreme poverty, violence, the criminalisation of migration, politicized research contexts, the policy-relevance of our research and/or dependence on government and non-governmental services and funding.” (IASFM, 2018, p. 1). As mentioned above, in feminist epistemology, reflexivity is a core ethical principle in conducting research as a relational endeavour between the researcher and her participants (Oakley, 1988). Reflexivity meant critically analysing my own position and choices throughout the research process and how these might have affected participants and research outcomes (von Unger, 2021).

The PhD methodology was submitted to and approved by the Ethical Review Committee of the University of Birmingham (application number ERN_20-1003),

ensuring compliance with principles of consent, confidentiality, data protection, and avoidance of undue risks in the research design. In practice, research ethics were constantly negotiated within the multifaceted social context and often subject to dilemmas and imperfect solutions. Guillemin and Gillam (2004, p. 264) argue to pay attention to these “ethically important moments”, “the difficult, often subtle, and usually unpredictable situations that arise in the practice of doing research”. In what follows, I discuss how I negotiated ethical principles during my research, structured along the temporal progression of the research relationship: first, recruiting a person to consent to participate; second, maintaining a secure research relationship through confidentiality and privacy; third, avoiding harm and fostering reciprocity; and fourth, risks and leaving the “field”.

3.7.1 Informed consent

Free, prior, informed and iterative consent is an important principle of social research (Kvale, 1996). The aim is to "inform the research subject about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design, as well as of any possible risk and benefits from participation in the research project" (Kvale, 1996, p. 100). Consent is rooted in a liberal conception of autonomy, that is, taking independent decisions about one's life: “people should have the right not to be involved in research, that they should opt into it, and should be able to opt out at any point they wish” (Hammersley, 2020, p. 450). Consent is often obtained through written signed forms that explain any benefits or potential harm research might cause. For stakeholder interviews, I adopted this classic approach, including a detailed description of the research and potential benefits and drawbacks in the initial email, and attaching an information sheet and consent form. Most key informants

were familiar with academic research and consented to the use of their information as I would see fit. In a few instances, I did not receive an answer (including to follow-up emails) or received an explicit rejection, both of which I interpreted as lack of interest in participation in my research.

Various factors can affect the ability to consent freely. Language barriers and unfamiliarity with academic research may limit participants' ability to fully grasp possible consequences, for example what publications entail (Kvale, 1996). Additionally, unequal power relations shape the ability to say no (Thorne, 1980). As I entered the field mainly through the physical sites of the temporary shelters in Frankfurt, and through family networks in Istanbul, I was conscious of the risks of relying on gatekeepers (Miller and Bell, 2002). For example, if shelter staff introduced me to potential participants this could mean that individuals who relied on the shelter for welfare felt obliged to participate. Shelters did not seem to prioritise the autonomy of residents: neither of the shelters asked residents in advance whether they were happy with me conducting research there, including conducting participant observation.

Conscious of these dilemmas, I adopted a free-floating, iterative, processual and relational approach when approaching refugee and non-refugee local participants, following Mackenzie et al. (2007). I tried to get to know potential participants first, introduce my research in conversations, as well as social research in general and only then asked people to participate. Once I invited participants, I shared an information sheet and consent form with a detailed description of the research project in German, English, Arabic, Turkish or Farsi. To account for varying levels of comfort with reading, I would also send prospective participants a voice message via

WhatsApp, with a verbal explanation of the study. At this stage I provided the option to discuss concerns and emphasised the ability to withdraw at any time.

Considering consent a “negotiation”, not a one-off exercise, meant that boundaries around consenting, withdrawal and navigating what I could include in the write up were blurry at times (Hammersley, 2020). As described above, one shelter withdrew its participation, and the new management explicitly prohibited me from interviewing its residents. However, I had already established contacts to some residents. Prioritising interlocutors’ autonomy over the rights of the gatekeeping shelter, I went ahead with meeting and talking to them. At other times, decisions about consent were less clear. For example, navigating the different roles of friend and researcher brought deep and uncomfortable questions about consent and exploitation (Iversen, 2009; Pettit, 2020). In Frankfurt, many interlocutors were not particularly interested in my research itself. Instead, they enjoyed our conversations, talking in Arabic or connecting to a local German, and I was often invited for food and to spend time with them (see also Espinoza, 2020). Once I invited interlocutors for a formal interview, some agreed as a favour to me, not because they really wanted to be interviewed. In other cases, I conducted an interview first and we then became friends. In that case, I navigated how to use “data” they shared during informal conversations. In one case, I became quite close to a family whose sibling was living in Turkey. I repeatedly explained my research and they happily answered all questions but were hesitant to sit down for a formal interview. I did not push them but still took notes on what they told me. In this case, I do not quote them in the thesis directly, but my analysis was still informed by our conversations.

Negotiating consent became blurrier when studying the transnational network in Istanbul. When contacting individuals in Turkey, I could not assume that just because their family members had connected us, they wanted to be part of my research. In two cases, interlocutors in Germany had taken up my offer to take some gifts to their family in Turkey, and I did the same on the way back to Germany from Turkey. I became a transmitter of messages and presents, which could be constructed as an act of reciprocity. I was also a material embodiment of the emotional connection to their family in Germany whom they had not seen in years, as well as an embodiment of the border that brutally divided them. There was an immediate sense of trust, and I wanted to cherish this trust. However, rapport also has “exploitative potential” (Finch, 1993, p. 81). I tried to explain repeatedly what my research was about, and what “research participation”, including being written about might entail. I am not sure I was always able to explain particularly well, especially that both informal conversations as well as formal conversations and interviews might count as “data” (Iversen, 2009). Because I had imposed myself onto their lives, and in one case was almost treated as a part of the family, I felt that I was “using” the “matched” individuals for research purposes. As van Vacano (2019, p. 83) argues if researchers become friends with their interlocutors “and engage in open and personal forms of dialogue, ultimately, they [still] engage in these relationships with a specific purpose of knowledge construction”. In the end, I decided to both quote participants when data was obtained through a formal interview, as well as through informal information where the information was corroborated by formal interviews in other contexts.

In Istanbul, consent with contacts *outside* these transnational networks was more easily negotiated. These individuals got to know me as a researcher, not as their

family's friend who conducts research. As a result, the researcher-participant relationship was more "contractual and transactional" and boundaries were clear at the outset (Siegl, 2019, p. 95). Participants were more aware of what participation might entail, because I was just inviting them for an interview at first. As a result, I found it much easier to ask follow-up questions, and I was more certain how I could include their information in my research. This did not preclude developing friendly relations after the interviews, and I continue to be in touch with several of these contacts.

3.7.2 *Confidentiality and right to privacy*

A second important ethical principle in social research is the right to privacy. Displaced people often lack secure legal status and are potentially vulnerable to arrest or deportation if sensitive information is disclosed to immigration authorities or home country secret services (Jacobsen and Landau, 2003). As a result, I took care to protect the confidentiality of my participants' identity and prevent harm (Barakat *et al.*, 2002). Throughout the analysis, fieldnotes and in the thesis write up, I used aliases, generally chosen by participants themselves. Some participants explicitly asked me to use their real names, and, while I respect their decision, I do not indicate where names are real or not.⁷ I recorded participants' first names and tracked them through a password-protected biographical data sheet in which I connected their identity to their alias. This sheet was stored in a different location to all transcripts or fieldnotes and password protected. Thus, interlocutors' real names would only be known by me and potentially the research assistants who were present during the interview. Contact details remained only with me. Audio files were stored until the

⁷ Ali is an exception— see Postscript.

final transcript was prepared and then deleted. In the transcript, any identifiable information was removed or changed. Research assistants were required to sign a confidentiality agreement, and were trained on interview and listening techniques, as well as free, prior, informed and iterative consent. With the exception of emails to stakeholder key informants, any digital communication used secure encrypted channels, such as Signal or WhatsApp with end-to-end encryption.

Full anonymity was difficult to maintain in the transnational research methodology. In many instances, interlocutors knew each other. Sometimes they talked about and with each other, about me and about my research. At times, one person told me something but explicitly asked not to share with their relatives and friends. This had ethical implications in which I needed to balance interlocutors' right to privacy and my interest in the social relations of refugees. Throughout this thesis, I made choices where I explicitly describe how some interlocutors are related or connected to one another. In other instances, I do not draw attention to how interlocutors are related. This may be because I was not able to talk to the other person involved, or because the persons were so close that it seemed unethical to discuss their relations to each other.

3.7.3 Doing no harm and reciprocity

Minimising harm to research subjects is the baseline of any research ethics. Directly causing physical harm is relatively rare in qualitative research. More often, participants may incur material harm, e.g. if participants spend money on hosting the researcher or forego income to spend time with her, or reputational harm upon publication of research (Hammersley, 2020). Most relevant for my research were harm caused by breaches of confidentiality in a context of authoritarian surveillance

and political violence, which I minimised through the measures describes in the previous section. Moreover, I sought to limit the emotional pain and anxiety caused through interviews. Many refugees have experienced difficult events in the past and continue to do so in the present. Talking about these events comes with a risk of retraumatisation in which interlocutors relive and feel difficult memories and emotions. At the same time, “trauma” should be considered relational and political, instead of an essential feature of the “refugee condition” (Malkki, 2007). When talking to interlocutors I asked direct questions on meaningful social relations but not on their displacement trajectory. In fact, in two shelters in Frankfurt, shelter managers agreed to my research on the condition that I avoid the trajectory of flight in my conversations, indicating how the “traumatised and vulnerable refugee” continues to be a figure of governance. Against this assumption, I held that both refugees and non-refugees are autonomous experts on both their situation and the harm that sharing may entail (Clark-Kazak, 2017). Several individuals indeed demanded I hear their *full* stories, especially stories from the war in Syria and the Kurdish regions in Turkey. Past experiences of violence and displacement were also frequently raised in informal conversations. In line with arguments about the importance of historicising displacement (Malkki, 1996), I sought to give space for sharing these experiences.

Given that research with people in situations of forced displacement builds upon unequal histories of imperial exploitation, it is particularly important to go beyond avoiding harm and towards active benefit to participants (Clark-Kazak, 2017). Thus, doing no harm means “proactively prioritizing the dignity, safety and well-being of participants, partners, research assistants, interpreters and researchers” (IASFM, 2018, p. 2). One important principle, again rooted in feminist ethics, is reciprocity

(Mackenzie, McDowell and Pittaway, 2007). Whenever I interacted with a participant, I sought to abide by simple norms of reciprocity such as bringing food (Espinoza, 2020) and sharing personal information about my own position in this research. In stakeholder interviews, I often encouraged participants to debate questions related to broader debates in migration studies, such as their personal views on the legitimacy of racialised exclusions or exclusionary policy changes. In doing so, I was hoping to make a limited contribution to shaping migration governance via those acting upon and within it. “Locals”, and some refugees, often closed a formal interview with a comment on how they enjoyed talking and reflecting on community life, implying at least a momentary benefit or sense of relief through the act of talking itself. In several instances I also supported individuals with studying German and provided information on laws, bureaucratic procedures and potentially useful contacts.

Nevertheless, refugee interlocutors in particular often asked how participation and “writing a book” would benefit them personally, as well as refugees as a group. I found this a difficult question. While I sought to practice norms of individual reciprocity, this varied between participants as I developed longer-term mutual relations to some but not to others. I did not have sufficient resources for financial compensation of interlocutors (Devereux and Hoddinott, 1993). Moreover, individual reciprocity did not seem to suffice to counter *structural* inequalities within the social context of research. I could not honestly claim that my research would impact policy, given a political climate in which even critical research on migrants and refugees is ignored at best and misused at worst. In the end, I hope to “give back” to interlocutors in the longer-term, upon publication of the thesis and long-term

engagement, but how this will look like is unpredictable at the point of conducting fieldwork (van Vacano, 2019).

3.7.4 Risks, security, researcher emotions and leaving the field

Social research not only comes with risks of harm to participants but also to the researcher. Risks include physical, ethical, professional and emotional harm and not all can be anticipated (Sampson, 2019). As part of the institutional ethics review, I conducted a “risk assessment” to identify risks and mitigation strategies in the field (Robben and Sluka, 2012). Risks to researchers are not limited to but may be enhanced in “dangerous fields” (Kovats-Bernat, 2002) such as in the authoritarian state of Turkey. I sought to mitigate risks to both my participants’ and my own safety arising from state surveillance and repression of opposition. For example, I used a separate SIM card to protect my own and participants’ identity, and to prevent both myself and them to be detained, interrogated and deported. I had not really anticipated risks that might happen through research participants themselves, and I had not taken precautions such as always choosing self-destructing messages in messenger communications.

Towards the end of my fieldwork in Turkey, it became apparent that one of the “matched” individuals could become potentially risky for my own security by virtue of association with a powerful institutional structure. In combination with increasing exhaustion after other participants had told me about their experiences of persecution and violence, I felt afraid, distressed, and unable to anticipate the consequences of the connection. After speaking to my supervisors, who had been helpful and supportive throughout, I made an excuse to my flatmates and research participants, and left Turkey immediately, two weeks earlier than planned.

As I realised afterwards, this underestimation of researcher risk might be common in a research atmosphere where both procedural research ethics and debates on research with refugees “generally situate[s] the safety of the informant, and then the ethnographer-self, above any inquisitive imperative” (Kovats-Bernat, 2002, p. 214). In this perspective, researchers are always assumed to be more powerful and to be able “to control or at least mediate or negotiate danger away from those with whom she or he is working” (2002 *ibid.*). While avoiding harm and epistemic violence are important considerations, we may be inclined to ignore the murky power relations in what Glasius et al. (2018) have described as fieldwork in the “authoritarian field”.

Fieldwork in “authoritarian fields” is not only challenging because of outward repression. It is rather the subtle atmosphere of fear and uncertainty that makes relations to research participants potentially ambiguous, causing feelings of betrayal and disenchantment from research participants, and, in the worst case, may even be dangerous (Glasius *et al.*, 2018). That is, conducting research “in politically fraught contexts asks us to negotiate between [...] three modes of participating in reality: the emotional, the analytical and the political” (Davies and Spencer, 2010, p. 18). In the context of Turkey, this atmosphere of fear and uncertainty is only partially created through actual practices of the government and its security institutions, such as locking up opponents and deporting refugees. More importantly, personal relations are infused with societal divisions and polarisations beyond the simple line of “state” vs “people”. Conspiracy theories abound of individuals who are involved in the shadowy paramilitary structures of the Turkish deep state (*derin devlet*) or the long arm of the Syrian intelligence service (مخابرات). Even though direct contact to these

structures, if they exist at all, will likely be rare, researchers can never be sure whether a new acquaintance is “safe” and well-meaning, or how political affiliations shape how interlocutors act towards them.

Leaving the field can be a drawn out process consisting of difficult, ambiguous professional and emotional negotiations between various actors, including the researcher, her participants, and institutional bodies and constraints (Iversen, 2009; Delamont, 2016). As Fitzpatrick (2019) describes, the “edges” of the field are fuzzy not only in a spatial sense but also temporally. In my case, returning to Frankfurt did not imply full “disengagement”. I had intended to continue data collection in Germany upon my return from Turkey, to consolidate what had felt like thin and insufficient data. However, through the transnational networks that I was researching, interlocutors in Frankfurt were connected and implicated with the networks in Istanbul, including the potentially problematic contacts. Therefore, I could not fully withdraw from the personal and political crisis that I had experienced in Turkey. I needed a few months before I could face up to research again. In the end, I decided to prioritise my personal wellbeing, and cut not only the difficult relations in question but also potentially connected networks in Frankfurt. This meant that I did not continue fieldwork in Frankfurt and tried to “make do” with the data that I had.

Fieldwork, and navigating research relationships generally, can take an emotional toll (Kleinman and Copp, 1993; Pollard, 2009; Davies and Spencer, 2010; Bosco, 2021). While I had experienced vicarious traumatising as part of my master’s research on female activists in Palestine (Ziss, 2015), for some reason I thought I was less vulnerable now, almost a decade later. Researcher trauma in social research is probably quite common but training of methods pays little attention to it

(Drozdzewski and Dominey-Howes, 2015; emerald and Carpenter, 2015). Our emotional reactions to fieldwork are sometimes not clearly defined, not within our control, and they may hinder reflexivity in practice (Kleinman and Copp, 1993). Drozdzewski and Dominey-Howes (2015) suggest that spatial and temporal distance, slow scholarship that focuses on change and process, and “retrospective reflexivity” may be key for maintaining both researcher mental health and rigor and critical perspectives. Not all of this is possible in PhD research with a short timeframe and limited funding. While fieldwork did feel like “failure”, this feeling seems to be common amongst qualitative researchers (Pollard, 2009; Mattes and Dinkelaker, 2019). Conscious of the trade-off between speed of research and depth (Glasius *et al.*, 2018), during write up I sought to “satisfice” both the field boundaries and the data that I was able to collect (Falzon, 2009a).

4 CHRONOTOPES OF IN/EXCLUSION: TEMPORAL GOVERNANCE IN GERMANY-TURKEY

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I address the first research question and explore which forms of temporal governance affect the social lives of refugees in Turkey and Germany. To do so, I draw on policy literature and stakeholder interviews to describe the way the refugee reception framework in Turkey and Germany employs time to govern who can stay under which conditions (residence) and who can become a “member”, legally, discursively and symbolically (integration and citizenship). I show that both states make use of temporal governance: time is a crucial element in differentiating between refugees and citizens, and constructing refugees as temporal others, on other timelines outside the temporalities of the state. This temporal governance is inherent in the legal framework of national migration and citizenship policies, ambivalently reinforced through bureaucratic implementation at various levels of state governance, and discursive and symbolic constructions of national membership more broadly. Temporal governance in turn shapes refugees’ individual experiences of time, and social temporal practices in relation to friends, family and acquaintances.

Germany and Turkey are important to consider together for three reasons: First, they are two of the most important refugee hosting states in the world, both in numbers and in terms of shaping refugee policy. Second, they share a long history of migration which is reinforced through the presence along two poles of the migration route. Third, and following from the first two points, they occupy different but interrelated positions within the EU migration apparatus, a conglomeration of institutions, stakeholders and discourses (Feldman, 2012).

According to UNHCR, Turkey hosts the largest refugee population in the world since the beginning of the Syria Civil War in 2011 (UNHCR, 2022). The Syrian revolution/civil war started in 2011 in Daraa in the wake of the Arab uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. After teenagers had been arrested and tortured for anti-government graffiti, an increasingly violent cycle of demonstrations and heavy repression by Bashar Al-Assad's Baathist regime ensued (Pearlman, 2021). Revolutionaries organised into militias, supported by Turkey and the USA; the army responded with tanks, arrests, torture and eventually shelling, supported by Russia and Iran. Millions of Syrians had to leave their homes, first within Syria and later across the nearest border to Turkey.

In 2023, Turkey officially hosts approximately 3.4 million Syrians with a status of *prima facie* "temporary protection" (PMM, 2023a), plus about 300,000 Afghan, Iraqi and Iranian refugees under "international protection". Almost all of them live in Turkish cities. These official numbers are contested. An unknown number of refugees and migrants live in Turkey irregularly. Some Syrians move on towards Europe (Düvell, 2019) or back to Syria either voluntarily or coerced (Amnesty International, 2019, 2023; Şahin Mencütek, 2022, 2023). For my purposes, the actual count is less important here than the symbolic and moral weight attached to it. The Turkish government has been documented to mobilise the issue of "refugees" for political clout, both domestically (Balta, Elç and Sert, 2022) and in foreign policy (Norman, 2020). The presence of refugees on Turkish territory is also part of larger negotiations of inclusion and exclusion and what it means to be Turkish.

In different but mirroring fashion, over the past decade Germany has established an international reputation as a country that "welcomes" refugees. While asylum

applications had been heavily restricted since the 1990s, numbers of refugee arrivals started to rise since 2012, especially from Syria, Afghanistan and Eritrea. This peaked in 2015 in what came to be known as— depending on your political standpoint— the “refugee crisis” (Karakayali, 2018) or “summer of migration” (Hess *et al.*, 2016) articulated in Chancellor Merkel’s dictum of “*Wir schaffen das*” (we can do it) (Mushaben, 2017; Schlott, 2020; Holzberg, 2021). In 2015 and 2016, about 1.2 million people applied for asylum in Germany. Between 2017 and 2022, annual asylum application numbers ranged between 100,000 to 250,000. In 2023, the largest groups without German citizenship were mostly refugees: Syrians (about 920,000), Afghans (about 370,000) and Ukrainians (1.1 million) (Destatis, 2023b). These numbers add to other non-German citizens, including 1.5 million Turkish citizens. In the words of Borneman and Ghassem-Fachandi (2017, p. 115), “much as the opening of the Wall in 1989 punctured the temporality of the Cold War order, the entrance of more than a million migrants and refugees into Germany in a single year, 2015, punctured the temporality of the post-Cold War European order”. With the increase in asylum seeker numbers over the past decade, Germany has reinforced its dominant position in shaping wider European asylum policy (Holmes and Castañeda, 2016).

Time is a crucial and strategic element in Turkish multi-layered refugee governance, termed “strategic temporality” by Şahin Mencütek and colleagues (Şahin Mencütek *et al.*, 2023) and “vulnerable permanency” by İçduygu and Aksel (İçduygu and Aksel, 2022). Time is used to govern refugees through, first, temporary and uncertain legal status, second, arbitrariness and uncertainty in the implementation of the framework, and third, discursive and symbolic creation of refugees as other. The

reception framework, in particular the temporary protection regulation for Syrian refugees, denies refugees pathways towards permanent residence or citizenship and restricts access to the labour market, social welfare or education. At the same time, this framework does not apply to all refugees equally. Some refugees can “integrate” or settle permanently, either by avoiding becoming refugees in the first place and remaining “migrants”, or by becoming Turkish citizens under the exceptional citizenship policy of President Erdoğan. The arbitrary implementation of the existing framework means that others never access the fragile status of temporary protection or cannot make use of it. Moreover, the Turkish state denies many Syrians under temporary protection their legally proscribed rights and increasingly makes use of deportation.

Similar to Turkey, refugee governance in Germany comprises at least three interlocking forms of state temporality: (1) legal temporalities of asylum legislation, creating numerous legal statuses which each differ in duration and pathways towards permanent residence; (2) symbolic temporalities of citizenship, rooted in historically inflected racial imaginations of nationhood that construct non-“Germans” as essentially different and continues to shape perspectives on societal futures; and (3) uncertainty in bureaucratic implementation, in which local conditions shape how the rights and resources granted through asylum legislation can be accessed. In both Germany and Turkey, temporal governance of refuge assigns people into categories with differing access to resources, rights and responsibilities. These in turn affect the ways refugees, as newcomers, can meet and connect with others, and the choices they can make in terms of living where and with whom they like.

4.2 Temporal refugee governance in Turkey: multidimensional precarity and ambiguous temporariness

The presence of foreigners on Turkish territory is governed through an overlapping legal and policy framework, some of which is concerned with the definitions, rights and obligations of "refugees" (Şahin Mencütek *et al.*, 2023). Turkey has ratified both the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol (United Nations, 1951, 1967) but maintained the geographic limitation and grants full asylum to citizens of nations of the European Council only. Under the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, LFIP, passed in 2013 under the government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP), asylum seekers, mostly from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, can apply for "international protection" (*uluslararası koruması*) to the Presidency for Migration Management (PMM) (see Annex 2: Legal documents and reforms). If granted, they can remain on Turkish territory until they are resettled to a third country, although the procedure from registration to interview to decision to resettlement takes years, and few are ever resettled (ECRE, 2020). The LFIP also provided for *prima facie* temporary protection status as a result of "mass influx", modelled on the temporary protection directive of the European Union (Norman, 2020). Following the Temporary Protection Regulation of 2014, this status has been applied to Syrians fleeing the war (see Annex 2: Legal documents and reforms). Within the framework of the LFIP, foreigners in Turkey can also apply for short- and long-term residence permits (*kimlik*), conditional on income, wealth and health insurance. While protection statuses as a rule do not lead to pathways to permanent residency or citizenship, under certain conditions, non-protection-related residence permits can be transformed into work permits and may lead to permanent residence.

Until 2010, Turkey was following an “ethnoracial and religious policy vis-à-vis migration” (Parla, 2019a, p. 17). Ethno-religious outsiders were expelled or excluded, starting with the Armenian genocide in 1915 and the “population exchange” with Greece in 1923, and shaped by the nationalist Euro-imperial order of the early 20th century (Goalwin, 2018). Conversely, groups thought to be assimilable into the “Turkish nation”, loosely defined as speaking Turkish and Sunni Muslim, could apply for permanent settlement and citizenship under the Settlement Law of 1926, 1934 and 2006 (Canefe, 2002). Indeed, under this legislation, the terms “refugee”, *mülteci*, and “migrant”, *göç/muhacir* only applied to people of “Turkish descent or culture” (*Türk soyundan veya Türk kültürüne bağlı kimseler*). As a result about 1.6 million Tatars, Circassians and Bulgarians immigrated to Turkey throughout the 20th century from regions of the former Ottoman or Russian Empires (Kirişçi, 1996, 2007; Parla, 2019b). Ethnonational and religious proximity has become de-emphasised in recent reforms of immigration policy and citizenship legislation, to align with EU laws as part of EU accession negotiations (Keyman and Icduygu, 2005; Kadioğlu, 2007). The Citizenship Law of 2009 allows for naturalisation without Turkish descent or culture, such as after 5 years of legal residence, and includes a possibility to grant citizenship on exceptional groups such as by establishing businesses, investing in Turkey or for other exceptional reasons.

International or temporary protection cannot be transformed into a “regular” migration pathway, and the duration of refugees’ presence on Turkish territory does not count towards “legal residence” which may eventually lead to an application for a permanent residence permit or citizenship. As Stronks (2022, p. 32) argues, in migration law, “legal time” values different forms of time differently: “Some time

counts, while other time does not". Instead, refugees are supposed to stay in Turkey temporarily. Protection statuses are indefinitely temporary, and, in the case of temporary protection, theoretically revokable by presidential decree . Most refugees under international protection and Syrians under temporary protection thus live under high degrees of uncertainty and precarity, based on their social, economic and territorial position (Biehl, 2015; Eder and Özkul, 2016; Baban, Ilcan and Rygiel, 2021).

Socially, the protection framework allows for access to public health services and education in theory but here are high barriers to using these in practice, for example if refugees are registered in a different province (Baban, Ilcan and Rygiel, 2021). Since 2016, various regulations and decrees have also formalised the access to work permits for refugees under international or temporary protection, as long as their employer applied on their behalf and fulfilled certain conditions (Memişoğlu and Ilgit, 2017; Norman, 2020). With a work permit, they would be paid the minimum wage, have access to social security (*sigorta*), and be obliged to pay taxes. In practice work permits are almost impossible to get. Employers have an interest in keeping Syrians and other migrants on lower wages, without job security and uninsured (Nimer and Rottmann, 2022). Some Syrians also prefer to work informally, e.g. to keep a greater chunk of their wages, maintain access to humanitarian aid, or, in the case of employers, to avoid Turkish labour regulations (Badalič, 2023). As a result, most Syrians work in highly precarious conditions, with little protection from wage exploitation, little ability to leave employment (Şenses, 2016; Ertorer, 2021; Badalič, 2023), and/or below their qualification and skill level (Nimer and Rottmann, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees were the first to be laid off, and later

partially reincluded in the labour market at worse conditions (Nimer and Rottmann, 2022).

Additionally, Syrians' mobility is restricted under temporary protection. They cannot legally travel outside the country. To leave the province of registration, they need to apply to the provincial governorate for a travel permit, which are often rejected. When Syrians seek work in a different province, or just to visit family, they are thus *de facto* irregularised. Insecurity of legal status overlaps with lack of economic rights and the inability to move elsewhere to produce multidimensional precarity (Baban, Ilcan and Rygiel, 2017, 2021).

Temporal governance in Turkey also works through the internal differentiation of refugees by class (Şimşek, 2020, 2021). As Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) argue, migration and bordering frameworks not only exclude migrants but *differentially include* some individuals to allow the adequate circulation of labour. Thus, higher-class Syrians who entered the country on regular visas, with valid passports, and who could prove a regular income, wealth and/or private health insurance, have been able to avoid the precariousness of temporary protection by just applying to normal residence permits (*kimlik*). Some wealthy Syrians established businesses in Turkey, and thus contributed to the capital interests of the Turkish economy (Pearlman, 2020; Akcali and Gormus, 2021), and informal employment or irregular transactions by Syrian businesses appear to be generally tolerated (Akcali and Gormus, 2021). About 170,000 Syrians live in Turkey with a short-term or long-term residence permit, many of whom are also able to apply for work permits. Residence permits may provide better access to social and economic rights compared to temporary

protection, can potentially be transformed into permanent residence, and may mean less exposure to discrimination in the holders' daily lives (Şimşek, 2021).

Due to the generalised if differentiated uncertainty for Syrians in Turkey, many were excited when President Erdoğan announced in 2016 that some Syrians (but not other refugees) could be granted exceptional citizenship (*istisnai vatandaşlık*) (Al Jazeera, 2016). Those working in core professions (teachers, doctors, engineers) and some students could apply for citizenship on a discretionary basis (CNN Türk, 2016). While there are no official statistics, and numbers must be treated with caution, the Interior Ministry regularly updates the press with current numbers which are then distributed and debated through various news channels. As of April 2023, Turkey has granted citizenship to about 230,000 Syrians, up from about 170,000 in the mid-2020s (NTV, 2023). Yet, the application process is opaque and shrouded by rumours. According to interlocutors, invited Syrians receive SMS invitations by DGMM to submit their files but it is not clear who is invited in the first place, or why some are invited and others not (Interviews with Tania and Majed). Moreover, as I show in subsequent chapters, even Syrians with citizenship of Turkey experience temporal exclusion and dispossession despite their privileged status.

4.2.1 Ambiguous bureaucratic implementation

The “enforced temporariness” (Merla and Smit, 2023) in refugee policy is compounded by ambiguity in how institutions and bureaucrats implement and enforce of the legal framework. Pre-LFIP refugee status determination was carried out by UNHCR on behalf of the Turkish government, and the presence of other migrants was governed by provincial security apparatuses. Since 2013, the Directorate General for Migration Management – in 2018 upgraded to Presidency

and reporting directly to President Erdoğan— has been responsible to register Syrians for temporary protection. In 2018, PMM also took over refugee status determination procedures from UNHCR. Both the shift in institutional responsibility and ambiguous implementation of the existing framework contributes to uncertainty over refugees' future presence in Turkey (Şahin Mencütek *et al.*, 2023).

For example, the decisions of local governorates shape the security of the temporary protection status (Interviews with human rights association (TK02) and a Syrian refugee association (TK05) Şahin Mencütek *et al.*, 2023). Since about 2018, many provinces have stopped registering Syrians for temporary protection in attempts to reduce, in the words of an interlocutor working in refugee protection, “pull factors” for migration (TK04). It has also become nigh impossible to change the province of original registration. Syrians who have recently left Syria, or who have moved westwards to Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir to find work or to be with their families are left in de jure or de facto irregularity (Interviews with volunteers in human rights association (TK02), and NGO employee (TK04)). “Normal” residence permits/*kimliks* theoretically grant better social rights but are also not a secure legal status, for Syrians and others. Renewal of residence permits requires a valid Syrian passport which many cannot provide. Syrian passports are only valid for three years, cost several hundreds of dollars to renew, and sometimes cannot be renewed due to paper scarcity and supply chain issues with the printing press (Interviews with volunteers in a human rights association (TK02), Syrian refugee association (TK05)). As a result, *kimlik* holders are also at risk of slipping into irregularity if they cannot fulfil the formal requirements for renewing their permits and can also not register for

temporary protection instead due to the registration stop in most metropolitan provinces.

Uncertainty in the implementation of the protection framework also affects refugees' access to housing. In Turkey, registered refugees do not receive any housing assistance and are expected to rent private accommodation in the province of registration. The registration stop meant that many Syrians are not able to sign rental contracts in a different province. Some municipalities banned landlords from renting to foreigners (Özkul, 2022), and some landlords refuse to rent to Syrians, leaving refugees in insecurity even with a valid TP ID. As a result, Syrians often rely on complex sub-contractual or informal living arrangements, staying in overcrowded flats with family members or friends, unfinished buildings, rooftop tents, or generally vulnerable to rental extortion and arbitrary expulsion (Ertorer, 2021).

Syrians registered under temporary protection in a different province, and those who struggle to renew their residence permits, are thus increasingly at risk of deportation.. In Istanbul the police regularly engages in extensive document checks in neighbourhoods with a high share of migrants, and arrests, detains and deports those whose papers are deemed not in order, either to the province of registration or directly to Syria. Arrests for detention and deportation also happen at PMM offices where refugees need to go to register in the first place(Interviews with volunteers in human rights association (TK02) and NGO employee (TK04)).Individual bureaucrats' decisions shape whether registration of temporary protection or renewal of a residence permit is granted or not, as several interlocutors explained:

The state gives specific directives and demands to its employees, like: "Syrians' appointments [to apply for a *kimlik*] must be facilitated."

But because the civil servant belongs to different parties such as the Good Party, the opposition party CHP, or the nationalist MHP, this issue enters the realm of bureaucracy and bureaucracy means that when orders are given from the top by the time it reaches the bottom, it will not be implemented (Head of Syrian refugee association, TK05).⁸

I don't know, it's also a bit arbitrary [whether someone can register or not] [...] Usually they go wait in line and then they may get rejected [...] or sometimes they only give them a pre-registration document, if they fulfil the criteria, and otherwise they are just sent off without anything official basically. [But] after some time it's dirty done lucky, they can say: "you are illegal here, we need to send you to go to the detention centre" (NGO employee, TK04).

As the legal framework is arbitrarily interpreted, subject to the individual politics of bureaucrats, all interactions with state institutions are fraught with risks for refugees, causing some to prefer living in hidden informality over formalising their status. The flexibility of the legal framework also meant that some municipalities interpreted the protection regime in favour of Syrian refugees (Employees of different Istanbul municipalities (TK08, TK09)), for example actively seeking EU-funds to be able to promote labour market integration.

This flexible uncertainty and ambiguity related especially to the future presence of Syrians in Turkey, in a context characterised by deep political polarisations on this topic. For NGOs and civil society involved in providing services to refugees, the unpredictability of how political polarisations and considerations would shape the presence of refugees in the future affected their ability to implement their activities, such as legal advice, language courses, or the distribution of material aid.

⁸ فنحن امام أمر الآن انو الدولة تعطي توجيهات محددة و تطالب الموظفين قائلة " انه يجب تسهيل أمور السوريين المتعلقة بأخذ المواعيد " و لكن بسبب كون الموظفين ينتمون الى احزاب مختلفة مثل الحزب الجيد و الحزب المعارض ج ه ب او غيرها او م ه ب القومي , فهذا الموضوع يدخل في حيز البيروقراطية و البيروقراطية تعني انه حين اعطاء الأوامر من الأعلى و الى حين وصوله للأسفل لن يطبق

All the things in Turkey's politics in the future are uncertain. [...] Maybe one day you wake up and you see a ridiculous change that happened while you were asleep at midnight. (NGO employee, TK11)

Since about 2016, international humanitarian and development organisations and NGOs have increasingly implemented projects to promote “social cohesion” (Zihnioğlu and Dalkıran, 2022), a vague term referring to longer-term coexistence beyond humanitarian immediacy while avoiding “integrationist” language with its connotations of permanence, societal participation or citizenship (Ozcurumez, Hoxha and Icduygu, 2021). Turkey's government prefers the similarly vague term “*uyum*”, officially translated as social harmony or harmonisation, with stronger connotations of “refugees” and “hosts” as separate communities with separate cultures that will and should not assimilate. PMM issued a “Harmonisation Strategy and National Action Plan” in 2018, which defined social acceptance of migrants by “local people” as objectives of migration policy. These discursive shifts did not seek to tackle exclusion from social, economic and political rights, and have not challenged the presumed temporariness of refugees in Turkey, as an employee of an international development organisation who worked in promoting “social cohesion” between refugees and locals summarised:

If *everything* is temporary, you cannot know what to plan with. [...] We don't know the approach of the Turkish state. I mean, are these people going to be sent back to their homes? Are they going to be citizens here? What will be their status? (TK01)

Refugee and migration policy, institutional ambiguity and political polarisations overlapped to produce state temporalities characterised by multidimensional and temporal precarity of refugees in general, and Syrians in particular. For refugees living in Turkey, uncertainty in formal legal status and uncertainty about its

bureaucratic implementation was compounded by uncertainty in the practical rights that protection status could afford. In the next section I show that legal status does not protect from experiences of violence. Shifting public opinion and discourses towards the reception of refugees, especially Syrians, led to both the increasing politicisation of refugees in governmental party politics, violence towards refugees, and deportations.

4.2.2 *Contested discourses and practices of membership and belonging*

Between 2011 and about 2014, the AKP pursued an “open-door” policy, during which Syrians could cross Turkey’s southern border easily (Gökalp Aras and Şahin Mencütek, 2015). Concomitantly, the government designated Syrians, who are majority Sunni Muslim, as “guests”, using both the culturally connoted term of *misafir* and hospitality (*misafirperverlik*), and the religious terms *muhacir* and *ensar*, referring to Prophet Muhammads flight to Medina and his welcoming reception by what became the first Muslim community (Polat, 2018; Carpi and Şenoğuz, 2019). The hospitality discourse was portrayed as a religious obligation, drawing on Islamic lore and historical precedent in the Ottoman Empire (Polat, 2018). This enabled Erdoğan and his followers to construct the Turkish nation, or rather the Turkish Sunni Muslim majority, as an entity morally superior to both the degenerate “West” and Turkish Kemalist secularism (Carpi and Şenoğuz, 2019; Alkan, 2021). The hospitality discourse also drew on past governmental practices in which the ‘guest’ label was used to flexibly extend favourable or less favourable treatment to groups of refugees (such as Iraqi Kurds and Turkmen), depending on foreign policy and domestic interests (Abdelaaty, 2021). The government discourse of *misafirperverlik* powerfully resonated with the Turkish Sunni Muslim majority. Many empathised with Syrian

refugees for the first few years after the revolution and were actively engaged in neighbourhood-based support activities, such as financial or material donations to refugee residents (Alkan, 2021).

Simultaneously, right from the beginning of Syrian displacement, anti-Syrian and anti-immigrant sentiment challenged this hospitality discourse. As Alkan (2020, p. 195) has argued, resentment against Syrians fits into existing “logics of alterity”, struggles over identity and belonging in contemporary Turkey. As mostly Sunni Muslim, Syrians pose a threat to ethnoreligious minorities such as Alevis and Kurds fearing Islamification and Turkification under Erdoğan’s AKP (Kılıçaslan, 2016; Polat, 2018; Saraçoğlu and Bélanger, 2019). Stereotyped as “Arabs” they are considered dangerous to the national project by nationalists who envision an ethnically pure Turkish nation (Yeğen, 2022). Some of this may also have its roots in historical Turkish-Arab competition since the late days of the Ottoman Empire (Interviews: Loay, Adam; Jung, 2005).

Over time, sentiments of solidarity have given way to simmering anti-Arab and anti-immigrant prejudice, including amongst the Sunni Muslim majority (Gökarıksel and Secor, 2020; Güney, 2022). Although opinion surveys should be treated with caution, especially in Turkey, one survey has consistently shown that Turkish citizens hold polarised and mostly negative views towards Syrians, either as “victims”, “guests” or as a “burden” (Erdoğan, 2020, 2022). However, the survey questions themselves reproduce essentialising boundaries between “us”, Turks, and “them”, Syrians, that are so very common in public discourse and leave minimal scope for fluidity and negotiation. Negative public sentiment towards Syrians has deteriorated in a context of economic crisis. Although overall GDP in Turkey has

grown, severe financial and currency crises shook the country in 2018-19 and again in late 2021, coinciding with my fieldwork. The value of the Turkish Lira plummeted within several short weeks, triggered by political decisions that affected the independence of the central bank and caused a run on savings and withdrawal of investors (Öniş and Kutlay, 2021). Xenophobic anti-Syrian sentiment needs to be contextualised within this context of precarity where poor workers compete for jobs, resources and position in a national project (Saraçoğlu and Bélanger, 2019). Syrians mostly entered the irregular labour market in industry and agriculture which has been occupied by both internal migrants from Eastern Turkey and international migrants from the former Soviet Union, Asia and Africa following the neoliberalisation of the labour market, weakening of trade unions and retrenchment of labour rights in the 1980s (Şenses, 2016; Parla, 2019a). This suggests that the legal framework of maintaining Syrians in legal precarity is part of a “state-capital nexus” in which the state protects the interests of capitalist employers (Bélanger and Saraçoğlu, 2020).

In political discourse, political parties across the secular Kemalist nationalist (CHP) and fascist-leaning spectrum (İYİ Parti, MHP) blamed Syrians and migrants for the economic crisis and the rise of housing prices, and encouraged the spreading of rumours, such as that Syrians receive paid salaries by the state (Onay-Coker, 2019). Moreover, racist discourses have become more acceptable, with the foundation of the right-wing extremist *Zafer Partisi* (Victory Party) in 2021, the first Turkish party to run entirely on an anti-immigrant platform. One exception is the left-leaning and pro-Kurdish *Halkların Demokratik Partisi* (HDP) which has continued to frame immigration and refugee issues under a universal human rights umbrella (Balta, Elç and Sert, 2022). The HDP has little weight in public opinion, however. In the wake of the

referendum on the presidential system with Erdoğan at its helm in 2017, the presence of Syrians on Turkish territory has also become an increasingly heated topic in public opinion. One public survey conducted in 2020 found that a large majority of Turkish respondents believed that “Syrians harm the economy” and live off a “salary” given by the Turkish state, but also remain critical towards giving Syrians work permits (Erdoğan, 2022). At the same time, *individual* connections may be independently formed despite politicisation and pitting of groups against each other for electoral capital. The same survey found that more Turkish citizen respondents reported having Syrian friends (20%) in 2020 than in 2017 (14%); and almost one third reported having supported refugees in the past (Erdoğan, 2022).

Building on these discursive constructions of Syrians as “other”, Syrians have increasingly been subject to xenophobic violence. This can take the shape of mob-like riots: During my fieldwork, the memory of violent riots against Syrian shops and residences following the alleged killing of one Turkish youth in Ankara in August of 2021 was still fresh on the minds of many (Interview with Adam; DW, 2021). Syrian youth have been regularly victims of lynching which are rarely prosecuted and subject to impunity (Farooq, 2022). Some interlocutors argued that xenophobic violence was carried out by extremist *ülküçü* (grey wolves) militias that in the past targeted Kurds (MacGregor, 2022). Instead of seeking reconciliation, government actors have fuelled resentment, e.g. by relocating Syrians from the respective neighbourhoods and thus legitimising mob violence (MacGregor, 2022). Anti-immigrant and xenophobic violence has also affected Afghans and other people read as “migrants”, although in public “Syrian” is often used as a shorthand for all undesirable immigrants (Balta, Elç and Sert, 2022).

One consequence of this polarisation in political and public opinion was that Syrian presence on Turkish territory has become ever more precarious, with reinforcements of the Syrian-Turkish border and deportations becoming a legitimate means of political practice. Already since 2014, the “open door policy” gave way to a policy of securitisation and border control, following the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment, but also increasing security concerns about cross-border operations of jihadists (Arslan, Can and Wilson, 2021) and the strengthening of the YPG Kurdish forces in Northern Syria (Genç, Heck and Hess, 2019). As a result, the Turkish government has reinforced the military and technological border infrastructure to Syria (Arslan, Can and Wilson, 2021). Inside Syria, Turkey continues to support Islamist militias financially and militarily and the Turkish army has become an active player in the Syrian war with several cross-border military incursions in 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2020 (Interview with NGO employee working on refugee protection (TK04); Bélanger and Saraçoğlu, 2019). Turkey also has effectively occupied and maintained control over a section of North Syria. These so-called “liberated areas” [*al-mahra*] are both an attempt to prevent a coherent Kurdish/YPG-controlled autonomous region, and to create a semi-permanent Turkish-controlled “buffer zone” to which Syrian refugees could be returned (Çevik, 2022; Şahin Mencütek, 2023).

The border has also become increasingly enforced *inside* Turkish territory. The political discourse has shifted from “hosting” towards “returning” Syrians, including among the AKP (Içduygu and Nimer, 2020; Balta, Elç and Sert, 2022). Turkish authorities have stepped up detention and deportation of irregularised persons, including Syrians with temporary protection registered in a different province without a cross-province travel permit (Şahin Mencütek, 2022). Officially, Turkey deported

about 120.000 persons in 2022, the majority to Afghanistan and the highest number recorded (PMM, 2022). In addition, the Turkish government insists that many hundreds of thousands of Syrians have returned to Syria “voluntarily” (Mülteciler Derneği, 2023). Yet, “voluntary return” often happens under coercion by the police and migration authorities (Şahin Mencütek, 2022, 2023), a practice deemed illegal refoulement by both Amnesty International and the European Court for Human Rights (Amnesty International, 2019, 2023).

These deportations are popular amongst the electorate. One survey show a significant increase in support to “send Syrians back” since 2017 (Erdoğan, 2022). Turkish authorities consider deportations as a demonstration of strength vis-à-vis domestic audiences. For example, PMM press statements on completed deportations regularly comment on how few deportations “Europe” has carried out (PMM, 2022, 2023c). During the campaign for the 2023 elections, the entire political spectrum sought to capitalise on anti-immigrant sentiment, including Erdoğan himself, and promised that millions of Syrians would return to Syria (Ertan, 2022; Levkowitz, 2023; MacDiarmid, 2023). Since late 2022, Erdoğan and the AKP government had also stepped up reestablishing diplomatic ties with the previously ostracised Assad Regime in Syria to facilitate the return of Syrians, voluntary or not (Syrian Trajectories, 2022). While most individual Syrians will likely *not* be deported, the political and public atmosphere towards “refugees” has become increasingly hostile, leading many to seek their fate elsewhere. In this respect, İçduygu and Aksel’s designation of Syrian presence in Turkey as “vulnerable permanency” (İçduygu and Aksel, 2022, p. 152) seems a premature assessment. Permanency is

giving way to the threat of actual violent deportation, resulting in what may be better termed “ambiguous temporariness”.

4.3 Temporal refugee governance in Germany: Temporal differentiation and hierarchies of future belonging

In a different and similar manner to Turkey, in Germany the legal and policy frameworks regulating refugees’ and migrants’ presence and belonging in Germany, and their applications and contestations in practice, operate through various temporal mechanisms: 1) the multiplication of legal and administrative statuses, each with different rights and obligations, which have forged hierarchies between asylum seekers through temporal logics of temporariness and future (non-)belonging; 2) temporalities of citizenship in which future membership is ambiguously predicated on a shared ethno-national-cultural past; and 3) uncertainty and ambiguities in bureaucratic implementation of the legal framework that intersects with local conditions to shape local belonging and settlement. In all these, the legal framework intersects with discourses of symbolic national membership and the capitalist political economy to produce refugees as permanently temporary outsiders.

4.3.1 Temporalities of asylum governance

Presence of refugees on the territory of Germany is governed through a range of laws, including the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz/GG*), Asylum Act (*Asylgesetz/AsylG*), the Residency Law (*Aufenthaltsgesetz/AufenthG*) and various EU regulations (see Annex 2: Legal documents and reforms). Over the past decade, formal governance of refugees has become increasingly diversified and complex. Asylum was transformed from a permanent and secure status to a temporary, uncertain, and deportable condition. Between the foundation of the German Federal Republic in

1948 and the so-called “asylum compromise” of 1993, asylum seekers were either granted refugee status on grounds of the constitution – or not. After 1993, categories of protection statuses and residence permits have proliferated. Germany’s asylum law was developed in line with EU processes of harmonisation, such as within the Dublin Regulations, adding the protection statuses of refugee in terms of the Geneva Convention (1993) and subsidiary protection (2013).

Increasing asylum seeker numbers before and after the “refugee crisis” of 2015 and renewed politicisation of “refugees” in public and media discourses triggered a flurry of legal changes after 2014. These laws were often passed in expedited parliamentary and second chamber hearings within a few weeks or months. As one employee explained, who had been working in an organisation for refugee rights for three decades:

The Residence Act has been so much in focus in recent years and in public debates, that these laws were always been rushed through [parliament] in emergency procedures. [...] Nobody is learning anything. Politicians are happily repeating the same mistakes, the stuff that already didn’t work in the 90s. (GK09) ⁹

They allude to how speed and brutality of the legal reforms in 2015, 2016 and 2019, and the accompanying deterrent response, resembled the moral panic on asylum during the 1990s. Between 2014 and 2017, twelve laws regulating some aspect of asylum seekers’ and refugees’ rights in Germany were passed (Will, 2018), plus another nine legal reforms between 2018 and 2022 (See Annex 2: Legal

⁹ Das Aufenthaltsrecht war so stark im Fokus in den letzten Jahren und so in den gesellschaftlichen Debatten und es wurden dann halt auch diese Gesetze immer im Eilverfahren durchgepeitscht. [...] Man lernt überhaupt nix. Also die Politik, die Politik mit dem, was die machen, also die gehen fröhlich immer darauf zu, die Fehler von früher zu wiederholen, also die Sachen, die in den 90ern schon nicht funktioniert haben.

documents and reforms). Most of these reforms restricted the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

All three protection statuses lead to a renewable temporary residence permit (§25 AufenthG) ranging from one to three years, and vary in terms of rights to free mobility, employment, and family reunion (see Table 2). The residence law also includes the possibility to grant temporary residence permits on a sheer endless list of grounds independent of protection statuses as such (Tometten, 2018). These include “deportation prohibition” issued to some rejected refugees (§60 AufenthG), humanitarian permits to refugees resettled by UNHCR or federal humanitarian admission programmes (§23 AufenthG) and refugees under the EU temporary protection directive (§24 AufenthG) e.g. Ukrainian refugees (see Table 2).

Refugees additionally may hold a variety of administrative papers which provide some degree of governmental legibility but do not count as proper legal statuses or residence permits. This includes registration papers before formally applying for asylum (“proof of arrival”, *Ankunftsnachweis*), during asylum procedures (“residence permission”, *Aufenthaltsgestattung*), and papers confirming that a person has applied for but not yet received a residence permit (“probationary permit”, *Fiktionsbescheinigung*). Since the 1960s, rejected asylum seekers have been issued the “non-status” of *Duldung* (§60a AufenthG), literally meaning “toleration”, if they cannot be deported for reasons like medical causes, “undetermined” nationality, lack of passport, or to protect family unity (Schütze, 2023). Formally defined as a “temporary suspension of deportation”, the *Duldung* can be issued by municipal Foreigner’s Offices for a discretionary period of a couple of weeks to several months. Following various legal reforms since 2011, some persons with *Duldung* could

regularise and get temporary residence permits under certain conditions, such as young “well-integrated” migrants, or, most recently, people who have been living with *Duldung* for longer than five years (“chance residence permit”/*Chancen-Aufenthaltsrecht*, 2022)¹⁰. Additionally, new forms of more formalised *Duldung* with fixed-terms and longer durations were introduced such as for vocational training (*Ausbildungsduldung*) or employment (*Beschäftigungsduldung*) (Drangland, 2020a), *after which* persons may be eligible for proper residence permits with all associated rights. Conversely, a *Duldung light* (“toleration light”) was introduced for people suspected not to cooperate with the German state to prove their identity, with more limited social and economic rights (Schütze, 2023). In 2018, Will (2018) counted 22 legal and 3 administrative statuses for foreigners’ residence in Germany; a number that has increased following the legal changes between 2019 and 2023.

¹⁰ While the German word “*Chance*” is generally used to mean opportunity, it also includes the original French *double entendre* implying both opportunity and random luck. It is not clear whether the irony was intended by the writers of the law.

Table 2 Asylum legislation and associated rights in Germany (own collation based on KMK, 2016; BAMF, 2023b; Basic Law; AsylG; AufenthG)

Status (selection)	Legal basis	Duration	Rights/restrictions	Permanent residence?
Asylum seeker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of arrival (<i>Ankunftsnachweis</i>) Temporary residence permission (<i>Aufenthaltsgestattung</i>) 	§63a AsylG §55 AsylG	N/A	Mobility: Restricted. Obligation to live in initial reception centre for duration of asylum procedure or up to 18 months, depending on federal state. Permission required to leave municipality, also for short stays. Further restrictions for various groups, incl. citizens of “safe country of origin”, rejected asylum seekers. Work: Permitted after 3 months Family reunion: No	N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constitutional Asylum (asylee) (<i>Asylberechtigter</i>) Convention Asylum (refugee) (<i>Flüchtling</i>) 	§16a GG §3 AsylG	3 years	Mobility: Obligation to live in municipality of asylum if dependent on welfare Work: Unrestricted access to labour market Family reunion: Yes, “privileged”, for nuclear family, if applied for within 3 months of acceptance of protection status	Humanitarian permanent residence (§ 26 AufenthG): After 3 years, if income sufficient for independent living and German language at C1 level After 5 years, German language at A2 level, generally not reliant on welfare, access to housing
Subsidiary protection (<i>Subsidiärer Schutz</i>)	§4 AsylG	1 year, 2 years after renewal	Mobility: Obligation to live in municipality of asylum if dependent on welfare Work: Unrestricted access to labour market Family reunion: Yes, for nuclear family, if applied for within 3 months of acceptance of protection status; family reunion was suspended between 2016 and 2018, currently it is limited to 1000 applicants per month	Humanitarian permanent residence (§ 26 AufenthG): After 5 years, conditional German language at B1 level, not reliant on welfare/own income, 5 years of payment into social insurance, access to own housing

Status (selection)	Legal basis	Duration	Rights/restrictions	Permanent residence?
Prohibition of deportation (<i>Abschiebungsverbot</i>)	§60 AufenthG	At least 1 year, renewable annually	Mobility: Obligation to live in municipality of asylum if dependent on welfare Work: Permission by Foreigner's Office needed Family reunion: No	Humanitarian permanent residence (§ 26 AufenthG): After 5 years, conditional German language at B1 level, not reliant on welfare/own income, 5 years of payment into social insurance, access to own housing
Temporary residence permits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On humanitarian grounds • Resettlement programmes • Temporary protection • Exceptional hardship • Well-integrated youth and other migrants with a <i>Duldung</i> • "chance residency permit"/<i>Chancenaufenthaltsrecht</i> 	§22, §23, §23a, §24, §25, §25a, §25b, §104c AufenthG	Between six months and two years, depending on permit Some are renewable, others are not (§104c)	Mobility: No restrictions Work: Unrestricted access to labour market Family reunion: Yes, for humanitarian and resettlement permits; no for cases of hardship or transformation of <i>Duldung</i>	Varies depending on condition of temporary residence permit
Toleration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Duldung</i> (temporary suspension of deportation) • <i>Ausbildungsduldung</i> • <i>Beschäftigungsduldung</i> • "<i>Duldung</i> light" 	§60a, §60b, §60c, §60d AufenthG	Various: discretionary by Foreigner's Office (several weeks to several months) Or 30 months (<i>Ausbildung-/Beschäftigungsduldung</i>)	Mobility: Restricted. Obligation to live in municipality of registration in first 3 months, if deportation is imminent, or if dependent on welfare Work: Permission by Foreigner's Office needed Family reunion: No	Permanent residence not possible

Depending on the status within the asylum procedure, the outcome of the asylum procedure, and the conditions for “integration” of the respective status, refugees thus can hold a huge variety of legal statuses that vary in duration, access to rights to mobility within Germany, employment and family reunion, and possibilities to transform the temporary residence permit (*Aufenthaltserlaubnis*) into permanent residency (*Niederlassungserlaubnis*) (see Table 2). This produces a hierarchy of worth with citizens at the top, refugee status in the middle, and *Duldung* at the bottom. Although rights associated with refugee status have been increasingly curbed since 2015, it still provides unrestricted access to the labour market and rights to family reunion, similar to permanent immigrants. On the lower rung of the hierarchy, *Duldung* holders have limited rights, including restrictions on their mobility, health care, and employment which may only be taken up upon permission by the Foreigner’s Office.

This hierarchy is directly related to how time is used as a governance tool of “temporal differentiation” within the legal framework (Stronks, 2022, p. 25). Asylum procedures are often assumed to proceed linearly: an asylum application will lead to either acceptance or rejection. In case of rejection, the person will be deported and thus removed from the territory. In case of acceptance, refugees shall “integrate”, usually defined as getting a permanent job, learning German, and finding housing – taken together this may eventually lead to permanent residence or citizenship. In practice, the refugee trajectory is anything but linear. Instead, legal exclusion of refugees is legitimated vis-à-vis the electorate through what Schütze (2023, p. 15) terms, referring to *Duldung*, the “fiction of temporary stay”, in which restrictions of rights for migrants rely on their limitless temporariness.

This temporal differentiation occurs through various ways. First, asylum itself has been transformed from what was considered a permanent status to increasingly temporary and precarious. This process started following the Immigration Act of 2004 which, on the one hand, responded to pressure of an unlikely alliance of employers and refugee rights organisations to open the labour market for asylum seekers, previously highly restricted (Laubenthal, 2019). On the other hand, the Act introduced reviews of asylum status outcomes, rendering “German asylum in principle a temporary rather than permanent status” (Crage, 2016, p. 360). In combination this began a transformation of asylum seekers and refugees from humanitarian subjects to cheap and disposable workers that have to continuously legitimate their presence through their usefulness (Etzold, 2017; Maroufi, 2017; Altenried *et al.*, 2018; Sohail, 2023). Nevertheless, if protection status was *not* revoked as part of these asylum reviews, refugees were still granted a permanent residence permit. This was restricted further with the so-called Integration Act of 2016 when permanent residency became contingent on other “integration-related” conditions such as language ability and employment (Hinger, 2020).

A second mechanism of temporal governance differentiates between how different status holders can transform their temporary status into permanent residence. “Higher” protection statuses have longer residence permits, shorter waiting periods, and lower eligibility requirements for permanent residency compared to “lesser” statuses like subsidiary protection or deportation prohibition. Moreover, while protection statuses and residence permits accrue “legal time” that counts towards permanent residency or naturalisation (Stronks, 2022), *administrative* statuses such as the registration papers of asylum seekers in the asylum procedure

or *Duldung* do not. Depending on the duration and outcome of their asylum procedure, asylum seekers thus may live in Germany for several years without any recognised claim to regularisation, let alone permanence.

In addition to differentiating amongst refugees between permanently temporary and potentially permanent, the temporal governance in Germany increasingly differentiates amongst refugees through a combination of *speed* and assumptions about refugees' *past and future*. Thus, asylum seekers are increasingly classified into different categories based on their legal nationality with some fast-tracked through asylum procedures towards "integration" whereas others are fast-tracked towards rejection and deportation (Will, 2018, 2019; Leutloff-Grandits, 2019; Abdelkader and Narawitz, 2021; Sperling, 2023).

Two tools are at work here, one formally embedded in the legal framework, the other one in non-binding bureaucratic regulations and discourses. First, since the 1990s, the German state has defined a list of "safe countries of origins", repeatedly expanded by parliament but never shortened (Sperling, 2023)¹¹. If asylum seekers hold the nationality of a "safe country of origin", their asylum procedure is accelerated with restrictions on their ability to appeal. In some federal states, they must remain in initial reception centres for the entire duration of their asylum procedure until their presumed deportation. Second, the classification of "safe country of origin" as tool of violent acceleration is complemented by the bureaucratic (not legal) concept of "prospect to stay" (*Bleibeperspektive*) that became increasingly prevalent to regulate

¹¹ As of writing (November 2023), the list of safe countries of origin encompasses all EU member states, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ghana, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Senegal and Serbia. Discussions about whether to include Georgia and Moldova are ongoing. A governmental proposal to include Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia was blocked in the second chamber, the Bundesrat.
<https://www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/kurzmeldungen-943636>

access to symbolic and material membership in Germany after 2015 (Sperling, 2023). Asylum seekers deemed to have “bad prospects to stay”, including but not only those from the defined list of “safe countries of origin”, were *ex ante* defined as not belonging. By contrast, asylum seekers understood to have “good prospects to stay” were supposed to be granted accelerated access to social resources, such as job search assistance and language courses during the asylum procedure. The concept of “good prospects to stay” was formalised in law in the 2016 Integration Bill as the *future-oriented* “expectation of a regular and lasting residence”. Between 2016 and 2017 the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, BAMF (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*), responsible for asylum procedures and “integration” services, operationalised this “expectation of a regular and lasting residence” by clustering nationalities based on past average asylum recognition rates (Voigt, 2016; Will, 2018, 2019; RND, 2023b; Sperling, 2023). “Good prospects to stay” was broadly defined as nationalities with asylum recognition rates of above 50% in the preceding year (BAMF, 2022c). Consequently, asylum seekers were differentiated based on their presumed *future belonging*, defined by their collective national *past*.

The concept of “prospects to stay” has been criticised for its arbitrariness, and the undermining of individual asylum grounds. For example, the list of countries deemed “good” did not include *all* countries with asylum recognition rates above 50%, excluding nationalities with overall small asylum application numbers, or Afghanistan despite high recognition rates (Voigt, 2016). Moreover, asylum recognition rates were artificially kept low by including initial inadmissibility based on administrative grounds (see e.g. BAMF, 2023a). Perhaps due to these discussions, formal differentiation between “good” and “bad” prospects to stay, and references to “expectation of a

regular and lasting residence”, was dropped in the most recent legal reform, and language courses were made available to asylum seekers from all countries (BAMF, 2022b). In practice, however, “an asylum seeker’s passport still determines whether he/she will be steered toward the fast-track to integration (with more opportunities) or toward the fast-track to return (with more pressure)” (Will, 2018, p. 178). Both the classification of “safe countries of origin” and “prospects to stay” has entered the public and political discourse as a recurrent symbolic reference point for moral (un)deservingness (Sperling, 2023), amongst parliamentarians, service providers, volunteers, and amongst refugees themselves (Abdelkader and Narawitz, 2021). Most recently, the German invention of assessing “prospects to stay” based on previous asylum recognition rates has become part of the reform proposals for the Common European Asylum System, and serves as a legitimation for fast-tracked border procedures towards rejection and deportation (Council of the EU, 2023), demonstrating the mutual interplay and reinforcement of legal, discursive and practical forms of temporal governance at multiple scales, amongst multiple actors and multiple institutions.

The hierarchical distinction of worth based on speed and future belonging defined *ex ante* is independent of the actual effect of the policies. For example, in 2022, accelerated asylum procedures for persons with “bad prospects to stay” in reception and deportation centres took an average of 2 months, shorter than the 7 months average for the past couple of years (BAMF, 2021, 2022a; Deutscher Bundestag, 2023). Yet, this comprised only 0.2% of all procedures, and the duration of “regular” asylum procedures of refugees from some so-called “safe countries of origin” varied significantly (e.g. Montenegro: 1.8 months vs Ghana: 10.7 months) (Deutscher

Bundestag, 2023). Thus, independent of whether the classification as “safe countries of origin” and “prospects to stay” actually sped up asylum procedures, the notion of “prospects to stay” introduced a moral hierarchy of worth amongst asylum seekers grounded in temporal differentiation, anticipating their future (non)-belonging and access to rights based on nationality, as well as past bureaucratic decisions to grant protection, in a recursively reinforcing cycle of disenfranchisement and hierarchisation based on time.

Finally, in Germany refugees are governed through time through the production of unpredictability, arbitrariness, and uncertainty in the bureaucratic and institutional implementation of the legal framework (Maas *et al.*, 2021). The complexity of legal status and residence law itself is a significant source of uncertainty, both for refugees and the bureaucratic institutions dealing with them, suggested the long-term employee of a refugee rights association:

[The Residence Act] has reached a level that is simply no longer enforceable. Neither for the administration, nor for the affected persons, nor for lawyers, nor for anyone else, nobody can reasonably implement this law. [...] In 2005, when the Immigration Act came into force, the paragraph on toleration was... well, about a third to half a page long. Now it's 7.5 pages long. So nobody can understand this anymore. And it's all contradictory. (GK09)¹²

This uncertainty about how to use and apply the legal framework is compounded by the contradictory nature of the multi-level governance structure of institutional refugee reception in Germany. Refugee reception is institutionally shared between the federal office for migration and refugees, BAMF (*Bundesamt für Migration und*

¹² Mittlerweile hat das [Aufenthaltsgesetz] einen Zustand erreicht, dass es einfach gar nicht mehr anwendbar ist. Also weder für die Verwaltung, noch für die Betroffenen, noch für Anwältinnen und Anwälte, noch für sonst irgendjemanden ist dieses Gesetz noch vernünftig anzuwenden. [...] 2005 als das Zuwanderungsgesetz in Kraft getreten ist, hat der Paragraph zur Duldung, der war... na so etwa ein Drittel bis halbe Seite lang. Mittlerweile sind es 7,5 Seiten, also da steigt niemand mehr durch, es ist alles widersprüchlich..

Flüchtlinge), responsible for the registration of asylum claims, the overall asylum procedure and “integration” services such as language courses, the federal states (*Länder*) that are responsible for status recognition, appeal procedures and deportation, and the municipalities which provide housing and welfare, and, through the municipal foreigners' offices (*Ausländerbehörde*), issue administrative legal statuses and residence permits. As a result, the implementation of asylum law varies significantly by location. Different BAMF offices and state courts have different decision practices that determine the outcome of the asylum determination process (Riedel and Schneider, 2017; Schneider, Segadlo and Leue, 2020). Municipal foreigners' offices are infamous for their discretionary power (Fontanari, 2022a), for example in terms of the duration of a *Duldung*, or whether and when work permits to asylum seekers are approved, as pointed out by a manager of a local welfare organisation:

[As an asylum seeker] you are now allowed to work after three months, at least that. But until you are recognized [as a refugee], you must have it [your employment offer] approved again from above. And by the time that is done you usually don't have the job. (GK10)

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Independent of the broader federal legal framework, its various protection statuses and formal social and economic rights associated with them, municipal conditions shape “refugee-integration-opportunity structures” (Phillimore, 2021) such as employment, learning the language or accessing state or NGO services,.

Taking housing as another example, asylum seekers and persons with *Duldung* are obligated to live in municipality-assigned housing and have to report to the

¹³ Man darf mittlerweile nach drei Monaten arbeiten [als Asylbewerber]. Immerhin. Aber bis du anerkannt bist, musst du das [dein Jobangebot] dann noch von oben nochmal genehmigen lassen. Und damit hast du den Job dann in der Regel nicht.

foreigners' office, if they want to leave municipal boundaries (*Residenzpflicht*). Recognised refugees officially can find their own housing unless they are dependent on welfare (*Wohnsitzauflage*)¹⁴ (Tanis, 2022). The regulations governing housing vary across federal states and municipalities, including the duration that residents are obliged to stay in them (El-Kayed and Hamann, 2018; Adam *et al.*, 2020). Different municipalities also adopt different housing strategies (El-Kayed and Hamann, 2018; Werner *et al.*, 2018; Adam *et al.*, 2020; El-Kayed *et al.*, 2020). Sometimes municipalities subcontract NGOs or privatised housing companies to run collective shelters, as was the case in Frankfurt. Other municipalities run their own shelters or promote decentralised accommodation by assigning refugees to private flats, or a mix of both. In collective shelters, residents usually share bathrooms and kitchens with several other residents, and often share rooms if they are considered "single" travellers. Often refugees lack both personal space and privacy (Steigemann and Misselwitz, 2020).

The interaction of the legal requirements and obligations at multiple levels of government, the variety in their practical implementation, and the political economy of the housing market generates absurd contradictions (cf. Stock, 2019). In the words of one interlocutor, a manager in a local welfare organisation:

[The municipality of Frankfurt is] assigned this and that many refugees, through the distribution key of Germany. And then they *must* be accommodated in Frankfurt. They can't go to Offenbach or Darmstadt, even if there was [free] accommodation there. Absurdly, that's why shelters are being built here in Frankfurt or hotels [are rented] or companies converted into accommodations, and in

¹⁴ Both German terms technically mean the same, as indicated by Google translate that renders both as „residence requirement“. Exploring the politics of legal terminology was beyond the scope of research for this thesis. I speculate that the term "*Wohnsitzauflage*" was introduced in 2016 to differentiate and distance it from the long history of contestation of "*Residenzpflicht*" amongst refugee-led and refugee-rights associations in Germany.

Darmstadt some [suitable shelters] are left empty. *This is completely absurd. Nobody who isn't a politician understands this* but that's how it is. (GK10) ¹⁵

When living in municipality-provided accommodation, refugees have no choice over where or with whom they live. Because of the various forms of legal residence requirements, many cannot move to a different municipality to adapt to restricted rental markets (Baba *et al.*, 2023), or to live with family, friends or other support networks (Leutloff-Grandits, 2019). This includes asylum seekers, and people on a *Duldung* with *Residenzpflicht* but also recognised refugees with refugee status who receive welfare benefits under the *Wohnsitzauflage*. The residence requirement obligation means that refugees with formal refugee status are often prevented from finding employment in a different location and thereby exit welfare, forcing them to continue living in municipal shelters. In other words, the interaction of the federal, state and municipal legal and policy framework, local institutions, individual bureaucrats, and the local conditions of employment and housing shape “integration” outcomes (Etzold, 2018), possibilities to access local and informal support networks and are a significant source of ambiguity for refugees and the people supporting them alike (Interviews with social workers in a feminist association (GK06), manager of local welfare association(GK10)).

In sum, refugee governance in Germany is mainly shaped by three state temporalities: temporal differentiation between those permanently temporary and precariously permanent, discursive and formal assumptions about refugees' future

¹⁵ Man kriegt so und so viele Geflüchtete zugeteilt, durch den Verteilungsschlüssel von Deutschland. Und dann müssen die auch in Frankfurt untergebracht werden. Die können dann nicht nach Offenbach oder nach Darmstadt gehen, auch wenn es da [freie] Unterkünfte geben würde. Deswegen werden hier in Frankfurt absurderweise Unterkünfte gebaut oder Hotels [werden angemietet] oder Unternehmen zu Unterkünften gemacht, umgebaut und in Darmstadt stehen aber welche leer. Das ist völlig absurd. Also das versteht niemand der nicht Politiker ist, aber es ist so.

belonging based on nationality and concomitant acceleration of those not considered to belonging towards exclusion and deportation, and unpredictability and contradictions in the interpretation and implementation at multiple levels of the legal and policy framework.

4.3.2 Temporalities of membership: citizenship, nationhood and “integration”

These state temporalities of asylum must be understood within broader symbolic and discursive negotiations of membership and citizenship, which in Germany are embedded in historical ethnoracial and colonial conceptions notion of the German nation as white and ethnically homogeneous (Schönwälder, 2004; Ebu, 2012; Wilhelm and Jaraus, 2016), temporally defined through a common eternal history and implicitly a common future (El-Tayeb, 2015). The territory that is now called “Germany” has for long been a site of intense human mobility, including Germans emigrating to the Americas and German colonies, Polish workers immigrating to the Ruhr region in the late 19th century, ethnic German “expellees” after World War II, “guest workers” from Turkey, Spain, Italy, and Morocco to West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s, “contract workers” from communist countries like Angola and Vietnam to East Germany between the 1960s and 1980s, and refugees from Iran and Vietnam in the 1970s (Oltmer, 2016; Poutrus, 2019). Despite this, in the aftermath of the nationalist movement of the 19th century, the German nation has constructed itself as homogenous and racially pure, both against “internal others” like Jews and Sinti and Roma (see e.g. Simmel, 2018 [1908]) that led to the genocidal form of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, and against “external others”, including Muslim Ottoman Turks and colonised subjects from Africa who came to Germany in the early 20th century (Jenkins, 2004; Fuhrmann, 2012; Ahmed, 2020). In the 1990s, long-standing

rejection of difference gave way to racialised notions of “integration”, in which migrants’ marginalisation was explained in culturalist or groupist terms. Up to this day, public debates often continue to assume a “German nation” rooted in logics of whiteness and linguistic homogeneity (Wilhelm and Jarausch, 2016; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018; Czollek, 2020).

In the wake of the 2015 “refugee crisis”, refugees have been negotiating these “national-ethno-culturally” coded “orders of belonging” as *refugees*, not only as racialised *migrants* (Mecheril, 2011; Karakayali and Mecheril, 2018). For a short period in the summer of 2015, Germany made international headlines with a collective moment of *Willkommenskultur* (welcome culture), in which citizens and migrants provided charity, donated or volunteered for recently arrived refugees (Hamann and Karakayali, 2016; Karakayali, 2017; Häberlen, 2019). However, the moment of enthusiasm and exhilaration about diversity did not fundamentally alter the racialised hierarchies of belonging and membership in Germany and was quickly replaced by renewed xenophobic anxiety (Borneman and Ghassem-Fachandi, 2017; Bock and Macdonald, 2019). Events in Cologne on New Year’s Eve in 2015/2016 stirred a moral panic about young male North African/Muslim refugees and migrants, constructed as sexual predators and racialised others (Weber, 2016). In parallel, right-wing extremist violence against asylum shelters and migrants increased in scale (Frey, 2020; Bocksch, 2022) but remained underestimated or even ignored by state authorities (Hielscher, 2016).

Similar to Turkey, xenophobia in Germany has been aided by a sense of disaffectedness following neoliberal restructuring, especially after the 2007/2008 financial crisis (Bock, 2018). Populist right-wing leaders capitalised on this sentiment

of loss, as well as on widespread ethnonationalist nostalgia and anti-Muslim prejudice, leading to electoral successes of the right-wing party AfD (*Alternative für Deutschland*) in state and federal elections. Although recent research shows increasing acceptance of the “majority” society towards migration-related diversity (Schönwälder *et al.*, 2016; Drouhot *et al.*, 2023), it is clear that extreme right-wing discourses and violence have become more salient and politically influential (Schulz, 2021).

These symbolic and narrative orders of belonging operate alongside exclusionary temporalities of membership and integration into the political community within formal procedures and policies relating to naturalisation and citizenship acquisition. Mirroring Turkish migration governance, naturalisation was for long reserved for those considered German co-ethnics (*Volksdeutsche*) (Perron, 2021). Since the so-called asylum compromise of 1993 (Bosswick, 2000) and with subsequent reforms starting in the 2000s (Anil, 2005), citizenship law has partially shifted from *ius sanguinis*, defined by “blood” or parental lineage, to a limited form of *ius soli*, or territorial conception of citizenship. Prospective citizens must fulfil certain requirements, *inter alia*, permanent residency, language ability, employment, passing a citizenship test, rejection of previous citizenship, and a pledge to the German Constitution. Citizenship to migrants is thus not granted but “earned” (Ahmad, 2017; Joppke, 2021). Naturalised citizens are obliged to *perform* a form of worth and deservingness, a sort of “Super Citizenship” that is not equally required of “German” citizens (Badenhoop, 2021).

Crucially, here again, membership is rooted in a dual temporal hierarchy of past and future belonging. Those considered to belong to the German ethnonational past

are considered almost automatic members in the future. Non-Germans must prove their loyalty and usefulness in the past to *formally* belong in the future. At the same time, naturalised citizens' belonging, especially that of Muslims and other racialised minorities, is recurrently questioned in discourse and practice (Banai and Kreide, 2017), for example in calls amongst right-wing politicians to conduct "name checks" of persons suspected of rioting in Berlin during New Year's Eve 22/23 (RND, 2023a). In Germany, "migrants and their descendants are perceived as living a *permanently provisional life*, never putting down roots, never shaping or being shaped by their 'host society'. They can therefore make legitimate claims of belonging neither *within national space nor within national time*" (El-Tayeb, 2015, p. 286, emphasis added). Even if migrants are naturalised, their permanent symbolic collective belonging remains in question.

4.4 Germany-Turkey as a connected chronotope

Differing legal frameworks, reception conditions, institutional set ups, and actors involved mean that time plays different roles in refugee governance in Germany and Turkey. Simultaneously, temporal governance across the two states is mutually implicated. As I describe in the subsequent paragraphs, I suggest understanding Germany-Turkey as an overlapping transnational social and governance space that has temporal, or chronotopical, characteristics. Specifically, past and present diplomatic and economic ties intersect with a long-standing circular migration route and ongoing social networks of migrants and their descendants to shape refugee governance and its temporalities today.

Historically, German-Turkish political relations were first shaped by the German Empire's attempts to extend imperial influence over the Ottoman Empire in the late

19th century, resulting in the German-Ottoman alliance during the first world war 1914-1918 (Lüdke, 2017). Legacies of this “semi-colonial relationship” resonate today (Fuhrmann, 2012): Both economies retain mutual dependence and Germany has been the single most important export market for Turkey for several decades (Ermağan, 2017; TUIK, 2023a). Germany and Turkey also maintain close if ambivalent diplomatic relations that Turhan (2019, p. 19) calls a “conflictual cooperative working relationship” resulting from “complex interdependence”. A full exploration of the ebbs and flows of Germany-Turkey diplomacy is beyond the scope of this thesis. It suffices to note here that economic and political ties have been shaped by the legacies of the Labour Agreement between 1961 and 1973 when hundreds of thousands of Turkish working women and men migrated to Germany, later joined by family members (Gieler, 2017) and leftist and Kurdish refugees in the wake of political turmoil in Turkey in the late 1980s and 1990s (Szatkowski, 2016). People with a history of migration from Turkey number around three million, approximately 500.000 of whom have Kurdish roots. These so-called “German-Turks” (even though many may not consider themselves Turkish at all) constitute the largest group with a “migration background” in Germany, a statistic category defined as having at least one parent without German citizenship. Approximately 1.5 million retain citizenship of Turkey (Schührer, 2018). Additionally, about four million Turkish citizens in Turkey are thought to have returned from Germany (Rottmann, 2019).

Migrants between Turkey and Germany play an important role in constructions of membership and national belonging in both countries (Rottmann, 2019; Tanç, 2022). Representations of “Turkish migrants in Germany” as a homogeneous and essentially different group have been at the core of post-war negotiations of

nationhood and debates about becoming a “country of immigration” (Joppke, 1996; Asiye Kaya, 2016; Chin, 2016; Foroutan, Karakayali and Spielhaus, 2018). “Turkish migrants” have been a main case study in German academic research about “migrant integration” (Esser, 2004; Triadafilopoulos and Schönwälder, 2006) and “multiculturalism” (Joppke, 1996; Eckardt, 2007), and in critical research looking at how migrants are racialised and *made* different (Chin, 2016; Foroutan, Karakayali and Spielhaus, 2018; Keskinilic, 2021). Tropes of the Turkish Muslim migrant male as backward and violent, and the Turkish headscarf-wearing female cleaner as “*nicht integrierbar*” (impossible to integrate), have been mobilised in endless public debates about *Leitkultur* (“guiding culture”) and whether or not “the Islam” “belongs” to Germany (Ha, Lauré al-Samarai and Mysorekar, 2016, Stakeholder GK03; Aydemir and Yaghoobifarah, 2019; Czollek, 2020). These tropes echo earlier histories of German national constructions against the “Muslim Turk” as the symbol of essential difference since the 18th centuries (Jenkins, 2004). Turkishness also plays a role in how youth speak back against racialisation, for example ironically using “*Alman*” (Turkish for “German”) to describe (white) “Germans”, and more generally people who exhibit stereotypical “German” traits like being bureaucratic, stuck up, submissive to authorities and not using spice in food (Yaghoobifarah, 2020; Amjahid, 2021).

Representations of “Germany” similarly play a role in shaping the Turkish national imagination (Kaya, 2019; Rottmann, 2019). Returnees from Germany to Turkey, derogatorily called *almançılar* (“German-er”), are stereotyped as backward or culturally corrupted (Kilinç and King, 2017; Rottmann, 2019). The exclusion and discrimination of Turkish migrants in Germany are part of everyday concerns and

politicians' discourses about the “degenerate West” and were often mentioned by institutional stakeholders who distinguished racism against Turkish migrants in Germany with the hospitality for refugees in Turkey (e.g. in interviews with a Syrian refugee association (TK05), and several municipality employees in Istanbul (TK08, TK09)). Conversely, artists, cultural institutions and political figures increasingly portray Turkish-German migration as a positive or at least formative relationship, as during public commemorations of the 1961 Labour Agreement during anniversary years (see Figure 5).



Figure 5 Public commemoration of the 1961 Labour Agreement in Istanbul: “60 years of migration to Germany” (own photo)

Many migrants from Turkey and their descendants retain transnational connections between both countries, from personal networks via business relations to circular return and re-return migration (Faist, 2000; Faist and Özveren, 2004; Faist, Fauser and Reisenauer, 2013; Bilecen, Çatır and Orhon, 2015; Aver and Gümüş, 2017). Through the networks of migrants and their descendants, and political,

diplomatic, and economic relations, Germany and Turkey constitute a multidimensional “transnational social field” (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). This transnational social field has been reinforced by Germany and Turkey’s geopolitical location on opposite ends of the so-called “Balkan migration corridor”, used by most refugees from Syria, Iran or Afghanistan. Almost 40% of those who arrived in Germany in 2015 had spent more than three months in another country, many of those in Turkey (Brücker, Rother and Schupp, 2016; Crawley *et al.*, 2016). Most Syrians at least retain transnational networks between Turkey and Germany (Şahin Mencütek, 2020; Rottmann and Kaya, 2021).

Germany and Turkey are also connected through mutual implication in legal frameworks and practices of refugee governance. For example, in Germany, debates about restricting the asylum law first hinged on the increasing number of asylum seekers *from Turkey* in the late 1970s (Szatkowski, 2016). The legal reforms of 1993 that impacted the structure of German refugee governance today were directly preceded by neo-Nazi arson attacks in Mölln and Solingen that killed *Turkish* citizens. More recently, Germany has been key to mediate relations between Turkey and the EU regarding “migration management” in the wake of the Syrian Civil War. Thus, the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016 followed Chancellor Merkel’s uncoordinated initiative to revive stalled EU accession procedures in exchange of Turkey’s increased cooperation in restricting migration along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan migration routes (Aydın and Turhan, 2017; Turhan, 2019). In a prime example of what Adamson and Tsourapas (2019) call “migration diplomacy”, Turkey committed to accept returned/deported migrants from the EU, and increase its own border control, in return for the reactivation of accession

negotiations and financial assistance (Gökalp Aras, 2019). These funds have so far amounted to 9 billion Euro to fund refugee projects and technological and infrastructural reinforcement of Turkey's borders (EC, 2022). Separately, Germany is a primary funder of humanitarian and development projects targeting refugees in Turkey (Interviews with employee in international development institution, (TK01), volunteers in a human rights association (TK02)).

Refugee governance in Germany and Turkey is mutually implicated, if ambivalently and unequally, through the co-constitution of *past and present* political and economic relations, symbolic constructions of nationhood, membership and otherness, transnational social networks and relational influences and legal and bureaucratic forms of refugee governance. All these relationalities are both spatial and temporal and combine individual with collective pasts, presents and futures. That is, Germany-Turkey constitutes a connected *chronotope*, in which refugees, constructed as temporary newcomers, navigate "particular types of space and time [in] a world where only certain subjects, narratives, practices, and [...] identities and memories, can legitimately take their place" (Pereen, 2006, p. 71). This chronotopical negotiation of space and time shapes the possibility for struggles for in/exclusion (Ataç and Rosenberger, 2013). For example, migrantised activists and academics sometimes describe Germany as a "postmigrant society" in which ethnic, national, cultural, racial, sexual and gender diversity has become the norm, and arguing for full national membership of migrantised persons born in Germany (Foroutan, Karakayali and Spielhaus, 2018; Foroutan, 2019). However, the reference point of struggle for equality often remains post-guest worker migration, specifically inclusion of the descendants of Turkish guest workers, with the argument based on past spatial

presence (Çağlar, 2018; Ohnmacht and Yıldız, 2021). Similarly, public Turkish discourses rarely draw analogies between Turkish migrants' discrimination in Germany and contemporary Syrians' exclusion in Turkey. In the words of one employee of a municipality in Istanbul:

“We have been in Germany for more than 50 years. But this has not affected how we treat Syrians here. [...] Unfortunately, our society has forgotten this. We are doing the same mistakes to Syrian refugees now.” (TK09)

In the temporal hierarchies of the Germany-Turkey chronotope, struggles of racialised minorities often remain disconnected from those of *refugee* rights, who continue to be constructed through notions of newness and temporariness, therefore legitimating their continued exclusion.

4.5 Conclusion: Politics of time in the Germany-Turkey chronotope

In both Turkey and Germany, refugee governance occurs through a variety of spatio-temporal means. In Turkey, refugees are maintained in enforced temporariness and simultaneous immobility through a legal framework, reinforced by bureaucrats, officials, and the police, that prevents permanent and secure residence on Turkish territory both formally and in practice. Few individuals have been able to access permanent residence or exceptional citizenship; more secure statuses do not necessarily provide security from deportation. This regime of temporariness is in line with interests of politicians who use refugees, and specifically Syrians, as scapegoats for a variety of ills, and employers who maintain access to cheap and disposable labour. In Germany, asylum legislation in theory provides a linear pathway towards protection, then integration, and then citizenship. In practice, bureaucratic complexity and the proliferation of temporary legal statuses means that most refugees live under

a regime of differentiated uncertainty and temporariness. For those with temporary statuses, membership is promised but uncertainly provided and contingent on both individual behaviour and local factors. In both Germany and Turkey, refugees negotiate historical conceptions of society based on imaginations of ethnonational (Germany) or ethnoreligious (Turkey) homogeneity that render belonging precarious and partial. Negotiations of these notions of belonging are centrally mediated by ongoing political and economic relations and collective memories and practices of migration between Germany and Turkey as a connected but uneven Germany-Turkey chronotope.

In both countries, the institution of refuge is principally premised on temporary and restricted residence on state territory. Refugees thus negotiate being constructed as temporary, “new” and always arriving. Refugee politics are based on an ambivalent politics of temporariness and permanence, negotiated through debates about social and political membership. Permanent status is not in itself a desirable or unalloyed good, as enforced permanence in status and symbolic belonging may be associated with enforced immobility. As assumptions of permanent settlement in the nation state system are usually associated with access to rights, resources, democratic participation, and even further mobility, enforced temporariness and lacking *potentiality* of permanence are tools of migration control that ambivalently keep undesirables out of racially defined social collectives. At the same time, refugees, racialised residents and migrantised citizens challenge discourses of enforced temporariness, make claims to permanent belonging, or just live their lives within these constraints. In the following chapters, I explore the social experiences of

temporal exclusion and emergent practices of temporal autonomy within the constraints of temporal governance.

5 CHRONOTOPES OF SURVIVAL: SOCIAL TEMPORALITIES OF PRECARIETY IN TURKEY

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the various ways that asylum and refugee governance Germany and Turkey operates through time. In this chapter I turn towards the question of how refugees negotiated this temporal governance of displacement in their social lives, and how these temporalities were shaped by other temporal structures of power and intersecting hierarchies such as gender and class. Specifically, I look at how Syrian refugees in Turkey navigated the ambivalent and multiple temporalities of Turkish refugee governance within the relationships to family and friends who lived nearby.

I argue that legal uncertainty intersected with economic crisis and capitalist exploitation to produce a specific collective temporal experience of displacement that I term the “chronotope of survival time”, borrowing both from Bakhtin (1981) and Stonebridge (2021). In this “chronotope of survival time”, refugees spent most of their time working and/or performing emotional labour in thinking about surviving. They experienced both *individual* temporal dispossession, the denial of building an autonomous future, and a *collective* sense of asynchronicity, from the times of loved ones and from national times of Turkey more generally. Temporal dispossession was partially related to class and some Turkish working-class citizens also experienced a denial of futures. Yet, for most Turkish citizens this experience was related to a sense of temporary crisis. By contrast, in the “chronotope of survival time”, Syrian refugees lived in a chronic collective existential temporality: a sense of permanently living in the immediate present. As a result, survival time had detrimental effects on

Syrians' social lives. By producing asynchronicities and temporal isolation, survival time affected whether and how they spent time with family and friends. Moreover, survival time had chronocratic characteristics: it maintained lower-class Syrians in different rhythms and on different collective timelines to other lower-class citizens within and against Turkish state temporalities.¹⁶

5.2 Survival time, temporal dispossession and temporal autonomy

To illustrate the interplay of social temporalities that refugees lived through in Turkey, let me start with a vignette. Bashar worked in a restaurant owned by a Syrian wealthy man, about two hours by bus from where he was living at the time. By the time we met, he had tried six times to cross to Greece but was always pushed back to Turkey by Greek or Turkish border forces. One evening in a northern suburb of Istanbul, we sat in a bar over beers. Smiling, he described his “dream” to me: Once he would get to Europe, he would like to open bar, with a long counter, about 20 tables, excellent cocktails, and live music once or twice a week. But then his face clouded over. Sighing he went on to tell me about his present situation.

This is the first time I'm off work for two weeks. I work all the time here. Do you know when I start working? At 7 am. We clean the place, it opens at 10 am. I get home at midnight or 1am and need to get up at 5.30 again. I work for 15 hours, commute for 4 hours every day. What kind of life is this? [...] [He shows me pictures of his blistered feet.] I just want to live somewhere where there is appreciation. Why? Because I have dignity. I don't want to live this life. I would rather die than continue living this way. I don't want to work for 20 hours, just to be able to pay my rent, food, nothing else.”

¹⁶ While I focus on Turkey, I do not mean to suggest that refugee governance in Germany does not have important intersections with the political economy. It does (Fontanari, 2022b; Sohail, 2023) and with important temporal dimensions (Drangland, 2020a). Nevertheless, for interlocutors in Turkey, survival and work was a stark element of their collective temporal experience of displacement, as *Syrians* and as *refugees*, in a way that was simply not the case for interlocutors in Germany.

As described in Chapter 4, Syrians under temporary protection live in various forms of precarity, including lacking secure status and free mobility (Baban, Ilcan and Rygiel, 2017, 2021; Ertorer, 2021; Özkul, 2022). This precarity is compounded by irregularity. Bashar lived in Turkey without papers. He was in constant fear of being rounded up and deported back to Syria. But he also had no intention of staying in Turkey; he wanted to move on to Europe to pursue his “dream” of opening a bar. To achieve this, he had to work, both to survive and to save up for a renewed smuggling attempt. What bothered Bashar in this situation was that he lacked control over his time. As he tried to survive in the present he was prevented to work on his “dream”. Bashar experienced what Ramsay (2020b, p. 16) calls “temporal dispossession”: “the possibility of a future that has been wrested from them”. Bashar’s time was *stolen* by employers who exploited his need to pay rent and food, and by the Turkish state that provided no legal protection, leaving him struggling for everyday survival over saving up for a future.

Recent research has argued that migration governance and militarised border enforcement steals migrants’ time: it renders the investment people have made to achieve goals and projects and build lives less valuable or lost (Bhatia and Canning, 2021). In the context of European and US border and asylum regimes, refugees’ and asylum seekers’ time is stolen through unpredictable decelerations and accelerations at external and internal border controls, and hostile bureaucracy which is characterised by “stickiness” or the waiting for life to change (to move on, for an asylum decision) (Conlon, 2011; Griffiths, 2014; Haas, 2017; Ramsay, 2017; Brux, Hilden and Middelthon, 2019). This stealing of time is related to capitalist exploitation

of humanitarian refugees as economically productive and exploitable (Ramsay, 2020b, 2020a).

Bashar's case is a prime illustration how stealing time and temporal dispossession in Turkey worked at the intersection of refugee governance and capitalist exploitation. One key feature of the refugee "underground economy" (Badalič, 2023) is that refugees work extremely long hours with little pay (Şenses, 2016; Baban, Ilcan and Rygiel, 2017, 2021). When discussing their lives, just like Bashar, other interlocutors would often automatically turn towards work schedules in Turkey. Work in Turkey was not considered a good investment, and rather a waste of time, which prevented interlocutors on pursuing their dreams and hopes for the future. Multidimensional precarity not only affected Syrians' ability to survive in Turkey. It also affected how they chose to spend their presents and futures: precarity staked a claim on their "temporal autonomy": "having control over how one chooses to use one's own time" (Goodin *et al.*, 2008, p. 30; see also Clancy, 2014).

This overlap of legal precarity within the frameworks of refugee governance and capitalist exploitation in Turkey shaped a specific existential *and* collective refugee temporality, which I term the "chronotope of survival time". Stonebridge (2021, p. 98) terms "survival time" in which time spent labouring takes centre stage: "labouring is what we do simply to survive; its time is transitory, as what we need to live we need in our lifetimes, today and not tomorrow". Stonebridge draws on Ricoer's (1983) interpretation of the temporalities of Arendt's characterisation of human life as labour, work and action (Arendt, 2018 [1958]). Human time, "our chronological lives and our experience of time", (Stonebridge, 2021, p. 98) encompasses the time of labour, but also the temporality of 'work', in which humans

strive towards durability in the face of mortality, and narration in dialogue with others: “Life [...] is full of events ‘which ultimately can be told as a story, establish a biography” (Ricoeur, 1983, p. 65). This biography is both *past* and *future* oriented (see also Brun, 2016). Bashar had a past and dreamed of a future where he could wash and sleep, labour indeed, *and still* work on following his dream [*hilm* / حلم] of opening a bar. His dream resembled a project of work and durability in Arendt’s sense (Ricoeur, 1983; Arendt, 2018) and he worked to create “biographical time” apart from what he could currently envisage for himself (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 91). Yet, in constantly spending all available time to barely survive, the existential condition of people like Bashar did not comprise the ability to fully work on that biography, but rather live in “survival time”.

This temporality of survival was particularly harmful both because survival prevented Bashar from working on his dream of a bar, but also because Bashar felt like he had little choice than to spend all his time working. As Standing (2013) argues, control of time is essential for the enactment of political and personal agency; Cwerner (2001, p. 21) refers to a “time trap” to describe the “strong sense of alienation whereby time seems to be rarely under one’s control. Not only time as an empty category to be disposed of, but also the future.” Lacking control over one’s time can lead to an existential experience of confinement and “un-freedom [which] is often more temporal than spatial, and what seems at stake is the individual’s ability (or not) to imagine, or propel themselves toward, a future” (Jefferson, Turner and Jensen, 2019, p. 6).

Bashar countered this sense of lacking control with an assertion of his “dignity” [*karamah*/كرامة]: “I would rather die than continuing living this way”. He refused to be

reduced to his labour only; against dispossession of his future, Bashar claimed temporal autonomy that went beyond survival time. Quite literally, he expressed that he would rather *end* his future than continue lacking the ability to make choices about about what his present and future looked like. Bashar has not actually ended his life, to my knowledge, up to the time of writing. But in making a claim that he could end his lifeline over continuing to submit, he staked a claim to temporal autonomy, the capacity to shape his own *biography*, a life story which was premised on a future of his own choosing.

Survival time, as a combined chronotope of capital labour exploitation, state-organised legal precarity and an existential sense of temporal dispossession, was met by Syrians with a range of strategies. While Bashar was presently stuck, other interlocutors engaged in an active sense of trading their time in the present to counter futural dispossession. The story of Mahmood was a case in point. One evening I travelled to Kanarya, a working class area of Küçükçekmece with a high share of Kurdish internally displaced persons (Kılıçaslan, 2016). It was a dark November evening at 8pm, and one of my research assistants, Mohammed, and I walked up the steep hill for an interview with Walee, a 26-year-old Syrian to whom I had been introduced via a common acquaintance. He had asked me whether it was fine to talk as a group because a couple of his friends might be around. As we arrived at Walee's place, his friend Mahmood was already there. While we waited for their other friend Zain, who was supposed to come back from work soon, we drank tea and chatted. Walee, Mahmood and Zain all met at an NGO workshop designed to prepare Syrians for the Turkish workplace (which, they say, was useless in terms of finding work but at least they met each other). Walee lived by himself; both Mahmood

and Zain lived nearby with their parents and siblings. Walee was of Turkmen origin and received Turkish citizenship a couple of years ago. Through his citizenship and ability to speak Turkish, he was able to land a job at a humanitarian NGO (see also Nimer and Rottmann, 2021). Mahmood and Zain were both Kurdish from the same city in northern Syria. They were related but had never known each other in Syria. Both Mahmood and Zain had temporary protection, and, while slightly less vulnerable to deportation compared to people without papers like Bashar, they still could not work legally.

Mahmood was tall and in his early twenties but looked at least 10 years older. He had a carved face with raised eyebrows and a forehead in deep folds, appearing critical and dubious. I was worried it was not a good time to talk; it turned out, Mahmood was just really, really tired:

I haven't slept for about 48 hours. Because I just go to work, then I go to university and then I go to work again. And I'm stuck in traffic in the meantime, so I just never sleep.¹⁷

Mahmood was studying graphic design during the day and working in a hospital call centre at night. I was struck by the drudgery he experienced. But he said he was used to it. He had no other choice if he wanted to do *more than just survive*.

We weren't fleeing from Syria as refugees, it was to complete our studies [...] But till now, we are just pulling through, we are working at night and studying during the day to complete our studies. And this affected me greatly. I mean, we could not bear the psychological pressure, the pressure of work, you know, and [always hearing] why are you here in our country?¹⁸

¹⁷ From fieldnotes – no original available

¹⁸ مو قصة انه هربنا من سوريا كلاجئ بس من أجل كان يعني تكميل الدراسة [...] يعني وحتى الآن هينا بنازع بنشغل بالليل وبندرس بالنهار لكي نكمل دراسة ولكن تأثرت كثيرا ينتهي هاد الامر. يعني عنجد ما قدرنا نتحمل ضغط نفسي ضغط شغل يعني، ليش جاي انتا لهننا؟

Mahmood explained that he had a purpose for being in Turkey. It was to improve his future, and to be able to finish his studies. While his family was not necessarily directly affected by the war, living in a comparatively quiet part of Rojava, they came to Turkey to support Mahmood. But to be able to survive and fulfil his purpose, he had to spend all his time either working or studying. He refused to live in survival time only. But to maintain his focus on a future, through education, he had to cut back on an essential part of his bodily life, his sleep.

Majed, another young Syrian man, explained to me that he used to work in a textile factory when he first arrived in Turkey in 2012. However, he decided to start studying both because of the extreme work schedule and because of a sense that otherwise his futures would be foreclosed.

Dyeing clothes was very exhausting, I was working from 7 AM to 7 PM for 800 TL. [...] But it was exhausting and stuff and it was far away and there was the rent. So, honestly, I didn't accept that it would be like that all my life, like, I was saying I don't want to remain a worker in a factory for the rest of my life and stuff. So I said I want to study and continue my studies, maybe [I] can change myself.¹⁹

Working in the factories for minimal pay, and thus experiencing the exploitation common for Syrians in Turkey, was exhausting. Just as important, Majed felt that it was chipping away at "the rest of his life", his mortal future. He thought his life could be different. He had the opportunity to get a university scholarship and started studying. Unfortunately, his experience was not positive. Although he was struggling to understand everything because of his insufficient Turkish at the time, few of his

¹⁹ صبغ ألبسة بس كان كثير تعب يعني كنت أشتغل من الـ 7 الصبح لحد الـ 7 بالليل وكانوا يعطونا 800 ليرة [...] بس التعب كثير وكذا ويعيد وما في أجازات، لهيك بصراحة ما قبلت أنه ضل طول حياتي هيك يعني قلت ما بدني ضل طول حياتي عامل في المعمل وكذا... لذلك قلت بدني أدرس وأكمل دراستي بلقي الواحد تغير

classmates would offer their help, due to racist prejudices, according to Majed. As he was struggling so much, he had to spend all his time studying with few breaks.

I was studying a lot, every day I would study for 10 hours. So this broke my psychology a little, like, it affected me, and now I lost my desire to study. If today I went to a test but [even though] and I didn't study for it yesterday, I would still get 93%. But now I hate studying because I studied a lot in those days and that was mentally stressful.

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The feeling of never having time that Majed experienced while working in the dyeing factories continued during his studies. The chronotope of survival time, combining labour exploitation and legal precarity in the present with a sense of temporal dispossession, affected his ability to construct a future for himself. These experiences of exclusion while studying, in turn, disturbed his sense of self as a studious person. Temporal dispossession affected not only the ability to survive but also had effects on psychological wellbeing, or the sense of living a fully rounded human existence.

In the context of asylum seeking in Europe, Kallio, Meier and Häkli (2021) argue that asylum seekers are often confronted with an oppressive linear temporality, understood as a linear progression from flight to safety to “integration”, which creates expectations that they knew they cannot fulfil. To counter this, asylum seekers focused on the present and a radical openness of the future – what they term “radical hope”. In the context of Turkey, refugees were not expected to “integrate” over time. Labour exploitation and legal precarity worked together to create a sense of futural dispossession amongst refugees, forcing them into an oppressive present that was

²⁰كنت أدرس كثير ولكن هاد الدراسة كنت بأيام أدرس باليوم 10 ساعات، فهاد الشي خلا نفسي شوي تأثرت يعني وهلا ما مشتهي أرجع أدرس... اليوم كان عندي فحص لكن مبارح ما درست جبت 93. صرت أكره الدراسة لأنه درست كثير هديك الأيام وضغط نفسي وكذا

always spent working. But, within the constraints of the chronotope of survival, interlocutors worked towards regaining temporal autonomy. Both Mahmood and Majed insisted on pursuing further education, even though it was hard to combine with the need to work. But by doing so they hoped to open pathways to a life with different possibilities, in effect repossessing their time both in the present and the future. Nevertheless, this practice to “recalibrate” (Sharma, 2014, p. 8) their own expected times with the demands of the chronotope of survival time came at a cost. Mahmood paid with time for rest and sleep, trading “labour time” of biological reproduction for working on his biography (Ricoeur, 1983). Majed paid with psychological wellbeing and a loss of his will to study; he traded in a part of *himself*.

5.3 Survival time and collective boundaries of class and citizenship

What I call the chronotope of survival time in Turkey overlapped with struggles over labour and capital and collective boundary-making practices. Indeed, the temporalities of capitalism and economic crisis affected all workers in Turkey, not just “refugees” (Saraçoğlu and Bélanger, 2019; Nimer and Rottmann, 2022). Some Syrian interlocutors pointed out that their working conditions resembled those of lower-class Turkish citizens. Thus, when I asked about his life in Turkey, Loay, a Syrian man in his early twenties argued:

L: In Turkey the work life is very time consuming. We don't have time. When do you start work in Germany?

P: Maybe 9am to 6pm usually?

L: You see, in Turkey you work for at least 10 or 12 hours, normally during the weekends too. There is maybe one day or two days off on Saturday or Sunday but you want to rest too. During the week you can't just go somewhere after work and meet your friends. *It is the*

same for Turkish people too, they go to work and come home, that is it. ²¹

Mahmood, Zain and Walee similarly highlighted how long hours affected Turkish citizens:

M: There are some of the Turks like this, there is a certain percentage who are like us.

Z: Yes, there are some who are like us.

W: Yes, but a small percentage, a really small percentage. ²²

For Loay, intensity of work schedules affected Syrians and Turkish people alike; for Mahmood, Zain and Walee, some Turkish citizens also were exploited in a similarly way to them. This indicates that capitalist exploitation contributed to temporal dispossession of marginalised individuals irrespective of their formal legal status or theoretical ability to access work rights, a point that Ramsay (2020b) also emphasises. In this vein, a growing number of scholars have argued that we should consider refugees within the framework of broader capitalist relations, to understand how economic structures and legal and political frameworks create “differential inclusion” beyond legal status (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Rajaram, 2018; Ramsay, 2020a; Bhagat, 2022).

The period of my fieldwork coincided with a period of intense public debate about the state of the economy, due to a temporary nadir in a succession of financial crises and economic downturns since 2018. Between 1 October and 20 December 2021,

²¹L: العمل في تركيا يستهلك الوقت بشكل كبير، ليس لدينا وقت. متى تبدؤون العمل في ألمانيا؟

P: عادةً من 9 صباحًا إلى 6 مساءً؟

L: في تركيا نعمل لمدة 10 أو 12 ساعة على الأقل وعادةً ما نعمل أثناء عطل نهاية الأسبوع أيضًا، ربما نأخذ يوم واحد أو يومين عطلة يوم السبت أو الأحد، ولكنك تريد أن ترتاح أيضًا. أثناء الأسبوع لا يمكنك أن تخرج وتلتقي بأصدقائك بعد العمل، ونفس الأمر ينطبق على الأتراك أيضًا: يذهبون للعمل ويعودون إلى المنزل

²²M: في نسبة للأتراك كمان هيك في نسبة للأتراك كمان هيك

Z: اه في منها بكونو معنا

W: اه بس نسبة ضئيلة، نسبة ضئيلة

when President Erdoğan announced measures to stabilise the economy, the Turkish Lira lost over 60% of its value against the dollar (Al Jazeera, 2021). After a short respite, the Turkish Lira continued to lose value since, albeit more slowly (The Economist, 2023). A cheap currency and capital controls on interest rates supported both the export industry and economic sectors reliant on cheap credit such as construction. However, the currency devaluation and financial instability resulted in a devaluation of worker's wages, and price hikes in rent and everyday goods, given the country's dependency on imports for many primary goods. Without resort to dollar savings, poor people were most affected.

In this context, the currency crisis, inflation and price hikes were a key concern of all residents of Turkey, refugee or not. Interlocutors, friends, and acquaintances would anxiously follow the most recent Turkish Lira-Dollar exchange rate. As one Turkish interlocutor said: "everybody is staring at the dollar" (Fieldnotes 02 December 2021). The period of financial crisis in late 2021 thus could be understood to pose a "historical conjuncture", in which refugees and citizens approached coequality, that is, struggling to survive in the same urban space of Istanbul, suffering from the same economic policies, resulting in a similar form of temporal dispossession (Çaglar and Glick Schiller, 2018).

One excerpt from my fieldwork diary illustrates this generalised anxiety:

The economic crisis is the main thing on everybody's mind right now. I'm sitting in a café right now, even at the table next to me they are discussing the inflation, how trade with Germany could be a way out, how you just need to learn German. Every taxi driver I speak to is either angry or frustrated at the economy. The other day, I asked one taxi driver to slow down – he was speeding and constantly looking at his phone. He was offended at first but then we got talking. The usual chit chat, "Where are you from? Why are you here?" Then he

went on: "Isn't life much easier in Germany? I would love to go there, at least they have human rights there. Here you don't get human rights." I asked him: "What kind of human rights do you mean?" He replied: "well... I mean, here the prices are always going up and up. The dollar now is at 12 TL²³. *We can't live anymore*. I used to make 200 TL a day, this was enough, you could go to the supermarket and buy lots of things. Now I can't buy anything with that anymore. Do you know when I started work today? At 2 o'clock in the morning. Now it's 8pm, I'm still working. *I work all the time, 7 days a week. I can't take a break anymore*. This started about 2 years ago already. It got worse with Covid, but it was before as well." I ask him for the reasons of the crisis. "Valla, I don't know, but it's bad. The government. They are not doing anything about it. But all the prices are always increasing, increasing, increasing. Everybody's angry. I'm angry."

The taxi driver referred to his presumably normal past when working regular hours was sufficient to survive. Now, in the current state of crisis, he felt like he could not survive any longer. Survival for him was understood as an ability to live with human rights, the ability to be human. One way of how this was expressed, again, was a sense of rush, spending all time just labouring, without time for rest, leisure or play.

Other Turkish interlocutors expressed similar worries about their present survival. Like amongst Syrian interlocutors, this sense of crisis affected what was perceived as a normal social life. Ayşe, a volunteer in a soup kitchen in a different part of Küçükçekmece explained:

Amongst our neighbours, when we see each other, we greet each other but everyone is worried for their livelihood. Previously, we would [sit] in our garden with our neighbours, or in their garden. I would cook, they would cook, we would make *börek* together. We would all gather together in one place and have a drink. These were very good days. The family-neighbour relationship was very good. I

²³ The Turkish Lira has continued to devalue since. As of writing (November 2023), the exchange rate was 28.50 TL to one dollar.

swear, now I don't see any of my neighbours anymore. When I see them, I say hello from afar, ok? No, it's over. Everyone is suffering from their own poverty.²⁴

As I describe in more detail in Chapter 7, visits and mutual support amongst neighbours constitute an important part of local social and moral universes in Turkey (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh, 2018; Alkan and Maksudyan, 2020). In Ayşe's narrative, neighbourly relations were about the regular rhythms of visiting and cooking with and for each other, including time consuming dishes like *börek* (dough rolls filled with cheese, spinach or meat). Neighbours shared particular "social times" in which time spent together was a part of expected and normative behaviour (Lewis and Weigart, 1990). However, when neighbours no longer had time to visit each other, expected presents felt wrong.

In addition to present times feeling aberrant, Turkish residents were also worried about their *futures*. Especially young people were thinking about leaving Turkey, and Turkish emigration had achieved new highs in recent years (Öztürk and Taş, 2022). One report published at that time found that almost three out of four Turkish youth would prefer living in a different country if given the chance (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2022). In this vein, Piro, a Kurdish refugee from Eastern Turkey, explained how many of his friends felt investing in education did not bring expected returns in the current state of the country, so they wanted to leave:

We also think that the state of this country is not very good. [...] I have nurse friends [and] there are others in the electrical and electronics jobs I am currently working in, they also want to go.

²⁴ Biz şu anda komşularımızla birbirimizi görürsek selamlaşıyoruz. Herkes kendi geçimine düşmüş. Daha önceden komşularımızla bizim bahçe olsun onların bahçe olsun. Ben yemek yapardım, o yemek yapardı, börek yapardık. Hep birlikte toplanıp yer içerdik. Çok güzel günlerimiz oldu. Aile- komşu ilişkisi çok güzeldi. Valla şimdi ben komşularımın hiçbirini görmüyorum. Gördüğüm zaman uzaktan bir selam veriyorum tamam. Yok bitti. Herkes kendi yokluk derdine düşmüş.

Everyone is trying to figure out how to leave, how to go to another place. They have been studying and working hard for 4 years. When they graduate, they can't find a job, they have nothing in their hands. They say that the only solution is to leave and be a waiter abroad, or I can do something else, but at least I will be able to live better than here.²⁵

Piro highlighted how his friends could not see a viable future for themselves in Turkey. They had invested time and effort but still could not find a job in their profession. Elsewhere at least they could live better.

Of course, Syrian refugees were also concerned about their lack of a viable future in Turkey. Amongst my interlocutors, many (although by no means all) were thinking or planning to leave Turkey. Some wanted to have a better future with or for family members: Aameena was waiting for refugee resettlement, together with her family, to get treatment for her son. Judy, who had received Turkish citizenship, was thinking of marrying a man in Dubai. Others expressed their situation in very similar terms as Piro – they felt they had dreams and plans and could not realise them, or live up to their potential, as expressed for example, by Adam, a naturalised Syrian Arab with Turkish citizenship:

I don't want to stay here, I am definitely leaving as soon as I can. I don't want to just do any kind of small work to sustain my life here. *I want to work on my future*, I want to work in my area. [...] The thing with my work is, I studied engineering but my certificate is only worth to put it on the wall. I want to work in my area, I don't want to have studied for nothing.²⁶

²⁵ Biz de bu ülkenin gidişatının pek iyi olmadığını düşünüyoruz. [...] Hemşire arkadaşlarım var, şu an çalıştığım elektrik elektronik işlerinde de gitmek isteyenler var. Herkes bir türlü nasıl giderim, başka bir yere nasıl giderim diye uğraşiyor. Burada 4 sene okuyorlar, uğraşıyorlar. Mezun olduklarında bir iş yapamıyorlar, ellerinde hiçbir şey yok. Tek çare oraya gideyim de orada garsonluk da yaparım, başka bir şey de yaparım, buradan daha iyi yaşarım diyor.

²⁶ أنا لا أريد البقاء هنا، سأغادر بالتأكيد من هنا في أسرع وقت ممكن، لا أريد أن أقوم بأي عمل صغير فقط لأستطيع أن أعيش هنا، أريد أن أعمل لمستقبلي، أريد أن أعمل في مجالي. لأن العمل هنا لشخص مثلي من الممكن جدا ان لا يكفي حتى لتأمين لقمة العيش [...]

Adam was looking for opportunities to work on his future on his *own* terms, not on externally imposed terms. He felt that his investment in his university education, even though in a demanded field, was not worth much. Again, he expressed a sense of temporal dispossession, that a future of his own choosing was denied to him. For him, leaving Turkey was the only option – and he did leave Turkey to Germany a few months after our conversation.

Yet, the experience of temporal dispossession, as a denial of autonomous futures, differed between Turkish citizens of Turkish origin, naturalised Turkish citizens of Syrian origin, and Syrians who had temporary protection or lived in Turkey irregularly. People on precarious legal statuses like Bashar and others considered their *lives* to be denied, that is, they experienced temporal dispossession as a *chronic and existential condition*. Turkish citizens like the taxi driver cited above, Piro and Ayşe, also experienced temporal dispossession but they experienced it as a *temporary situation of crisis*, albeit with an uncertain end point.

Indeed, citizenship and legal security provided some protection against the greatest excesses of labour exploitation, as Walee explained:

As for me, I went through this experience before, but now, thank God, the work in which I am working in now has official working hours, like nine to eight hours. Therefore, I do not face this problem now, but I went through it previously, I mean, I used to work for 12-13 hours.²⁷

Walee worked as a Turkish-Arabic translator and research assistant in an NGO, and he had registered to study law. He had been able to access a white-collar job,

المشكلة في عملي هو أنني درست الهندسة، ولكن لا أهمية لشهادتي غير لتعليقها على الحائط، أريد أن أعمل في مجالي، لا أريد أن تذهب دراستي سدى.
27 انا من ناحيتي مريت بهاي التجربة، بس الحمد لله العمل اللي هلاء عم بشتغل فيو ساعات عملو رسمية يعني تسع ساعات، ثمن ساعات تسع ساعات يعني. فلذلك ما يواجه هذي المشكلة هلاء بس سابقا كانت موجودة، يعني كنت بشتغل 12-13 ساعة

unlike many skilled Syrians (Nimer and Rottmann, 2021), and he had only been able to access this kind of work because he could naturalise and get Turkish citizenship. Moreover, as a Turkmen from Syria, he spoke Turkish as one of his first languages and was generally considered “Turkish”. By contrast, other Syrian interlocutors who had received Turkish citizenship expressed could rarely escape their “refugeeness” (Nguyen, 2019, p. 111). When I probed Adam why he could not get a job in his field although he was a Turkish citizen by now, he explained that employers still discriminated against him as *Syrian*, understood here as “Arab”.

[To have a better future] I would need to change my name. [...] Even though I am a citizen, I have rights, but I can't get them because any time anyone sees my ID they just see that I am Syrian.²⁸

And Loay, also naturalised by now, explained:

L: I don't have a future in Turkey. I think my future is in Europe [...]. The biggest problem here is the work situation, the situation of the Turkish Lira. You work 10 or 12 hours and at the end of the month you only take 2000 TL. And you pay rent and food and nothing is left. [...]

P: But this situation is the same for Turkish people, right? And you have citizenship? What is the difference?

L: It is different. *Turkish people are sons of the land*, this is their land. This is not our land, we are just guests here, they say that to us.²⁹

In other words, Syrians were concerned about their futures not because the country experienced a temporary economic crisis. Instead, they felt that their future was denied to them as *Syrians*. Irrespective of the theoretical or formal ability to access employment with regular pay and working hours, Syrians negotiated being

²⁸ سأحتاج إلى تغيير اسمي [...] حتى بالرغم من أنني مواطن ولدي حقوق، إلا أنه لا يمكنني الحصول عليها لأنه كلما رأى أي شخص هويتي، لا يرى غير أنني سوري.

²⁹ L : ليس لدي مستقبل في تركيا. أعتقد أن مستقبلي في أوروبا [...], أكبر مشكلة هنا هي وضع العمل ووضع الليرة، أنت تعمل 10 أو 12 ساعة وفي نهاية الشهر تأخذ 2000 ليرة تركية فقط، تدفع الإيجار والطعام ثم لا يتبقى شيء. P : ولكن هذا الوضع هو نفسه بالنسبة للأتراك، أليس كذلك؟ ولديك الجنسية؟ ما هو الفرق؟ L : هناك فرق، الأتراك هم "أبناء الأرض"، هذه هي أرضهم، هذه ليست أرضنا، نحن مجرد ضيوف هنا، يقولون هذا لنا

discursively and symbolically constructed as outside the nation-state temporalities of belonging.

Another example of this was Said who had a temporary protection ID in a different province but lived in Istanbul irregularly. He repeatedly expressed to me that he wanted to leave Turkey:

“I can't open a bank account, I can't have proper work, I can't buy a car... this is the thing - in this place life is okay. You can get by, but you can't have *aims in life or dreams*.”³⁰

For Said, everyday life in Turkey in the present was fine but he could not plan for his future. This was interesting to me because Said mostly passed as Turkish in everyday life. He had made a conscious decision to blend in as much as he could and avoided the Syrian community. He only had Turkish friends, spoke Turkish fluently, worked in Turkish-speaking contexts, and shared a flat with his Turkish colleague in a middle-class area with a comparatively lower share of migrants. Most people did not suspect that he was Syrian at all; sometimes he struggled to find the right words in Arabic which he only used with his family who lived in Frankfurt (and with me). Despite his outwardly “integrated” life in Turkey, his legal status affected his ability to work on the future. The present was insufficient; Said wanted another future for himself in which he could dream and have aims in his life.

Temporal dispossession was also differentiated by the way it affected temporal autonomy, understood as an ability to choose how to spend one's time both in the present and in the future. For example, Walee argued that Turkish citizens might work long hours for choice while Syrians worked out of a lack of alternatives:

³⁰ Based on fieldnotes of an informal conversation in Arabic – no Arabic original available.

We have to take this into consideration: I mean, the Syrian will work for minimum wage in this job, but the Turk, if he wants to work in one thing, he might have a second option to work too, and so he can take a multiple of his wages and that's why he will work this additional job. I mean, this is their choice. But most Syrians are forced to do this.³¹

While some lower-class Turkish workers were affected by the exploitative nature of the work system, and suffered from economic decline and inflation, Walee argued that Turkish citizens were still able to live in human time because they had a *choice*. In other words, Turkish citizens were able to exercise temporal autonomy despite temporal dispossession. This difference was produced both through legal uncertainty of the temporary protection regime and irregular status, and through a generalised construction of *Syrians* as different. For Syrian refugees under temporary protection like Mahmood or Zain, or living in Turkey irregularly like Bashar cited above, temporal dispossession was coupled with a denial of temporal autonomy and a *permanent condition* related to their irregularity and legal precarity.

I would argue that temporal dispossession of all workers in Turkey was distinct from the specific time-space configuration that I have termed the “chronotope of survival time”. For most working-class Turkish citizens, the economic crisis was a crisis precisely because it was perceived as materially, symbolically and affectively different to their expected normality, be it being able to live off 200 TL per day in the past, or young people expecting to work in their field of studies. For them, the economic crisis was experienced as an uncanny “present-ness” of the present, in which “the links between past, present, and future that ordinarily allow us to anticipate” were severed (Bryant, 2016, p. 21). For Syrian refugees, however, a focus

³¹ في شيء مقابل شيء، يعني السوري ممكن يشتغل بالأجر الأدنى بهاد العمل بس التركي وقت اللي يكون هو على قناعة وبدو يشتغل هاد الشغل مع انه في أشغال تانية ممكن يشتغلها بشتغل بأجور مضاعفة لهيك بشتغل هاد الشغل. يعني هادا خيارو بس بينما السوريين أغلبهم مجبورين عهاد الشيء

on labouring in the present to the detriment of working on a desired future, as shaped by past individual and social expectations, was not an exceptional situation but a core temporality of refugeehood in Turkey. The chronotope of survival time was a *collective and enduring experience of difference* amongst Syrian refugees.

Temporal dispossession in the Turkey labour and refugee regime affected how individuals envisaged futures for themselves, differentiated by legal status, class and ethnic origin. Survival time also impacted on how futures could be envisaged in relation to important others. These shared futures were rooted in social and cultural norms of what constituted an ideal life course. This was illustrated by Ali, who lived in Küçükçekmece at the time. He suggested that the harm caused by the Turkish work regime lay less in low wages or the long work hours in themselves, or even in the inability to work on an individual future and build a “biography”. Instead, the problem was the disruption to the ability to even think about living a family life in the future, as a normative part of being human and “Arab”.

It's hard for us to work in workshops. We, as Arab people, in general the work system is: [the hours] are from 9 to 2 or 3 because for normal people, you need time to rest. If you're married with kids, then you'd go out with them. If you have a father or a mother, then you spend time with them. So, this is the issue [here]: you work for 12 hours. We go out at 8, then eat and sleep and rest if we're tired, then go back to work. And you can't go out on Sundays because you've been working for a full week, 6 days. Your body is exhausted so you need to rest at least for one day. So, the working hours are very difficult for [us]... the Turkish people [may be able to bear this] work but for the rest of us, working 12 hours is very hard. I mean they may not have a strong social life like us Arabs. We, as Arabs, even the employers in Syria, he knows that you can't work tomorrow, you need to see your family or kids. If I had a son today, ok, his mother would raise him, but a boy needs a father as well. So, by the time I got out [of work] and see my son, I wouldn't be enjoying my son and

walk with him a little. Why have a kid in the first place [if I can never spend time with him]? I would just stay single and that's it.³²

In Ali's narrative, the work life in Syria was designed to enable both rest and a family life. He contrasted this with the life in Turkey which prevented individuals to fulfil their social roles, such as having children and spending time with one's parents. In his view, the intensity of working both harmed the ability to see family and friends in the present, but also the ability to envisage a normal life in the future. Ali's narrative points to how temporal experiences were *normative* (Schatzki, 2013). Social and collective norms regarding work, family and gender shaped what counted as a normal life rhythm, who should spend time with whom, where and when and how often, expectations and anticipations of when a family should be formed, and what regularities of care might mean once it is formed. Just as temporal norms are rooted in shared pasts and histories (Anderson, 1983; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Chakrabarty, 2000), they also reach into the future by shaping expectations of a normal life course, many of which are *normalised* and thus unquestioned (Tavory and Eliasoph, 2013).

At the time of our meeting, Ali had been unable to unite with his wife who lived in a camp in Southern Turkey, because of the mobility restrictions imposed on camp residents. They quite literally were unable to share the same space, as well as building a shared future. He affirmed how the temporalities of work schedules

³² لأن صراحة صعب الواحد يشتغل بالمعامل نحنا كشعب العرب بشكل عام موضوع سيستم الشغل ساعات العمل من التسعة للساعة ننتين أو ثلاثة لأنه كحياة فرد طبيعي لسه فيه عنده يروح يقعد يرتاح إذا كان متزوج وعنده أولاد يطلع معاهم إذا عنده أب أم يقعد معاهم فهون موضوع الشغل تشتغل 12 ساعة نطلع الساعة 8 إذن نرجع الساعة 8 يعني كنا ناكل وننام ولو تعبانين نرتاح شوي نطلع نشتغل والأحد ما تقدر تطلع الأحد لأنه أنت جاي أسبوع كامل ست أيام تشتغل جسمك منهك فيدك ترتاح أقل شي يوم فهذا الموضوع ساعات العمل جدًا صعب بالنسبة لـبس الأتراك يشتغلون هذا الموضوع بالنسبة لباقي الكل صعب عليهم موضوع 12 ساعة جدًا صعب يعني هما ممكن ما عندهم موضوع حياة اجتماعية قوية نفس احنا العرب احنا عندنا موضوع حتى صاحب العمل يقولك كعرب احنا بسوريا يعرف انه بكرة عندك بدك تتخلص من الشغل تروح تشوف أهلك أولادك تطلع إذا أنا اليوم صار عندي ولد طيب أمه رح تربيه أو كي بس الولد محتاج للأب كمان فأنا على ما طلعت أخذت ابني أنا ما انبسطت بابني فرحت بيه ورحت مشيته شوي ليش عم صار عندي ولد رح اعيش عزابي وخلص

disrupted his biographical work, in his case focusing on forming a family, raising a child and spending time with his parents. As Schatzki (2013, p. 52f.) argues, social timespaces work to coordinate “certain ends, projects, actions, and combinations thereof [... which] *should* be pursued or performed there.” Part of Ali’s disappointment of working long hours and having no time in Turkey was a sense of failure to build a normative life rhythm of spending time with children and family.

Ali pointed to how the chronotope of survival time in Turkey delegated Syrians to a different normative collective temporality outside the temporalities of the nation-state. In noting the difference between how “Arabs” and “Turks” work, he showed how he was excluded from Turkey’s “national temporality” (Edensor, 2006, p. 541). Family-based social norms and rhythms are shaped by national norms, or “temporal customs about when and where specific social practices should occur” (Edensor, 2006, p. 534). These social and national temporalities work to mark group boundaries, in distinguishing one group from another (Edensor, 2006; Tavory, 2018). Ali’s encounter with what he perceived as a *different* temporal norm in Turkey resulted in an experience of difference. Ali drew clear boundaries between the supposedly “Arab” rhythms which included rest and have a family life, or “human time” in a fuller sense (Stonebridge, 2021), with the rhythms of work in Turkey which only comprised work, eating and sleeping, limited to the times of labour and survival. The repetition of this daily rhythm harmed the longer-term temporal norm of creating his own biography with a family, including marrying, having children and spending time with his wife, parents, and children. This was not just any individual biography, but, in Ali’s view, a typical “Arab” biography which had a different norm towards a social life from the Turkish life.

National and social temporal norms are always contested. Just like “Arab” gender and family norms are multiple, contested and changing (Joseph, 1996, 2000, 2018), temporal norms of what counts as the “proper” way of spending one’s time in daily rhythms and the life course, are shaped by struggles over hegemonic cultures as well as global histories. Thus, national times and temporal norms are shaped by gender norms, class, politics and location (Greenhouse, 1989). I got the sense that Ali self-consciously and ironically self-stereotyped himself as Arab and the normative Arab family against a frequent experience of othering in Turkey. Syrians in Turkey, not as individual refugees but as an involuntarily collectivised group, thus navigated belonging and differential inclusion through time.

The existential condition of temporal dispossession of marginalised Turkish workers was forged through a sense of crisis and disappointment with a future that had been promised to them in the past. In a different chronotopical fashion, Syrian *refugees*, in a formal sense, were dispossessed of their temporal autonomy through the precarity of their legal status or non-status that could be resulted by employers to steal refugees’ time. At the same time, Syrians were also dispossessed of their futures as *Syrians*, stratified by ethnic origin and the ability to blend in as Turkish. Even those who escaped legal precarity by naturalising as Turkish citizens lived in the “chronotope of survival time” to various degrees. In other words, in the chronotope of survival time, class, citizenship and discrimination intersected to differentiate between those whose presents and futures were valued and those whose time seemed wasted. In the words of Sharma (2014, p. 25), “Not everyone is equally out of time. [...] Keeping in and out of time is a form of social control, one of the conditions of possibility for contemporary global capital [... to inhabit the world in

time means recognising] how our time is entangled with the time of others". The times of working-class refugees and citizens was differentially valued from the times of higher-class professionals, who in turn were stratified along the Syrian/Turkish divide. Temporal dispossession and temporal autonomy were relational *social* temporalities with different *collective* temporal effects. In what I termed the "chronotope of survival time" work schedules functioned as a marker of difference, in forcing Syrian refugees to remain outside the national, both regulated and discursively constructed timespace. This denied them "coevalness" (Fabian, 1983; Kirtsoglou and Simpson, 2021), or an understanding that capitalist exploitation and state practices interacted to enforce temporal dispossession of Syrians and keeping them as temporally different.

5.4 Survival time, shared time and care time

So far, I have argued that labouring for survival, combined with legal precarity, acted as a constant dispossession of refugees' existential human time, which included working on dreams, life course projects and futures. Survival time kept Syrians *as refugees* and *as Syrians* outside the dominant national temporality of Turkey. The chronotope of survival time also had other effects, namely on human sociality. Like in Ali's narrative cited above, this became clear when I asked other Syrian refugees in Turkey to describe their relationships to "locals" as well as to other Syrians. Many responded with resignation that they did not have time for friends, hanging out or meeting people because of the long working hours needed to survive. A similar point is noted by Sigona (2012), who shows that undocumented migrants in the UK found it difficult to make friends and have aspirations because they lacked time and often needed to work multiple jobs at once. Some even felt they had no time

for family. This was illustrated by how Zain and Mahmood talked about their family relationships:

Mahmood: Socially, I live with my family, but I see them once a month, [only] one time each month I see them. Sometimes I would come home late at night and they would be asleep already. As for my friend[s], he would visit me at home and leave again because of the stress from university and work. At night I work [and] I mean, my family is here [in Kanarya] but during the day I am at the university. I would run out of time from that point to this point [as I go from one place to another]. At this point I rarely see my family, it is difficult, but we do communicate socially, I mean, I communicate with my family. But yeah, I barely have any rest with all of this.³³

Zain: It's the same for me, I work 12 hours a day, yeah, 12 hours, and travelling the distance takes us two hours too, one hour on the way and one hour back, so it's 14 hours. And when I arrive home to see my family, I see them for an hour, two hours maybe, then I put my head on the pillow and sleep.³⁴

Mahmood's and Zain's experience shows that sharing spaces, quite literally the same flat, did not necessarily coincide with the synchronisation of times between family members and loved ones.

This simultaneity of physical proximity and lack of shared time was also expressed by Ameena, a 48-year-old Syrian woman from Aleppo. She was living with her husband, four sons and daughter in Esenyurt in Western Istanbul, a working-class neighbourhood with high numbers of displaced people and migrants from a range of countries and rural Anatolia. Her elderly uncle and aunt lived in the same house on the basement floor. Across the street, at least three floors of the five-storey house were occupied by cousins and former neighbours from Aleppo. Other cousins,

³³ اجتماعي بذاتن عايش مع اهلي ولكني بشوفهم بالشهر مرة، بالشهر مرة وحدة بشوفهم، بجوز صرلي اكثر من باجي بساعة متاخرة وبلاقيهم نايمين. رفيقي هو بيجي لعندي وبروح من كثر ما اني بضغط من الجامعة للشغل. بالليل بشتغل [...] يعني اهلي هون بنهاري يكون بالجامعة يعني، طلعت من الوقت من هاي النقطة لهاي النقطة. هاي النقطة انه نادرا ما اشوفهم اهلي بهاي النقطة يعني. يعني في صعوبة، بس بنتواصل اجتماعيا، يعني مع اهلي عم بتواصل اه. ويا دوب استريح كل شي مع بعضه.

³⁴ كمان نفسي الشئ بشتغل أنا باليوم 12 ساعة، اه 12 ساعة ومسافة الطريق بتاخذ معنا ساعتين، ساعة روحة وساعة رجعة، صارو 14 ساعة، وبرجع للبيت بشوف أهلي وعائلتي بشوفهم ساعة ساعتين بحط راسي وبنام.

uncles and aunts lived a few blocks away. I visited her family regularly and often stayed in her house to drink tea, coffee and chat, sometimes staying overnight. Sometimes her aunt took the two flights upstairs to hang out, help with cooking and eat together. A few rare times Ameena took me to visit her relatives together. Usually, she preferred to stay at home and be left alone. I was struck by how Ameena's relatives seemed to almost recreate their Aleppian neighbourhood in Esenyurt but Ameena herself seemed to avoid most of them. This was in contrast to Ameena's sister in Germany, Rania, who often told me that she suffered from being far from her relatives and felt very isolated. When we sat down for an interview, I asked Ameena why she did not see her relatives more often if they lived so close by.

Yes, we have relatives here, but everyone is at work and they come back tired. I mean there are not a lot of visits unless there is an occasion. Everybody would come home from work, have dinner, take a shower, and sleep and the next day back to work. I mean, there are some gatherings but very few. You saw what it's like, it's not possible to meet up, and, thanks God, it is okay. [...] I mean, it is very tough to [visit], stay a bit and go back [in these conditions], very tough [...] And all of them are going through a hard financial situation, and all the people are living by the salaries that their children bring in. So, the one who will stay up late in the night won't be able to go to work in the morning, so that's difficult, God forbid.³⁵

Together, Mahmood and Zain's, and Ameena's story, point to how what I call the chronotope of survival time disrupted what could be expected to be normal socialising with relatives and family who lived nearby. They described a pervasive sense of asynchronicity between work schedules and social rhythms. In Mahmood's and Zain's life, the requirements of the Turkish chronotope of survival time, combined

³⁵ اي في اقرباء هون بس يعني كل واحد بالشغل , بيجوا تعبانين , يعني مافي زيارات كثير الا بالمناسبات , لكل بيجوا بيتعشوا بيتحموا بيناموا و ثاني يوم عالشغل , يعني بصير اجتماعات بس كثير قليل و شفتي هون ما بصير يصير في تجمعات يعني و الحمدالله ماشي الحال ... يعني كثير صعب الواحد يضل روحي و تعي , كثير صعب [...] و كلون اوضاعون المادية ضعيفة , و الكل عايشين على اجور ولادهم , الي بدو يسهر ثاني يوم مارح يقدر يروح على شغلو فصعب حرام

with their attempts to forge their own future, resulted in de-synchronisation of their daily rhythms from that of their families. This also affected others like Ameena, who did not work herself but lived in a context where labour and survival were a prime concern. Many Syrians in Turkey lived asynchronous lives from their family members, rendering shared places non-coincidental with shared times. Living in 'survival time' individualised my interlocutors' times against a desire to also live in what Robertson (2021, p. 129) calls a duality of "shared time", a time rooted in a particular locality, or "how time is shared and passed with others in place", and "care time", the ability to care for loved ones in the present.

The importance of synchronising family times has been noted in the context of transnational family relations, for example as transnational couples struggle to maintain quality communication across different time zones (Cwerner, 2001; Baas and Yeoh, 2019), or negotiate different expectations towards maintaining a sense of "nearness" (Acedera and Yeoh, 2019; Robertson, 2021). However, physical proximity did not necessarily translate to temporal proximity (see also May and Thrift, 2001). Amongst interlocutors in Istanbul, the constant need to survive meant that interlocutors felt a sense of temporal separation despite proximity in physical space. According to Allan (1994, p. 208), "time is materialised in space" – spatial experience of distance could also be materialised through time. With temporal separation, I mean to describe the sense that times were not shared with persons although sharing times was individually or normatively desired. People literally were not able to spend time with each other. This mattered because social temporal norms mandated something different, including visiting frequently and envisaging shared futures.

The chronotope survival time thus also implied a collective feeling of asynchronicity, not having enough time for family members, and at the same time being stuck on an undesired future trajectory different from what would be socially and collectively expected. This chronotope had an intense affective character, in which time was *felt* as abnormal. In this vein, I asked Ameena how her social life in Turkey differed from her life in Aleppo.

We had many social gatherings back in Aleppo, every Thursday all the women used to get together and meet in one of the women's houses, and the men were also meeting, it was the same for them, and we would stay up till late at night, and we used to go to the sea on weekends and go visit, and also on Fridays, it's an off day, right? So we used to do visits to the relatives and go to the sea and life was so beautiful back then. But here there are not many visits, visiting each other is very rare. And the reason is there is no occasion to come together, and if there's no occasion there is no need to go [visit each other]. The boys will come home tired after work, everyone is tired and there is no one who is free. Imagine I am visiting you when it's late and you are tired, this is difficult. Like, my children come back tired from work, so the children of someone else will also be tired.³⁶

Similar to Ali's description of different Syrian and Turkish work schedules, Ameena also contrasted the life rhythms in Syria as beautiful and relaxing with those in Turkey, where people were always tired, needed to rest and had little time for each other. In contrast, Ameena remembered her past social life as characterised by rhythmical regularity, ordinariness ("every Thursday") and predictability. She highlighted Friday as a collective religious holiday for intense sociality, celebration and excitement. This contrasted with how other interlocutors, such as Loay and Ali

³⁶ كان في كثير اجتماعات في حلب . يعني كان كل يوم خميس نجمع نحن النسوان , كنا نجمع ببيت و نسهر , و الزلم يجمعوا سوا و يضلوا سهرانين و نروح عالبحر و نروح دوارة , ثاني يوم الجمعة مو عطلة كنا نروح زيارات عند الاقارب و كنا نروح عالبحر و كانت الحياة كثير حلوة , بس هون ما في زيارات كثير , الزيارات هون كثير قليلة , و السبب انو في مناسبة منروح , مافي مناسبة ما في داعي نروح و الولاد جابين تعبانيين و الكل تعبانيين و مافي حدا فاضي , يعني بدني ارواح اسهر عندك و انتي تعبانة صعب و مثل ما انا ولادي تعبانيين فولاد الناس التانيين اكيد تعبانيين

quoted above, spoke about the off-day Sunday as just a day of rest and recovery from labour, without any collective symbolic meaning attached to it.

Ameena's memories might have been idealised in hindsight, in a bout of nostalgia, indicated by her repeated referral to travelling to the sea, a two-to-three-hour drive from Aleppo. It was clear, though, that life in Turkey was socially experienced as *lonely* due to the intense dispossession of refugees' time. Survival time prevented a social life and building connections that were considered normal, and it prevented living the normative rhythms Syrians had grown to expect "at home". The temporality of survival prevented the regularity, predictability and rhythmicality that was necessary for a normal life, in turn rooted in memories of past practices.

The experience of labour exploitation in Turkey, and its temporal effects, clearly had a gendered element to it. In Turkey, Syrian men, in particular young men, are more likely to work than women (Demirci and Kirdar, 2023). Just as my interlocutors described, they were more immediately affected by temporal dispossession as restricting actually disposable minutes and hours, or what economists sometimes term "discretionary time" (Goodin *et al.*, 2008). While young men like Mahmood, Zain and Ali worked very long hours and missed out on seeing their family because of this, Ameena was a housewife. She was busy with housework for parts of the day, but she did take the time to see me when I came to visit. We sometimes sat and chatted for hours, which is one reason why I was confused at first as to why she rarely saw her neighbours and relatives. Ameena also often asked me why I did not come visit more often to spend more time with her.

However, when Ameena described how “everyone is tired” in her neighbourhood because of the need to survive, she also talked about herself. A normal social life with normal rhythms in Syria was “beautiful”. Turkey, by contrast, was tiring and exhausting, leaving little emotional energy for doing anything else than just survive. I interpret this seeming contradiction between Ameena’s actual disposable minutes and hours and her argument that “everyone is busy” as an indication that her description of social time in Turkey was not an individual but a *collective* experience. The chronotope of survival time was an interwoven social temporality, or a “teleoaffective structure” (Schatzki, 2013, p. 52), where the common practical experience of working long hours in poorly paid, informal and exploitative labour exhausted not only those directly engaged in it but also those affectively connected to those workers. Survival time was an affective chronotope of tiredness and exhaustion, “highly charged with emotion” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 248), that was collectively experienced, independent of each individual refugee’s actual disposability of clock time.

This point recalls recent arguments that borders not only have material and legal but also affective dimensions that draw emotional boundaries around or within the nation (Ahmed, 2004; Holzberg, 2021). As Meier (2020, p. 2) argues in the context of the German and UK asylum regimes, affective borders are intentionally and unintentionally violent: institutional practices and everyday racialisation, detainability and deportability force asylum seekers to perform what she terms “emotional borderwork”. They feel discomfort and shame when going about their daily lives, experiencing the border in and through the body (Meier, 2020). These affects have particular rhythmical temporalities, e.g. through regular exhausting encounters with

the bureaucracy to renew papers or collect benefits (Meier and Doná, 2021), or through constant worry about the future (Meier, 2020).

In Turkey, the affective nature of the chronotope of survival time meant that even if clock-time minutes or hours were disposable for socialising in theory, in practice these did not *feel* free. Past research has defined lack of temporal autonomy as the unavailability of actually disposable minutes (Goodin *et al.*, 2008). In the context of survival time, disposable minutes appeared irrelevant if the present was spent worrying about the near and far future, both individually and in relation to others. Ameena was constantly worried about her two older sons' work and future, her disabled son's treatment, and her daughter's mental health. Her present available minutes were filled with her projection into the future through worry for kin (Jefferson, Turner and Jensen, 2019). The chronotope of survival time in Turkey affected her emotional and mental wellbeing which prevented her to feel rested enough to see other people, even if she wanted to. She experienced the affective border in the Turkish context through survival time of everyone around her.

5.5 Countertemporalising survival time as making times

Affectivity also characterised challenges to temporal dispossession by the intersection of Turkish refugee governance and capitalist exploitation. First, while many interlocutors were expressing significant dismay at long work hours and how this affected their ability to spend the present as they wanted and imagine desired futures, many actively countered this enforced temporality by spending as much time as possible with friends who were in the same situation. As in the case of Walee, Mahmood and Zain, it often happened that I was scheduled to meet with one person for an interview but then ended up interviewing several people at once or sequentially

as they coordinated their times with an expression of interest in my research. The same was the case for Ali, Loay and Adam, who all slept at Majed's house in Istanbul as they were waiting for job opportunities after finishing their studies. When I asked Walee, Mahmood and Zain them about their relationship to each other, they told me:

Walee³⁷: Our social relationships are strong.

Mahmood: Sometimes we spend 24 hours together. [...]

Walee: Okay, all right, because our social relationship is strong. I mean, we meet every week...I mean, sometimes we meet every day, and sometimes once a week. Sometimes we get together once a month to meet. This is according to each person's stress in his work, and occupation, or his studies, but in general, we try to meet as much as possible.

Zain: But we are connecting with each other via the phone almost every day.

Walee: Exactly.

This echoes Robertson's point of the importance of shared time *in place* for a sense of connectedness and belonging (Robertson, 2021). In this sense, Walee, Mahmood and Zain lived in multiple temporalities at once. On the one hand, they struggled to recalibrate their present lives to the imposed rhythms of the Turkish chronotope of survival time (Sharma, 2014). The rhythms of long hours of work contributed to an affective sense of being rushed and "out-of-time" (Griffiths, 2014), lacking synchronous time with family, and chipping away at their lifetimes and potential to work on their future projects. However, as I meet Walee, Mahmood and Zain at Walee's house, they clearly *made time for each other*, prioritising their friends who lived in similar situations in the face of hardship and drudgery (see also Sigona,

W: 37 علاقتنا الاجتماعية قوية

M: أوقات بنقعد 24 ساعة مع بعض [...]

W: اه تمام لانه علاقتنا الاجتماعية قوية يعني بنجتمع بالاسبوع اييه يعني... يعني احيانا بنجتمع كل يوم، وأحيانا بالاسبوع مرة. أحيانا بنجتمع شهر لنلتقي. حسب كل شخص وضغوطاته وعمله وشغله ودراسته، أما بشكل عام بقدر الإمكان بنجتمع.

Z: أما عالتفون تقريبا كل يوم بنضل بنتواصل مع بعض

W: بالضبط.

2012). Here, physical proximity, living in the same neighbourhood, may have helped by reducing the clock-time necessary to travel to see each other. But even if they could not meet up physically, they were in touch on the phone. Just as transnational families are nowadays mediated by what Madianou (2016) has called “ambient co-presence”, the temporal separation that Mahmood and Zain experienced from their families was countered by digital co-presence with friends. Countering the state temporality of having no time, of always being rushed, coincided with carving out time for those who mattered, at least in this moment.

A few weeks after our first encounter, I saw Mahmood again, this time at the flat where he lived with his parents and siblings, around the corner from Walee. Mahmood looked much more relaxed and even happy: he sat more upright; his face was much softer. He told me that he just finished exams for the term, so he was off university for a while. He also introduced me to his new girlfriend, Cristina, 21, who wanted to share her experiences living in Turkey. I interviewed her while Mahmood sat along. Cristina was sharing a flat with her sister in a different neighbourhood in Istanbul. She had had to interrupt her nursing degree because she could not afford the fees and living costs, and at the time she was working in a factory to save up money. But, she explains, she was also working even while she was studying. Remembering how struck I was by Mahmood’s commitment to his studies and his work, I asked both when they had time to see each other.

C: Sometimes during my break time while I am at work. I have an hour’s break or like 45 minutes. He visits me at work, or we meet in the evening. Like today, I get off work and he would take me from there, he drove me here. So we meet in the evening and on holidays.

P: But isn’t that hard?

C: It's hard but we are putting up with it [laughing]. We are forced to. We have to [deal with it]. Like this.³⁸

Living in survival time conflicted with “human time” (Stonebridge, 2021) – time for dreaming, future making, and, as I have shown, building relationships. Sociality is essentially temporal in that present relations are affected by the thickness of the past and the future (Rosenthal, 1996). While my Syrian interlocutors affectively often felt like they had very little time, both in the present and for the future, Mahmood, Cristina and others made time for each other, quite literally carving out each minute of free time to get together physically. In telling me that “We are putting up with it. We are forced to”, Cristina highlighted the dialectic of *temporal dispossession*, imposed on them by the state temporalities of refugee governance and capitalist labour relations in Turkey, and *temporal repossession* and reclaiming of temporal autonomy within and against those dominant temporalities. Cristina and Mahmood had no choice but to bear that they had little time for each other and somehow manage it. Cristina described a strategy of endurance in negotiating the temporal regime of survival time, by reappropriating the little chunks of time they had available. This kind of endurance was neither connected to “waiting out” a crisis or an active engagement with the future (Khosravi, 2020), nor characterised by political passivity (Hage, 2015). In the context of refugees negotiating temporal dispossession of survival time in Turkey, the endurance that Christina described was less an active strategy to fill time in anticipation of a changed future but rather about reclaiming ordinary and interpersonal temporal autonomy in the face of externally imposed temporal

³⁸ C : احيانا بوقت استراحتي وانا بالشغل عندي ساعة استراحة، كانت ثلاث ارباع الساعة هيك.... يجي لعندي عالشغل، أو، المسا مثل هلاء ... هلاء من شوي أنا طلعت من الشغل اجا دغري اخدني لهون... المسا بنلتقي يعني وأيام العطل.
P : بس يعني مو اشي زي هيك شوي صعب
C : صعب بس عم نتحمل (ضحك) مضطرين، مجبورين. وهيك

dispossession. While not actively challenging the state and capital temporal powers that she lived in, by spending time together and caring for each other, she and Mahmood maintained open possibilities for “potential worlds” (Povinelli, 2011, p. 33), in which connection and shared living in the present and in the future would be possible.

5.6 Conclusion

In Turkey, the refugee regime often forced Syrian interlocutors to work irregularly, for very long hours, at extremely low wages. This legal and economic precarity overlapped with capitalist labour demands to produce a state temporality in which free time was scarce, and lives felt rushed. What I have termed the “chronotope of survival time” in Turkey was a social and collective temporality of displacement in which Syrian interlocutors *individually* experienced time as temporal dispossession and a denial of temporal autonomy, *relationally* experienced time as temporal separation from people who lived nearby, and *collectively* experienced time as living on different times than “Turkish society”.

Precarity, as a combination of labour exploitation and legal uncertainty in Turkey, forced Syrian refugees to spend a significant amount of time working, or, if not working, performing emotional labour in thinking about surviving. As a result, refugees experienced a form of temporal dispossession: the denial to choose how to spend their time in the present and from working on their futures. This resembled how other working-class residents of Turkey experienced time in a context of economic crisis and financial devaluation. Whereas (non-Syrian) Turkish citizens conceived of temporal dispossession as a situation of crisis that may end at some point, for Syrian refugees, survival time was an existential and “chronic” condition

(Vigh, 2008). Temporal dispossession prevented people from following their futures and had detrimental effects on spending time with loved ones who live nearby. The temporal structures of survival time also maintained Syrians as outside the national temporality, both as refugees, and as Syrians. Nevertheless, refugees struggled to repossess time and claim temporal autonomy, by choosing to spend time working on their future through education and *making time* for each other.

6 CHRONOTOPES OF SEPARATION: TEMPORAL GOVERNANCE AND TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES ACROSS GERMANY-TURKEY

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I turn towards an analysis of how refugees' family relations across the transnational social field of Germany-Turkey were experienced and practiced within and practiced against temporal governance in the Germany-Turkey chronotope. Displacement and a variety of individual and collective strategies meant that family members were involuntarily dispersed across and within countries. I show that this dispersal and separation in space was reinforced by temporal governance in both Germany and Turkey to produce specific spatio-temporal configurations, or chronotopes (Bakhtin, 1981), in which family temporalities, understood as shared memories and expectations of living together in the future, were affected. I focus on how forced displacement and settlement in the country of asylum resulted not only in spatial but also in *temporal separation*, the involuntary disentanglement of refugees' human and biographical times from family's shared times in the pasts and hopes for shared futures. While separation sometimes occurred in the chaos of the journey, I argue that tools of temporal refugee governance, such as legal status and age of maturity, then erected *temporal* borders within families. In this vein, spatial separation could be managed as such but was considered as existentially threatening when it was accompanied by temporal separation. While enforced family unity could also be conceived as oppressive, memories of shared pasts and expectations of shared futures shaped the pain of separation in the present.

6.2 The relationship between spatial and temporal separation

As discussed in Chapter 2, spatial separation of families is common in forced displacement, leaving families spread out across different countries or continents. Some separate due to chaotic circumstances (Chandler *et al.*, 2020). In other cases, families take strategic decisions to separate with some family members journeying ahead to find employment, send remittances, access education, or apply for family reunification (Chandler *et al.*, 2020; Dubow and Kuschminder, 2021). In my study, almost all refugee participants had family members that were important to them but lived in different countries.³⁹ Interlocutors were separated from parents, adult siblings, and adult children, in addition to more extended family members such as cousins, uncles and aunts. Some family members had remained in the country of origin, such as Syria or Afghanistan. More often, families were spread across different places, including Turkey, Sweden, the USA, the Gulf, and Iran. While much literature on transnational families focuses on the separation of the nuclear family (Yeoh *et al.*, 2020; Tiilikainen *et al.*, 2023), my sampling approach meant that most interlocutors who had spouses or children were also currently living with them. Some interlocutors were single; others had experienced temporary separation from their spouses or minor children in the past but had been able to reunify later.

Spatial separation was often experienced as painful, independent of whether separation occurred due to strategy or chaotic circumstances. One example of both could be seen in the story of Nadeen, a 31-year-old Kurdish woman from Syria. I met her several times during social events at the temporary shelter in Frankfurt where she

³⁹ One Syrian interlocutor in Turkey, Ali, had travelled to Turkey with his entire family, and did not have family members living in Europe.

resided. She was always accompanied by her three children: a toddler in a stroller, a boy of 6 and a girl of 8. She was friendly, eager to help other residents, and brought food to Arabic-speaking staff members. Still, one could tell that she was anxious. When she told me her story, she explained that she continued feeling unsafe after arriving in Germany. The shelter staff monitored her and her children's movements and actions, and she felt like "in prison". This made it difficult to deal with the trauma that she experienced as part of the repeated instances of separation from her children and husband during her flight from Syria. As she told me, she had expected to live in safety, hoping for a better future for herself, together with her children and husband.

When we were planning to leave Syria, we were saying that we were leaving to live in safety but [ever since] everything was extremely hard for us; everything was hard and up to today I haven't been able to rest psychologically.⁴⁰

At the various stages of her journey, her expectations to have a future in safety with her children and her husband were frustrated by the separations that materialised. First, whilst smuggling from Turkey into Bulgaria, Nadeen lost sight and then contact with her husband and two older children. As she moved on to Greece with her toddler, then a few months old, she had thought that her children were with her husband but learnt later that he had been imprisoned by the Bulgarian border force. Her two children were taken in by a stranger. This man had identified Nadeen's brother via Facebook, whose name he remembered from one conversation with Nadeen during their smuggling journey. Nadeen stayed in Greece with her toddler for eight months before she was able to reunite with her children in Germany. She

⁴⁰ من سوريا كان بدنا نهاجر لانو كان نقول انو بدنا ياهم يعيشوا بامان بس كان كل شي صعب , كل شي صعب لسا ما ارتحت نفسي انا

remembered the period of eight months as a difficult time, but it was made easier because she knew her children were safe with her brother.

Honestly, if they hadn't been with my brother, I wouldn't know what would have happened to me, I mean really in such situations I don't know what a person can do. My heart was about to burn up, but thankfully they were with my brother⁴¹

When Nadeen arrived in Germany, it was during the Covid-19 pandemic. She had expected to reunite with her children immediately but instead Nadeen was quarantined for one month. While she was able to see her children, she was unable to *touch* them as they were physically separated by a fence. Nadeen again described this separation as extremely painful:

If I start speaking about this, I will start to cry. [...] When I came to [the initial refugee reception centre] and sorted my affairs out, I stayed for one month [in quarantine]. My brother used to bring my children so I could see them at a distance, but I was unable to hug them and kiss them, and my son used to kick the fence because he wanted to get me out of there. So, it was really hard for me.⁴²

In a third instance of separation, Nadeen was placed in a temporary shelter in Frankfurt, in a different neighbourhood to where her brother was living with his wife, his newborn baby and her two other children. While she was able to move to the same city as her brother, and her children eventually moved in with her, she was disappointed in being located far from her children's social network.

They told me 'you will be far from your children' and [my brother] couldn't help me in this [...]. He told me: 'your kids are too little and there is no way that they will put you in a far place', but I was far and that was the hardest thing for me, because it was so far and [my

⁴¹ اي بصراحة لو انو هندن ما كانوا عندو ما كنت بعرف شو رح بصرلي , يعني ما بعرف حتى الواحد شو كان بدو يعمل لو ما كانوا عندو بس انو كانوا هندن عندو يعني احسن , يعني كان رح يحترق قلبي , اي الحمدالله انو وصلوه لعندو
⁴² اي , اذا بحكي رح ابكي والله ... اهلي من 8 شهور هون و انا باليونان , اجوا قبلي ب 8 شهور [...] وقت رحنت على غيسين و سلمت حالي , و ضليت شهر لان في نظام انو لازم تضلي لتاخدي الحجر الي هو تقريبا شهر , كان اخي يجيلي ياهم بس ما اقدر شوفهم و ضمهم او بوسهم , و هو كان بيضرب برجلو انو بدو يكسر الحديد مشان يطالعني , اي كان كثير صعب علي

children] have to go to school, and they have to learn the language and integrate with the people.⁴³

Nadeen was separated from people who were important to her: her brother had left Syria before her, then she left her parents in Syria, later she was separated from her husband and two of her three children during the flight. These separations occurred across various spatial barriers: the Aegean Sea, the borders between Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria and Germany, the closed and fenced-in refugee camp and finally navigating various unknown locations in Frankfurt. But once she was reunited spatially with her children, she still seemed unable to lay her worries to rest.

I argue that this was because her experiences of separation also occurred through *time*. The pain of separation from her children was not only because of the clock-time duration of separation of eight months, and one month in quarantine. Rather, she sensed that her children had entered another temporality, on a timeline towards “integration” in Germany, while she was trapped and stuck in the “prison” of the shelter. While Nadeen was able to physically reunite with her children eventually, she did not seem able to, using Sharma’s (2014, p. 8) phrase, “recalibrate” her own times with her children’s times. The distance to her children’s support network, and a sense of feeling trapped and “in prison” in the temporary shelter that she was living in, affected Nadeen emotionally and psychologically, resulting in a continued sense of asynchronicity between her own life and that of her children. While refugees have often been described as “out-of-time” while waiting for asylum decisions or on the move (Griffiths, 2014), Nadeen felt *out of synch* from the times of her children, whose future, through a good education, was her current objective.

⁴³ قالولي بعيدة انتي و هو ما قدر يساعدني بهل الشغلة [...] قلي انتي ولادك صغار مستحيل يحطوكي بمكان بعيد و يبعدوكي عنهم بس بعدت و هاد كان اصعب شي لان كان بعيد و هية مجبورة تروح عالمدرسة لان لازم تتعلم لغة و تتأقلم مع العالم

Her experience of separation from family members suggests that time is not individually but socially experienced. In hoping for a better future for her children while putting her own future second, Nadeen negotiated expectations of a linear temporality of refuge in which flight leads to asylum which leads to safety which leads to integration (Kallio, Meier and Häkli, 2021) with her non-linear temporality of seeking to *synchronise* the shared times of her family. The different stages of Nadeen's separation from her children, first during the chaotic circumstances of flight, followed by separation during quarantine, and then feeling desynched from her children's future, had different chronotopical characters. In the first instance, separation was caused by the exceptional and critical need to irregularly cross physical state borders. In the latter two instances, separation and asynchronicity resulted from policies and bureaucratic practices, going against Nadeen's expectations of finally living in safety, and perceived by her as arbitrary.

In differentiating between various forms of separation, during the journey versus in the country of asylum, I suggest that not all forms of spatial separation were necessarily experienced as harmful. Rather, spatial separation became harmful when it implied a disruption of joint futures and shared family times which were expected to be spatially connected. That is, family separation was relationally experienced – it depended on shared experiences of pasts and expectations of sharing spaces as well as times in the future. While *spatial separation* occurred through the circumstances of flight, *temporal separation* was actively produced through state practices of temporal bordering: state temporal practices that maintained asynchronicity between individuals and prevented the recalibration of refugees' individual times with the shared times of their families.

6.3 Temporal separation and family reunion: temporal borders of legal status and age

In many instances, experienced of separation in time were created through what I term “temporal borders”: legal frameworks and bureaucratic decisions which differentiated between individuals through time and caused separation of loved ones in its wake. Amongst my interlocutors, this occurred mostly in two forms: legal status, by differentiating between categories of refugees on the grounds of time; and categories of age and maturity which reconfigured the families by shaping whether shared futures could be both anticipated and realised.

To illustrate this argument, I would like to recount the story of Feiruss, a 48-year-old Syrian man from Damascus, now living in Frankfurt, and his two sons, Malik (17), also living in Frankfurt, and Said (21), living in Istanbul. Feiruss, his wife, two sons and youngest daughter had been forced to leave Syria to Turkey in 2014. Although they did not necessarily intend to stay in Turkey in the long term, the family was unable to pay for the smuggling passage for all five. Thus, Malik, who was 11 at the time, moved on to Germany together with his maternal uncle, with the hope that Malik would be able to apply for parental family reunion later. Sending children or adolescents ahead to Europe used to be a common strategy along the Eastern Mediterranean route before family reunification became more restricted and less available in practice (Dubow and Kuschminder, 2021). Malik’s uncle registered as an asylum seeker in Dortmund. As his uncle was not the legal guardian, Malik himself was transferred to Frankfurt, where he first lived with a foster family for one and a half years and then in a camp for unaccompanied minors. Feiruss, his wife, eldest son, Said, and daughter continued living in Istanbul.

Malik arrived in Germany in 2015 and, after waiting for several months, was granted subsidiary protection status for one year, with an extension for two years afterwards. However, by the time Malik was granted residence papers, the possibility to apply for family reunion had been suspended for people with subsidiary protection status as part of an asylum and residence law reform in 2016 (see Annex 2: Legal documents and reforms). By August 2018, another law reinstated family reunion for people with subsidiary protection although an annual quota of 1000 persons was kept, thus slowing down the process for most families (Tommetten, 2018). Malik had applied for family reunion with his parents and siblings, and once the suspension was lifted, his application was processed. However, by the time the procedure was completed in 2019, Said, his older brother in Istanbul, had turned 18. He did not count as underage anymore and was therefore excluded from travelling to Germany; Said stayed behind in Turkey. He explained to me when we met up in Istanbul:

Malik went with his uncle because he was young, he could have brought all of us. It was very difficult for Malik, he was alone. He had to grow up very fast. It took 4 years for the family reunification to pass, I had turned 18 by that time. There were two options, either my family doesn't go and leave Malik alone or they go and leave me here. I said: "you go, I'll be OK by myself"⁴⁴

Said was 21 years old by now. He wanted his family to support Malik instead and promised that he would be OK by himself. He was working as a hairdresser, just like his uncle in Germany, in whose salon in Syria Said had learned the trade. In Turkey, Said had a temporary protection ID but in a different province than Istanbul. He was not able to work legally in Istanbul but he had made a life for himself. However, he suffered from the separation from his parents. He told me: "I grew up here in Turkey,

⁴⁴ From fieldnotes – no original available

this is kind of my home now. But my mom and dad are the most important thing.” He spoke to his parents on the phone most days but felt this was not enough. Neither Feiruss nor Said were able to go on short-term visits to meet each other. Putting aside the high costs, Feiruss, his wife and the other two children were issued a non-return order once they resettled to Germany as they had been living in Turkey irregularly, expecting to leave soon. As a Syrian under temporary protection, Said was not allowed to leave and then return to Turkey. As a legal adult, Said was not declared as a child anymore; he was also no longer financially dependent on his parents in practice. However, the emotional bond of hoping for a spatially connected future was neither severed by the legal act of coming of age, nor by economic necessity.

The story of Feiruss, Malik and Said points to various ways of how temporal bordering operated in the transnational social space of Germany-Turkey. First, they were caught in a system that continued to allocate differing rights to refugees depending on their legal status and position within the asylum system, each with different implications for family unification (see Chapter 4). Because Malik was granted subsidiary protection, not refugee status or asylum, his family were exposed to restrictions on family reunion based on temporary governmental decisions. Second, the family was separated through legal definition of age and childhood. The German state defined family, and the possibility for family unity in shared spaces, based on the cut-off point of 18 – which did not accord with the expectation of an appropriate parent-child relationships of Feiruss’ and Said’s family. Because of the delays and decelerations in the family reunion application, Said “aged out of eligibility” (Dubow and Kuschminder, 2021, p. 4274). In both legal status and age of

maturity, time played a central role in allocating rights and thus the possibility for family unity. That is, time functioned as a bordering device, excluding Said from both the German state territory and consequently from his family social network. I will discuss these two temporal borders in turn.

6.3.1 Temporal bordering through legal status

Depending on their situation in the asylum procedure, country of origin, trajectory of travelling, location of application and time of application, refugees in Germany may access a range of protection statuses, temporary residence permits or deportation suspensions that regulate their stay on German territory (see Chapter 4). Each of these statuses and papers is associated with different rights and obligations, either specified in law or dependent on individual bureaucratic decisions, engendering a sloping and ambivalent status hierarchy amongst refugees. Importantly, each status is associated with a different duration of temporary residence and varying pathways towards permanence or potential deportation. Shorter duration and greater temporariness are associated with fewer rights.

This is part of a trend across Europe whereby time has become a core factor for the stratification of rights in migrant law. According to Stronks (2022), states distinguish between clock time, biographical time and legal time: the clock time (months or years) that a person is present on a state territory often does not count as legal time, such as for the accumulation of residence periods. This means that undocumented migrants may live on a territory for decades – as their “biographical time” passes – without ever able to regularise (Stronks, 2022). Similarly, a “violation of temporal regulations”, such as overstaying a temporary visa, or missing a deadline extension, is one of the main causes for migrants’ slipping into illegality: “the crossing

of a timeline, in other words, that renders one's presence illegal" (Brux, Hilden and Middelthon, 2019, p. 1441). More generally, as I have discussed above, time has become a central tool of state bordering, through the differential speeds and rhythms in controlling migrants' movements, and the symbolic differentiation and valuing of presents/presence and futures (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Tazzioli, 2018).

In my study, differences in legal status with different durational rights affected the ability of families to live a family life and build a common future. For example, at the time of our interview, Jane Doe, a 34 year-old Eritrean female had been living in Germany for six years with a *Duldung*, an indefinitely⁴⁵ renewable non-status that suspends deportation for administrative reasons and is granted mostly to rejected asylum seekers for one to six months at a time (Schütze, 2023). Jane Doe recounted the most difficult episode in her asylum process when she and her son received a deportation order while her daughter and husband did not:

I was so afraid. I was constantly thinking: what if they come and take me? The problem was, they only ordered a deportation for me and [my son]. But not for my daughter, who was born here, or my husband, who is studying. [...] I wouldn't have minded leaving, I would have even left on my own myself, but how could BAMF not think that it would be difficult for a family to be separated? I was pregnant with my daughter during the [asylum] interview, and they ordered our deportation six months later. They would have seen that I had given birth to her! I want [my children] to stay here [in Germany]. [...] I want my children to grow up in stability. I don't want them to move around all the time. I know what that does to people, I experienced it myself. I want the future of my children to be different.

None of Jane Doe's family members had permanent residency in Germany, and all experienced various degrees of deportability (De Genova, 2002). Importantly,

⁴⁵ Indefinite renewal of *Duldung* was supposedly ended as part of the legal reform in December 2022. Yet, conditions towards a proper residence title remain high, so it remains to be seen whether tolerated individuals will be able to regularise.

everyone was variously included into the German state temporality depending on their *worthiness to remain in the future*. Jane's daughter was born in Germany and thus was considered more future-worthy, through her past connection to the territory. As a student, her husband was also ambiguously included within the German state time, his status extending further into the future, even though still not permanent. Although the potential separation between Jane Doe and her family was later revoked by a lawyer on humanitarian grounds, it was not her own deportation that Jane feared. Rather she was worried about the separation from her children and from each other, and their severing from a better future (see also Omar, 2023).

In addition to separating families because of different degrees of deportability and futures attached to them, differences in durational times of legal statuses established symbolic and practical hierarchies. Thus, formal protection statuses were associated with a specific duration before they were reviewed or needed an extension, meaning that "higher" or "better" statuses were longer and "lesser" statuses shorter. Refugees in Germany were highly aware of these temporal hierarchies. Interlocutors would often refer to their legal status not by its name e.g. "refugee status"/ *Flüchtlingsstatus/Asyl* or "subsidiary protection"/ *Subsidiärer Schutz* but by the duration of their residence permits, reproducing the moral value attached to time by the state. Thus, Rania, with whose story I had begun this thesis, told me that living in the damp basement of a poorly run temporary shelter made her suffer from recurrent kidney and urinary tract infections. One afternoon she exclaimed:

Walla, the situation is really bad. I got a three-year permit, so why are you doing these things to me?⁴⁶

In referring to the three-year refugee status that she received, she expressed expectations that she *should* be treated better than other refugees with shorter and thus “lesser” statuses.

Rania drew on moral distinctions of deservingness embedded in the German system of temporal legal differentiation. This hierarchical differentiation between “deserving” refugee status and “undeserving” toleration or rejection is well documented (Fontanari, 2022b), and this differentiation often runs along lines of nationality. It is important to note that even more “privileged” refugees, such as Syrians, were internally differentiated *through time*, establishing a sloping but unstable hierarchy of legal status. Until early 2016, most Syrians had been granted “refugee status” under Art. 3 Basic Law which is based on the Geneva Refugee Convention definition (see chapter 4). In early 2016, internal BAMF asylum decision directives changed, apparently upon the order of then-interior minister Thomas de Maizière (PRO ASYL, 2016). As a result, Syrians who applied for asylum afterwards, usually received one-year subsidiary protection instead of the three-year refugee status. This ran directly against earlier court decisions but was legally upheld later (Tometten, 2020). This change affected many Syrians who had already arrived in 2015 due to the delays in asylum procedures at that time, including Malik in the vignette recounted earlier. Depending on when they arrived, when they received a decision on their asylum procedure, and how old they were, refugees fleeing the same Assad regime and Syrian civil war were channelled into different categories

⁴⁶ From fieldnotes – no original available

with differential access to rights both immediately after their asylum decision, and in terms of their long-term trajectory in Germany.

Rehab, a 33-year-old Syrian from Damascus who arrived with her younger brother in Germany in 2015, was acutely aware of the differential chances and rights that she had with one-year subsidiary protection status. She explained that she met an Egyptian translator at the reception centre who advised her not to elaborate on the horrors of war that she had witnessed; she would have to provide evidence, and this would delay her asylum procedure. As a result, she was scared and confused and was unable to recount her story in full.

Then I got one year of residency instead of three years, I didn't get three years, I got one year only because of this, because [the translator] told me to talk like this [...] I could have gotten three years, he made me get a year only. I can't get a German passport or anything like that because of this, thank God.⁴⁷

Rehab thought because of the poor advice of her translator both her and her brother “only” got subsidiary protection, not full refugee status. This in turn impacted on her subsequent trajectory in Germany.

In addition to Syrians receiving subsidiary protection instead of refugee status, as mentioned above, a 2016 legal reform suspended family reunion for persons under subsidiary protection for a duration of two years (until 16 March 2018, to be precise). This reversed a 2014 legal decision that had improved access to family reunion for this category of refugees (See Annex 2: Legal documents and reforms). The legal changes heavily restricted the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in order to deter and limit migration in response to right-wing political pressure following the “refugee

⁴⁷ بعدين طلعت بسنة وحدة اقامة بدل 3 سنوات ما أخذت 3 سنوات أخذت سنة بس بسبب هداك لأنه هو قلتي احكي هيك [...] أنه الواحد كان بيقدر ياخذ 3 سنوات خلاني أخذ سنة ما اخدت لا باسبورت ألماني ولا أي شي الحمدلله

crisis” of 2015 (Riebau, 2017). Just like Feiruss, Malik and Said had to wait before they could apply for family reunion as a result, Rehab and her brother were also affected by this bureaucratic change. Rehab’s brother was underage when they arrived in Germany but he could not apply for family reunion with their parents because both got “one year only”:

I mean, my brother could have gotten my mother and my father out but since we only got one year [of subsidiary protection], we couldn’t bring anyone.⁴⁸

Rehab and her brother did not try to apply for family reunion later but were able to remain in the same city at least. Just like Said in Turkey, Rehab’s brother also turned 18 before the suspension of family reunion was lifted in 2018 and could not apply for parental family reunion later.

The suspension of family reunion for persons with subsidiary protection, which was explicitly targeted towards limiting the number of Syrians coming to Germany, responded to the mutually reinforcing dynamics of refugees crossing borders and states seeking to contain them (De Genova, Garelli and Tazzioli, 2018; Picozza, 2021). Stuck in the middle were families like Rehab’s, and Feiruss’ and Said’s, who had made family- or “household”-based mobility strategies (FitzGerald and Arar, 2018) based on *previous* information including the possibility for official family reunion. Feiruss’ family had avoided smuggling all family members, both because they could not afford the smuggling fees and because it was plainly dangerous. Malik travelled with his uncle in order to apply for family reunification with everyone afterwards, becoming what Jastram and Newland (2003, p. 560) have termed an

⁴⁸ يعني أخي كان بإمكانه يطلع أمي ويطلع أبي نحن أخذنا سنة وما طلعنا حدا من وراه هو [...] لأنه الواحد كان بيقدر ياخذ 3 سنوات خلاني أخذ سنة ما اخدت لا باسبورت ألماني ولا أي شي الحمد لله

'anchor child'. This travelling strategy was explicitly temporal and future oriented: The family decided to temporarily separate with the anticipation of reuniting and sharing in the future. In choosing Malik to travel, who is younger than Said, the family demonstrated an awareness of the risk that "delays in the asylum or family reunification procedure can [...] jeopardize the family's unity in the longer-term, for example if a minor 'ages out' of eligibility" (Dubow and Kuschminder, 2021, p. 4274). Rehab and her brother changed their plan to reunite with their parents in response to the legal suspension of family reunion. In Feiruss' and Said's case, the family maintained the hope to apply for family reunion later once the suspension was lifted. In the meantime, Said aged out of eligibility to reunite with his brother together with his parents. By suspending family reunification, not banning it completely, the German state imposed a delay, not a full stop, on procedures, slowing down refugees' family lives. Families were not only unable to reunify temporarily but also unable to make alternative plans in an oscillation of deceleration and acceleration, a future-oriented political signal of limbo that is characteristic of the European asylum bureaucracy (Griffiths, 2014; Tazzioli, 2018; Bhatia and Canning, 2021; Yahya, 2021).

6.3.2 *Temporal bordering through age*

As I have argued elsewhere with colleagues, time shapes both access to and experiences of family reunion for refugees (Phillimore *et al.*, 2023): Deadlines for filing applications for family reunification may be tight or not known to applicants (three months in the Germany case); they change by legal status. Moreover, the process of waiting after application affects refugees' emotional and physical wellbeing (Brunner, Hyndman and Mountz, 2014; Tiilikainen *et al.*, 2023).

Feiruss'/Said's/Malik's experience points to another way that time shapes refugees families: Said's approaching, and then passing, 18th birthday. The age of 18 as a definition of maturity became a "temporal border" (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013, p. 132) within their family and between the German and Turkish states. Amrith (2022) has used the idea of "temporal borders" to describe how older Filipino migrants negotiated approaching retirement age. In her study, just as in mine, age constituted "a particular moment in the lifecourse that mark[ed] a transition from present lives [...] to future lives elsewhere" (Amrith, 2022, p. 1914). In my interlocutors' case, 18 was an externally defined "countdown deadline" (Cohen, 2018, p. 6) after which they lost the ability to share family lives.

According to Cohen (2018), democracies use linear calendar/clock time, or "durational time" (p. 1), as a quantifiable, neutral and equal proxy to distinguish between participating and non-participating members. The presumably "objective" cut off point of "18", based on a linear notion of measurable years and days, defines the meanings of maturity, an end to childhood and dependence. But notions of "maturity", just as other temporal norms, are both culturally specific, and variable both within societies and often within one person (Greenhouse, 1989; Bastian, 2011). Although establishing "age" is contested in itself (Bialas, 2023), even if we take the age of 18 as given and neutral, it is used by German refugee law to attribute particular social meanings of maturity and adulthood on to refugee families.

In defining dependent children as minors under 18, the German state imposes a normative assumption about what constitutes a child, a dependant and the family. This has effects on the persons designated as children and what happens when they transition to adulthood: A significant literature on "unaccompanied minor asylum

seekers” shows how the turning point of 18 is a source of insecurity for young migrants, and a site of heavy political contention about what it means to be a “child” (Allsopp, Chase and Mitchell, 2015; Hughes, 2022; Bialas, 2023).

The temporal border of age also has effects on families more broadly. Family reunification policy in Europe heavily relies on age as a distinction for eligibility. Applications are usually limited to spouses and underage children, reinforcing patriarchal and often Eurocentric, ideas about the normal family as constituted by the nuclear heterosexual family with minor children (Jastram and Newland, 2003; Kofman *et al.*, 2011; Welfens and Bonjour, 2021). At the same time, the temporal cut off point that defines “maturity” is handled differently depending on the reception context. Resettled refugees in the USA, for example, can apply to reunite with elderly parents and unmarried children up to the age of 21 (Bruno, 2015). In most reception contexts, “extended” family such as parents of adult applicants, grandparents, cousins, non-biological adopted relatives, siblings, and adult children, can rarely be included in family reunification applications. Many refugees across the world consider this restriction harmful, as discussed in the context of Australia (Wilmsen, 2011) and Canada (Ilcan and Connoy, 2021). As Turner (2020, p. 241) puts it, “dominant conceptions of the family continue to produce exclusions and organise violence and dispossession”.

While Germany’s reunification law generally defines “family” as the heterosexual nuclear family, exceptions are possible in theory. In Malik’s and Feiruss’ case described above, Malik’s underaged siblings *could* travel with their parents to reunite with their brother, which is not always the case. However, other exceptions seem to be rarely applied. In 2019, of 96,633 individuals who entered Germany on family

grounds, only 530 were neither children nor spouses of adult applicants, nor parents of minor applicants (BAMF, 2020).⁴⁹ It is also not clear how many applicants were relatives of refugees compared to other migration status categories; 12,760 Syrian individuals were issued a family visa in 2019, which included Feiruss, his wife and his daughter.

In addition to imposing norms about family, the temporal border of age as defined within the legal framework for family reunification has a second effect: it imposes *norms about time* on refugee families. These norms are often distinct from the desired temporalities of the family itself, precluding a shared vision of a future as rooted in past experiences and affective memories. The temporal norms of family in the German context imply that a person stop being a “dependant” upon turning 18 and therefore no longer have a moral claim to physical proximity with their parents. Against this, Said emphasised that his stay in Turkey while his family travelled to Germany went against their wish to be together physically. In this, Said differentiated his own family from other families who might be able to deal with the separation more easily:

The thing is, there are some families that are not particularly close, for them the separation might not be so bad. But for us, we are not like that, *we were always together*. Family is the most important thing.

Not only a physical separation, Said’s separation from his family was temporally experienced. Said’s and his family maintained temporal norms that included efforts to forge a shared family time, understood as physical proximity, based on shared

⁴⁹ More recent statistics from 2020 and 2021 are available. Because of Covid-19 pandemic-related travel restrictions and according delays of bureaucratic procedures, these earlier statistics are more meaningful.

memories and expecting shared futures. These were repeatedly disappointed through the temporal bordering practices of the state.

As Said was unable to travel to Germany to reunite with his younger brother, his own time was disconnected from that of his family's. Here, the fixity of Said's birthday on his passport was related to a rigid linearity of "objective time" in which discrete moments follow one after the other on a timeline from the past into the future, each subsequent moment annulling what came before. While Said was able to support himself financially, to do so he was forced to work irregularly and in a legally precarious situation. In contrast, his siblings were attending school, his parents went to German classes; his family was expecting increasing stability and security in terms of legal status and education. In conjunction this caused emotional frustration and a feeling of isolation. Thus, the enforced linearity of limiting the definition of a child to "under 18" disregarded emotional ties and life course plans. This cut-off point introduced a temporal border within Feiruss' shared family time by dividing the family into one section that was worthy of protection and another one that was not.

This imposition of a normative social temporality through legal and symbolic definitions of childhood and age not only affected possibilities for family reunification *across* national borders. In several cases, spatial separation through time was also experienced *within* the territory of Germany if family members were not allowed to actually live together. Malik's separation from his uncle described above is a case in point. A similar experience of separation was also shared by Beheshta, a 30-year-old woman who had studied human rights law in Afghanistan. Escaping gender-based persecution, she left Afghanistan with her sister and her sister's toddler, to join their brother who had already been living in Germany for several years. The three

travelled irregularly via Iran, Turkey and the so-called Balkan route, experiencing indescribable horrors on the way, including one time when Beheshta's nephew almost drowned. When I met her, she shared a room in a temporary shelter in Frankfurt with a woman who was 40 years older. While they got along well, Beheshta often felt alone. More importantly, she wanted to live closer to her siblings, especially her sister:

My brother was here [in Germany], I wanted to be with him because Afghans usually depend on their family members. They like their family. Everywhere they want to live near their families. Before I came, I thought that I should be near my brother. That would help me a lot and he could be support me. I also tried to live with my sister but they told me *she has separate family and I am at age of maturity. I am alone and I should live alone.* [...] The first day when I came, I told the *Sozialamt* [social services] that I want to be with my sister. My sister is in [name of place about 3 hours' drive from Frankfurt]. They said that she is a separate family because she has a child. And that she has her own life. But her husband is not with her, she lives alone, her husband is not. Because of that I would like to be with her and [we could] support each other. But it is not possible to be with her.⁵⁰

As Beheshta recounted it, the social services workers explicitly reproduced the normative state temporality that did not consider herself and her sister "family". Beheshta was an adult woman without children and legally "alone", whereas her sister was a mother of an underage child and a "separate family". In this, the legal definition family, as interpreted through social services officials, separated family members who wanted to care for each other. In this bureaucratic practice, previous social relations and connections that Beheshta had in the new place were not taken into account (i.e. Beheshta's brother), nor potential support networks with whom they travelled (Beheshta's sister). Beheshta explained that this conception did not follow

⁵⁰ This interview was conducted with a translator.

what Afghans may consider family. While surely there is variety within the Afghan community, Beheshta acutely felt the spatial separation from her sister, a separation that occurred on the grounds of her age.

Beheshta's understanding of shared family times was shaped by Afghan norms that expect siblings to live close to each other if they can and provide mutual support and childcare. What also contributed to her desire to live close to her sister was her own experience growing up together and, not least, living through the horrors of flight. But again, her family's times, as rooted in shared past memories and an expectation of shared futures, was separated in space through the temporal border of age. In Said's and his family's case, the family would have chosen to live together in one place but witnessed their "shared times" split up across territorial national borders through the temporal border of age. In both Said's and Beheshta's story, the family was prevented from sharing their times because the temporality of German asylum law, and its interpretations and reproductions in bureaucratic practice, normatively assumed that claims to family ended once the children turn 18. In both cases, spatial separation was accompanied by temporal separation.

6.4 Spatial separation without temporal separation: transnational families across space and time

The experience of separation for families is often assumed to be universally harmful to the wellbeing of refugees (Wilmsen, 2011; Tiilikainen *et al.*, 2023). As described in Chapter 2, family separation has been described as particularly detrimental to Syrian refugees, many of whom regard the extended family with high normative and emotional importance (Joseph, 2018; Ilcan and Connoy, 2021; Lokot, 2023). Yet, emotional closeness before flight, experiences during exile, and

expectations to live together in the future, shape whether families want to live together in the first place. In this, family separation of refugees resembles the experiences of other transnational families which is influenced by an interplay of intra-family dynamics, social norms and policies across various states (Zentgraf and Chinchilla, 2012). In my study, not all families had planned to be together in the first place, and sometimes plans changed over time. In many instances, spatial separation, including from adult parents and adult siblings, was considered painful but it did not cause existential harm or a sense of temporal separation.

One factor in shaping whether spatial separation was experienced negatively was the type of relationship across borders, and differences in associated social expectations towards these relationships. Actual or potential separation from children, as in the examples of Nadeen, Jane Doe and Feiruss mentioned above, was particularly painful. But even here there were differences among individuals and even within families. The different approaches to spatial separation of Rania and her husband, Ibrahim, illustrate this point. Their eldest son, by now 22, had fled to Germany via irregular means a few years prior and was now living in a different German city. Upon Rania's and Ibrahim's resettlement through UNHCR, their adult daughter, aged 25, remained in Lebanon with her husband and young children. Rania said that she was constantly suffering while her daughter remained in Lebanon where the situation for Syrian refugees was highly precarious (Janmyr, 2016; Stel, 2021).

[My daughter and her family are] scared all the time. She always sends me pictures and she says: when we die you have pictures of us, now don't forget us. [Rania starts to cry] [...] We can't live here where it's safe and I know my daughter is in danger. It's very

stressful for me, I can't concentrate here because my head is somewhere else.

Rania's husband Ibrahim by contrast was trying to focus on ending the spatial separation from their son. Rania's and Ibrahim's son was legally restricted from moving his residence, and because of the regulations in their shelter in Frankfurt, he could not come to visit and stay with them. As Ibrahim explained:

The only two things I want is to solve our problems with our house, and to bring my son here. I want all the family to be together, or perhaps he can stay somewhere else, but [at least] I can see him regularly. The issue with bringing our daughter from Lebanon, I know it's difficult. It is a big problem. *But it is for later.*

Rania felt powerless, worried and ashamed that her time of presumed safety in Germany would mean nothing while her daughter was suffering in Lebanon. Rania expressed a sense of being both spatially and temporally held back as she was never fully in the "here and now" – in Frankfurt, but instead always and simultaneously "there and then", in Lebanon with her daughter (Sakti and Amrith, 2022). Ibrahim instead focused on the spatial separation from his son, which he felt was solved more easily. Rania and Ibrahim thus approached spatial separation from different temporal perspectives. For Rania, being separated from her daughter while she was suffering collapsed into her own present. Ibrahim distinguished between the immediate and the distant future (Luhmann, 1976), and sought to manage the pain of spatial separation from both his daughter and his son by focusing on what he could change *soon*. In Bloch's (1986, p. 12) terms, the "objective possibilities" posed by his situation seemed more manageable and thus hopeful.

In contrast to parental separation from their children, interlocutors accepted both separation from their parents and from adult siblings more easily. Families actively

maintained relations across borders through "simultaneity of physical absence and social presence" (Boccagni, 2012, p. 123), and thus bridged spatial separation while maintaining an emotional connection over and through time. Frequent contact via social media was essential here. Thus, Jane Doe explained that almost every day she joined a group video call with her mother and brother, both in Saudi Arabia, and her sister in Canada. Living in three different time zones was difficult but:

We make it work. I am a night owl anyway, so we speak at night when it is about 23hrs here. My sister comes in when she comes back from work. Where there is a will, there is a way.

Similarly, Judy, who is from Syria and whom I met in Turkey, explained that her family was spread out across several continents, but she was in touch with her siblings almost daily through video chat.

J: We have a family WhatsApp group and we call each other on video call on Wemo. This kind of communication between us is a natural thing by now. As you know, in the Arab society, the family stays together no matter what. [...] We have a good family bond, despite the travelling [and not living together] we communicate with each other. Our relationship is very good. Except sometimes the world gets busy and there is a time difference, but we always call each other every evening⁵¹. [...]

P: has your relationship with your parents and siblings changed after travelling and separating?

J: No, never, we have the same relations but just at a distance.

Jane Doe's and Judy's families maintained connections by coordinating simultaneity and synchronicity across borders despite living across various time zones (see also Cwerner, 2001).

⁵¹ J: اول شي نحن في عندنا مجموعة للعائلة على الواتس اب، وبنحكي مكالمات فيديو على الايمو، امر طبيعي يكون في هذا التواصل بيناتنا، انت بتعرف ك مجتمع عربي بتضل الاسرة مع بعض مهما حدث، ... نحن هنا انا واخواتي 3 متزوجات واخي الصغير هون، كل متزوج، في ترابط أسري بيننا، بالرغم من السفر، يوجد تواصل وترايط، علاقتنا كثير كويسة، بس مشاغل الدنيا ، واختلاف التوقيت، ف دائما عند المساء كل يوم بنحكي مع بعض.

P: هل علاقتك مع اهلك واخوتك تغيرت بعد السفر والتفكك؟

J: لا ابدأ نفس العلاقة ولكن عن بعد

For other interlocutors, possibilities or impossibilities of seeing or visiting each other in the future made a difference as to whether or not separation from siblings and parents was bearable, something also pointed out by Boccagni and Baldassar (2015). For Feiruss and Said mentioned above, visiting was not possible due to their respective legal situations – Feiruss could not visit Turkey and Said could not visit Germany. As a result, even temporarily seeing each other physically was closed off into the far future. A similar point was made by Hakan in Istanbul whose brother had fled the Erdoğan regime to Germany. Hakan’s parents continued living in a Kurdish province in Eastern Turkey. He described what it was like for him that his brother left Turkey:

It is tough that he will *never be able to come back here again*. And this is upsetting for us as a family. [...] Not being able to *see him here again* is upsetting both for us and him. [...] Actually, Frankfurt and [Kurdish province] are not so different in terms of how long it takes to travel by plane, one takes two and a half hours, the other three hours. But because they are located in two different countries, both going and coming back takes time and money. [To travel to Germany], you apply for a visa, then you interview, then you show all these things, it takes work, I mean.⁵²

Although Hakan could visit his brother in Germany in theory, he could not afford to do so in the current economic situation, and he was worried he might not get a visa. Additionally, Hakan would like to see his brother *in Turkey*, something that was not possible for the foreseeable future. It was not spatial separation itself that was upsetting Hakan, neither only the spatial separation across borders (although that

⁵² Yine abim burada yaşıyordu. [...] Bir de bir daha buraya gelmeyecek durumda olması zor yani. Yani bu aile olarak üzüyor. [...] Yine dediğim gibi onu burada bir daha göremeyecek olmak hem onu hem de bizi üzüyor. [...] Yani aslında şey Frankfurt'la [bölge ile] uçakla biri 2.5 saat biri 3 saat yani öyle çok fark da yok. Ama hani arada farklı iki ülke olduğu için hani gidiş geliş hem maliyet hem de zaman alıyor. Yani şöyle vizeye başvuruyorsun işte mülakattır işte belli bir şeyler gösteriyorsun yani işleyişi çok.

was a problem too), but rather the foreclosure of a shared future in a common and familiar space.

By contrast, siblings of other interlocutors *could* come visit, and even if this did not happen frequently, the “objective possibility” (Bloch, 1986, p. 12) of seeing each other in person made spatial separation easier. This was explained by Cristina, a 21-year-old Syrian who had last seen her older sister 10 years before when she got stuck in Germany just as the Syrian revolution broke out. By now her sister had applied for and received German citizenship and thus could visit Cristina and her other sister in Turkey.

There was a long time when we could not communicate with each other because of the war and then because we moved here, so we could not communicate, we had no phone numbers [...] Now recently we have been communicating again and she is coming ... [*speaking joyfully*] she is coming here to visit⁵³

Whether spatial separation contributed to a sense of temporal separation between family members, including adult children, parents and siblings, was influenced by several interacting factors: state temporalities differentiated between and within refugees based on legal status and other means of differentiation, such as the number of age and norms of maturity. This put refugees into different asynchronous times than their family members. These state times interacted with family shared times, which were shaped by past expectations to be together, as well as experiences in the present and on the journey to Germany, as in Said’s and Beheshta’s story. Finally, various spatio-temporal circumstances opened up or closed down possibilities for families to engage in present synchronisation through

⁵³ مرة فترة طويلة ما بنتواصل أبدا اه بسبب الحرب ونحنا جيتنا لهون وهيك. ما نقدر نتواصل أرقام ما أرقام ما نقدر، هلاء من جديد رجعنا نتواصل وهلاء ليكا جاي (نبرة فرحة) جاي لهون زيارة

regular contact or potential visits, as was the case for Cristina and her sister who received German citizenship.

6.5 Enforced family unity: chronotopes of disrupted biographies

The overlapping spatio-temporal configuration of the German (and less so Turkish) state temporality with refugee family times did not always cause temporal separation across space. Sometimes families were separated by temporal borders *despite being spatially together*. For a few of my interlocutors, their family's intention to physically stay together, together with the temporalities of legal frameworks, and their interpretation by institutions and refugees themselves, was experienced as restrictive, immobilising, and detrimental to their own future. Indeed, not all research participants constructed their families as harmonious and sharing past experiences and visions of enjoined futures. Enforced maintenance of family unity, if involuntary, also led to a sense of temporal separation of individuals from what they imagined as their own desired futures, in different social and temporal collectivities from where they were at present. I call this time-space configuration the "*chronotope of disrupted biographies*".

Piro, a 26-year-old Turkish citizen of Kurdish background, was born in a town just outside Frankfurt and lived there with his mother and siblings until the age of 10 as an asylum seeker (or refugee, it did not become entirely clear to me). His father stayed in Turkey in the meantime, eking out a living in and out of prison as a smuggler of goods across the Turkish-Syrian border ("everything except drugs", in Piro's words). Piro remembered Germany and his life fondly. He still spoke German well and could imagine himself living in Germany again in the future, if he could only get a visa. His family left Germany following a deportation order to some of his

siblings who had turned 18. While Piro would have been able to stay in Germany, at least until his own 18th birthday, his mother took the decision to follow her other maturing children back to Turkey to keep the family together. As a result, Piro and his younger brother also moved to Turkey. Piro remembered that:

[The officials in Germany] told me and my younger brother that you can come back after the age of 18. When we turned 18, the consulate rejected me. I asked why the difficulties, they said: 'it is impossible for you to return there. Your family is not a citizen of that place.' [But] I was told [the contrary] when I was there [in Germany], but maybe we were small, they said it so as not to offend us, I don't know if there is such a rule or not. I was born there, you probably know better, I don't have such an opportunity, right?⁵⁴

Piro's story again highlights the temporal border of age and maturity defined as the linear chronological number of "18". His siblings experienced enforced deportation at 18 but Piro himself was involuntarily immobilised (Lubkemann, 2016; Schewel, 2020): he had hoped to re-return upon his 18th birthday but this hope was frustrated. Piro had imagined a future for himself in Germany, but he was prevented from resynchronising with the German state due to the temporal restrictions imposed on his siblings.

In a parallel story, Bastian, a young 21-year-old Syrian man from Damascus, used to live in Germany when he was younger but I met him in Istanbul where he was living with a temporary protection ID. Together with his parents, older brother, and younger sister, he had fled Syria to Frankfurt via Egypt and Turkey when he was 15 and stayed in a town near the Swiss border until he was 17. Like Piro, Bastian

⁵⁴ Dediler ki geri gidersen bir daha dönemezsin. İmza atacaksın, ama bana ve küçük kardeşime bunlar 18 yaşından sonra gelebilirler dediler. 18 girdiğimizde niye zor olduğunu sordum, konsolosluk bana olmuyor dedi. Senin oraya dönmen imkânsız, senin ailen oranın vatandaşı değil dediler. Ben oradayken bana bu söylendi ama belki de biz küçüktük bizi kırmamak için söylediler, böyle bir kural var mı yok mu bilmiyorum. Orada doğdum, siz daha iyi bilirsiniz, öyle bir imkânım yok değil mi?

returned to Turkey because of his parents' decisions. One day Bastian and his siblings were told to pack their bags for holidays. Once they were in Turkey, his parents said that they would not return to Germany. According to Bastian, his father "didn't adapt in Germany" and decided for the entire family to live in Turkey. After another two years, Bastian was informed that he had lost his refugee status. He had left and not reported back to the BAMF. He had tried to reinstate his protection status and reapply for a visa at the German consulate but was rejected, in his view because he did not share the full story:

I hadn't told [the German consulate] the truth initially; I didn't tell them why I had gone to Turkey because I didn't want to make any problems for my father. Also, my mom had asked me not to say anything about my father's decision. But now I can't go back because they wouldn't believe my second [true] story

Unlike Piro, who was close to his family and happy to live with his parents, Bastian was not happy with his father's decision. Indeed, he felt betrayed and fell out with his father. He told me that he had been happy in Germany, both with his social life and his future opportunities.

It was really great for me, that's my opinion. I have many friends, German friends, Italian friends too. [...] I was super happy with studying and working and football, with life in Germany. Yes. In Germany there are many possibilities, many opportunities, whatever you want to do you can do in Germany. You can always work on your dreams in Germany. [...] And I'm unhappy in Turkey. I have a lot of respect for Turkey, for Turkish people, of course. But I'm not happy. [...] [Turkey has] my respect because I am a guest here in Turkey, that's why. And I want to say thank you very much, yes, for allowing me to continue living and studying here. [...] But if my father

hadn't done that, [...] if I had continued to live in Germany, *I would have had a better life in Germany.*⁵⁵

Bastian had made good friends in Germany, with whom he kept in touch regularly via Instagram and WhatsApp messenger. He also appreciated the opportunities and possibilities in Germany, repeatedly emphasising that Germany was a good place to build a future. Bastian had finalised his high school diploma at a private Arabic speaking school in Turkey and he was trying to learn Turkish to start a university degree in design. Despite this plan, he felt like he didn't have a future in Turkey, he was only a *guest* there (see also Chapter 7). Remembering his good life in Germany in the past combined with present experiences of isolation and oppressive temporariness to express pessimism about his future.

We should not take this to mean that Bastian and his family members did not experience discrimination in Germany. I was unable to talk to Bastian's father about his view. My point is that Bastian sensed that his life, remembered as previously imbued with potentiality and hope in Germany, was rerouted to a different, unchosen temporality. Unlike Piro, who very much continued to emphasise the connection to his family, Bastian considered his own imagined life path, or his "biographical times" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 116), to be disrupted by the decision that his father took. As Kleist and Jansen (2016, p. 381) highlight, the way we imagine futures "are conditioned not only by past events [...], but also by *past futures*, including remembered hopes and

⁵⁵ Es war sehr super für mich, das ist meine Meinung. Ich habe auch viele Freunde, deutsche Freunde, auch italienische Freunde. [...] Ich war super glücklich mit Lernen und Arbeiten und Fußball. Mit dem Leben in Deutschland. Ja. In Deutschland gibt es viele Möglichkeiten, viele Chancen, was man machen will kann man in Deutschland machen. Alles. Man kann immer an seinen Träumen arbeiten in Deutschland. [...] Und ich bin unglücklich in der Türkei. Ich habe ganz viel Respekt für die Türkei, für türkische Menschen, natürlich. Aber ich bin nicht glücklich. [...] [Die Türkei hat] meinen Respekt, weil ich ein Gast bin hier in der Türkei, deswegen. Und ich will sagen vielen Dank, ja, dass ich hier weiterleben darf und studieren darf. [...] Aber wenn mein Vater das nicht gemacht hätte, [...] wenn ich in Deutschland weiter gelebt hätte, hätte ich ein besseres Leben gehabt in Deutschland.

fears". Bastian felt "stuck" in the present (Hage, 2015) because he remembered a future that seemed within reach but failed to come to pass. His experience resonates with Luhmann's (1976) discussion of temporal structures, in which Luhmann highlights the difference between *present futures*, i.e. current imaginations, anticipations and expectations, and *future presents*, the various possible outcomes of decisions made in the Now. He emphasises that the future is not entirely open but contains possibilities limited by the structures encountered in each society at present. As Piro and Bastian used to be part of a different society, with different legal systems, economic opportunities and social networks, they perceived the limitations of their present futures as more limiting and debilitating.

As we have seen earlier, bureaucratic categories of age and adulthood could lead to the separation of shared times for one family. In Bastian's case his parental decision to physically stick together resulted in the affective separation of Bastian from his father. Although he continued to live with his family, and remained close to his mother, he felt like he did not share his family's future anymore:

I take my own decisions now. I don't ask my family any longer. Now I think about my future and my decisions by myself. My mother said the same thing: you need to take your own decisions now. You are a child no more.⁵⁶

While Bastian was separated from an imagined future in Germany, a could-have-been that he associated with "more opportunities" and "dreams", he maintained an affective connection to his friends and a future hope that he might re-return to Germany at some point.

⁵⁶ Ich treffe meine eigenen Entscheidungen. Ich frage meine Familie nicht mehr. Ich denke jetzt immer alleine über meine Zukunft nach und meine Entscheidungen. Meine Mutter hat mir das auch so gesagt: du musst deine Entscheidungen jetzt alleine treffen, du musst nicht mehr fragen, du bist kein Kind mehr

I have a goal to go to Germany, some time. I am working towards that. I want to work in Germany and return to Germany.⁵⁷

The sense of being held back for him was not rooted in spatial separation from his family but rather in temporal separation from his own envisaged future biography as *located in Germany*, however idealised this might be. His narrative can be read as an attempt to recalibrate his own future with his family's frustration of something that was hoped for but then was lost. Bastian primarily blamed his father for the fact that he was currently unable to realise his envisioned future in Germany. However, his chosen social temporality in Germany was also closed off because of the immobilising forces of temporary legal status in Turkey, and Germany's restrictions to reapply for asylum once refugee status has been lost.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter grapples with how the politics of time shape relationships of families living across the transnational social space of Germany-Turkey, through the experiences and perspectives of refugee interlocutors who have family members in both places. I have sought to show that refugees' negotiations of transnational family lives were characterised by the disentanglement and ambiguous reweaving of individual, family and social temporalities in specific chronotopic configurations. Refugees were separated from family members for various reasons: through experiences on their journey and because of active choices made to separate with the hope to rejoin later. Refugees grappled with temporal borders in which legal and bureaucratic categories restricted future presents/presence of some refugees through temporary status and deportability, and through the imposition of cut off

⁵⁷ Ich habe ein Ziel, nach Deutschland zu fahren, irgendwann. Ich arbeite dafür. Ich würde in Deutschland arbeiten und nach Deutschland zurückgehen

points of age onto individual biographical times. Spatial separation did not always lead to *temporal* separation, an existential and shared sense that desired futures spent *together* with loved ones were foreclosed. Separated families who experienced temporal separation were living in an existential temporality of pain and worry. For others, both states and families interfered with *individual* desires to build their own autonomous futures in a location of their choosing, in what I have called the “chronotope of disrupted life-courses”. All of this was mediated by state practices of temporal bordering through temporary and uncertain legal statuses, age cut off points and preventing permanent residency.

7 CHRONOTOPES OF CONNECTION: REFUGEES' LOCAL RELATIONS IN FRANKFURT AND ISTANBUL

7.1 Introduction

So far, I have focused on how temporal governance conditions and influences the (im)possibilities for refugees to legitimately live on state territory (Chapter 4), and how refugees navigate social and collective temporal effects such as temporal dispossession (Chapter 5) or temporal separation (Chapter 6). I would like to focus on the final research question and explore how refugees negotiate possibilities for social connections beyond family within and against the dominant temporalities of the Germany-Turkey chronotope. I am specifically concerned with the micropolitics of how refugees interact and build relationships with and other people living in their vicinity, and the social temporalities lived in these relationships. In this, I explore the relationship between spatial and temporal proximity, or how sharing spaces is connected to sharing times. As Sharma (2014, p. 22) argues, "the sharing of space does not guarantee the sharing of time". But under which conditions *do* refugees share both spaces and times with others? That is, how do refugees work to align their individual times, including memories of pasts and imaginations and expectations of futures, with the times of others? What enables or hinders this sharing of times, including structural features like laws and collective narratives of belonging, and what sort of social temporalities are produced as a result?

In this chapter, I discuss how refugee interlocutors navigated what Glick Schiller and Caglar (2016, p. 25) term "proximal relations", and especially how individual experiences of time related to social connections to non-kin in the localities of their residence. I follow Appadurai (1996) and Massey (2005) in understanding "locality"

as a relational production of place, produced, lived in and imagined through social ties and connections, located in physical infrastructures and shaped by multiscale relations of power including local histories, national legal frameworks and economic and capital relations. In these localities, I understand “refugees” as newcomers who “emplaced” over time (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2016) and “located” their own times within the social spaces and places that they encountered. These social spaces included temporary asylum shelters in Frankfurt and neighbourhoods in Istanbul, as localities in which residents and non-residents agreed to share certain material and infrastructural, as well as symbolic and representational features.

At the outset, interlocutors in Frankfurt and Istanbul lived very different lives in very different spaces. As described in Chapters 3 and 4, refugees in Germany usually live in shared municipal temporary shelters, often subcontracted to an NGOs, until they are able to find independent social or private housing. Depending on their infrastructural conditions, temporary shelters are characterised by high levels of control (Kreichauf, 2018) and segregation from local networks and neighbourhoods (Zill *et al.*, 2020). Simultaneously, temporary shelters can also constitute sites of support and solidarity where refugees build networks with other refugees (Adam *et al.*, 2019; Steigemann and Misselwitz, 2020). One consequence of the shelter policy is that refugees are obliged to negotiate living together with individuals not of their own choosing, with ambivalent effects. In Turkey, conversely, refugees are obliged to find their own housing (Ertorer, 2021). The housing situation varies widely, depending on whether they have formal rental contracts, the local policies and practices of governors and landlords, the relations with neighbours, and whether refugees live near supportive networks like friends or relatives.

Despite the different legal and regulatory frameworks, and local conditions, interlocutors in both Frankfurt and Istanbul negotiated living in temporary localities. They lived in close spatial proximity to “strangers” and familiar faces and negotiated relations with both recent refugees and longer-term residents. But they also expected to move at some point while uncertain about when that may be known. Refugees thus mediated between keeping to oneself and becoming familiar with people that they lived with. In both temporary shelters in Frankfurt and in neighbourhoods in Istanbul, conflict coexisted with social avoidance and retreat as well as potential sociability and solidarity (see also Adam *et al.*, 2019; Alkan, 2020; Zill *et al.*, 2020; Blank, 2021). This dynamic created ambivalent social temporalities of isolation and friendship (in Germany) and connection and distance (in Turkey).

Focusing first on the context of temporary asylum in Frankfurt, I analyse how refugees experienced and navigated living in close spatial proximity to other refugees, and how this spatial proximity shaped connections in space and time. Through a description of various chronotopical configurations, I show how the interplay of temporal governance and interpersonal relationships constrained and oriented whether interlocutors experienced temporal coherence and how they worked toward coherence in their “biographical times” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 116). Some interlocutors experienced chronotopical isolation, an individualising sense of being cut off from both one’s own and other’s past and future. At other times, interaction and making friends enabled a sense of regularity and normality, while sharing “good times” and fleeting moments of joy with others rendered uncertain futures more endurable in the present.

Second, I show how refugees in both Frankfurt and Istanbul countered a sense of social isolation and disconnection from the future by making longer-term friendships that merged into kinship-like relations. Chronotopes of care and solidarity were characterised by “shared times”, social temporalities that emphasised mutual reciprocity and obligations that reached into the future.

Finally, focusing on Istanbul, I describe how Syrians and Turkish residents navigated ambivalent spatio-temporal relationships of hospitality and neighbourliness. In “chronotopes of local belonging”, Syrian refugees navigated both state temporalities that discursively and legally constructed them as temporary guests, and “shared times” in which they shared everyday spaces and mutual support with neighbours. Against enforced temporariness that excluded them from future belonging to the social collective, Syrians and some Turkish activists struggled to build neighbourliness, which was an explicit political orientation of durability and the possibility of sharing a common future.

Overall, I argue that, in a context of displacement in which refugees have an uncertain standing of whether they belong or not, affection and connection to other people, whether other refugees or non-refugees, is made through *sharing time*. With this I mean not only literally spending time with people, although that is important. Rather, sharing time was about the practice of aligning individual and social temporalities, such as perspectives of the past and present, daily rhythms, and coordinating futures. Sharing times meant forming new connections, which could be read as a practice of countertemporalising collective futures against temporal isolation in the chronopolitics of the Germany-Turkey chronotope.

7.2 Chronotopes of isolation and friendship in Frankfurt

When I talked to interlocutors in Frankfurt about their social life, many expressed feelings of loneliness and isolation, as seems common in European asylum shelters (Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019; Strang and Quinn, 2021). Isolation was not related to lack of contact to other people. Many interlocutors had some positive ties to shelter staff, volunteers, or other refugees. Most were also sharing rooms with other refugees, which some interlocutors found oppressive (Firat) while others did not mind (Rehab). Some residents in temporary shelters actively avoided contact to other residents (Stakeholder GK03).

But not everybody who was alone was also lonely and isolated. Instead, feelings of isolation were rooted in a combination of spatial and temporal factors that came together to form what I call the “chronotope of isolation and crisis”. In this spatio-temporal configuration, interlocutors suffered from both extreme spatial proximity to other individuals and refugee governance that designated them as temporally different, to form an existential experience of time characterised by an overbearing individualising present and separation from ones’ *social past and future*. In crisis, Bakhtin (1981, p. 248) writes, “time is essentially instantaneous - it is as if it has no duration and falls out of the normal course of biographical time”. In this chronotope, state times interfered with interlocutor’s ability to forge shared times with other residents.

The narratives of Beheshta and Jane Doe illustrate this argument. Beheshta recounted her initial experiences of arriving in Germany as intensely isolating. Following traumatic experiences both in Afghanistan and on her trajectory to Germany she was unable to find emotional and mental relief. When she first arrived

in Frankfurt she lived in a crowded camp, sharing the room with eight persons. She was constantly afraid, especially fearing other male refugees, and suffered from anxiety and insomnia. She felt insecure, not able to communicate in German, and, unlike her roommates, she was not yet allowed to go language classes.⁵⁸ She felt isolated and also isolated *herself*, too depressed even to talk to her family in Afghanistan.

The experiences I had on the way here, and what happen to me in my own country, had affected my self-confidence. [...] I was afraid to contact anyone. [...] I wanted to be alone [...] When I came to Frankfurt, I couldn't trust anyone at all, and didn't want to be friends with anyone. I was not going to the [language] course while the others were going [...], the women who were staying with me. And I was sitting in the camp, alone, it was giving me bad feelings. I was stressed, thinking "why are things like this?". I was awake all night until morning, and I would fall asleep at sunrise. I was thinking about how my home used to be in Afghanistan and how I was forced to leave my home and my family. These things were upsetting me so much, and I didn't have a mobile phone to contact my family, and also I didn't *want to* contact them. [...] Sometimes I was standing in front of the mirror and looking at myself: I was a cheery and active girl in Afghanistan, and suddenly I became like this. [...] I totally lost that Beheshta during this period.

Beheshta's description of sitting by herself, unable to sleep and reminiscing about a lost past, resembled the temporal condition of existential uncertainty that often characterises the asylum system in Europe and the US (Rotter, 2016; Haas, 2017; Brux, Hilden and Middelthon, 2019; Jacobsen, Karlsen and Khosravi, 2020). The asylum process is often characterised by a sense of an overbearing present and an inability to even think about a future, potentially accompanied by intensely negative affects including depression and suicidal thoughts. This individual time experience

⁵⁸ People from Afghanistan did not count as having 'good prospects to stay' until 2021, so they could not attend language classes during the asylum procedure. See chapter 4.

has been connected to irregular or temporary legal status, in which the present is spent existentially waiting for regularisation, life chances and an ability to move on with one's life (Brun, 2015; Khosravi, 2020, 2021; Biner and Biner, 2021).

For Beheshta and others like her, feelings of isolation were not connected to the condition of waiting as such. While Beheshta was indeed waiting for the adjudication of her asylum case and regularisation, this was not directly what contributed to her depression and loneliness. Rather, she expressed how she lost the connection to her *past*. She was constantly around people but was unable to connect to others. She also had lost a sense of her past self, remembered as a cheery and social person. In Germany, her negative experiences haunted her, creating a barrier to others, and between her and her family. Beheshta was going through a moment of crisis, a temporal experience that “brings the present into consciousness, creating an awareness or perception of present-ness that we do not normally have” (Bryant, 2016, p. 20). In crisis, not only her own sense of progression between her own past, present and future was disrupted, but she also lacked coherence between her own and *others'* presents, pasts and futures. Her sense of isolation was exacerbated by others moving ahead with their lives. The affectively charged temporality of isolation was *relationally experienced* (Drangslund, 2020b). Beheshta felt isolated in relation to her past timespace of home in Afghanistan, to her family, her past cheerful self, and in relation to how individuals around her in the present were able to move on with their lives into a potentially better future.

Beheshta's narrative also points to how German refugee governance created or at least exacerbated her social isolation. In Germany, asylum seekers are channelled into different pathways, forming a hierarchy of access to resources (Schultz, 2020),

and concomitantly differential speeds of building a future. Individual and social futures are more delayed for some than for others. While Beheshta was kept idle, others were allowed to attend a “language course”, representing both a reconnection to a social life and a more longer-term future of settling in a new country and becoming part of a new collective.

In other words, bureaucratic categorisation prevented building individual and social futures; a point made explicit by Jane Doe. Originally from Eritrea, she had grown up in Saudi Arabia, studied in Sweden and had lived in Germany for several years. She came to Germany to apply for asylum but after her application was rejected, she had been living in Frankfurt with a *Duldung*. She considered herself a social person but was struggling to make friends. She tried meeting people who had been in Germany for longer, including people from the Eritrean community, and “German citizens” but struggled to overcome her isolation:

In 2018 it was where I really broke down. I didn’t have friends, or anyone with whom I connected except my husband and one friend who was with us in a *Heim* [accommodation] beforehand. I didn’t have any girlfriend outside the camp world, but even inside. There was no one in my age, there were some older ladies, but I didn’t have much in common with them.

Jane Doe expressed her desire not only for contact or any connection that could support her but for *friendship* based on equality and freedom (cf. Kathiravelu and Bunnell, 2018). She had made a couple of friends who were “in the same situation” as her, that is, living in a temporary shelter and seeking asylum. However, she missed meeting people of her own age with whom she connected at a deeper level. She especially struggled to connect to people outside the shelter. As she told me, “it is easier to connect with different refugees, especially in the *Heim*, but not with

citizens". When she described her attempts to make friends with Germans, she explained that she mostly has "*Bekannte*", acquaintances she did not feel very close to:

In Germany, *people build up walls*. It is hard to break the wall. They are always friendly, they talk to you, but you don't see people reach out, making more effort to get in touch or to invite you to things. For a person who has been migrating in so many places like me, you don't know any more how to deal with that. You ask yourself: *is it too late now?* It gets more difficult over time. [...] I was educated enough; it is not that I couldn't communicate with the people here. But it seems I have not been able to build relationships because of my status. *It categorises you in a zone where your contact is limited.*

Jane Doe described how her own lifetime seemed to be running out to make connections. Her life course ran against the temporalities of the migration trajectory, which continued to force her to start afresh every time she had migrated. She felt like it was "too late" to adapt to a new context. Jane Doe also pointed to how her legal (non-)status made it difficult to meet and connect at a deeper level, recalling studies that show that insecure legal status affects refugees' ability to connect socially (Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019; Strang and Quinn, 2021). Jane Doe highlighted that her legal status became a sort of "non-contact zone" (cf. Pratt, 1991): an *ex ante* designation as different and strange without the possibility for connection or affective interaction. Drawing on Pratt's notion of the colonial encounter as a contact zone that transforms both the coloniser and the colonised, Ahmed (2000, p. 12) argues against "a linear narrative that assumes a transition from distance to proximity". Instead, as Jane Doe explained, contact and making friends was non-linear, full of frustrations, and shaped by refugee governance.

Her non-status of *Duldung* exacerbated broader social and symbolic boundaries within German society. Jane Doe literally referred to an invisible “wall” between her and other people, related to how Germans were friendly but not interested in deeper connections. Indeed, despite the welcome movement of 2015 (Hamann and Karakayali, 2016), German people have an infamous reputation for their unfriendliness towards foreigners, as claimed by an annual non-representative survey amongst wealthy “expats” that regularly makes the round on social media (InterNations, 2023). More importantly, the “wall” that people erected pointed to the mutually implicated interaction of asylum legislation and legal status as a state bordering device and symbolic social boundary-making (Van Houtum and Van Naerssen, 2002; Fassin, 2011, 2019; Blank, 2021). This affected personal relationships and contributed to refugees’ sense as outsiders and excluded from the social collective.

Importantly, the psychological impacts of insecure legal status maintained both Beheshta and Jane Doe out of place and out of time. Isolation was experienced affectively as a combination of *spatial proximity* and *temporal distance*. They struggled to connect their past senses of self, as social persons with hopes and dreams, with the present experience of isolation, reaching into a potentially lonely future. In other words, both felt that their “biographical time” did not match with the social times of their environment. For Beheshta, social isolation was related to a disruption of her sense of self in the past, while others moved on into a better future. Jane Doe could not connect to people because she was kept in a non-contact zone of legal difference and felt like it was *too late* to make friends. Beheshta and Jane Doe felt like their own times did not merge with the social temporalities of the majority

society. They were kept in existential “allochronism”, as temporal others with no shared pasts and no shared futures to the ones around them (Fabian, 1983, p. 32). This was not due to lack of opportunities to meet individuals spatially, but rather due to a sense that they could not share the social temporalities of others.

7.2.1 Countering isolation through fortuitous encounters

Several interlocutors in Frankfurt reported how they had felt lonely and temporally lost in the past but were fine now. When I asked about who or what supported them in difficult times, some interlocutors spoke about meeting important individuals who changed their lives. These “pivotal relationships” (Marx, 1990, p. 195) were often described in terms of a before and an after, indicating that these meetings were temporal junctures in the lives of refugees. As Bakhtin (1981, p. 116) suggests, in what he calls the “chronotope of everyday life”, in which “events determined by chance [...] manifest themselves in fortuitous encounters (temporal junctures) and fortuitous nonencounters (temporal disjunctions)”. Thus, the “chronotope of isolation and crisis” could at times be transformed through fortuitous encounters that shaped how time was experienced. It was in these micro-interactions that dominant state temporalities were recalibrated and, perhaps, normalised. By meeting important individuals, some interlocutors were propelled onto a different timeline, from enforced “present-ness”, using Bryant’s (2016, p. 20) term, to a fuller sense of biographical time that more coherently connected the past with an open future.

Madi, a Syrian Kurd, had come to Germany via Bulgaria in 2013. Although he had experienced violence and torture by the Bulgarian border police, in 2017 BAMF judged his asylum request as inadmissible on the grounds of the EU Dublin Regulation that assigns responsibility for asylum claims to the EU country of first

arrival. Madi received a deportation notice and went into hiding. At that time, deportations to Bulgaria were suspended in most cases, and Madi had sought help from a lawyer from Aleppo to challenge his deportation order. This lawyer did not help and, as Madi said, even lied to him. While Madi was in hiding, he met a “Turkish man”, as he called him, who helped to find a more suitable lawyer. Through an effective legal challenge, Madi’s deportation notice was eventually revoked. Madi was granted subsidiary protection in Germany in 2018.

When I got rejected and on that basis they were going to send me away [i.e. deport me], this guy [the Turkish man] tried to protect me. [...] This person was working [in my hiding place], we met by chance. I wasn’t able to speak Turkish properly properly but I was able to communicate with him, and I could tell him what my situation was, so he connected me with a stronger lawyer who could work on my case. So, we managed to find this German lawyer and I hired him and when I did my situation changed a lot. [...] I now can access all my rights, I can even work, and I can go and come [whenever I want] and the best thing is I was able to get a house.⁵⁹

As Madi spoke a little Turkish, he could connect with the man and was still in touch. The man continued to support him whenever needed, such as with official letters. Meeting this man helped Madi to stay in Germany and hope for a different future based on rights, mobility and having a space of his own where he could live with his wife and newborn child.

For Madi, accessing his rights was important for building a future. Other interlocutors emphasised that significant others helped with reconnecting emotionally with their sense of self. Both Jane Doe and Beheshta, mentioned above, eventually

⁵⁹ لما اجاني رفض و على اساس يسفروني فهاد الزلمة حاولت حصن حالي , يعني كنت ... و الزلمة كان عم يشتغل هونيك , فتعرفت عليه بالصدفة و ما كنت بحكي مزبوط مزبوط تركي بس كنت بقدر اتواصل معو و بقدر احكيلو فهو دورلي على محامي اقوى و بيقدر يشتغل بالقضية , و شفنا هاد المحامي الالمانى, و كلتو و لما و كلتو اختلف الوضع الايجابية انو صار بحقلي جميع الحقوق حتى انو اشتغل و روح و اجي , و صار المجال قدامي اكبر انو اخذ بيت .

were able to mediate their sense of temporal isolation through connections with others. After Jane Doe struggled for several years with isolation that made her depressed, she decided that she would not accept her situation any longer. She contacted several women on social media. After one bad experience, she got to know an Ethiopian woman who had been living in Germany for 20 years.

She is more than a support system to me. I had so much difficulty with my [legal] process. I didn't see a bright light. I couldn't study, make more things for myself. I was always focusing on my problems. But she helped me see a different side. She highlighted to me where to focus, and not to focus. She was the reason why I started my make up course. It helped me figure out myself, her motivating me all the time. [...] My friend [...] started showing me how much talent I had. I didn't even think of that, that I was talented.

Bourdieu argues that powerlessness in the present is connected to an inability to see and work on possibilities in the future: “the real ambition to control the future [...] varies with the real power to control that future, which means first of all having a grasp on the present itself” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 221). As Jane Doe explained, the uncertainty and powerlessness associated with legal precarity disrupted her ability to work on her future, through studying or making something else for herself. Instead, she was forced to focus on her present “problems”. Through her friend, Jane Doe was eventually able to reconnect with her broader sense of “biographical time” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 116): She was able to reinterpret her past as talented and imagine a future of herself as a make-up artist. Meeting her friend enabled Jane Doe to move out of a sense of stuckedness (Hage, 2015), the experience of an overbearing present and existential immobility, to see a “bright light” and an open path towards the future.

In a similar way, Beheshta's situation changed from a sense of temporal disconnect from her past to a holistic sense of biographical time. First, she changed residence from an emergency shelter to the temporary shelter where we met. Here, it was less crowded; there was open space separating different shared flats. She was still sharing a room, but just with one other woman, and she got along well enough with the other six women in her flatshare. With greater privacy, Beheshta felt safer and was able to start the things that she wanted to do, like learning German and sorting out her papers:

Here, I have seen lots of people who are walking, talking and laughing together, here there is no stress. I found and applied for *Deutsch* [German] course. I met many different people in the *Deutsch* course as my classmates. When they were giving me *Termin* [appointment at the foreigners' office], at first, I was afraid to go and follow up on my asylum procedure. Gradually I learned *Deutsch*. Then when I was going to the [shelter] office to follow up on my procedure, I was telling them that my *Deutsch* is not that good and they were telling me no problem, we can help you. I was speaking incorrectly, but they were supporting me, saying "your *Deutsch* is good enough and you can". I have met positive people who were making me feel good again. *Gradually I found Beheshta back and I learned to laugh again.* I am studying and I am back to being in touch with others.

As Beheshta explained, the space itself made it easier to connect to others. She started learning German and sorting out her papers. Importantly, Beheshta began to accept the support of shelter staff and, as she explained later, a mental health specialist. By reconnecting to others, she regained self-confidence and was able to connect her past self with her present and future.

Madi, Jane Doe and Beheshta all had in common that they experienced legal precarity. In the case of Madi's, whose asylum claim had been rejected on administrative grounds, and Beheshta, who had been waiting for a decision to her

asylum claim, this was a temporary condition in the past. In the case of Jane Doe, legal precarity reached into the present up to the point of our interview. Legal uncertainty implicated in the process of asylum seeking shaped a state-imposed temporality of temporariness, uncertainty and doubt, resulting in an overbearing present with an uncertain future (Griffiths, 2014; Rotter, 2016; Haas, 2017). However, while papers were important to alleviate existential uncertainty, these were insufficient. Rather, connecting with one or more persons for instrumental and emotional support was important to regain a sense of self, which meant coherently forging a connection between their pasts, making sense of the present, and envisioning alternative futures. These connections resembled a time of *kairos*, what the Ancient Greeks called the temporality of meaningful moments, of openness, possibility and change, or “critical moments when things can happen and openings for changes may ensue” (Khosravi, 2020, p. 205; see also Jacques, 1990). Existential uncertainty, with its impacts on mental health and feelings of safety, was transformed into a more positive future trajectory of rights, and a renewed relation to their pasts. Through the “fortuitous encounter” with people who sometimes became friends, Madi, Beheshta and Jane Doe passed a “temporal juncture” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 116). At this juncture, interlocutors could exit a restricting chronotope of isolation and crisis and recover “biographical time”: a sense of everyday life in which the past and the future had meaning in a “normal” present.

7.2.2 Refugee friendship: sharing spaces and times

While interlocutors like Beheshta and Jane Doe reported intense feelings of isolation, others described feeling quite comfortable with the possibilities for social relations in the localities that they were embedded in. Indeed, the infrastructural

spaces of refugee reception, including shelters but also foreigners' offices and refugee support organisations, at times facilitated connections for mutual support, for having a good time in the present, and for building longer-term relations of intimacy, commonality and equality, which most interlocutors understood was the main characteristic of friendship (cf. Killick and Desai, 2010). These connections could puncture temporalities of isolation characterised by a heavy present and enabled *sharing times* that connected the past with the future. This shaped a social spatio-temporal configuration of mutuality and solidarity that I term the "chronotope of refugee friendship".

One example was Rehab, a lively 33-year-old Syrian woman from Damascus. She shared a small flat with three other women and got on fine with them. She also relied on everyday support from her co-residents in the shelter: Because the internet in her room was patchy, Rehab sometimes sat in another resident's flat to attend her online German course. Other neighbours picked up groceries or brought her the mail, since she had a physical disability and could not walk for long distances or do heavy lifting. Still, Rehab explained to me that she preferred keeping an emotional distance to her co-residents in the shelter. She wanted to avoid gossip and be left alone to rest whenever she felt like it. In any case, she did not need her co-residents for emotional support. When she wanted to socialise, she would go out to hang out with friends scattered across Frankfurt. Some she had met in emergency shelters when she first arrived in Germany, others by chance when out and about navigating the German bureaucracy. As Rehab perceptively explained: "This is how you meet people: either in the camp, or at the *Ämter*, [government offices] or just on the street." What Rehab pointed to was that, in Frankfurt, the refugee reception infrastructure

created spaces of encounter in which connections could transform into longer-term and deeper relationships characterised by equality, autonomy and the lack of noteworthy difference. Sharing a language and background could be an important facilitator of connection. But just like shared residence in a shelter did not necessarily lead to emotional connection, in most instances shared language was insufficient to develop meaningful connections. Instead, friendships were formed with other refugees on the ground of both common experiences and common interests that meant that interlocutors *shared times* with their friends.

Feiruss was a social man. Friends and his social life had always been important to him. He had felt quite isolated when living in Turkey: “In five years I didn’t even make a single Turkish friend”⁶⁰. The Covid lockdown also affected him significantly: “The whole country was closed, and the thing that bothered me most was that I couldn’t communicate with people [lit: the world]. I couldn’t see my friends and hang out and stuff⁶¹”. Over time, his life in Germany became easier when he made several close friends. When Feiruss and his wife and daughter arrived in Frankfurt to reunite with their son, Malik (see Chapter 6), they met another family with children of a similar age. When his family moved from an emergency shelter to the current temporary shelter, coincidentally the other family moved there too:

There is a Syrian family; we arrived just one day apart from one another. We stayed together in the camp, and we left it together. I mean, we became very close friends, we really liked each other, and we would go out together [to eat]. When we moved, we came to the same area and, thank God, we stayed together. Almost every day

⁶⁰ حتى كان ما إلي أصدقاء أتراك، ب 5 سنين ولا صديق تركي
⁶¹ وكل البلد مسكر وأكثر شي انزعجت انو ما تواصل مع العالم، ما عاد شوف أصدقائي واجتمع وكذا

we are together. Because our women became friends, and our children became friends. We have fun together.⁶²

Feiruss described how the two families' lives aligned through space and time. They developed an emotional bond, they became close in other words, through shared discrete moments of mobility and change, through rhythmical regularity of almost everyday contact, and by aligning different timelines of generations and genders. By living in the same spaces and keeping regular contact, the two families both shared spaces and *shared times*.

Kathiravelu and Bunnell's (2018, p. 501) might call these forms of friendships "communities of convenience": physical proximity can lead to mutual support and affection but this is often temporary and potentially conflictual. I would argue that, in the case of interlocutors like Rehab and Feiruss, common interests and affection overlapped with common rhythms of asylum (arrival, mobility, navigating bureaucracy) to sediment into friendship over time. Friendship became a convergence of timespaces through similarity in experiences of struggle and exclusion, providing mutual support but also just having fun together. Sharing the spaces and times of asylum with likeable people who shared similar experiences made everyday struggles more bearable.

7.2.3 *Good times against enforced presents*

Living as a refugee or asylum seeker in a temporary shelter was often laden with bureaucratic oppression, societal exclusion and racism, and a sense of being prevented from building a life in Germany. Several interlocutors practiced making the

⁶²إي في عيلة سورية، جينا تقريباً فرق يوم واحد، قعدنا بالكامب مع بعض وطلعت هالعيلة يعني... صرنا كثير صحبة وحبينا بعض وبنطلع مع بعض. ووقت انتقلنا جينا بنفس المنطقة هون فالحمد لله ضلينا مع بعض وكل يوم مع بعض تقريباً لأنه النسوان صاروا أصدقاء والأطفال صاروا أصدقاء، فيعني بنتسلى معهم كثير

present more bearable by *sharing good times* with people living nearby. In this “chronotope of good times”, shared moments of joy became a means to deal with an enforced focus on the present and working on alternative possibilities for shared futures. Simultaneously, good times in the present were ambivalent. A focus on joy in the present was a reminder of potential futures lost in the past.

The importance of spending good times with others for dealing with difficulties was explained to me by Sepideh, a 70-year-old woman from Iran who had fled the Mullah regime after her conversion to Christianity.⁶³ When we met, she was in the third round of appeal against the rejection of her asylum claim. She expressed worries and anxiety about the outcome of her appeal, but she was generally a cheerful woman. As she told me, Sepideh had made friends with interesting women at asylum shelters and even at detention centres. Although she could not visit them often due to her legal precarity, she kept in touch with several via WhatsApp. In her current residence, she was sharing a four-bed flat with seven other women, and she enjoyed living with them. They often cooked for each other or helped with grocery shopping. Once Sepideh organised a party for one of her flatmate’s birthdays. When probed about her reasons, she emphasised that she enjoyed creating good memories for other people:

Life is short. We shouldn’t have more expectations than that. We don’t know whether tomorrow we are alive or not. You might not see me for ten years, so I shouldn’t do something which creates a bad memory for you.

⁶³ In 2021, before the Iranian feminist revolution of 2022 and 2023, the asylum bureaucracy in Germany did not pay much credibility to the plight of women in Iran.

While the state prevented Sepideh from having a future in Germany, she wanted to enjoy every moment because, as humans, we must die. Generating joy for someone in the present, even if fleeting, was a temporal strategy of generating connection against state-enforced temporariness. This strategy recalls what Gil Everaert (2021, p. 4333) termed “inhabiting the meanwhile”: refugees and asylum seekers waiting for papers fill their time by keeping busy or learning something new. Sepideh was indeed waiting for the outcome of her asylum appeal, but filling this “empty interlude” (Rotter, 2016, p. 80) was not her main concern. Instead, she was simply practicing sociality, reciprocity and care with persons that she was sharing spaces with *right now* in “throwntogetherness” (Massey, 2005, p. 151). This was only partially because her future was uncertain in Germany but rather because the future was uncertain anyway. Sepideh and her flatmates “countertemporalised” the state-imposed temporality of an eternal present (Meier and Doná, 2021), with an equally present-oriented temporality that focused on having a good time in the “Here and Now” (Sakti and Amrith, 2022). Having a good time in the present rendered moments of joy a tool against threatening futures.

Sharing “good times” in the present could also be ambivalent, precisely because it was a present-oriented tactic with uncertain effects for longer-term future making. Firat’s story illustrates this. A 31-year-old Kurdish refugee from Turkey, Firat was generally quite social. When we first met, he had been living in Germany for 18 months after fleeing persecution by Erdoğan’s regime. He had been active in leftist politics in Turkey and immediately connected to political groups in Frankfurt, such as

a Kurdish association which made him feel “like you are in Kurdistan”.⁶⁴ He befriended a Kurdish woman whose brother, imprisoned in Turkey, Firat had supported as a human rights lawyer before he was persecuted himself. He had friends amongst the German majority society; some he had met through language classes for refugees, others through leftist networks. One had helped him find a flat. Another had provided Firat with the keys to an allotment, where he grew garlic and beans, and invited people over.

Firat’s example shows how networks of refugees can translate into social capital (Menjívar, 2000; Bernhard, 2021). Through his activism, he moved with ease amongst networks of “co-ethnics” and the majority society, learned the language quickly and could continue his political work. Because he had been granted “proper” refugee status (see Table 2), he could expect to get permanent residency soon and build a life in Germany. Nevertheless, Firat was not happy. When we met in “his” allotment to sit down for an interview, Firat told me:

[Even] if I have a good time in this garden here, I’m not thinking, like “oh, I live a good life”. [...] I have friends here. I hang out with Germans and others. And I do have good relationships. But I don’t like it. I always ask myself: “why am I staying here?” [...] When I spend a nice time with a group, I would still think “why am I here?” I think about the negative side of this.⁶⁵

While Sepideh tried to share good times with her flatmates in the face of an uncertain future, for Firat there was a difference between “good times” in the present

⁶⁴ According to Firat, the Turkish state was enabled to oppress its Kurdish population by ongoing military, political and economic support by Germany, including through the EU-Turkey Deal. He tried to influence politics “back home” through political activism in Germany.

⁶⁵ Aber [selbst] wenn ich hier im Garten eine gute Zeit verbringe denke ich nicht, ah, hier hab ich ein gutes Leben. [...] ich habe hier Freunde und Freundinnen. Ich treffe mich mit Deutschen, mit anderen Leuten, und ich habe auch gute Beziehung auch. Aber ich mag es nicht. Ich frage mich immer: warum bleibe ich hier? [...] wenn ich hier [bin], eine gute Zeit mit einer Gruppe verbringe, denke ich „warum bin ich hier?“ Auch über die negative Seite denke ich nach.

and a “good life” more generally, or, we might say, between existential individual times and biographical times. In this, Firat expressed acute awareness of how his individual experience of time was clouded by past experiences of political persecution and displacement. When having a good time with other people, he was reminded of the fact that he was in Germany involuntarily, and, by extension, that Turkey continued to oppress Kurdish people and human rights activists like himself. He was living in a diasporic chronotope (Pereen, 2006) in which a “good life” necessarily meant returning to Kurdistan.

I keep on learning German but sometimes I ask myself: why am I learning German? [...] If I could [only] go to Turkey or Kurdistan, I would always make plans for *that* time. [...] I could be rich here, have a lot of money or a good life. I’m involved in politics here. But I don’t try to do anything else. [...] Others want to have a good family, get married here. I don’t try these things.⁶⁶

Firat was learning German but he also made an active decision *not* to work on his future in Germany. For him, he would be able to reconnect with his “biographical time”, as a coherent narrative from the past via the present to the future (Bakhtin, 1981; Allan, 1994), if he could return to Kurdistan. The futures or ideas of a “good life” available to him right now were not the ones that he wanted.

At the same time, Firat was involved in political and cultural activism to influence German society to support the Kurdish cause. As an “utopian” practice, his activism was clearly a future-oriented and hopeful activity (Bloch, 1986; Hodge and Hodge, 2021).

⁶⁶ Ich lerne immer deutsch, aber manchmal sag ich mir: warum lerne ich Deutsch? [...] wenn ich nach Türkei oder Kurdistan fahren könnte, dann plane ich immer diese Zeit. [...] Ich könnte hier reich sein, viel Geld haben oder ein gutes Leben haben. Ich mache hier auch Politik. Aber anderes versuche ich nicht. [...] Andere Leute hier [möchten] eine gute Familie, wollen hier verheiratet sein. Ich versuche das nicht.

“If we can practice good politics here, against racism or against the Turkish government, or even against imperialism, you can have hope. I always have hope.”⁶⁷

Although Firat did not see a future for himself in Germany, he continued working on collective Kurdish futures. As a political asylee, Firat could expect to get permanent status in Germany and build a life there. However, his future of choice was the liberation of Kurdistan, which implied the presence of Kurds on Kurdish territory⁶⁸. Present joy and good times with his friends could not distract from ongoing suffering of his people, and instead rendered it more *present*.

Both Sepideh and Firat made efforts to “countertemporalise” state-imposed temporalities (Meier and Doná, 2021, p. 56). Although they had different temporal strategies conditioned by different perspectives on the future, the social practices and connections of both were characterised by forging and maintaining potentiality (Povinelli, 2011; Hughes, 2020), an “otherwise” against the dominant temporalities of exclusion in the German asylum regimes (Povinelli, 2011, 2012; Hughes, 2020). Sepideh’s future in Germany was uncertain right now. By organising parties, hanging out with her flatmates, and caring for people around her, she created fleeting moments of joy, or “good times”, to make the present bearable. Firat instead worked on the social and collective future of Kurdish liberation but did not endeavour to work on his own biographical future. In sharing “good times” with others, Firat’s felt acutely reminded of that his “past future” (Luhmann, 1976), a social temporality of working towards Kurdish freedom in Kurdistan, was, borrowing from Preen (2006, p. 72),

⁶⁷ Wenn wir hier gute Politik machen gegen Rassismus oder gegen die türkische Regierung und auch gegen Imperialismus, man kann Hoffnung haben. Ich habe immer Hoffnung.

⁶⁸ Amongst politically minded Kurds, Kurdish presence on Kurdish territory is a form of resistance against colonialism and forced assimilation. For example, Kurds in Turkey are often critical of Syrian Kurds fleeing from Northern Syria/Rojava because this can be interpreted as contributing to territorial erasure and abandoning the Kurdish cause (Kılıçaslan, 2016).

“not only distant; it [was] also past or passed, left behind in space and in time” (emphasis in original). Good times in the Now, as lived through friendships and social relations, was not the same as living a good life, a biographical time in which past and future were coherently connected to the social temporalities shared with a larger political and social collective.

In summary, the temporary shelters, asylum institutions and infrastructures constituting refugee governance in Frankfurt produced several distinct chronotopical configurations, in which sharing spaces with other refugees shaped interlocutors’ individual time experiences. Legal precarity, overcrowding, and symbolic exclusion from societal temporalities could forge a sense of isolation and crisis, expressed as temporal dislocation from familiar social pasts and futures. Interlocutors dealt with this isolation by *sharing times*: connecting with important individuals that changed their trajectory in positive ways, becoming friends on the grounds of shared experiences of displacement, or by making good times in the Now. In what I have termed the chronotopes of isolation, refugee friendship, and good times, the spaces and times of individual refugees overlapped to shape individual biographical times and create new presents and futures *together*. They thereby maintained or opened up potentialities, socialities characterised by the “otherwise” (Povinelli, 2012), albeit with uncertain and potentially ambivalent outcomes for both their own lives and their social lives in the future. In the next section, I focus more in depth on how refugees in Frankfurt and Istanbul shared times and produced new collectivities by doing so.

7.3 Shared times: Chronotopes of care in Frankfurt and Istanbul

In the previous section, I have shown how individual time experiences of human and biographical time were shaped by interactions with people who lived nearby

within and against the state temporalities produced by shared residence and legal precarity. In this section, I would like to turn to the role of time in shaping new forms of refugee sociality and collectivities in both Frankfurt and Istanbul. In both locations, interlocutors usually clearly distinguished between “friends” and “family”. Friends were usually understood to be persons with whom interlocutors shared commonalities and experiences, characterised by present-oriented everyday support or sharing moments of joy. Sometimes, and this is the focus of the following paragraphs, interlocutors described deep friendships which transcended these present-oriented relations. These relationships were instead talked about through the language of kinship and family, or “kinship-talk” (Rodgers, 2010, p. 72), with connotations of mutual obligation, reciprocity, care and solidarity. I suggest that these family-like friendships also implied that in certain times and spaces, relationships transformed from immediate and temporary forms of support and fun to longer-term emotional bonds and even permanent relationships. Refugee governance often had individualising and isolating effects, through the infrastructures of temporary shelters, the presentness of legal insecurity, and broader societal narratives and practices of refugees as temporal outsiders and others. Against this enforced present-ness, in “chronotopes of care”, refugees emphasised responsibility, reciprocity, interconnectedness, that is, the long-term nature of their sociality, which implied not only sharing the present but also building joint futures.

“Kinship talk” was used to express several types of relationships. Some interlocutors described everyday support by other refugees as family-like, highlighting the regularity, reliability and mutuality although people lived together in involuntary “throwntogetherness” (Massey, 2005, p. 151). For example, Rehab described her

relation to her flatmates as “we are like sisters”: they would cook together, everybody would contribute equally to cleaning, and they would share groceries and foodstuff: “Nobody says, this is mine or yours, everybody uses things together.” In a similar manner, Feiruss explained that he and his wife inadvertently assumed responsibility for another couple’s children when they were living in an emergency shelter shortly after arriving in Germany:

F: My wife was responsible for three children because their mother had psychological issues so they took her to the hospital, and their father wasn’t able to take care of the children. My wife felt bad for them because they were small, and so she helped them. They were so cute, the small ones. I told her that it’s a big responsibility, but she insisted on taking care of them for five months. She showered, fed, and clothed them. [...]

P: So you were like a family to those three kids?

F: We had to be.⁶⁹

In this exchange, it was me, not Feiruss himself, who interpreted his family’s care of another couple’s children as “family”. He even expressed reluctance to the responsibility that this entailed. But in doing so he accepted the family-like obligation of everyday care for what at the time was an indeterminate duration.

As another example, Beheshta became close to an older lady in her temporary shelter residence because she was lacking family members living nearby (see also Chapter 6 on who counts as family).

There is a lady I call her *mother*. Because my mother has passed away and I like her a lot. Whenever she has any problem or needs any help, she asks me if I can help her. I know my *Deutsch* [German]

F⁶⁹: هلا مثال، بالكامب كانت مرتي مسؤولة عن 3 أطفال أمهم معها مرض نفسي أخذوها على المستشفى والأب كان مو خرج يدبر باله على أطفال فكتير زعلت عليهم لأنهم صغار فساعتهم، حلوين كتير هم صغار. قتلها انها مسؤولة كبيرة يعني بس ضلت شي 5 شهور تحممهم وتطعمهم وتلبسهم [...]
P: كنتوا مثل العيلة للأطفال الثلاثة؟
F: اضطرينا

is not good but I use *Deutsch* [German] and English and solve the problem. She always prays for me and she is happy for me. She says "you are a good girl and you have always tried to study." [...] it gives me a positive energy and I think nothing is more than her appreciations when she tells me that I can do stuff. And it motivates me to try.

In Beheshta's narrative, she related to the older lady both through an emotional bond and reciprocal support. She supported the woman practically and her "mother" gave her moral and emotional support, enabling Beheshta to think about her future. Again, deeper relations beyond practical support drew on a moral universe of responsibility and obligations that had more a kin-like than a friend-like character.

Other interlocutors emphasised that the relationships to their friends were characterised by reciprocity, mutual obligations and affective depths that endured and reached far into the future. Friendship was thus too weak a term. One example, briefly drawing from the fieldsite of Istanbul, was the relationship between Adam, Majed, Ali and Loay, whom I met while they were staying in the same flat. Adam described their relationship as follows:

With my friends whom I met in the camp, we meet all the time, we are always together. Even when we don't live in the same city, we talk almost every day via WhatsApp. *I call them my brothers, not my friends.* [...] [Sometimes we fight] but we don't hold grudges against each other, we don't stay angry. We shared experiences, we know each other's problems because we all lived the same life. We grew up together. *We are brothers.* [...] Even our families are friends and visit each other. Sometimes we help each other with money. If one of us doesn't have money, we give him money. If you don't have money, they give it to you.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ ألتقي دائماً مع أصدقائي الذين التقيت بهم في المخيم ونحن دائماً معاً، حتى لو لم تكن في نفس المدينة فإننا نتحدث عبر الواتساب تقريباً كل يوم، أعتبرهم إخواني لا أصدقائي. [...] ولكننا لا نحمل الضغينة ضد بعضنا، لا نظل متخاصمين، عشنا التجارب نفسها ونعرف مشاكل بعضنا البعض لأننا عشنا نفس الحياة، كبرنا معاً، نحن إخوة [...]، حتى عائلتنا أصدقاء وهم يزورون بعضهم البعض . في بعض الأحيان نساعد بعضنا البعض بالمال، إن لم يكن لدى أحدهنا مال فإننا نعطيهِ مالا، وإن لم يكن لديك مالا فإنهم يعطونه إياك

Adam had arrived in Turkey in 2011 as a teenager with his parents and siblings. As some of the first Syrian refugee fleeing the war, they lived in a refugee camp at the Turkish-Syrian border. Here, Adam met Majed, Ali and Loay. Growing up together in the camp led to long-term *brotherhood* rooted in multi-generational mutuality and reciprocity. Adam described how his friends were *more than friends* but rather *brothers*; he thus pointed to the deep intimacy and commitment that transcended time and space even through conflict.⁷¹ This also meant an emphasis on *sharing* whatever resources one had, in a promise that this could be reciprocated in the future.

The practice of using family or kinship terms for close friends, and individuals who have provided support, has been noted in other studies on refugee social connections (Rodgers, 2010; Strang and Quinn, 2021, *passim*; Baillot *et al.*, [forthcoming], *passim*). In Rodgers' (2010) view, using kinship terms for close friends may be expressions of emotional proximity and claims to moral obligations and reciprocity usually associated with family. In the context of refugee camps in both Germany and Turkey, I suggest that using family/kinship terms had a specific *temporal quality*, which was less about equality and commonality in the present, and more about building joint futures. In this vein, Bell and Coleman emphasise “the power of kinship as an idiom through which to express the power of all social relations considered to have *binding qualities*” (Bell and Coleman 1999, cited in Obeid, 2010, p. 94 (emphasis added)). Kinship draws on *past* relations and traditions, but is also a flexible practice and performance, a *becoming* that is directed

⁷¹ The depth of this friendship was sadly mobilised beyond life when Adam and Majed helped organise the funeral of Ali and his family who were buried under the rubble of a collapsed building during the Maraş earthquake on 6 February 2023.

towards the future (Carsten, 2020). Amongst my interlocutors, friendships-as-family were temporally imbued with long-term commitment into the future, against a context of temporal refugee governance heavily permeated by present-ness.

In some cases, friendship relations fully reconfigured into kinship, resulting in almost stand-in family in the absence of “biological” kin. Bettina, a 73-year-old white “German German” woman (in her own words) became close friends with a Syrian family by volunteering with a mentorship and homework support project. She first supported a Polish girl for a few years. When this girl was about to move away with her parents, she gave Bettina a leaving gift. Afterwards Bettina never heard from the girl which she found frustrating. Still, she agreed to support another child, a Syrian boy. It turned out the family lived nearby, so him and his sister started to come around Bettina’s house after school. The girl also wanted homework support but the association did not think that she needed it. So Bettina stopped volunteering and just supported the siblings directly. Over time, Bettina also developed a close friendship with their parents:

We got to know and to love each other. I have a proper women’s friendship with the mother. And the children love me. They call me their “blond German granny”.⁷²

When the children asked Bettina about the girl that she supported previously, she explains:

The Syrian children asked me later: Are you still in touch with the Polish family? I told them the story. They said: “We don’t have to give you presents. *We will have you forever*”. That is beautiful.⁷³

⁷² Wir haben uns kennen und lieben gelernt. Ich habe eine richtige Frauenfreundschaft mit der Mutter. Und die Kinder lieben mich. Sie nennen mich ihre „Blonde deutsche Oma“.

The physical absence of family members due to displacement led Bettina's friends to "adopt" her as a grandmother. Bettina also distinguished between her "woman friend", while the mother's children called her grandmother, she expressed both the overlap of friendship and kinship, and the difference between the two. In this view, family was rooted in unequal relations characterised by mutual obligations and care that reach into the future, while friendship was rooted in equality and freedom.

The varying forms of kinship talk amongst my interlocutors point towards a particular future temporality of friends-as-family relations. For Adam, growing up together and sharing life in the refugee camp in the past meant that he could rely on his friends *a/ways*, in the present and the future. Feiruss was worried about the responsibility that caring for the other family's children would entail, implying that his wife could not just stop once she started. Beheshta's "mother" made her try harder and invest in her future. Bettina's stand-in grandchild promised to be with her *forever*. In all these cases, their relationship was expressed through emotional bonds *and* mutual obligations that reached into the future, expressing a promise of a lasting connection in the face of uncertainty and mobility. In Tavory's (2018, p. 127) words: "relationships appear as anticipatory structures. An interaction with a close family member—even if the interaction is fractious—is usually assumed to be one moment in a cadence of interactions. Whether or not we disrupt the interaction, even quite radically, *we assume we will see each other again*".

In other chronotopical relations described above, sharing spaces sometimes led to sharing times. Here I emphasise that, over time, some non-kin relationships

⁷³ Später haben mich auch die syrischen Kinder gefragt: Hast du noch Kontakt zu der polnischen Familie? Ich habe ihnen die Geschichte erzählt. Sie haben gesagt: „wir brauchen dir kein Geschenk zu machen, wir haben dich für immer.“ Das ist schön.

became characterised by *times of caring and sharing*, that is, by a mutual obligation and affective promise to be there for each other in the future, whatever may come. These times were not characterised by individual experiences of time but by shared understandings of rhythmicity, reciprocity and obligation based on social norms of family – based on what I referred to as *shared* or *social times* above (Sorokin and Merton, 1937; Hareven, 1977). Amongst my interlocutors, displacement as forced reconfiguration of their family relations shaped how they became kin with friends. This is not to say that these relations necessarily lasted or were without conflict or hierarchies. Rather, in a context that constructed refugees as temporary and “out of place” (Malkki, 1995a), making time with and for each other now and for joint futures counterbalanced enforced temporariness with a promise for a shared future.

7.4 Times of guests and neighbours: Chronotopes of local belonging in Istanbul

Here, I will leave the temporary shelters and refugee reception spaces of Frankfurt and return to local social relations of interlocutors in Istanbul. In Chapter 5, I had shown how the chronotope of “survival time” shaped Syrian interlocutors’ relations to family and friends, including those who lived nearby. Over the next few pages, I discuss the social temporalities of “proximal relations” with “local” Turkish people (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2016, p. 25). These were often expressed through the notion of neighbourhood (TR: mahalle, AR: haara /حارة), understood as local social worlds with shared moral and symbolic codes. I argue that neighbourhoods were chronotopical timespace configurations in which refugees negotiated between being accepted as *neighbours* (TR: komşu, AR: jaar /جار), associated with equality, durability and legitimate future belonging, while Turkish laws and collective

discourses continued to construct them as *guests* (TR: *misafir*), associated with temporariness and inequality. Both constructions were characterised by different social temporalities with implications for the social relations expressed through them.

Many interlocutors in Istanbul reported that neighbours were important sources of material support when they first arrived. Neighbours helped with furnishing the house, providing food, and collecting money for individual purchases. Landlords also reportedly reduced or deferred rent payments if interlocutors struggled to pay. For example, when Judy, a 32-year-old Syrian woman and her parents moved into a new house, the neighbours in her building organised to buy all the furniture, would cook meals for them, and even scolded them for buying food at the market themselves. As her neighbour insisted, the “*right of the neighbour is that neighbours help them.*”⁷⁴ In this, they drew on a moral code in Turkey (and the wider Middle East) in which neighbours have been important sources of material support, social order and local political administration historically (Marcus, 1989; Freitag, 2014) and today (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh, 2018; Alkan, 2020, 2021; Alkan and Maksudyan, 2020). Neighbourliness involved sharing food, material assistance, and paying regular visits, connected to notions of honour and respectability and in exchange for local social control (Obeid, 2010; Rottmann, 2019; Alkan and Maksudyan, 2020). In helping, my interlocutors’ Turkish neighbours thus abided by appropriate ethical and moral behaviour according to community norms.

Some Syrians I spoke to interpreted this neighbourly support as an indication that they were fully accepted into the Turkish community. Thus, Ghazal described how

⁷⁴ حق الجار على الجار انه نساعدهم عملت اجتماع مع الجيران، قالت لهم في سوريين جايين جداد،

she had been living in a house in Gaziantep in the Southeast of Turkey. Her neighbours were extremely helpful and caring and “Antep” felt like home, even more so than Syria:

The first six months were tough but then, I mean, we moved to another house, there were so many good people there. The owners of the house made us feel like we were their children. They took and they gave, for example. We didn't feel like strangers, we felt like we were in our country. [...] More than Syria, we don't think about Syria anymore, we think about Antep [as our home]. So, in Antep, my sisters are living there. And my neighbours. I feel [miss] my neighbours more than my family. They would tell me "whatever you need, we will do it for you, but don't go, stay here with us in the neighbourhood [*haara*], right?"⁷⁵.

Ghazal here connected three ideas: first, she referred to her neighbours as family, again drawing on the notion of permanence and mutual obligation I described above. Second, she drew on the notion of reciprocity, as giving and taking, as a temporally indeterminate relation between the present and the future (Mauss 1921 in Alkan, 2021). Third, this experience of reciprocity led her to feel as if she belonged, expressed through the notion of *haara* / حارة with a connotation of locality, familiarity and the multi-generational co-residence of an extended family. The support Ghazal received from neighbours meant that she did not feel like a (temporary) stranger. Rather she expressed feelings that she could, and should, stay permanently. Once she moved to Istanbul with her family to find better work opportunities, neighbourly relations were not the same. Ghazal sometimes picked up lunch from a volunteer-run and neighbourhood-based soup kitchen (where we met). At times she was invited to help with cooking and packing lunch for distribution to local poor Syrian and Turkish

⁷⁵ أول ست شهور كانت صعبة، بعدين يعني . انتقلنا ع غير بيت كثير جماعة كثير كويسين . صحابين البيت حسونا مثل ولادهم، صارو ياخدو ويعطو مثلا، ما حسينا بغربة، حسينا يعني ببلادنا[...] اي اكثر من سوريا، سوريا ما بنفكر فيها زيادة، عم نفكر بعنتاب، هلا بعنتاب خواتي هناك . مثلا جبراني جبراني أكثر من اهلي بحسهم، جبراني كثير يعني قالولي شو ما بدك بنساويلك بس لا تروحي يعني، خليكي عنا هون بالحارة ما

families. This neighbourly support provided fewer resources, was less mutual and less stable in the future.

While individual Syrians read neighbourly support and aid as based on moral notions of neighbourhood, with its connotation of mutual reciprocity, stability, and future belonging in the local community, other, especially Turkish, interlocutors interpreted these as practices of temporary hospitality, which could be and were subsequently revoked. As Fatma, a volunteer at the same local soup kitchen, suggested:

I know people who showed solidarity with each other when they [Syrian refugees] first came, before they were receiving citizenship; such as helping children to go to school, heating the house, getting shoes for children, beds to sleep in, blankets to cover with etc. [...] in response to this initial despair, people were showing warmth. But when it was understood that they were becoming „from here“ [*buralı olacakları*] and they were not leaving, the attitude changed [i.e. became more negative].⁷⁶

Fatma described how many Turkish residents showed solidarity to Syrians shortly after the revolution, understood as practices of hospitality towards guests for a limited duration of emergency. However, once Syrians made claims to permanent community membership, as citizens, or just didn't seem to make efforts to leave, Turkish residents struggled to negotiate this transition and consider Syrians their neighbours (*komşular*). Neighbours were “from here”, making claims in the past, and thus will stay here in the future. They would participate in the local moral code of mutual support and social control, and therefore, I would argue, share in a future

⁷⁶ Mesela ilk geldikleri dönemlerde işte bu henüz vatandaşlık almadıkları dönemlerde, çocukların okula gitmesi ile ilgili ya da evin ısınmasıyla ilgili, bir küçük çocuğun ayağına ayakkabı giymesiyle ilgili ya da yatacak yatak, üzerine örtecek battaniye vs. ile ilgili birbiriyle dayanışma göstermiş insanlar da biliyorum. Yani hani o ilk çaresizlik dönemlerinde bu sıcak şey gösterildi ama sonradan artık buralı olacakları ve gitmeyecekleri anlaşıldığı zaman gösterdikleri tavır aynı tavır değildi.

collective temporality. Instead, many Turkish people continued to draw on a discourse of hospitality, constructing Syrians as temporary guests that should leave at some point. As Ahmet Hoca, a middle-school teacher, said regretfully:

“Hospitality has finished, and settlement has started. These people will not leave from our country. They are settling permanently.”⁷⁷

While Ahmet Hoca and others somewhat grudgingly but pragmatically accepted permanent settlement of Syrians, they felt that Syrians were overstaying their welcome (Koca, 2016). Hospitality is an inherently temporal, specifically temporary, phenomenon. Hosting a guest is deemed to end at some point, although this point is not predefined. As a result, hospitality “prerequisites a cultural setting in which a guest is considered not only someone to be helped, but also someone who is worth a *prolonged encounter*” (Nowicka, 2021, p. 237, emphasis added). From the perspective of Ahmet Hoca and others, the transition from guesthood to settlement implied a transition from temporariness to permanence, something that they did not want to grant. While engaging in prolonged encounter with local established communities, Syrians were often not (yet) considered worthy of permanence by collective narratives. Many ceased to be (unwelcome) guests but had not yet been accepted as full neighbours.

In Chapter 4, I described how the discourse of hospitality, and its association with temporary hosting, was rooted in state practices of refugee reception, again indicating how shared times are shaped by the times of the state. The Turkish state and the Erdoğan government described Syrian refugees as “guests”, *misafirler*, and called upon the Turkish population to extend hospitality, *misafirperverlik*, towards

⁷⁷ Misafirlikten çıktı artık yerleşmeye de geçti. O insanlar artık bizim ülkemizden gitmeyecekler. Sabit yerleştiler.

them. This triggered widespread practices of donating and providing material support to refugees at a local level. Once this societal discourse on hospitality, and norms of hosting, became enshrined in the temporary protection regulation, it also became a state-embedded practice of temporal governance and bordering. Discursively, symbolically, and legally, “Syrians” were defined as temporally different, in a lower hierarchical position and outside any state temporality that would render a joint future possible.

Once Syrians crossed the boundary from legitimate temporariness into what was perceived as illegitimate permanent presence on Turkish territory, they entered the crosshair of existing intense negotiations over Turkish nationhood and membership which had targeted Kurds and other migrants in the past (Parla, 2011, 2019b). As Hakan explained: “Turkey is already a country that is not at peace with its own people”⁷⁸. These negotiations overlapped with competition over economic resources. As residents, “Syrians” had become scapegoats for existing economic problems in Turkey.

Because they are not guests anymore, they need to share public spaces, business area, or maybe even GDP per capita, you know. I mean the economic situation is really important too. As people get poorer, they don't want to share anything anymore (NGO employee working on “social cohesion”, TK11).

This scapegoating and negotiation of permanence resembled how other migrants had been received in the past, as Fatma explained:

In the past, [local people] were involved in the economic lives of the neighbours and people who immigrated from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. They started to work in the same workplaces, they

⁷⁸ Türkiye zaten kendi halklarıyla barışık olmayan bir ülke. Üstüne göç başladı.

started to live in the same buildings [...] They associated the social and economic problems that they were experiencing with them, not with the government. Now they are doing the same thing, this time to refugees coming from other countries.⁷⁹

According to Fabian (1983), othering works through the construction of some people as operating on a separate timeline, either out of time or stuck in the past. This denies how lives of these “others” are shaped by the same ongoing historical and structural inequalities, what he terms the “denial of coevalness” (Fabian, 1983, p. 31). Discomfort with Syrians’ no-longer-temporariness resonated with broader debates about the relationship between the state and its people, class-based struggles over resources, and what sorts of rights permanent membership might or might not provide.

By contrast, neighbourhood solidarity that worked on commonality in the *present* helped in destabilising these powerful boundaries of temporary hospitality to the exclusion of permanent belonging. Thus, in the past, migrants got accepted as members of the community, simply because difference ceased to be noteworthy over time.

Walee: It’s almost by cohabitation. I mean, the period of time solved this issue [referring to tensions between Turkish and Syrian neighbours].⁸⁰

Fatma: After a certain period of time, *time turns into a tool* that enables people to get closer to each other and to eliminate those prejudices. Now, people who work together in the same workplace, in the same factory, they get to know each other over time, and they

⁷⁹ Geçmişte Bulgaristan'dan Yugoslavya'dan göçen komşulara, insanlara, onların ekonomik yaşantılarına dahil olmuşlardı, çalıştıkları iş yerlerinde çalışmaya başlamışlardı, yaşadıkları binalarda oturmaya başlamışlardı [...] Nasıl ki yaşadıkları o toplumsal ekonomik sıkıntılarla ilgili direkt onları ilişkilendiriyorlardı, onları yöneten devletleri değil de. Şimdi gene aynı şeyi bu sefer farklı ülkelerden gelen mültecilere yapıyorlar.

⁸⁰ بالمعاشرة تقريبا يعني المدة الزمنية هي اللي حلت هالشي

realize that they are actually from the same [working] class, and then those prejudices and nationalist preconceptions begin to disappear slowly.⁸¹

According to Fatma and Walee, the passing of time worked in favour of getting to know each other and building a collective consciousness as workers. In their explanation, separation and boundaries transformed into convivial acceptance not only over time, but through time itself. In this, time itself had agency. By spending time in shared places and building common rhythms, “time [could] do its work” (Das, 2007, p. 90) to reduce prejudice and enable cohabitation.

For Mehmet, who was a co-founder of a local community organisation, changing local residents’ minds to accept and transform that Syrian neighbours were not going anywhere was a key element of his solidarity work. His organisation lost several volunteers because they insisted to support Turkish and Syrian residents equally. They insisted on providing for the needy based on need, not on background but this meant that they were at odds with some local Turkish residents:

People around are still asking "When are you going to leave? Are you planning to go back?" This kind of thing still exists. They don't want to understand that refugees are staying here. [...] We always distribute [material aid like school bags and food] according to needs, but we do try to give equal opportunities to Turkish and Syrian people. We tell this to Syrians; we also tell this to Turkish people. This is actually a way of teaching, but a way of teaching by smacking across head. When they come to us saying "Why are you giving those things to Syrians, they are getting like 2000-3000 TL from the government, per child or whatever" [...] When these objections come, we will tell them: "Sister, if you don't mind, this is that kind of place" [...] We became a bit defensive about this. We are

⁸¹ Bir de zaman insanların birbirine yakınlaşmasını ve o önyargıların ortadan kalkmasını da sağlayan bir araca dönüşüyor belli bir zaman sonra. Şimdi aynı iş yerinde, aynı fabrikada birlikte çalışmayı sürdüren insanlar zaman içerisinde tanıyorlar birbirlerini ve aslında sınıfsal olarak aynı sınıfın insanlarını olduklarını fark edip anlayıp sonrasında o önyargılar ve milliyetçi ön kabuller ortadan yavaş yavaş kalkmaya başlıyor.

politically neutral but this association has turned into something that defends refugees. This was without intention.⁸²

In Nowicka's conception, practicing "convivial hospitality", that is, moving beyond the temporal conditionality of hospitality and towards more stable settlement, requires engagements with difference, interactions "nested in a respectful withdrawal respectful withdrawal" and assuming common responsibilities "beyond society and state" (Nowicka, 2021, p. 241). While Mehmet tried to assume common responsibilities for Turkish and Syrian residents irrespective of background, the political polarisations of Turkey rendered respectful withdrawal an impossibility: equal support itself was politicised and became an act of "defending" refugees. Solidarity with both Syrian and Turkish residents, by virtue of them sharing the same space in their neighbourhood, was a way to "smack people across the head" and show that Syrian were not going anywhere. His association engaged in a form of future politics in which supporting each other was independent on the eventual fate of Syrian presence. Shared futures did not rely on a common vision in the country necessarily, but rather on a pragmatic conviviality of living together, sharing spaces and times in the Here and Now (Sakti and Amrith, 2022).

Material support and help, as a core relation between Syrians and Turkish people in Istanbul neighbourhoods, contained a temporal negotiation between practices of temporary guesting/hosting and permanent neighbouring. While some Turkish people maintained a distinction to Syrians as former temporary guests who had overstayed

⁸² "Ne zaman gidiyorsunuz? Gitmeyi düşünüyor musunuz?" falan. Böyle bir şey var hala. Mültecilerin artık burada kalıcı olduğunu anlamak istemeyen bir kafa var. Bunu sürdürüyorlar.[...] Her zaman, tabii ihtiyaca göre bu dağılımı yapıyoruz ama Türkiyelilere de Suriyelilere de eşit vermeye çalışıyoruz. Bunu Suriyeliye de söylüyoruz, Türkiyelilere de söylüyoruz. Bu da aslında bir öğretme biçimi ama kafasına vurarak öğretme biçimi. Çünkü bizde hep şöyle:" Ya neden Suriyelilere veriyorsunuz? Ya onlar işte devletten para alıyorlar 2000-3000. Çocuk başı bilmem ne falan?" [...] İtirazlar gelince de "Abla işine geliyorsa, burası böyle bir yer." Biraz da savunucu bir taraftaydık. Politik olarak tarafsızız diyoruz ama mültecileri de diğer yanıyla savunan bir şeye dönüştü bu dernek. Gayri ihtiyari oldu bu.

their welcome, others worked to accept them as neighbours. This meant accepting shared living conditions, shared needs, and potentially sharing local futures. While constructions of hospitality and guesthood implied sharing spaces but living in different times, neighbouring contributed to sharing of both spaces and times.

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that sharing spaces in local social contexts in both Frankfurt and Istanbul ambivalently coincided with sharing times. In the German context of residence in temporary shelters, and in the Turkish contexts of urban neighbourhoods, refugee sociality was shaped by ambiguous relations between space, as describing emotional and spatial nearness and distance, and time, as in the present and the future. In Frankfurt, the interaction of some forms of temporal governance, including enforced temporary residence and precarious status, contributed to an individualising time experience characterised by feelings of isolation from other persons living nearby, and an enhanced sense of present-ness in separation from both biographical pasts and futures. Meaningful interaction with important individuals, supporting co-residents and making friends could transform chronotopes of isolation, characterised by individual temporalities, into chronotopes of friendship, connecting individual time experiences with the temporalities of others, and creating new interactional temporalities. Here interlocutors sensed that their “biographical times”, as a narrative from the pasts via the presents into the future were again coherent; they also *shared times* with their friends, which meant feeling less lonely and producing hopes for the future.

In both Frankfurt and Istanbul, interlocutors supported and received support by some people living nearby, focusing on present and fleeting moments of joy. In other

cases, sharing spaces led to deep emotional bonds and long-term friendships with mutual obligations. In “chronotopes of care”, kinship-like friendships were characterised by a desire to share both presents and futures – sharing spaces and times led to the production of new social formations, or “social projects” in Povinelli’s (2011, p. 7) usage, that were expected to last. Finally, in Istanbul, refugees’ social relations to neighbours were more directly implicated in the effects of temporal differentiation through the interaction of the legal temporary protection regime and broader discourses of hospitality. Because Syrians were designated as temporary guests this impeded but did not stop the transformation of *guests* into *neighbours* with all the moral, social and material obligations that implied.

Spatial proximity could both facilitate and inhibit affective connections to co-residents in temporary shelters in Frankfurt and neighbours in Istanbul. Whether spatial proximity led to mutual support, emotional bonds, or *enduring* relationships, was shaped by chronotopical characteristics, such as to what degree a transformation from enforced temporariness through legal status or designations as guests influenced individual and social temporalities. Refugees and other local residents actively countertemporalised against enforced temporariness and enforced present-ness. By sharing times, friendships could become like family with all the connotations and implications of permanence, mutual obligation and endurance even in the face of conflict. Sharing material assistance for a common good, and opening potentialities for shared future lives, was also central in practices of neighbourhood solidarity, rooted in a future politics that was pragmatically indifferent to whether refugees stayed or not.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 How refugees make social times within and against state times

I began this thesis with the story of the sisters Ameena and Rania and will return to them to conclude. A few months after I returned from Istanbul to Frankfurt, Rania texted me excitedly. She had received confirmation from the municipality that she could finally move out of the temporary shelter into a flat in a social housing block at the edge of the city. The flat was small, two-bedrooms and an open-plan kitchen/living room for a family of two adults and three teenagers. Still, Rania felt much better. Once she had escaped the restrictions of temporary residency, imposed by the local German conditions of asylum, Rania started to build her own life in her own space. Together with her husband and children, she was finally making plans for her future. These were not ambitious dreams but simply consisted of being with people that were important to her. Shortly after moving, she and her family travelled to Sweden to visit their other sister. Her son could finally visit and stayed frequently, on weekends or during Ramadan. Rania made plans to travel to Lebanon to visit her daughter, once she figured out how to get a visa and had saved enough to pay for a plane ticket. Whenever we met, she was visibly calmer and more optimistic about her future.

Ameena, in the meantime, received a confirmation from UNHCR that she and her family could be resettled to the USA. Compared to other resettled refugees, this was a good outcome. She had waited for the confirmation for only two years. Not only would her son be able to get treatment for his disability in the USA. Both of her adult sons were also supposed to come along, which is not always guaranteed during resettlement. Still, she had mixed feelings. Ameena had hoped she would be able to

live closer to her sisters in Europe. The USA were far, travelling would be expensive. Her children, all of them fluent in Turkish by now, would have to learn another language to continue their education. In any case, it was not clear *when* she would be resettled, a new form of uncertainty in her life beyond the struggles of temporary protection. At the time of writing (October 2023), Ameena still remains in Turkey.

Ameena's and Rania's stories illustrate how refugees' presents and futures are embedded within the social temporalities of their networks and the social temporalities of refugee governance. In this thesis I built on the growing literature on temporalities of migration and refugee socialities to argue that displacement not only shapes refugees' temporal experiences of the present and the future but also the social relations with people near and far. Displacement is experienced as refugees move through space and time as individuals *and* through the timespaces of their social lives. These social lives are shaped by multiple and overlapping temporalities, rooted in refugees' own social histories and biographies and intersecting with the temporal forms of power that they encounter and live in.

I would like to return to my research question: How does temporal governance shape social temporalities of displacement in Germany-Turkey? We know by now that time is a central tool that states and governments use to govern human mobility (Griffiths, Rogers and Anderson, 2013; Griffiths, 2021). Practices of "temporal bordering" shape hierarchies amongst people based on who can move across borders, how fast, and whether someone can stay or leave according to one's free choosing. Temporal governance, as embedded in the discourses and practices of legal frameworks, state institutions and NGOs, and, ambivalently enforced by individual bureaucrats, officials, migrants and citizens, operates at borders, by

selectively slowing down or speeding up some groups and individuals, and within borders, by constructing some individuals as potentially permanent and others as permanently temporary. In turn, these practices of temporal bordering shape experiences of displacement (war-related and otherwise), which are often characterised by existential uncertainty, enforced temporariness, and waiting.

In line with methodological individualism, studies of time and migration have often focused on either phenomenological experiences of migrants, refugees or asylum seekers, or on a critical analysis of state practices. Important as these studies are, aside from a few exceptions within migration studies (Leutloff-Grandits, 2017; Acedera and Yeoh, 2019; Robertson, 2021; Yeoh *et al.*, 2023), we know very little about the social effects of temporal governance. This is a great lacuna as displacement and questions of how settlement translates into membership are essentially social problems – questions about how humans relate to each other, form and maintain social groups through boundaries and borders, and how people exert or resist power. How do refugees experience and deal with temporal governance as social beings? How do they maintain and form social ties over time and space, in a context that is often characterised not only by physical dislocation but also spatial separation from loved ones? How do individual understandings and experiences of time intersect with state temporalities to shape these social connections?

Refugees' individual times, interactional/shared times, and dominant state temporalities unevenly merged and were negotiated within spatio-temporal configurations that I have called "chronotopes", using Bakhtin's formulation as dialogical and affective social timespaces. In my conceptualisation, chronotopes of displacement are almost like genres in literature, each with particular rhythms,

tempos and sequences, narratives of pasts and futures, and degrees to which they are dominated by either state legal frameworks, social/shared or individual/biographical refugee times. These chronotopes of displacement were coloured by positive and negative emotions, in particular places and localities. In the “Germany-Turkey chronotope”, refugees’ individual lived experiences of time, as *human* and *biographical time*, were constructed within and in turn shaped “*shared times*”, understood as the alignment of individual pasts and future imaginations with people that they felt affectively connected to, whether family members, friends, or neighbours.

By sharing times, refugees *made* new temporalities within and against the state-dominated temporalities of refugee governance across Germany and Turkey. In *making* social temporalities, refugees countered uncertainty about the future and relegation into the present in state temporalities with novelty, potentiality and creativity, in themselves indeterminate and unpredictable in whether or not, or how, these would forge alternative temporal worlds. They thus engaged in political interaction in Arendt’s (2018 [1958]) sense, the political capacity to start something new, the ability to think and act otherwise with uncertain outcomes, together in human relationships. While I am careful about the notion of resistance, I argue that sharing times was an political act of autonomy, as ““the Other” of governmentality” in Samaddar’s words (2005, p. 10). As Povinelli (2011, p. 191) suggests, ““Not this” makes a difference even if it does not immediately produce a propositional otherwise”. In that sense, even if interlocutors did not avoid, escape or transform state practices and discourses of temporal dispossession and the effects of temporal

separation, sharing times was a temporal form of autonomy that made oppression least more endurable and thus conserved potentiality for social lives in the future.

I have described several of these chronotopical configurations in which state temporalities merged and overlapped with refugees' social temporalities. Addressing the question of *which forms of temporal governance affect the social lives of refugees*, in Chapter 4, I conceptualised Germany-Turkey as an uneven and overlapping chronotope which maintains refugees in ambiguous temporal conditions. In Germany, temporal refugee governance centres on two aspects: increasingly differentiated protection statuses in which the temporary duration of protection becomes not only associated with access to resources but also moral worth; and the ambiguous implementation of the law in the federal system which creates uncertainty for refugees and designates living conditions based on arbitrarily allocated location of residence. In Turkey, the presence of refugees, and Syrians in particular, is governed through legal and discursive constructions as temporary, legally through the temporary protection regulation and symbolically by designating Syrians as guests and thus outside the temporalities of nation-state belonging. In both contexts, refugees also navigated broader societal and historical notions of exclusionary nationhood: in Germany expressed through a racist conception of a homogenous ethnolinguistic nation that excludes non-whites and non-Germans and designates them as essentially temporary; in Turkey expressed through hierarchical nationalist notions of Turkish superiority and non-Turkish (including Kurdish and Arab) inferiority. Importantly, these forms of temporal governance and negotiations of nationhood, membership and belonging are not independent from each other. They are informed by shared histories and collective memories of Turkish-German migration, and

contemporary diplomatic negotiations over unequal power positions within the unequal EU migration apparatus, as evidenced in the EU-Turkey Deal.

In this Germany-Turkey chronotope, my interlocutors faced a situation in which they were considered outside the dominant and hegemonic temporalities of both nation-states. They were both considered newcomers, not sharing a common social past, present on state territory temporarily, and not fully accepted as *future* members of the state. This was independent of actual legal status and included some naturalised citizens, in particular in Turkey. To showcase the centrality of temporariness in navigating social temporal experiences, I (awkwardly) refer to most interlocutors identified as such as “refugees”, even though some were not refugees legally, many had resided in their respective localities for years and some had permanent residence or citizenship.

Considering the question of *how refugees negotiate temporal governance of displacement in their social lives, in interplay with other temporal structures of power and intersecting hierarchies such as gender and class*, in Chapter 5 I focused on the mutual implication of the economic crisis and hyperinflation, the legal framework, and structures of labour exploitation in producing specific social temporalities for refugees in Turkey. I have shown how economic crisis, capitalist exploitation and a legal framework built on temporariness combined to maintain Syrian refugees in “survival time”. Survival time was a chronotope of isolation, in which most Syrians experienced temporal dispossession: they were always working or thinking about survival which prevented them from exerting temporal autonomy, such as pursuing their dreams, or meeting and living with people that were important to them. This was not a coincidence as exploitation was pertinent to capitalist business owners who had

access to cheap refugee labour. Survival time also had a political function of keeping refugees both busy and isolated, and thus outside any political challenge to the fragile hierarchical relations in Turkey. While labour exploitation and economic crisis was shared with working class Turkish citizens, I argued that, for now at least, the imbrication of exploitation and legal exclusion of refugees shaped a chronic and durable temporal condition that went beyond crisis experienced by most (non-Syrian) citizens. Challenges to survival time occurred at the level of micro-interactions. By making an “effort” (Povinelli, 2012, p. 466) to spend time with each other against all odds, and thus living in *shared times*, Syrians maintained pockets of alternative countertemporalities against the state-imposed temporalities of survival time.

Moving into the social and affective dimensions of chronotopes of displacement, I addressed the question of *how temporal governance affects transnational family life and the social temporalities of refugees across borders* in Chapter 6. I described the different ways that refugees in Frankfurt and Istanbul navigated transnational family life and living in spatial separation across Germany-Turkey, and the temporal characteristics of this separation. For some, spatial separation was experienced as painful if it was accompanied by temporal separation: they wanted to live in physical proximity with family members, based on memories and past experiences, but *could not* in the foreseeable future. This was due to temporal borders like temporary legal status and age of maturity which restricted rights to reunify. Thus, separation was not *temporary* but *temporal*, in a sense of producing ongoing asynchronicity of social futures. For others, spatial separation was navigated more easily, through ongoing virtual and digital contact, and the possibility of future visits. Some interlocutors felt that it was not spatial separation but rather the compulsion to stay with family that

prevented them from working on their futures. In these chronotopes of separation, immobilising practices by state laws, institutions, and other people, shaped experiences in the present and also social understandings and practices of the future.

Throughout Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I emphasised how legal, economic and political frameworks imposed dominant state temporalities on refugees, while showing how refugees navigated and negotiated this imposition through their social relations. In chapter 7 I looked at the micro-temporal social interactions in which times become shared, focusing on the negotiation of local social ties in temporary shelters in Frankfurt, and neighbourhoods in Istanbul. Looking in-depth at the question of *how refugees negotiate social connections beyond family ties within and against the temporalities of the Germany-Turkey chronotope*, I have shown how the social relations of refugees with people who lived nearby were shaped by a simultaneity of local spatio-temporal factors, such as spatial proximity to other refugees and bureaucratic categorisations (in Frankfurt), and historical and contemporary processes of hierarchical in/exclusion and boundary-making (in Istanbul). Against these dividing forces, refugees actively sought out connection with others, based on shared experiences, affinity, and, crucially, sharing times. With this I mean a practice of imagining and working on common futures, whether these futures were short-term in fleeting moments of joy, or long-term social obligations in which friendship transcended into kinship, and hospitality into neighbourhood.

Whether and how refugees were affectively able to cope with separation from loved ones and family members, or whether and how they built new connections and made new friends, was shaped by legal, social and economic conditions, by their

past experiences and future expectations of family and social life, and by the degree that they felt in control over how they could spend their own time. I argue that the emotional need for social connections could not exclusively be satisfied by the nuclear family but also involved parents, siblings, friends, or a sense of being part of a social collective such as the “neighbourhood”. While refugees are often portrayed through the lens of their individual experiences, their present experiences in the locality, either Turkey or Germany, was shaped by past, present and future social relations, and the possibility to share times with others as collectives.

8.2 Contribution to the literature

8.2.1 Empirical contribution

This thesis contributes to the empirical literature on temporalities of migration and displacement, and on refugee social relations, through an in-depth exploration of how refugees in Germany and Turkey navigated temporal governance, as individual and as members of families and social networks. I make three substantive empirical contributions, focusing on displacement as an existential *and social* experience of time, the workings of temporal governance across transnational fields, and the *politics* of refugee governance through the negotiation of state temporalities within refugee social networks.

First, I contribute to the literature on time and migration by focusing on refugee temporalities as socially and relationally produced instead of through their individual existential temporal experiences. I thus connect the emerging literature on temporalities of transnational migrant families (Robertson, 2015; Acedera and Yeoh, 2019; Baas and Yeoh, 2019; Yeoh *et al.*, 2023) with budding interest into temporalities of refugees’ social relations (Ramsay, 2017; Drangslund, 2020b; Sakti

and Amrith, 2022). I build upon but move beyond descriptions of refugee experiences of displacement as constituted by “waiting” (Brun, 2015; Rotter, 2016; Haas, 2017; Achtnich, 2022) or “protracted uncertainty” (Horst and Grabska, 2015). Focusing on waiting and uncertainty as individual experiences risks relegating refugees to times outside the political and economic conditions that produce them, and thus inadvertently reproduces their temporal “othering” and exclusion (Fabian, 1983; Chakrabarty, 2000; Povinelli, 2011; Ramsay, 2020b; Sakti and Amrith, 2022). The futures of most of my interlocutors were indeed uncertain, and most were waiting for material and symbolic resources, such as for legalisation or permanent status, or to move elsewhere, across borders or within the same city. Yet, whether and how presents could be lived, and futures could be imagined with others, was more relevant for their experiences of time than uncertainty and waiting as such. I also contribute to literature that argues to consider social connections of refugees beyond the nuclear family of a heterosexual couple with minor children, including extended family members like parents, adult siblings and adult children (Welfens and Bonjour, 2021; Alkan, 2022; Tiilikainen *et al.*, 2023). Paying closer attention to the meanings and practices of non-family ties, such as friends, acquaintances and neighbours, also aids understanding displacement as a broader social condition beyond simple binaries of state vs family.

Second, I provide an empirical case study of the social effects of time as a migration governance and state bordering strategy. Building on the growing body of research on how migration and refugee governance are bordering practices of states that control migrants’ mobility and belonging through time (Cwerner, 2001; Tazzioli, 2018; Griffiths, 2021; Meier and Doná, 2021; Papoutsi, 2021), I show that temporal

governance produces temporal separation (Chapters 5 and 6) and temporal isolation (Chapter 7), which I understand as *existential* and *social* experiences of being separated from individual and collective pasts and futures. Middle Eastern refugees in Germany and Turkey would have liked to spend more time with, live in proximity to, and share futures with friends and family but were often prevented to do so by the interactions of legal, political and economic conditions of displacement. Thus, I contribute empirical evidence for Ramsay's (2020b, p. 4) argument that displacement is less about physical mobility and more about temporal dispossession, "to live with the sense of a dispossessed future". I argue that understanding displacement as dispossessed futures should not only be understood as individual futures, although individual dreams and hopes are important too, as I show in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The thesis demonstrates that refugees imagine and work on futures together with significant others, be they family, friends, or acquaintances, and for social collectives, whether neighbourhoods or nations (Chapter 7).

Third, I expand on the literature on migration governance in the EU, Turkey, and elsewhere that describes how temporal structures in asylum governance (Anderson, 2020; Drangslund, 2020a; Stronks, 2022; Şahin Mencütek *et al.*, 2023) and at borders (Andersson, 2014; Tazzioli, 2018) affect mobile persons through delays, arbitrariness and the production of uncertainty, but are also political sites of negotiation and contestation (McNevin, 2013, 2020; De Genova *et al.*, 2022). I argue that temporal refugee governance in "Germany-Turkey" is rooted in histories and contemporary practices of Empire, nation-building and migration (Chapter 4). Throughout the thesis I show how the temporality inherent in refugee governance, such as legal uncertainty in the Turkish temporary protection regulation and

diversions toward permanent residence in Germany, intersect with other temporal structures to produce socially and collectively experienced temporalities, such as with the temporalities of political economy in “survival time” (Chapter 5), broader temporal rules in nation state governance such as age of maturity to create “temporal separation” (Chapter 6), and local conditions of urban residence that shape “shared times” (Chapter 7). In doing so, I contribute to the literature that considers the relationship between temporality and displacement as a sites of contestation and politics, in which refugees actively resist or unintentionally endure state-imposed times and, in making different times for each other, produce new temporalities (Meier and Doná, 2021; Papoutsis, 2021).

8.2.2 Methodological contribution

Methodologically, I have built upon existing research that studies refugee governance through multi-sited ethnographic research (Marcus, 1995; see e.g. Ramsay, 2018). Drawing on a simultaneous connected case study (Mazzucato, 2009), I was able to experience both local and transnational relationships and tensions of interlocutors’ relationships in real space and real time. This transnational research approach shows that refugees’ lives, their practices of family and other social relations, and their individual and social experiences of time are not only shaped by immediate structures of temporal governance that affect them locally, like their own position in the asylum procedure or pathways towards legal status and legal membership. It is also shaped by refugee governance elsewhere (Shams, 2020), which affects refugees through the experiences of their family members and friends abroad. Thus, I contribute to methodological approaches that seek to avoid “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002), the assumption that

the nation-state is the most relevant unit of analysis and overlaps neatly with concepts of “society”.

Considering Germany and Turkey together with shared histories and presents, I show how the interaction of regulatory frameworks, their implementation, and other local frameworks and conditions, not only affect those refugees living within the state borders but also across borders through transnational networks (see e.g. Amelina and Faist, 2012; Amelina and Bause, 2020). This approach does not imply that nationstate frameworks are irrelevant to understanding refugee socialities, and it also goes beyond comparing refugee sociality in different state contexts along pre-defined criteria. Instead, I provide an inroad to understanding how and when specific state frameworks matter, as I have shown in Chapter 5, and when these are infused with other conditions, such as the historical development and interaction of refugee regimes within and beyond nation-states (Chapter 4), transnational connections (Chapter 6) or locality (Chapter 7). Understanding Germany-Turkey as a connected *chronotope of displacement* highlights in a novel way how the mechanisms and effects of refugee governance does not neatly map onto the territorialities of nation-states, how previous histories of displacement and migration, and their ambivalent integration in collective memories and selective forgetting, feed into contemporary refugee reception, and how these historical interactions and connections are mediated and reproduced within ongoing forms of displacement and in/exclusion.

8.2.3 *Theoretical contribution*

Previous literature has emphasised how states differentiate between mobile persons through speed of movement, thereby produce hierarchies between and within groups of migrants (Tazzioli, 2018; Griffiths, 2021), and how the production of

uncertainty is key to temporal governance and experiences of displacement (Griffiths, 2014, 2021; Biehl, 2015; Maas *et al.*, 2021). In my study, I argue that we can fruitfully understand the interplay between individual, social and state times in particular spatial localities through the lens of the “chronotope” (Bakhtin, 1981). In the various chronotopes of displacement that I described, refugees’ individual and biographical temporal experiences of displacement, such as working on their dreams (Chapter 5) or rebuilding themselves after past trauma (Chapter 7), were relationally or “dialogically” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 252) shaped by the temporal lives of others living nearby and faraway, whether family, friends, acquaintances, or neighbours. That is, individual temporal experiences were centrally shaped by *social temporalities* of displacement. Chronotopes of displacement were simultaneously temporal (“chronos”) and spatial (“topos”), rooted in particular localities (Appadurai, 1996, 2013; Schatzki, 2013), and had particular affective and emotional colourations, such as exhaustion (Chapter 5), sadness and pain (Chapter 6), or joy (Chapter 7). These relational, dialogical and shared temporalities were differentially experienced depending on the possibilities and opportunities for building and maintaining connections with other people, facilitated or hindered by temporal structures rooted in migration governance and bordering in Istanbul and Frankfurt. Temporal governance practices included the production of uncertainty through enforced temporariness, temporal dispossession, and temporal separation.

In using the notion of chronotope instead of other temporal concepts such as “timescales” (Robertson, 2015), “chronomobilities” (Robertson, 2021), “timescapes” (Adam, 2008), or “timespace” (Mavroudi, Page and Christou, 2017), I emphasise this inseparability, simultaneity, and relationality of individual times, social times, and

state times, in particular spaces. The concept of chronotope also usefully highlights how time is political and used by various social groups (families, neighbourhoods, nations) to include as well as exclude, based on narratives of shared histories, practices of sharing presents and imaginations of the future (see also Landau, 2021, for a similar use).

The key temporal mechanism that impacted the social lives of the interlocutors in my study, and running like a thread through all described chronotopes of displacement, was a struggle over social and collective future-making, a central concern in recent theoretical debates in the broader sociology of time (Mische, 2009, 2014; Tavory and Eliasoph, 2013; Bryant and Knight, 2019; Suckert, 2022; Bazzani, 2023). For my interlocutors, constructing futures was less about regaining a sense of *certainty* about the future, although they often faced existential uncertainty. More important was the affective sense that they could regain a sense of *temporal autonomy*, understood not (only) as work on individual biographies but as a social practice to autonomously shape and work on projects, narratives and relationships *with others*. Just like other humans, refugees in my study wanted to choose not only where and how, but also *with whom* they would live.

Legal frameworks of refugee governance, their bureaucratic implementation, and in interaction with capitalist relations, reconfigured refugees' previously expected futures, what Luhmann (1976, p. 131) termed "past futures". Past futures were social, in the sense that past expectations were based on wider social norms in the location of origin, family expectations, as well as struggles for individual projects and biographical narratives (Bourdieu, 2000; Tavory and Eliasoph, 2013). Refugees in Germany and Turkey were often forced to live in and focus on the present, as in the

condition of survival time, or in isolating temporary shelters. Their existential condition was not related to waiting for a specific future change, such as legal status, but they were denied futures of their own free choosing. Displacement is “not only the impermanence of place but the inability to project and envision the permanence of a future” (Ramsay, 2018, p. 18), that is, a condition in which a sense of “normal” temporality is disrupted. What my thesis shows is that interlocutors’ attempts to live in “normal” temporalities, and practice temporal autonomy, were not exclusively about seeking individual projects or “dreams”. What I have called “temporal dispossession” and “temporal separation” were the effects of state-imposed denial of social and collective futures. Conversely, “sharing times” was an ordinary, usually unintentional and agentic practice to reconstruct these social futures.

As such, the reconfiguration of past futures into present futures was a site of political struggle, of chronopolitics (Kirtsoglou and Simpson, 2021). States worked on refugee times with concrete social and material effects. Borders kept refugees in different locations and separated from their loved ones, not only in space but also in time. Temporal governance enacted power in which times for love and care were expropriated for both economic and political purposes. This temporal power was ambiguously and fragilely resisted through an insistence on feeling, sharing and caring. By making time for each other, working to be together in the future, or forging lasting connections, refugee interlocutors produced alternative “countertemporalities” against imposed state time (Meier and Doná, 2021, p. 55). Against enforced temporariness and temporal separation, they kept open the possibility to think and live “otherwise”, with care, mutual obligation and relational reciprocity (Povinelli, 2012).

8.3 Limitations

Several caveats are in order. First, I do not intend to imply that refugeehood is characterised by a homogenous temporality that is necessarily “out of time”. As my interlocutors have repeatedly made clear, their own personalities, personal histories and existential desires shaped whether and how they imagined and worked on collective futures. I also do not intend to imply that refugees are somehow essentially different from non-refugees. I have shown that legal, bureaucratic frameworks of asylum and reception *produce* particular hegemonic state temporalities and that these sometimes render refugees as living in “different times”. This process, however, is multidirectional, uneven, with uncertain outcomes, and not implied in a particular relationship of causality. “Refugees”, “states” and the temporal powers that are imbued in both are relational and multilayered constructs with nevertheless material, and often cruel, depressing or violent, realities. In Chapter 5, I explored whether “survival time”, and its associated temporality of controlling refugees’ individual and social futures, was a product of “refugee times” at all and argued that it crucially overlapped with class. I would have liked to explore this aspect further: whether and how chronotopes of displacement, as merging state temporalities, biographical and social times, were shared with other “non-refugees”, in particular other racialised and migrantised minorities.

Second, I do not intend to romanticise social collectives, whether as “communities” or “families”, as everlasting, unchanging and bounded social networks without conflict or complication. Indeed, as I described in Chapters 6 and 7, several individuals chose to distance themselves from the people around them, spend time alone, and work on individual projects and narratives over the production of social

and shared times. Nevertheless, I argue that withdrawal should be *chosen*, not imposed. If refugees were forced to isolate themselves from others, and thus from collective imaginations and visions for the future wherever and with whomever, this was an act of power, force and violence. From the perspective of social network literature, isolation removes refugees from an instrumental social safety net (Menjívar, 2000), and affects refugees' mental health (Strang and Quinn, 2021). I argue that spatial and *temporal* isolation had detrimental effects on affective wellbeing. This implies that, while the future is always uncertain, a certain degree of predictability helped refugees build and maintain social connections whether with family members, friends, or neighbours.

Finally, the chronotopes of displacement that I have described were spatially and temporally contingent and specific; they were a snapshot of what I have seen during my study. Social relations, and their meanings, can and do change, especially as the living conditions of people change. I do not make claims to generalise the spatio-temporal features that I describe across time and space. Rather, I sought to highlight how careful attention to the social lives of refugees can illuminate questions of what displacement and settlement may mean today. As such, I suggest that refugees experience *ongoing displacement* because they are separated from other humans through time.

8.4 Future avenues of research

Future research on displacement, sociality and time could build upon this thesis in various methodological, empirical and theoretical ways. Methodologically, studies of displacement should adopt a more coeval and connected approach, and understand refugee experiences, and the effects of refugee governance, as

embedded in transnational social fields simultaneously constituted by “origin”, “transit” and “settlement”, and multiple actors, institutions and practices in various connected localities. This would bring fresh insights into how refugees make, use and remake networks, and how they reshape the social conditions of the locations that they reside in.

Empirical research in refugee studies and the geography of borders should pay closer attention to how asylum governance and state bordering practices have effects on the social relations and networks of refugees, asylum seekers and irregularised migrants. Refugees should be considered as members of families, and social groups and networks beyond the nuclear family to understand how refugees’ social worlds are shaped by displacement, and how refugees shape the social worlds that they embed in. Further research should also consider more explicitly how gender relations and age, as lived in individual times, constructed in shared times, and shaping temporal norms, structure how social temporalities of displacement are negotiated. It would be extremely pertinent to investigate which legal frameworks, forms of governance, and political-economic conditions enable refugees to experience futural *certainty*, and work on autonomous futures in relation to others.

Research should explore further how temporality *makes* displacement, by analysing how state bordering and governance practices use time to define and categorise migrants, and practices of temporal power differ from racialised and marginalised citizens. This would further our understanding into how temporal governance makes or *unmakes* difference and social boundaries. Research could also analyse how collective memorialisation or silencing of past and “overlapping displacement” (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016) across the Euro-Mediterranean shape

refugee reception, and conceptions of citizenship and membership today, especially with regards to historical continuities and discontinuities of Kurdish and Turkish displacement across Syria, Turkey and Europe.

The notion of “chronotopes of displacement” can initiate a conversation between the sociology of forced migration and sociologies of time to explore how time is invested in the legal frameworks, historical conjunctures and various localities that refugees and other displaced persons negotiate and embed themselves. This would help understand better how refugees’ pasts and imagined futures, individually and as members of social groups with collective memories and shared experiences, relate to the pasts and futures of receiving societies and localities of residence, which opens fruitful avenues to explore larger questions of membership, belonging, nationhood and how states and societies make themselves: How do individual memories and imaginations relate to how small groups like families constitute themselves? How do biographical and social times of refugees’ and migrants’ networks relate to national narratives of inclusion and exclusion, or global narratives of modernity and backwardness? How do narratives of social pasts and futures shape where, how and when “protracted displacement” or “integration” take place, especially within transnational social fields with overlapping histories of migration and displacement? Studies should explore these questions to advance a critical understanding how time is used as a tool of power that makes as well as unmakes social hierarchies, in/exclusion, and social boundaries, especially in the contemporary re-legitimisation of ethno-national and exclusionary conceptions of statehood.

Time is social. We spend most of our lives hanging out with others, laughing, dreaming, arguing, avoiding, and making up with each other – and most of us suffer

when alone for an extended period. Time is also political. Who has time, whose time is valued and which pasts and futures count, are matters of intense political negotiation. Considering contemporary displacement across Germany and Turkey through the social and political lens of time enables us not only to understand the experiences of refugees but also gives fresh insights into the machinations of power, borders, and exclusion.

9 POSTSCRIPT ON THESIS TIMES: WHEN DOES RESEARCH STOP?

Time shapes writing a thesis on time. My fieldwork in mid-2021 was conducted at a *specific moment in time* with unique temporal and affective characteristics. The world was slowly emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. In Germany, the sense of slowness, enclosure, and existential separation from others shaped with whom I was able to connect to and how. In Turkey, fieldwork was affectively charged by frenzy, rush and stress, with the financial and economic crisis, double and triple figure inflation (a chronic condition since), the crash of the Turkish Lira on many person's minds and hearts. When we write about interlocutors and their stories, we capture and fix some of these *moments* and *periods* in time. Interlocutors' *lives* are usually assumed to extend beyond them.

Sometimes they do not. As I wrote my chapters, quoting interlocutors and friends, an earthquake shook the Southeast of Turkey on the 6th of February 2023. Buildings did not withhold the tremors, following years of corruption and mismanagement in the construction sector. Entire neighbourhoods were wiped off the map. Istanbul was not itself affected, although tremors were felt there too. However, several of my interlocutors had returned to their families in the Turkish Southeast in the year after my fieldwork. They had preferred living close to their relatives over unsuccessful attempts to eke out a living in the metropolis. I wrote to interlocutors with whom I was still in contact. Most close friends in the region were safe, although displaced from their homes, sometimes for the second, third or fourth time in their lives. To some I could not get through at first. Majed replied several weeks later, with a picture of himself in hospital, his head covered in gauze. The building where he had been

staying with his parents had collapsed. He just about managed to scramble out from under the rubble. His parents didn't make it. He had buried them the week before, in Turkey, not in Syria as they would have wished. Adam, who by that time had journeyed to Germany to apply for asylum, told me of the fate of his friend Ali. I had conducted an interview with Ali, a bearded, stocky, fun and caring man in his mid-20s (see Chapter 5); I had not followed up with him afterwards. Ali, Ali's wife, parents, and brothers – an entire family – had been buried under tons of concrete and steel. They could not be rescued. In Istanbul, Ali was suffering from being far away from his parents and wife. In Antakya, he had managed to be together with those he loved – into the beyond.

The social temporalities described in this thesis do not take this lost life into account. When I write about futures, I write about them as if they were possible and real. The chronotopes of displacement that I describe are specific spatio-temporal configurations of the period during which I did my research. They may be different in other periods of time; laws change, governments change, lives sometimes end.

When I write about Ali's desire to raise a family, I write about him as if he was still alive. I had previously considered writing Ali under a pseudonym, "Omar", just as I wrote about others using their chosen pseudonyms. This presumed protection seemed disrespectful to his memory. I would not have called Ali a friend – I had only met him once and he graciously and jokingly shared his concerns and experiences on a grey October day in Istanbul. He feels dearer now as there is no option of ever meeting him again. Futures do not usually happen as we wish them. In this mortal human life, futures sometimes do not happen at all.

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ANNEX 1: RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND INTERVIEWS

Refugees and “Locals”

All statuses refer to the time of interview and may have changed in the meantime.

Location	Interview category	Name	Gender	Age	Country of birth (ethnic, national and/or religious affiliation added where known)	Living with...	Legal status
Frankfurt	Refugee	Jane Doe	Female	30s	Saudi Arabia (Eritrean)	Husband and two children in temporary shelter	Toleration
	Refugee	Firat	Male	30s	Turkey (Kurdish)	Flatmates in private flatshare	Refugee/asylee
	Refugee	Saeed	Male	30s	Algeria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Wife and two children in temporary shelter	Toleration
	Refugee	Feiruss	Male	Late 40s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Wife and two children in temporary shelter	Asylum seeker
	Refugee	Rehab	Female	30s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Roommates in temporary shelter	Subsidiary protection
	Refugee	Darius	Male	20s	Iran (Afghan/Persian)	Flatmates in private flatshare	Asylum seeker
	Refugee	Rania	Female	40s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Husband and three children in temporary shelter	Resettled refugee
	Refugee	Ibrahim	Male	40s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Wife and three children in temporary shelter	Resettled refugee
	Refugee	Nadeen	Female	30s	Syria (Kurdish)	Husband and three children in temporary shelter	Refugee or subsidiary protection
	Refugee	Beheshta	Female	20s	Afghanistan	Roommates in temporary shelter	Refugee or subsidiary protection
	Refugee	Sepideh	Female	70s	Iran (Azeri Christian)	Roommates in temporary shelter	Asylum seeker, waiting for appeal to rejected asylum application
	Refugee	Madi	Male	30s	Syria (Kurdish)	Wife and child in private flat	Subsidiary protection
	Refugee	Ahmad	Male	30s	Afghanistan (Pashto)	Wife and two children in temporary shelter	Refugee
Frankfurt	Local	Essayas	Male	50s	Ethiopia		German citizen
	Local	Amama	Female	70s	Germany	Husband	German citizen
	Local	Ayat	Female	50s	Sudan	Flatmates in temporary shelter	German citizen

Location	Interview category	Name	Gender	Age	Country of birth (ethnic, national and/or religious affiliation added where known)	Living with...	Legal status
	Local	Bettina	Female	70s	Germany	Alone	German citizen
	Local	Madina	Female	20s	Germany (parents from Afghanistan)	Parents	German citizen
	Local	Dieter	Male	70s	Germany		German citizen
Istanbul	Refugee	Said	Male	20s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Flatmate and colleague	Temporary protection in different province, undocumented in Istanbul
	Refugee	Bashar	Male	30s	Syria (Arab/Alawi)	Flatmates in private flatshare	Undocumented
	Refugee	Loay	Male	20s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Friends (temporary flatshare) in private flat	Naturalised Turkish citizen
	Refugee	Ali	Male	20s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Friends (temporary flatshare) in private flat	Temporary protection
	Refugee	Adam	Male	20s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Friends (temporary flatshare) in private flat	Naturalised Turkish citizen
	Refugee	Walee	Male	20s	Syria (Turkmen)	Alone in private flat	Naturalised Turkish citizen
	Refugee	Mahmood	Male	20s	Syria (Kurdish)	Parents and siblings in private flat	Temporary protection
	Refugee	Zain	Male	20s	Syria (Kurdish)	Parents and siblings in private flat	Temporary protection
	Refugee	Tania	Female	30s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Mother in private flat	Naturalised Turkish citizen
	Refugee	Ameena	Female	50s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Husband and four children in private flat	Temporary protection
	Refugee	Judy	Female	30s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Parents in private flat	Naturalised Turkish citizen
	Refugee	Ghazal	Female	30s	Syria (Turkmen/Sunni Muslim)	Husband and three children in private flat	Naturalised Turkish citizen
	Refugee	Musa	Male	40s	Syria (Turkmen/Sunni Muslim)	Wife and three children in private flat	Naturalised Turkish citizen
	Refugee	Betul	Female	30s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Two children in private flat	Undocumented
	Refugee	Bastian	Male	20s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Parents and three siblings in private flat	Temporary protection
	Refugee	Christina	Female	20s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Sister	Temporary protection
	Refugee	Majed	Male	20s	Syria (Arab/Sunni Muslim)	Friends (temporary flatshare) in private flat	Naturalised Turkish citizen
Istanbul	Local	Hakan	Male	20s	Turkey (Kurdish)	Wife and child	Turkish citizen
	Local	Fatma	Female	40s	Turkey (Turkish)	Alone	Turkish citizen
	Local	Ayşe	Female	40s	Turkey (Turkish)	Husband	Turkish citizen
	Local	Piro	Male	20s	Turkey (Kurdish)	Parents and siblings	Turkish citizen
	Local	Ahmet Hoca	Male	30s	Turkey (Turkish)		Turkish citizen

Stakeholders

Location	Code	Position	Gender	Age
Frankfurt	GK01	Employee of Frankfurt municipality	F	50s
	GK02	Director of temporary shelter	F	30s
	GK03	Director of temporary shelter	M	50s
	GK04	Team leader in youth project	F	20s
	GK05	Head of Islamic association	M	50s
	GK06	Social workers in feminist association (joint interview)	F	40s
	GK07	Social worker in temporary shelter	F	30s
	GK08	Social worker in temporary shelter	M	30s
	GK09	Head of a refugee rights organisation	M	40s
	GK10	Manager/Head of integration and migration department in a welfare organisation	M	50s
Istanbul	TK01	Employee of international development institution	F	30s
	TK02	Volunteers in a human rights association	F + M	50s and 30s
	TK03	Head of Syrian refugee association	M	40s
	TK04	Employee in non-governmental organisation working on refugee protection	F	30s
	TK05	Head of Syrian refugee association	M	50s
	TK06	Volunteer in neighbourhood solidarity association	M	30s
	TK07	Employee of a municipality in Istanbul	F	30s
	TK08	Employee of a municipality in Istanbul	M	50s
	TK09	Employee of municipality in Istanbul	M	50s
	TK10	Employee of municipality association	F	50s
	TK11	Employee in non-governmental organisation working on social cohesion	M	20s

ANNEX 2: LEGAL DOCUMENTS AND REFORMS

Turkey

Yabancılar ve uluslararası koruma kanunu [Law on foreigners and international protection] (2013) *Resmî Gazete* 28615, Kanun Numarası [Law no.] 6458, 10 April 2013. Available at: <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gigm-mevzuati> (Accessed: 14 November 2023).

Geçici Koruma Yönetmeliği [Temporary Protection Regulation] (2014) *Resmî Gazete* 29153, Kanun Numarası [Law no.] 6883, 22 October 2014. Available at: <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/21.5.20146883.pdf> (Accessed: 7 April 2023).

Türk vatandaşlık yasası [Turkish Nationality Law] (2009) *Resmî Gazete* 27256, Kanun Numarası [Law no.] 5901. 12 June 2009. Available at: <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuatmetin/1.5.5901.pdf> (Accessed: 22 November 2023)

European Union

Council Directive 2001/55/EC on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof [Temporary Protection Directive]. (2001) *Official Journal* L 212, 7.8.2001, p. 12–23. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:32001L0055>. (Accessed: 23 November 2023)

Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast) [Dublin III Regulation] (2013) *Official Journal* L 180, 29 June 2013, p. 31. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02013R0604-20130629>. (Accessed: 23 November 2023)

Germany

Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland [Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany] (1949) Published in *BGBI*. S. 1 on 23/05/1949; Last updated in *BGBI*. I

S. 2478 on 19/12/2022 with. Available at: <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/BJNR000010949.html> (Accessed: 14 November 2023).

Asylgesetz [Asylum Act] (2008) Published in *BGBl. I* S. 1798 on 02/09/2008. Last updated with Gesetz zur Beschleunigung der Asylgerichtsverfahren und Asylverfahren on 21.12.2022 (*BGBl. I* S. 2817). Available at: <https://dejure.org/gesetze/AsylG> (Accessed: 23 November 2023)

Aufenthaltsgesetz [Residence Act]/ Gesetz über den Aufenthalt, die Erwerbstätigkeit und die Integration von Ausländern im Bundesgebiet (2008) Published in *BGBl. I* S. 162 on 25/02/2008. Last updated on 08/10/2023, *BGBl. I* S. 271. Available at: <https://dejure.org/gesetze/AufenthG> (Accessed: 14 November 2023)

Relevant legal reforms to the Asylum and Residence Acts of Germany

Date	Law	Changes to	Published in
21.12.2022	<i>Gesetz zur Einführung eines Chancen-Aufenthaltsrechts</i> [Act on the introduction of chance residence permit]	Residence Act, Asylum Act	<i>BGBl. I</i> Nr. 57 S. 2847
21.12.2022	<i>Gesetz zur Beschleunigung der Asylgerichtsverfahren und Asylverfahren</i> [Act on the acceleration of asylum court proceedings and asylum procedures]	Asylum Act, Residence Act	<i>BGBl. I</i> Nr. 56 S. 2817
03.12.2020	<i>Gesetz zur Verschiebung des Zensus in das Jahr 2022 und zur Änderung des Aufenthaltsgesetzes</i> [Act to postpone the census until 2022 and to amend the Residence Act]	Residence Act	<i>BGBl. I</i> Nr. 59 S. 2020
15.08.2019	<i>Drittes Gesetz zur Änderung des Asylbewerberleistungsgesetzes</i> [Third act to amend the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act]	Regulations on benefits for asylum seekers	<i>BGBl. I</i> Nr. 31 S. 1290
15.08.2019	<i>Zweites Gesetz zur besseren Durchsetzung der Ausreisepflicht</i> [Second act to improve the enforcement of the obligation to leave the country]	Residence Act	<i>BGBl. I</i> Nr. 31 S. 1294
15.08.2019	<i>Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz</i> [Skilled Immigration Act]	Residence Act	<i>BGBl. I</i> Nr. 31 S. 1307
04.08.2019	<i>Zweites Gesetz zur Verbesserung der Registrierung und des Datenaustausches zu aufenthalts- und asylrechtlichen Zwecken (Zweites Datenaustauschverbesserungsgesetz – 2. DAVG)</i> [Second Act to improve registration and data exchange for purposes of residence and asylum law (Second Data Exchange Improvement Act - 2nd DAVG)]	Regulation on registration procedures for asylum seekers	<i>BGBl. I</i> Nr. 29 S. 1131
08.07.2019	<i>Gesetz über Duldung bei Ausbildung und Beschäftigung</i> [Act on “tolerated stay” during training and employment]	Residence Act	<i>BGBl. I</i> Nr. 26 S. 1021
04.12.2018	<i>Drittes Gesetz zur Änderung des Asylgesetzes</i> [Third Act amending the Asylum Act]	Asylum Act	<i>BGBl. I</i> , Nr. 43 S. 2250
29.07.2017	<i>Gesetz zur besseren Durchsetzung der Ausreisepflicht</i> [Act to improve the enforcement of the obligation to leave the country]	Residence Act	<i>BGBl. I</i> , Nr. 52 S. 2780
06.08.2016	<i>Integrationsgesetz</i> [Integration Act]	Residence Act	<i>BGBl. I</i> Nr. 39 S. 1939
11.03.2016	<i>Gesetz zur Einführung beschleunigter Asylverfahren</i> [Act on the introduction of accelerated asylum procedures]	Asylum Act	<i>BGBl. I</i> Nr. 12 S. 390
11.03.2016	<i>Gesetz zur erleichterten Ausweisung von straffälligen Ausländern und zum erweiterten Ausschluss der Flüchtlingsanerkennung bei straffälligen Asylbewerbern</i>	Residence Act, Asylum Act	<i>BGBl. I</i> Nr. 12 S. 394

	[Act to facilitate the expulsion of foreigners with criminal convictions and to extend the exclusion of refugee recognition for asylum seekers with criminal convictions]		
02.02.2016	<i>Gesetz zur Verbesserung der Registrierung und des Datenaustausches zu aufenthalts- und asylrechtlichen Zwecken (Datenaustauschverbesserungsgesetz)</i> [Act to improve registration and data exchange for the purposes of residence and asylum law (Data Exchange Improvement Act)]	Asylum Act	BGBl. I Nr. 5 S. 130
20.10.2015	<i>Asylverfahrensbeschleunigungsgesetz</i> [Asylum Procedure Acceleration Act]	Asylum Act, Residence Act	BGBl. I Nr. 40 S. 1722
01.08.2015	<i>Gesetz zur Neubestimmung des Bleiberechts und der Aufenthaltsbeendigung</i> [Act on the redefinition of the right to stay and termination of residence]	Asylum Act, Residence Act	BGBl. I Nr. 32 S. 1386
23.12.2014	<i>Gesetz zur Verbesserung der Rechtsstellung von asylsuchenden und geduldeten Ausländern</i> [Act to improve the legal status of asylum-seeking and tolerated foreigners]	Asylum Act, Residence Act	BGBl. I Nr. 64 S. 2439
30.07.2004	<i>Gesetz zur Steuerung und Begrenzung der Zuwanderung und zur Regelung des Aufenthalts und der Integration von Unionsbürgern und Ausländern (Zuwanderungsgesetz)</i> [Act to control and limit immigration and to regulate the residence and integration of EU citizens and foreigners (Immigration Act)]	Asylum Act, Residence Act	BGBl. I Nr. 41 S. 1950