GEOGRAPHIES OF RENEWAL

The term "Heimat," referring to a local sense of home and belonging, has been the subject of much scholarly and popular debate following the fall of the Third Reich. Countering the persistent myth that Heimat was a taboo and unusable term immediately after 1945, *Geographies of Renewal* uncovers overlooked efforts in the aftermath of the Second World War to conceive of Heimat in more democratic, inclusive, and pro-European modes. It revises persistent misconceptions of Heimat as either tainted or as a largely reactionary idea, revealing some surprisingly early identifications between home and democracy. Jeremy DeWaal further traces the history of efforts to eliminate the concept, which first emerged during the Cold War crisis of the early 1960s, and reassesses why so many on the political left sought to re-engage with Heimat in the 1970s and 1980s. This revisionist history intervenes in larger contemporary debates, asking compelling questions surrounding the role of the local in democracy, the value of community, and the politics of place attachments.

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GEOGRAPHIES OF RENEWAL

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Abbreviations

BdV	–	Bund der Vertriebenen (Federation of the Expellees)
BvD	–	Bund der vertriebenen Deutschen (Federation of Expelled Germans)
CDU	–	Christian Democratic Union
DP	–	Deutsche Partei (German Party)
FAZ	–	Frankfurt Allgemeine Zeitung
FDP	–	Free Democratic Party
GDR	–	German Democratic Republic
NPD	–	Nationale Partei Deutschland (National Party of Germany)
SPD	–	Sozialistische Partei Deutschland (Socialist Party of Germany)
WDR	–	Westdeutscher Rundfunk

Preface

Over the past decade, Germany has witnessed what several commentators have referred to as a "boom" in popular discourses about *Heimat*. The term "Heimat" – well-known to scholars of German Studies – refers to a sense of home and belonging in local and regional places. It is sometimes described as a local experienced space, near space, personal geography, or a symbolic relationship to a place in which social networks are situated. Heimat represents an emotional attachment to such places of home as sites of community, belonging, orientation, and life memory. Since 2015, "Heimat" has been the theme of numerous popular magazines, television documentaries, radio programmes, special museum exhibitions, theatre pieces, newspaper articles, and popular non-fiction works.[1] Few of these works have failed to note the intensification of popular discourse on Heimat over the past few years. This growing interest in local geographies of home, moreover, is hardly limited to Germany. A range of international and interdisciplinary scholars have similarly noted a growing "discursive vitality" around the concept of "home" and proliferating interest in the phenomenon of place attachment which have resulted from popular experiences of precarity, fluidity, mobility, and globalization.[2]

While popular publications in Germany often juxtapose the present Heimat boom against an earlier disinterest in the subject, interest in Heimat was already relatively high in the preceding decades. The forces which have historically generated interest in Heimat are as diverse as the factors which influence, challenge, or disrupt individual relationships to local places of home. Expulsion, internal migration, immigration,

[1] See Epilogue.
[2] Sanja Bahun and Bojana Petric, "Homing in on Home," in *Thinking Home: Interdisciplinary Dialogues*, eds., Sanja Bahun and Bojana Petric (London, 2018), 1–13; Maria Lewicka, "Place Attachment: How Far Have We Come in the Last 40 Years?," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 31 (2011): 207–230; Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford, "Defining Place Attachment," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30 (2010): 1–10.

economic compulsion to be mobile, environmental destruction, feelings of lost community, and local exclusion from decision-making processes are among the many forces which have triggered popular discussion of Heimat throughout modern German history. In the most recent debates, one of the most contentious questions has centred around how Heimat relates to politics. Much of this debate has taken place against the backdrop of the concept's abuse by the far-right groups who have identified it with the nation at large and depicted it as threatened by immigration. A growing number of activists and politicians on the political left have responded by calling for greater engagement with Heimat and popular desires for home to challenge their political abuse. Others, however, have rejected such calls, arguing that Heimat and desires for home are – and seemingly always have been – exclusionary, reactionary, and anti-democratic. The appropriate strategy, they have argued, is not engagement with Heimat but rather its rejection and transcendence.[3]

Assumptions about the longer history of the concept have played a central role in these debates and reveal the persistence of popular misconceptions. These range from arguments that engagement with Heimat has always been the prerogative of the political right, that attempts to forge more democratic or inclusive ways of thinking about Heimat would be radically new, or that earlier ideas of Heimat were always about an immobile society's passive celebration of stasis. Perhaps the most ingrained misconception, which both popular and academic works continue to assert without offering evidence or examples, is that the Heimat concept immediately after 1945 was tainted, a "*verbum non gratum,*" a "taboo word," and an "unusable term."[4] As one academic historian recently argued in a popular interview, the concept allegedly "had no place in the early

[3] On these debates, see Epilogue.

[4] For only a few examples, see Rainer Gross, *Heimat-Gemischte Gefühle* (Göttingen, 2019), 19, 54; Christian Schüle, *Heimat. Ein Phantomschmerz* (Munich, 2017), 13; Renate Zöller, *Heimat. Annäherung an ein Gefühl* (Bonn, 2015), 21; "Was ist Heimat?," *Der Spiegel*, April 7, 2012, 5; Beate Herget and Berit Pleitner, "Heimat im Museum?," in *Heimat im Museum?*, eds., Beate Herget and Berit Pleitner (Munich, 2008), 16; Jens Korfkamp, *Die Erfindung der Heimat. zu Geschichte, Gegenwart und politischen Implikaten einer gesellschaftlichen Konstruktion* (Berlin, 2006); "Heimat. Warum der Mensch sie wieder braucht," *GEO* 10 (2005): 3; Martin Hecht, *Das Verschwinden der Heimat* (Leipzig, 2000), 14–15; Thomas Schmidt, *Heimat. Leichtigkeit und Last des Herkommens* (Berlin, 1999), 17; Christopher Wickham, *Constructing Heimat in Postwar Germany: Longing and Belonging* (Lampeter, 1999), 7; Wolfgang Lipp, "Heimatbewegung, Regionalismus," in *Heimat. Analysen, Themen, Perspektiven*, vol. 1, eds., Willi Cremer and Ansgar Klein (Bielefeld, 1990), 135–154; Helfried Seliger, "Vorwort," in *Der Begriff "Heimat" in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur*, ed., Helfried Seliger (Munich, 1987), 7; Eduard Führ, "Heimat-süße Heimat," in *Worin noch Niemand war: Heimat*, ed., Eduard Führ (Wiesbaden, 1985), 185; Rainer Jooß, "Heimat Geschichte," in *Heimat Heute*, ed., Hans-Georg Wehling (Stuttgart, 1984), 60.

Federal Republic."[5] For those who have not fallen into this misconception, Heimat in the post-war years is often viewed through the lens of bucolic ruralist films of the 1950s or nationalist politics of the German expellee societies. It is often assumed to have been, at best, an escapist retreat into green cinematic landscapes and at worst a fundamentally anti-western, anti-democratic, and exclusionary idea.

This book probes the history of ideas of Heimat in West Germany from the end of the Second World War to national reunification. It challenges frequent preconceptions about Heimat in the period and traces the efforts of democratically minded groups to conceive of the concept in ways that were potentially more democratic, inclusive, and post-nationalist. Conservative, nationalist, and exclusionary strains of thinking about the concept had not disappeared. They were not, however, the only ways of thinking about Heimat.

From the very beginning of my research, it was clear that Heimat was anything but tainted in the aftermath. In poring over tens of thousands of pages of early post-war discourses on Heimat from a range of genres, authors, and places, one finds not only numerous references to Heimat feeling having reached fresh heights, but also virtually no reference to it as tainted. Instead, writings on Heimat were filled with deeply personal and emotional reflections on shattered lives, destroyed hometowns, dislocation, and deep uncertainty about the future. Such sources often combined reflection on loss with visions of Heimat as a site of new lives.

In the early stages of my research, it also quickly became apparent how much discourses on Heimat in the period were filled with discussions about democracy. Looking at different local and regional examples also revealed another surprising trend. Fairly soon after the war, groups of more democratically minded localists in different towns and cities simultaneously began to argue for "democracy" as a tenet of local identity. Heimat, many argued, was a force that could promote European unification and federalist decentralization, while reining in the excesses of nationalism. Democratically minded localists also emphasized the importance of the local as a site of political participation. Such locally rooted identifications with democracy emerged surprisingly early, though

[5] Klaus Ries interview in Renate Zöller, *Was ist eigentlich Heimat? Annäherung an ein Gefühl* (Berlin, 2015), 22. On post-war Heimat as limited to the "content free" world of cinema, see Klaus Ries, Edoardo Costadura, and Christiane Wiesenfeldt, "Einleitung," in *Heimat Global*, eds., Klaus Ries et al. (Bielefeld, 2019), 14.

they were often vague and existed alongside a host of shortcomings. The search for democracy was nothing if not a long and open-ended process.

In aggregate, the history of thinking about Heimat in the Federal Republic speaks to both present-day German debates about Heimat and broader contemporary questions about local place attachments and their intersection with diverse political, social, and cultural issues. West Germans who thought about Heimat confronted a range of questions which continue to be asked in contemporary Europe and beyond. What role, for example, should the local play in modern democracy? Should cities be built to foster a sense of home and local community or to promote greater mobility? Should economic demands to be uprootable be celebrated as a means of maximizing efficiency or moderated to secure an individual's right to stay home and keep meaningful relationships intact? How, moreover, should one engage with popular desires for local places of home in reaction to globalization, social isolation, or community fragmentation? Can local and regional identities be shaped in ways that promote more inclusion or does inclusion require transcending them? Hovering above many of these issues is the question of whether popular desires for home and secure local place attachments should be discouraged as the basis of a problematic spatial worldview or engaged with to channel them in more democratic and inclusive directions.

The breadth of this project has left many people to be thanked at the various stations of its development. At Vanderbilt University, where I began this project, I would like to thank Helmut Walser Smith for his support, advice, and careful readings of multiple drafts. I have benefitted greatly from his openness and the breadth of his knowledge. Thanks are also due to Celia Applegate, whose move to Vanderbilt during my final two years there proved most serendipitous, allowing me to benefit from her knowledge of the history of regionalism. For extending their helpful advice and reviewing chapter drafts, I would like to thank James McFarland, Michael Bess, Meike Werner, and Sarah Igo. In Cologne, where I spent a year as a DAAD Fellow, I would like to thank Hans-Peter Ullmann and the attendees at the ZEUS Postdoc-Platform at the University of Cologne. In Berlin, I would like to thank Paul Nolte and participants of the Berlin Programme with whom I enjoyed working as a Berlin Programme Fellow and later as an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow.

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Working on Heimat amidst the academic nomadism often expected of the early career humanities scholar has proven particularly enlightening. With seven transatlantic moves over a decade – in addition to two relocations within Germany and now one cross-channel move – maintaining even a partial sense of "Heimat" would not have been possible without faithful friends. In Cologne, I would like to thank my circle of friends in the LGBT community amongst whom I first encountered the idea of "Kölner Toleranz," enjoyed Carnival celebrations, and experienced the local landscape. I thank Harald Schraeder for our frequent discussions and annual summer bike trips through different regions. In Nashville, I have had a loyal friend in Amanda Johnson, who has never let contact slip. I also owe tremendous gratitude to my family in Salt Lake City, who, despite our philosophical differences, have remained a source of support. In Erlangen, I would like to thank Peter Mauritz for being a great and supportive colleague. In the UK, I would like to thank Martha Vandrei, who has been a great help in getting settled in at the University of Exeter. In Berlin, thanks are also due to my circle of friends at my "Stammcafé," Romeo und Romeo, who were often amused to find me mumbling passages under my breath as I revised my manuscript. Finally, in Berlin, I would like to thank both Simon for his friendship and constant company and Alexandre for the warmth of his affection. Without both of them, I could not imagine a place feeling like home.

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