Helping Refugees Build a Home – Interactions between Muslim Chaplains and Vulnerable Persons

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This study focuses on the question of how Muslim chaplains can, through their interventions, exert an influence on the situation of refugees, characterised by vulnerability and loss of home. Based on definitions in social work and anthropology studies, home can be conceptualised as a key anthropological need, comprised of spatial, temporal, relational and spiritual dimensions. Referring to an empirical study on asylum chaplaincy in Switzerland, this study analyses how five Muslim chaplains accompany refugees, how their styles of chaplaincy differ in practice and what effects their interventions have. These empirical results are then brought into conversation with a theoretical framework, to explore the connections between counselling and vulnerability. While it could be argued that referring to the vulnerable situation of refugees reinforces an image of passivity, the co-construction of a home represents a collaborative effort and empowers refugees by mobilising both forces and resources. Chaplains, in particular, can contribute to the relational and spiritual dimensions of home. For refugees, articulating their religious concerns and working together with Muslim chaplains, means they can address the limits of the existing asylum system and demand recognition of cultural diversity.

Introduction

Refugees, who often experience high situational vulnerability, due to the loss of their home, their forced flight, distress, violence, persecution and unclear legal status while awaiting an asylum decision, form a target groups addressed by chaplains. Refugee vulnerability is particularly evident in the transitional situation of host country asylum centres, due to the temporary nature of this 'home' and to the interpersonal relationships formed there. For this reason, it seems obvious to use asylum centres as a starting point for research on interactions between chaplains and refugees. In these centres, host countries usually provide psychosocial services to support refugees. Chaplaincy services are part of such support and countries generally offer them to refugees in response to specific needs[1].

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[1] Sarah L. Kimball, Haniya S. Syeda, Houda Chergui, Linda A. Piwowarczyk and Jennie Gould, 'Embedding Chaplaincy Services in Primary Care for Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers: A Boston Pilot Intervention', *Journal of Religion and Health* (2022), pp. 1-10.

Against the background of an empirical study conducted in Switzerland, the following considerations will focus on connections between vulnerability, home and spiritual care. The latter term is used for the wider disciplinary field, whereas its institutional implementation will be referred to as chaplaincy. This paper explores the following questions: what role does home play for refugees, as particularly vulnerable persons? How does interaction with a chaplain influence the situation of refugees? What insights concerning vulnerability result from this process?

The first section of this paper relates the notion of home to the vulnerability of refugees. The second section develops for dimensions of home which serve as a theoretical framework. The third section explores the supportive role chaplaincy can play in home-building, while the fourth section presents the empirical research context and the methodology used in the study. In the fifth section, we analyse how five Muslim chaplains accompany refugees, supported by interview material. The final section brings the empirical results into conversation with our theoretical starting points, to explore connections between counselling and vulnerability.

Home in Relation to the Vulnerability of Refugees

Vulnerability is a key concept when analysing the situation of refugees. It relates to the physical and mental situation of human beings and entails dependence on the care of others[2]. However, due to the broad spectrum of understandings of vulnerability, "this notion has often been discussed in relation to other key concepts"[3] like need, dependency, care or exploitation[4]. Here, it will be related to the concept of "home", as both home and vulnerability are relational, and can therefore complement one another. Many studies on refugees refer to Judith Butler in developing a relational understanding of vulnerability that goes beyond a deficient reading of refugees' vulnerability[5] and its instrumentalization as an "essential marker of asylum policy"[6]. In contrast, according to Butler, vulnerability can reflect a general human condition, focussing on "susceptibility to others that is unwilled, unchosen, that is a condition of our responsiveness to others"[7]. This sense underscores the agency refugees have, which is also relevant to homemaking[8].

Analysing "the nexus between home and vulnerability", Aurora Massa speaks of "home vulnerability"[9] related to different aspects of home. A study on refugees in asylum

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[2] Catriona Mackenzie, Wendy Rogers and Susan Dodds, 'What Is Vulnerability and Why Does It Matter for Moral Theory?', in *Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy*, edited by Catriona Meckenzie, Wendy Rogers and Susan Dodds (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1-29, at p. 4.

[3] Amalia Gilodi, Isabelle Albert and Birte Nienaber, 'Vulnerability in the Context of Migration: a Critical Overview and a New Conceptual Model', *Human Arenas* (2022), pp. 1-21, at p. 3.

[4] Mackenzie, Rogers and Dodds, 'What Is Vulnerability?', p. 1.

[5] Gilodi, Albert and Nienaber, 'Vulnerability in the Context of Migration', pp. 5-6 and 11-12.

[6] Kate Smith and Louise Waite, 'New and enduring narratives of vulnerability: rethinking stories about the figure of the refugee', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45:13 (2019), pp. 2289-2307, at p. 2303.

[7] Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 87-88.

[8] Anne Sigfrid Grønseth and Ragne Øwre Thorshaug, 'Struggling for home where home is not meant to be. A study of asylum seekers in reception centers in Norway', *Focaal—Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 92 (2022), pp. 15-30, at p. 17.

centres in Norway refers to "vulnerable home-making"[10], that is, that refugees can often only reach "a precarious stability and a sense of home in a context of ongoing crisis and vulnerability"[11]. A key requirement for a home is security, not least because refugees themselves, or their friends and family members in their countries of origin, can be particularly affected by threats of bodily harm[12]. Security represents a basic human need: in Maslow's pyramid of needs, which has been applied as a tool for refugee counselling[13], security needs take second place, after basic existential needs and before social needs[14]. According to Maslow, security includes physical and emotional safety, but also basic material security. The fulfilment of these basic needs contributes to human well-being[15]. Conversely, it is known that mental health problems in refugees can also arise as a result of their precarious living conditions in host countries[16].

On this basis, a home can be understood as "a construction – something that is complex, multiple and in continual process"[17]. It is characterised by integrity and security, thus comprising the different needs mentioned by Maslow: "Each person has an idea of home that merges place and personality, that goes beyond having four walls and a roof, and that indicates a positive feeling that derives from security, belonging, attachment or familiarity, among other things."[18] However, a home is not always a safe place and therefore always remains ambivalent, with possible positive and negative associations[19]. Beyond its material dimension, personal, emotional and value-oriented aspects are included in the notion of a home.

In the context of migration and flight, the home becomes simultaneously mobile and settled, localised and expandable[20]. In contrast to a planned migration, however, refugees find it much more difficult to navigate their new environment, as their situation is characterised by uncertainty and instability[21]. Differences between their societies of

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[10] Grønseth and Thorshaug, 'Struggling for home where home is not meant to be', p. 27.

[11] Massa, "'All we need is a home.'", p. 43.

[12] Lonn and Dantzler, 'A Practical Approach to Counseling Refugees', pp. 67-68.

[13] Marlise R. Lonn and Jamoki Z. Dantzler, 'A Practical Approach to Counseling Refugees: Applying Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs', *Journal of Counselor Practice* 8:2 (2017), pp. 61-82, at p. 62.

[14] Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), p. 39.

[15] John E. Annison, 'Towards a clearer understanding of the meaning of "home"', *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability* 25:4 (2000), pp. 251-262, at p. 259.

[16] Matthew Hodes, Melisa M. Vasquez, Dimitris Anagnostopoulos, Kalliopi Triantafyllou, Dalia Abdelhady, Karin Weiss, Roman Koposov, Fusun Cuhadaroglu, Johannes Hebebrand and Norbert Skokauskas, 'Refugees in Europe. National Overviews from Key Countries with a Special Focus on Child and Adolescent Mental Health', *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 27:4 (2018), pp. 389-399, at p. 19.

[17] Helen Taylor, *Refugees and the Meaning of Home: Cypriot Narratives of Loss, Longing and Daily Life in London* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 3.

[18] Boguisa Temple and Rhetta Moran, *Doing Research with Refugees: Issues and Guidelines* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2006), p. 76.

[19] Ulrika Börjesson and Åsa Söderqvist Forkby, 'The concept of home – unaccompanied youths voices and expe-riences', *European Journal of Social Work*, 23:3 (2020), pp. 475-485, at p. 483.

[20] David Ralph and Lynn A. Staehli, 'Home and Migration: Mobilities, Belongings and Identities', *Geography Compass* 5:7 (2011), pp. 517-530, at p. 525.

[21] Hanna Kienzler, Cameron Spence and Thomas Wenzel, 'A Culture-Sensitive and Person-Centred Approach: Understanding and Evaluating Cultural Factors, Social Background and History When Working with Refugees', in *An Uncertain Safety: Integrative Health Care for the 21st Century Refugees*, edited by Thomas Wenzel and Boris Drožđek (Cham: Springer, 2019), pp. 101-116, at pp. 101-102.

origin and highly differentiated and individualised Western societies constitute a supplementary challenge.

Four Dimensions of Home

Based on Taylor (2015)[22], one can distinguish between the spatial, temporal and relational dimensions of home. The material dimension linked to smell, taste, soil, plants, food etc.,[23] as developed by Taylor, will not be included here. Instead, the spatial, temporal and relational dimensions will be complemented by a fourth dimension, the spiritual, which is particularly relevant for the focus of this paper. All four dimensions can be directly related to the situation of refugees in asylum centres, which is the focus of this paper.

In a *spatial* sense, a home is a geographically located place. In asylum centres, refugees find themselves distanced from their original home and in a very particular situation: the living conditions in asylum centres are characterised by spatial confinement, as well as numerous tensions and conflicts in everyday coexistence. Access and distribution of space in the centre is controlled by its administration and management[24], so that refugees only have very limited possibilities to shape the space themselves.

In a *temporal* sense, nostalgia for and idealisation of the former home is evident[25]. Refugees live in a "liminal present"[26], being confronted with an uncertain future. Their hope is to regain a safe home, but it remains uncertain as to whether and where they will find a home, or if they will be able to return to their former home. Refugees therefore find themselves in a transitional situation, characterised on one hand by memories of their homeland, sudden departure and often long and confronting journey, and on the other, by expectations for the future, and by the very everyday experience of waiting in a relatively uneventful situation[27].

In a *relational* sense, beyond the spatial and temporal dimension, home "is constructed from the social interactions, relationships and family/social/economic networks that represent everyday life"[28]. Refugees are often missing family and friendship structures, even if they can sometimes keep contact through social media and other forms of communication. New relationships can be built with other refugees or even with asylum centre staff and caregivers. These relationships are asymmetrical however, due to the staff's specific professional role and limited presence in the centres[29]. In an asylum centre, refugees cannot choose with whom to live, so it can be considered an enforced proximity[30].

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[22] Taylor, *Refugees and the Meaning of Home.*

[23] Taylor, *Refugees and the Meaning of Home,* pp. 116-117.

[24] Melanie Hartmann, *Zwischen An- und Ent-Ordnung: Sammelunterkünfte für Geflüchtete als Räume des Politischen* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2020), pp. 264-267.

[25] Eugenia Arvanitis and Nicola Yelland, "Home Means Everything to Me …': A Study of Young Syrian Refu-gees' Narratives Constructing Home in Greece', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34:1 (2019), pp. 535-554, at p. 551.

[26] Arvanitis and Yelland, "Home Means Everything to Me …', p. 538.

[27] Natalie Powroznik, *Religion in Flüchtlingsunterkünften. Sozialanthropologische Perspektiven* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2020), p. 84.

[28] Arvanitis and Yelland, "Home Means Everything to Me …', p. 538.

[29] Hartmann, *Zwischen An- und Ent-Ordnung*, p. 226.

[30] Hartmann, *Zwischen An- und Ent-Ordnung*, p. 209.

In a *spiritual* sense, a key challenge for refugees in the host country turns out to be the "absence of […] externally-provided cultural and religious reference-points"[31]. There is a risk that the spiritual dimension is neglected when care is oriented towards the immediate satisfaction of refugee needs. Spirituality and religiosity can create a sense of belonging and a reference to an overarching meaning. Faith-communities and faith-practice can provide a "spiritual home" which "enables refugees to feel connected without cutting off with their deep bonds with their family and culture of origin"[32]. Narrations of refugees thus often contain ideas of home as a "spiritual place"[33]. This is especially the case for Muslim refugees' ideas of home and identity, which tend to be permeated by religion[34].

We have illustrated that new dynamics of home-construction can occur in all four dimensions for refugees. However, a tension remains: namely that, even though asylum accommodation can become a kind of home, it will never be the home that the refugees left behind[35]. Several empirical studies highlight the importance of the relational dimension for refugees. In a study on refugee minors in Norway, Archambault concludes that the feeling of 'being at home' has not only a spatial but a relational component, and that "[e]ven life in an asylum centre may be defined as 'good', relatively speaking, as long as it meets people's needs in terms of space and relations"[36]. A further study from Sweden highlights the need for unaccompanied refugee minors to build relationships as a counterbalance to experiences of exclusion[37]. Finally, a study on asylum seekers in Italy finds that respondents are most likely to develop a "place attachment" when they enjoy a sense of community[38]. This illustrates that the various dimensions of home are strongly interrelated. Home thus proves to be a very dynamic notion, fragile, but also malleable and variable, especially for refugees in their vulnerability.

Chaplains as a Co-Constructors of a Home for Refugees

Refugees are particularly dependent on orientation, due to their situation in an environment that is largely alien to them, and on supportive accompaniment, which can be provided with different foci by social workers, psychologists or chaplains. The role of chaplains can be precisely to address the various dimensions of home in a holistic sense.

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[31] Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Yousif M. Qasmiyeh, 'Muslim Asylum-Seekers and Refugees: Negotiating Iden-tity, Politics and Religion in the UK', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23:3 (2010), pp. 294-314, at p. 310.

[32] Hugo Kamya, 'Healing from Refugee Trauma. The Significance of Spiritual Beliefs, Faith Community, and Faith-Based Services'[2008], in *Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy*, edited by Froma Walsh (New York: Guildford Press, 2010), pp. 286-300, at p. 294.

[33] Roselinde den Boer, 'Liminal Space in Protracted Exile: The Meaning of Place in Congolese Refugees' Narra-tives of Home and Belonging in Kampala', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 28:4 (2015), pp. 487-504, at p. 500.

[34] Marwa Shoeb, Harvey M. Weinstein and Jodi Halpern, 'Living in Religious Time and Space: Iraqi Refugees in Dearborn, Michigan', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20:3 (2007), pp. 441-460, at p. 443.

[35] Sandra Dudley, 'Feeling at Home: Producing and Consuming Things in Karenni Refugee Camps on The Thai-Burma Border', *Population, Space and Place* 17:6 (2011), pp. 742-755, at p. 752.

[36] Josée Archambault, "It can be good there too': Home and continuity in refugee children's narratives of set-tlement', *Children's Geographies* 10:1 (2012), pp. 35-48, at p. 35.

[37] Börjesson and Söderqvist Forkby, 'The concept of home', p. 477.

[38] Caterina Nicolais *et al.*, 'At Home: Place Attachment and Identity in an Italian Refugee Sample', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18:16 (2021), pp. 1-18.

Due to the high diversity among refugee populations, a universalist model of spiritual care for all, independent of their faith and spirituality, reaches its limits. A "'one size fits all' approach to chaplaincy"[39] cannot respond sufficiently to specific requests of service-users. Empirical studies show that Muslims have "specific types of needs that would remain unaddressed by interfaith chaplaincy services"[40]. Conversely, religious, cultural and linguistic affinity between chaplains and refugees can provide supplementary resources. Several studies confirm that this kind of proximity could be helpful when providing care for refugees: a social anthropological study on refugees in asylum centres concludes that shared belonging can be beneficial because it connects and creates closeness in a foreign place[41] Through this closeness, caregivers can contribute to the refugees' "self-continuity"[42] between their past and present, which, according to numerous studies, is a relevant factor in the development of "place attachment" as a "multidimensional affective bond between people and places, involving a symbolic relationship with the place and the willingness to maintaining proximity with the place"[43]. In addition, through their empathy and closeness, chaplains can help refugees better process the tension between their current daily lives, their hopes and what they have left behind[44].

Although chaplains are only temporarily present in the asylum centre, they can nevertheless participate in the "co-construction of home"[45], both in terms of space and relationships, by conveying home linguistically, culturally and religiously. Precisely because the tension between past and future is unresolvable for the refugees in their current situation, chaplains can play a central role for asylum seekers by building a linguistic, cultural and religious bridge between the situation in the host country and their former home. They can foster interpersonal contacts, build relationships and bring people together through communication. Altogether, previous research confirms the hypothesis that Muslim chaplains' interventions are not only useful for refugee wellbeing but consequently also for peaceful coexistence in asylum centres and the wider society. Thus, the need to further explore how Muslim chaplaincy affects the vulnerability of refugees seems obvious.

Methodological Approach and Context of the Research

This paper is based on an empirical study on Muslim chaplaincy for refugees in Switzerland carried out in 2021. In the Swiss asylum system, refugees usually first stay in one of 20 federal asylum centres while going through the asylum procedure[46]. Since 2016,

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[39] Wahiba Abu-Ras and Lance Laird, 'How Muslim and Non-Muslim Chaplains Serve Muslim Patients? Does the Interfaith Chaplaincy Model have Room for Muslims' Experiences?', *Journal of Religion and Health* 50 (2011), pp. 46-61, at p. 55.

[40] Abu-Ras and Laird, 'How Muslim and Non-Muslim Chaplains Serve Muslim Patients?', p. 56.

[41] Powroznik, *Religion in Flüchtlingsunterkünften*, p. 237.

[42] Thomas Albers *et al.*, 'The Role of Place Attachment in Promoting Refugees' Well-Being and Resettlement: A Literature Review', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18 (2021), at p. 4.

[43] Albers *et al.*, 'The Role of Place Attachment in Promoting Refugees', p. 4.

[44] Börjesson and Söderqvist Forkby, 'The concept of home', p. 478.

[45] Börjesson and Söderqvist Forkby, 'The concept of home', p. 483.

[46] State Secretariat for Migration, *Asylum regions and federal asylum centres*, https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/asyl/asylverfahren/asylregionen-baz.html (2019) (accessed 2022-10-21).

Muslim chaplains have been assigned to one federal asylum centre in Zurich, in addition to the Christian chaplains already working there. At the beginning of 2021, the State Secretariat of Migration (SEM) decided to expand the deployment of Muslim chaplains to other federal asylum centres across the country. There were two principal motives for introducing Muslim chaplaincy: the *first* was the relatively high proportion of Muslims among refugees arriving recently in Switzerland, many of whom are from North Africa, the Middle East, Afghanistan and Eritrea. The idea was that Muslim chaplains would better understand these refugees and thus contribute to their well-being. All of the Muslim chaplains in the project have a migration background, some having come to Switzerland as refugees themselves. Therefore, they shared the experience of living in vulnerable situations with the refugees [47] and, as a result, could better understand their lives. The *second* motive was conflicts among young male refugees, and transgressions into criminality by some, which were related to the situation they were living in and the residents' unclear perspectives . This caused difficulties both in the asylum centres and the surrounding areas. Thus arose the wish that Muslim chaplains could build a bridge between the refugees and the host country and help to de-escalate conflicts. On the basis of many years of interreligious dialogue, the churches also encouraged introducing Muslim chaplaincy and acted as intermediaries, due to their long experience in collaborating with the State Secretariat of Migration.

Before introducing Muslim chaplaincy permanently, the State Secretariat of Migration commissioned an evaluation of this service in federal asylum centres[48]. Conceptually, an approach of "fourth generation evaluation"[49] was followed. Based on a constructivist model of cognition, this takes into account the needs and perspectives of all relevant stakeholders in the process of data collection. This approach allows the evaluation to first explore the diversity of stakeholder claims and perspectives. This can then be extended to stakeholder groups and to working towards a common understanding of the evaluand[50]. Usually, qualitative methods are employed, to explore stakeholders' constructions of meaning as deeply as possible[51]. In this sense, evaluators take an active role in helping stakeholders to engage with and understand each other's different perspectives[52].The role of the evaluators echoes that of learners, who actively contribute to shaping processes of understanding as "change agents"[53]. In this study, 30 guideline-based qualitative interviews[54] were conducted by a small research team directed by the author of this paper. The interviews were to explore how Muslim chaplains see their interventions (mainly but not exclusively addressed at Muslims) and how these affect refugees, both individually and in social interactions at their accommodation. These effects were examined through the perspectives of different stakeholders such as service recipients,

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[47] Mackenzie, Rogers and Dodds, 'What Is Vulnerability?', p. 15.

[48] Hansjörg Schmid, Amir Sheikzadegan and Aude Zurbuchen. *Muslimische Seelsorge in Bundesasylzentren. Evaluation des Pilotprojekts zuhanden des Staatssekretariats für Migration* (SZIG/CSIS Studies 6), Freiburg: Schweizerisches Zentrum für Islam und Gesellschaft, 2022.

[49] Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Fourth generation evaluation* (London: Sage Publications, 1989).

[50] Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth generation evaluation*, pp. 50, 205-207.

[51] Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth generation evaluation*, p. 259.

[52] Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth generation evaluation*, pp. 55-56.

[53] Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth generation evaluation*, p. 261.

[54] Svend Brinkmann, *Qualitative Interviewing: Understanding Qualitative Research* (New York: Oxford Univer-sity Press, 2013); Irving Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006 [1991]).

Christian chaplains, nurses, security services and other staff who were interviewed. The research design had been developed in a previous study[55].

For this paper, interviews with five Muslim chaplains were selected and analysed with a specific focus. As three chaplains who had recently started their job were interviewed twice in the evaluation study, a total of eight interviews made up the bulk of the empirical material for our analysis. While they all participated in the same project of asylum chaplaincy, they have had different experiences and apply different styles of intervention. These interviews are focused on the narrations, self-presentations and self-assessments of the chaplains and illustrate both intersections and differences within the stakeholder group of Muslim chaplains. This focus on counsellors' points of view and self-assessments responds to a desideratum in refugee research[56]. As part of a qualitative content analysis of the interviews[57], passages were selected in which the chaplains reflect on their intervention with the refugees. With a view to obtaining a spectrum of different perspectives and approaches, eleven passages were chosen for this paper, according to the principle of maximum variation[58]. The quotations have been translated as precisely as possible from German and French into English. These passages were subject to a detailed analysis, the selected results of which are presented below. The theoretical perspective on home and vulnerability flowed into the interpretation.

An Empirical Exploration of Refugee Chaplains' Interventions

Having presented our theoretical considerations and the state of research, empirical examples will now be used to examine how chaplains' interventions relate to refugee vulnerability and may contribute to their sense of home-building[59].

Building Relationships with the Chaplain, Fellows and God
The first aspect we will examine concerns the way chaplains understand their service and what role the religious dimension plays therein. One of the chaplains presented chaplaincy as a personal accompaniment, offered to a diverse spectrum of recipients, including both Muslims and non-Muslims:

> "Each day I am in the asylum centre, I meet with many people, men, women, Muslims, non-Muslims, and I accompany them, I give them comfort when they are sad, also hope when they have no hope, for example. I give them prayers, if they seek proximity to God, I answer their questions; after that, I can also say a prayer with them." (Chaplain 1, Interview I)

Each time the chaplain uses the verb "to give", he is indicating the three gifts the refugees receive from him: hope, comfort and prayer. In each case, a situation of distress can be transformed and overcome. The three elements of hope, comfort and prayer can be seen as

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[55] Hansjörg Schmid and Amir Sheikzadegan. 'A Muslim Chaplaincy für Asylum-Seekers? Results from an Evaluation Research', *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 74 (2020), pp. 124-132.

[56] Lonn and Dantzler, 'A Practical Approach to Counseling Refugees', p. 77.

[57] Margrit Schreier, *Qualitative content analysis in practice* (London: Sage Publications, 2012).

[58] Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002).

[59] Quotations from the interviews are indicated with in-text references mentioning the chaplain in an anonymised way. Due to the formative character of the research, two interviews were conducted with each chaplain enabling thus progressive reflection. In each case, the number of the interview is also indicated.

constitutive elements of a home. The relational, as well as spiritual, dimensions of a home are evoked in the above quote by the special emphasis it places on prayer, linking it to the relationship with God. The prayer mentioned here does not refer to the ritual prayer but to the informal one (*duʿāʾ*), representing an important aspect of Muslim chaplains' practice[60]. Whereas comfort and hope engage the refugees as recipients, with the prayer, the chaplain refers to a common action ("with them") that helps refugees construct this relationship with God.

Another chaplain focused on interactions with the refugees and reflected on factors which facilitate communication:

> "Yes, we are with them. [...] Most of the people who come to me are Muslims. They ask me for advice, tell me their story and so on. Perhaps they have more trust in me, perhaps also the Arabic language facilitates communication a lot, especially for those who speak Arabic. So, I also use my religious background to reassure them, to comfort them, to give them hope, and that is essential for them. [It is crucial] to have their trust because they can't tell me things if they don't trust me." (Chaplain 2, Interview I)

This chaplain uses the expression of "being with" the refugees, which is often referred to as a core notion of spiritual care[61]. The quote then mentions the refugees' actions ("come", "ask", "tell"). The chaplain goes on to describe the relationship with recipients as a relationship of trust. Two factors nourish this trust: the Arabic language and religious knowledge, which facilitates the transmission of comfort and hope. This demonstrates how a trusting relationship can contribute to home-building in the spiritual and linguistic dimensions; which, in turn, provides a basis for the refugees to tell their - often painful - story.

However, language and religion are not the only tools for building a relationship of trust. One of the chaplains highlighted his practice of playing football with the refugees, which integrates physical and group dynamic aspects. As the chaplain explained, for him, playing football is complementary to a conversationally oriented approach, offering another way of building up relationships and a basis for other types of exchange: "This helps me a lot in creating relationships." (Chaplain 3, Interview I) Compared to his colleagues, this chaplain was also more careful concerning the role of religion and spirituality:

> "We are not in charge of people's spirituality. It's mainly listening, it's mainly orientation, it's mainly support. [...] So religion and spirituality are really anecdotal, so to speak. It remains very intimate and confidential. [...] We really try to keep this aspect of intervention religiously neutral, to avoid the Muslim/not-Muslim polarisation." (Chaplain 3, Interview I)

As can be seen here, he distances himself from a strong focus on spirituality and characterises chaplaincy as the three activities of listening, providing orientation and giving support. The two reasons he gives for the spiritual reserve he shows are his personal character and the risk of creating cleavages between Muslims and non-Muslims. An earlier study explored chaplains' intentions to avoid reproducing hostile images of the religious other, to assist in overcoming negative experiences from the home countries and creating

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[60] Sophie Gilliat-Ray, Muhammad Mansur Ali and Stephen Pattison, *Understanding Muslim Chaplaincy* (Farn-ham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 81-84.

[61] Steve Nolan, '"He Needs to Talk!": A Chaplain's Case Study of Nonreligious Spiritual Care', *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy* 22:1 (2016), pp. 1-16, at p. 14.

a trans-religious community in asylum centres[62]. A further factor may be the context of Western Switzerland, where this chaplain works, and where religion is mainly considered a private affair. However, in a follow-up interview conducted some months later, the same chaplain articulated his reflection on spirituality in a slightly different way:

> "Of course, spiritual accompaniment remains a key element in all of this, because it's combined with assistance for the return to their home country, defusing violence, crises, the search for alternatives. All of this always involves a small dose of spirituality, of belief, and it is...well, a variable dosage, because everything depends on the person you are talking to, the person you are dealing with." (Chaplain 3, Interview II)

Yet he still speaks of a "small dose" which should be "variable". This highlights the person-centred and non-judgmental approach of chaplaincy implemented here[63]. The scale of spirituality is defined by the refugee's request. In this sense, the spiritual dimension in the construction of a home is not considered according to the chaplains' ideas, but according to the refugees' needs. The chaplain names four functions of spirituality: helping refugees when they have to return, de-escalating violence, responding to crises, and discovering alternative perceptions of their situation. Spirituality is thus not an aim in itself but related to a particular life situation, the refugees' vulnerable condition and an intended outcome. This is a cautious way of contributing to the construction and nurturing of a spiritual home. Below, however, it also becomes apparent that this depends on the individual chaplain and how he or she relates to spirituality and religion.

Conflicts and Directive Interventions by Chaplains
A second aspect to consider relates to conflicts, either in the sense of the refugees' personal struggle, or conflicts which occur in the asylum centre. As mentioned previously, various conflicts were a significant motivation for authorities to introduce Muslim chaplaincy. One of the chaplains specified that the refugees' uncertainty about their home is a source of distress for them:

> "There are fears about the asylum procedure. You don't know what will happen in the future, whether they stay or go back home. And there is also the fact that people are psychologically burdened anyway." (Chaplain 4, Interview I)

In this statement, the refugees' situation is characterised by instability in a temporal sense, but their former home remains a point of reference. In a follow-up interview, the same chaplain spoke in a more detailed way about conflicts as a threat to a secure home and the contribution chaplaincy makes to de-escalation:

> "If I am there and I notice that a conflict is about to emerge, then I intervene and take the person aside and talk to him. I try to understand why he reacts the way he does. And as a Muslim, I always conclude every conversation with: 'You must be an example, give a good image of Islam. Islam is peace, Islam is helping others, is understanding others, avoiding conflicts, avoiding problems.' I give a few hadiths and then I try to tell the person clearly that there are rules that you must follow and that not following these rules is not good." (Chaplain 4, Interview II)

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[62] Hansjörg Schmid. 'Interfaith Chaplaincy in a Post-Secular Context', *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 30:2 (2020), pp. 163-185.
[63] Gilliat-Ray, Ali and Pattison, *Understanding Muslim Chaplaincy*, p. 85.

This chaplain describes his intervention with verbs which progress from a more empathic approach to intervening in a more directive and normative way: being there, noticing, talking, understanding, concluding, giving, trying, intervening. At the centre is a quotation, a kind of slogan: here is the role model of the chaplain and, connected to this, a certain understanding of Islam is assumed. This "must" of self-commitment expected from all Muslims, including the chaplain himself and his conversation partner, is followed by the generalised "must" of obligation aimed at residents about observing rules (which are not explicitly indicated as Islamic). On one hand, this shows the contribution chaplains make to stabilising the home with the help of rules. However, there is a risk of paternalism[64], when the chaplain addresses a service recipient in such a normative way. By prescribing a certain normative understanding of Islam, the chaplain goes beyond an understanding of non-directive and person-centred spiritual care, which can be seen as "counterproductive in working with Muslim clients,"[65] as the chaplain is already positioned as an authority from whom guidance is expected. This reveals a tension between the role of a companion for refugees and that of a conflict mediator in the service of the institution. The quotation also illustrates how, within the specific framework of the asylum-centre, refugees, as well as chaplains, have to adapt to regulations that they can only shape on a very limited scale.

Another chaplain is more critical of understanding chaplaincy as a tool for conflict de-escalation, through emphasising rules and order:

> "So, chaplaincy is, of course, not primarily about preventing conflicts, but about supporting people in what they have perhaps experienced or what is going on inside them. But of course, it is also a kind of overcoming of conflict." (Chaplain 5, Interview I)

This chaplain emphasises the relevance of her service to the experiences and the inner life of service recipients. Finally, she acknowledges that her way of intervening can be understood as coping with conflict in an indirect way.

Unlike his female colleague, another chaplain advocates some flexibility in applying a more normative stance:

> "I present myself as an imam to some people – not to everybody – but to some people that I want to have a strong influence on. I reserve the imam's hat for this level of influence. For people who ask me for religious advice, who are looking for answers to religious questions, I need to say that I have this hat on. I put it on to tell them that I have answers that are based on [religious] texts and references. That way, they accept my answers." (Chaplain 2, Interview II)

Here, the imam-role is used to have an impact on refugees or in relation to specific religious issues. The imam is considered as an authority, with the listening and receptive counselling role being complemented by more active interventions. The religious advice uttered wearing an "imam's hat" is related to the refugees' "looking for answers", which may help to provide clarity and stabilise their spiritual home. A more authoritative role as chaplain may also meet specific expectations refugees have. Empirical studies show that religious

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[64] Mackenzie, Rogers and Dodds, 'What Is Vulnerability?', p. 15.
[65] G. Hussein Rassool, *Islamic Counselling. An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge), p. 129.

authorities are particularly important in Muslim countries[66]. This includes these persons giving advice, and it is obvious that such an expectation is at least partly projected onto the chaplains by service-users in Swiss asylum centres.

Sharing Memories with the Chaplain and the Transformative Power of "another logic"
A third focus highlights reflections on the effect chaplains' interventions have. One imam reported a situation in which he supported a refugee in conflict with security staff. In the interview, he first described how he talked to the refugee and then accompanied him to the Securitas office. The chaplain interprets his intervention in this situation as follows:

> "Change of space, we are in another process, there is another logic which is established: there is accompaniment, there is understanding, there is listening, there is sharing. And you arrive at the Securitas desk, which is the control centre, with the computers, ... so you already spend time with the person [the refugee]. You take an interest in how he feels. He feels that everybody rejects him, that nobody cares for him, that he is pursuing something that he never gets." (Chaplain 2, Interview I)

Chaplaincy is described here as "another process" and "another logic". This is linked to a "change of space". This refers to the spatial dimension of home. Space is ordered and controlled by the administration of the centre and the security staff, with whom the refugees often have a conflictual relationship[67]. However, in accompanying the refugees and taking them somewhere else, the chaplain can disrupt the logic of control. This change of space is linked with the receptive activities of understanding, listening and sharing. Another key aspect is dedicating time. The chaplain's intervention can reverse the feelings of rejection, futility and neglect experienced by the refugee. Through the chaplain, the refugees receive what they do not receive from the more functional staff of the asylum centre, what they need in this situation of vulnerability: personal attention, time and interest. The chaplain does not state that he wants to defend the refugee; but the way he interacts with the refugee already reveals a transformation of the situation, even if the security agent's reaction remains the same. In this way, the chaplains also contribute to broadening the understanding of security to the sense of a basic human need for a safe home.

Although a large majority of refugees are men, gender-specific concerns are also articulated time and again, especially by women, who tend to specifically address the female chaplain[68]. The female chaplain quoted below refers to a situation relating to the rape experienced by a woman who spoke to her:

> "So in one case the husband was with her. She had never told him and she was afraid how he would react if he found out. It was a relief for her to be able to pass on something about herself and to deposit it in some way. Because she simply couldn't see any possibility of telling anyone. And that was very, very advantageous for her, it reduced her burden a bit, that she knew someone knew about it." (Chaplain 5, Interview I)

This quote shows a contrast between the fear of being left alone, despite the presence of her husband, and the relief of sharing the burden with the chaplain. The memory and

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66 Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular. Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 148 and 154.
67 Hartmann, *Zwischen An- und Ent-Ordnung*, pp. 233-234.
68 Schmid, Sheikzadegan and Zurbuchen, *Muslimische Seelsorge in Bundesasylzentren*, p. 48.

burden she shared seem to reduce her vulnerability. The chaplain is the one to whom the woman can tell something that she cannot tell anyone else, not even her husband. This interaction indicates a high scale of trust towards the chaplain, as already discussed above. In this specific case, the chaplain's gender can also be seen to be "enabling"[69]. A relationship of closeness and a community of remembrance is created here, which provides some relief for the woman. Such aspects can contribute to the construction of a home, by healing wounds and relieving pain. Nonetheless, a certain element of vulnerability remains.

Perspectives for Vulnerability, Home and Spiritual Care in an Interreligious Context

Analysing our empirical material has given a broad insight into the chaplains' perspectives on their interventions and relationships with refugees. Chaplaincy is mainly understood as accompaniment, listening and support. However, differences in the perceptions and approaches of the chaplains have become apparent.

While four chaplains primarily pursue a conversation-oriented approach, one chaplain chooses less conventional approaches, for example by playing sport with the refugees, to create interactions and achieve relaxation. This is a way of sharing everyday life, which results in conversational opportunities: it could be seen as a kind of street-work chaplaincy. The emphasis on spirituality also varies. While all chaplains agree that spirituality should be dosed according to the needs of the refugees, they weigh it differently. One chaplain sees spirituality as being more in the personal sphere, others see it as a means of building a relationship with refugees. One chaplain derives a requirement for exemplary conduct and an ethical obligation from belonging to Islam, and in this way tries to dissuade refugees from deviant behaviour. Finally, chaplains differ in the extent to which they see conflict de-escalation as their task. While one chaplain tends to distance herself from this function, the other chaplains assume this task and even use their religious authority to exert a positive influence on the refugees and to contribute to the peaceful coexistence through religious norms. However, the fact that religious authority should be used with caution must be taken into account, as various minorities from Muslim contexts have had negative experiences with strongly normative references to "Islam" and are therefore extremely sensitive and vulnerable to such use of religious authority.

Coming back to the idea of a home, as one of the Christian chaplains articulated, the introduction of Muslim chaplaincy into an asylum centre already conveys the message to Muslim refugees that: "You have your place here."[70] It therefore contributes to their structural integration. Beyond this, the analysis showed many links between the chaplain's interventions and the four dimensions of a home: spatial, material, temporal and relational.

Concerning the spatial dimension, as shown previously, chaplains can intervene in conflictual situations concerning space. However, they are also subordinate to the asylum-centre regime and have limited capacity to make changes. In some asylum centres, the spatial arrangements were also precarious, in that there was no permanent retreat room available for counselling conversations[71]. Where such a room exists, the material dimension of home, as postulated by Taylor, is also evident, e.g. present in the form of Qur'ans, prayer carpets and other objects of religious practice, usually provided by the

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[69] Gilliat-Ray, Ali and Pattison, *Understanding Muslim Chaplaincy*, p. 93.

[70] Schmid, Sheikzadegan and Zurbuchen, *Muslimische Seelsorge in Bundesasylzentren*, p. 30.

[71] Schmid, Sheikzadegan and Zurbuchen, *Muslimische Seelsorge in Bundesasylzentren*, pp. 81-82.

chaplains. Concerning the temporal dimension, refugees can share their memories and hopes with the chaplains, which provides them with some emotional (?) relief. In situations of hopelessness, chaplains may provide and nourish hope. Above all, they can help to ensure that the refugees have positive experiences when interacting with them, and this helps to stabilise the refugees' situation. In terms of the relational dimension, chaplains' engagement with refugees is characterised by a particularly high level of trust, distinguishing theirs from other relationships. Concerning the spiritual dimension, chaplains help to strengthen the relationship with God, share moments of prayer with the refugees, answer religious questions, give advice and remind them of religious norms. Interventions by chaplains are a transformative force for the refugees. They contribute to alternative perceptions and interactions in the refugee centres, in order to make them more home-like.

Overall, the supportive role of chaplains in home-building becomes evident, even if they cannot respond to all of the refugees' needs. A lack that may be identified is that links and relationships to a faith-community or the wider society outside the asylum centres are not particularly encouraged during the asylum procedure period, as in most cases it is very uncertain whether the refugees will be able to stay. Against this background, the function of chaplains who have a role in the centres, but come from 'outside', is of particular importance. While their interventions are linked to all four dimensions of home, both the relational and spiritual dimensions serve as a foundation – in one case also described as relational, towards God. This can be linked to a correlational approach which has been developed for Muslim chaplaincy[72]. The empirical examples cited also show that the usual methods of conversation-oriented spiritual care and non-directive counselling have their limits, and that chaplains in the specific field of asylum centres also act, or are expected to act, as conflict mediators and religious authorities. Here, both cultural backgrounds and the vulnerability and woundedness of refugees play a central role, requiring chaplains to adopt specifically adapted approaches.

One limitation of the material analysed is that it examines in a rather structural manner how Muslim chaplaincy interacts with refugees in the interprofessional context of asylum centres. Within the framework of this study, it was not possible to explore more deeply exactly what spiritual and religious ideas or norms the chaplains use. From the point of view of Muslim chaplaincy, there is still a lack of theological reflection about vulnerability and home[73]. Vulnerability implies a spiritual openness, yet chaplains need to be careful not to exploit this situation, and to consider the agency of the refugees. Co-construction of a home means a collaborative effort and implies that refugees are empowered by the mobilisation of forces and resources. When chaplains largely apply a person-centred approach, they do not impose themselves, but focus on the interests of those they care for in the best possible way. The chaplaincy case therefore demonstrates the kind of collaborative action which can form a counterweight to the stereotype of passive refugees. In this sense, their vulnerability can be seen as paradoxical. As Judith Butler highlights: "vulnerability is neither fully passive nor fully active, but operating in a

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[72] Nazila Isgandarova, 'The correlational approach to Islamic spiritual care', *Tidsskirft om islam & kristendom* 16:1 (2016), pp. 15-28.
[73] Muna Tatari, 'Vulnerabilität – Ein vernachlässigter Aspekt muslimischer Theologie und Anthropologie', *Reli-gionen unterwegs* 25:3 (2019), pp. 19-23.

middle ground"[74]. Therefore, a concept of spiritual care is required that takes into account both the active and passive facets of vulnerability. Such a conceptual approach would require further research, in which the refugees' perspective is more strongly taken into consideration.

Furthermore, the question arises as to what role chaplains play in asylum centres, where they participate in how they function without being able to fundamentally question things. As one study highlights, exposure to the asylum reception system in European countries often increases refugees' vulnerability[75]. A more structural reflection could refer to a political theology of vulnerability showing sensitive to mechanisms of social exclusion, which is also exacerbated by the accommodation in refugee centres[76]. However, this structural dimension is already indirectly present in the case of Muslim chaplaincy: by articulating their religious concerns and working together with Muslim chaplains, refugees address the limits of the existing asylum system and demand the recognition of cultural diversity. This is also about working against the unequal distribution of vulnerability which concerns refugees in a particular way. Yet, as the empirical analyses have shown, the tension between autonomy and relationality, self-determination and dependence on help and support remains structurally irresolvable.

Chaplaincy based on this irresolvable tension might be about asking questions without getting full answers, but it nonetheless keeps alive a desire that can be seen as a key factor of religion and spirituality:

"In a sense, the ethical stance consists […] in asking the question 'Who are you?' and continuing to ask it without any expectation of a full or final answer. The other to whom I pose this question will not be captured by any answer that might arrive to satisfy it. So if there is, in the question, a desire for recognition, this desire will be under an obligation to keep itself alive as desire and not to resolve itself."[77]

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[74] Judith Butler, 'Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance', in *Vulnerability in Resistance*, edited by Judith But-ler, Zeynep Gambetti and Leticia Sabsay (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 12-27, at pp. 25-26.

[75] Massa, '"All we need is a home."', p. 34.

[76] Michaela Neulinger, *Zwischen Dolorismus und Perfektionismus: Konturen einer politischen Theologie der Verwundbarkeit* (Paderborn: Brill/Schöningh, 2018), p. 228.

[77] Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, p. 43.

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