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Austrian-Jewish Refugees in Pre- and Wartime Australia Ambivalent Experiences of Encounter

Abstract:
As "strangers" in a new land, Jewish refugees from National Socialism had experienced, what has been described as "everyday otherness" upon their arrival in Australia. This paper analyses refugees' memories of everyday-life situations to demonstrate the dynamics of self-identities and the diverse and complex ways, encounters had impacted upon their social relations and their identity formation in Australia. Located at the intersection of urban studies and the history of migration, it draws upon qualitative, biographical approaches based on the refugees' memories of their early years after their arrival to pin down experiences of encounter. Memories on their encounter experiences offer a reflective judgment of the meaning of their experiences. They show, how refugees recalled having experienced "everyday otherness" upon their arrival, a process that, as this paper argues, sustainably affected success or failure of their transition from being a "stranger" in the contact phase towards their acculturation

1 Refugees in Australia
- A Historical Introduction

Refugee migration to Australia has a short history compared to other states. Many factors are responsible for this, amongst others the fact that most of the refugees of the 19th and early 20th century may have "perceived the country to be too remote", as historian Klaus Neumann puts it in his recent book about Australia's responses to refugees.[1] The country was barely touched by the major refugee movements of the late 19th century.[2] Consequently, when the first Australian parliament congregated on 9 May 1900, refugee issues were not to be found on any agendas. Furthermore, three quarters of a century would pass before a comprehensive refugee policy was announced in parliament. Until the 1970s, refugees were regarded as alien immigrants thus having to match strict ethnic, and financial immigration criteria. Once arrived in Australia, "they were supposed to leave behind their experiences of suffering, and their allegiances to their native countries"[3].

As historian Andrew Marcus puts it, Australians, since the turn of the 19th century developed a "clear concept of themselves as [...] superior to all non-European [high status][4] people". Thus, as he claims, "discrimination on the grounds of race became normal, accepted behaviour."[5] From its first foundational meeting on, the Australian parliament designed laws such as the Immigration Restriction Bill or the Pacific Island Labourers Bill to exclude those who have been regarded as "undesirable". As a result, Australia's population became even more racially homogenous during the first four decades of the 20th century.[6] Until 1948, its residents were British subjects. They came overwhelmingly from the British Isles, either by birth or by descent. Australia's Chinese-born population, which constituted the largest non-indigenous, non-European minority, for example, shrank from 29,000

[1] Klaus Neumann, Across the Seas: Australia's response to refugees: A History (Collingwood: Black Inc., 2015), 5.

[2] Except for some few German Lutherans who fled Prussia and the odd émigrés from Europe, see: Neumann, Across the Seas, 17.

[3] Neumann, Across the Seas, 1.

[4] Generally, only people from Great Britain and northern Europe were seen as high-status immigrants. Migrants from southern, or Eastern Europe usually were regarded as a distinct racial group, see: Andrew Markus, *Australian race relations, 1788-1993*, St Leonhard: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 145.

[5] Markus, *Australian Race Relations*, 111.

[6] Neumann, Across the Seas, 15.

to 6,400 during those four decades.[7] This, however should not overshadow the fact that the predominantly British-Australian settler society yielded its own socio-cultural specifics, such as contacts between the British and the indigenous population or other marginalised groups, often under highly asymmetrical relations of power, which also affected identity formation.[8]

Racial prejudices and negative attitudes towards immigration increased during the Great Depression of the 1930s, reinforcing the prevailing assumption "that Australia should remain as British as possible."[9] At that time even informed opinion was still cautious about the number of immigrants Australia could absorb and it was repeatedly stressed that immigration should be on a "modest scale".[10] The events of the spring 1938 *Anschluss*, when Nazi Germany occupied Austria and triggered a large wave of refugees, thus coincided with a general atmosphere of mistrust towards migrants in Australia.

Increased numbers of people seeking refuge from Nazi oppression caused the international community in July 1938 to organise a conference in the French spa town of Évian-les-Bains to discuss an international response to the refugee crisis. The conference turned out to be a "dismal failure".[11] Australia, like most of the other participating states, retained a negative position on the liberalisation of its immigration policy[12] and potential asylum-seekers faced strict requirements influenced by anti-Semitic and racist criteria.[13] The Australian delegate summarised the official Australian stance vis-à-vis the intake of refugees as follows: "it would no doubt be appreciated that as we have no racial problem we are not desirous of importing one."[14] During the year 1938, more than 20.000 visa applications matched

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[7] Neumann, Accross the Seas, 15.

[8] For more information on Australian settler colonialism, see: Fiona Paisley, The Italo-Abyssinian Crisis and Australian Settler Colonialism in 1935, in: History Compass 15/ (2017): 8-11; Georgine Clarsen, Mobile Encounters: Bicycles, Cars and Australian Settler Colonialism, in: History Australia 12:1 (2015): 165-186; Lisa Slater, *Anxieties of belonging in settler colonialism : Australia, race and place* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

[9] Ursula Wiedman, German and Austrian Refugees in Melbourne 1933-1947 (MA thesis, Melbourne 1965), 47.

[10] Wiedman, German and Austrian Refugees, 45; for more information on media reactions to Jewish refugees who came to Australia during the 1930s, see: Philipp Strobl, *Die Flüchtlingskrise der 1930er Jahre in australischen Tageszeitungen. Eine medienhistorische Diskursanalyse* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac, 2019).

[11] Neumann, *Across the Seas*, 36.

[12] Suzanne D. Rutland, *The Jews in Australia* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), 57.

[13] Birgit Lang, *Eine Fahrt ins Blaue: Deutschsprachiges Theater und Kabarett im australischen Exil und Nach-Exil 1933-1988* (Berlin 2006), 41.

[14] Southern Cross, 21 Oct. 1938, 10

the strict Australian requirements[15] and one year later, Australia restricted the annual number of "Jewish migrants" to 5.000 over a period of three years.[16] This was the situation when the protagonists of this paper arrived.

2 Aims and Research Questions

This paper interrogates the initial phase when refugees' made contacts after their arrival in Australia. It examines intercultural everyday encounters in so called *contact zones* - a term coined in 1991 by the linguist Mary Louise Pratt to describe social spaces, where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power.[17] It is informed by an extended multi-layer concept of identity formation, which is a useful tool to reconstruct and comprehend the dynamic and "hybrid" patterns of identities involved in migration processes.[18]

As "strangers"[19] in a new land, the refugees experienced, what has been described as "everyday otherness", a form of "cultural crisis – reflecting both danger and opportunity – as long-term regional residents and new 'visible migrants' engage in the challenges of intercultural interaction".[20] Their first experiences of encounter are of particular interest for this analysis since they have shaped their sense of belonging and subsequently affected the dynamics of their identity formation process and the ways they imagined their future lives in Australia.

This paper firstly introduces a theoretical framework reworked and adapted to analyse the hybrid identity formations that had taken place once European, Jewish refugees had entered a country, they perceived as geographically and culturally "strange". It focuses on interactions between ref-

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[15] Lang, *Fahrt ins Blaue*, 41.

[16] Paul R. Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust 1933-45* (Kew: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1994), 115ff.

[17] Marie Louise Pratt, Art of the Contact Zone, in: Profession 91 (1991), 33-40, 33.

[18] Mario De La Rosa, Acculturation and Latino adolescents' substance use: A Research Agenda for the Future: in: "Substance Use&Misuse 37 (2002): 429-456; Hani Zubida et. Al., Home and Away: Hybrid Perspective on Identity Formation in 1.5 and second Generation Adolescent Immigrants in Israel, in: "Clocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics and Innovation (2013): 1-28.

[19] Alfred Schuetz, "The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology", in: *American Journal of Sociology* 49 (1944): 499-507

[20] David Radford, "'Everyday otherness' – intercultural refugee encounters and everyday multiculturalism in a South Australian rural town", in: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2016): 2128-2145, 2130.

ugees and the local population to analyse intercultural everyday encounters[21] between Austrian refugees, as "the strangers" and Australians "as the locals".[22] It pursues an actor centred approach using refugee memories to unearth and question everyday-life situations of Jewish World War II refugees in Australia such as encounters at the workplace, or the next-door grocery store after the arrival of the refugees. Influenced by the school of thought of "New Biography"[23], this paper analyses these sources in their context of origin and appreciates the fact that their "genuine truth" is not constituted by historically secured facts but rather by the pictures and fragments of the past, they offer. Subsequently, the paper categorises and compares refugees' memories and contextualises them against the literature on identity formations. This allows to demonstrate the dynamics and hybridity of self-identities, as well as the complex ways, encounters had impacted upon their social relations and their acculturation.

Researching memories of everyday encounters offer reliable insights into the intercultural, social coexistence of people. As we will see, encounters with "everyday otherness" can be difficult because they imply the possibility for conflict, misunderstanding and antagonism.[24] They constitute important situations in the lives of the refugees that "may facilitate, or impede mutual understandings and integration" during a crucial phase within the migration process.[25] Researching, comparing, highlighting and analysing the memories of selected key moments in the arrival process of World War II refugees in Australia did not have received much scholarly attention so far. Thus, more research on these processes is needed and will improve our understanding of the complexities, challenges, effects, and strategies of encounters between refugees and the members of a host society.

This paper is located at the intersection of urban studies, biography, and the history of migration. More particularly, it is situated within a small but

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[21] The concept of "interculturalism" emphasises processes that take place between culturally different individuals during their encounter, see: Aleksandra Winiarska, "Intercultural Neighbourly Encounters in Warsaw from the Perspective of Goffman's Sociology of Interaction", in: *Central and Eastern European Migration Review* 4 (2015), 43-60, 44.

[22] Schuetz, "The Stranger".

[23] See: Katharina Prager, "Überlegungen zu Biographie und Exil im 20. Jahrhundert," Exilforschung Österreich: Leistungen, Defizite & Perspektiven, ed. Evelyn Adunka et al. (Vienna: Mandelbaum, 2018); Philipp Strobl, "'Ich habe nie die Absicht gehabt, autobiographische Arbeiten zu schreiben'—Exil und Autobiographie im transnationalen Leben von Paul Hatvani-Hirsch," Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften 29 (2018): 58–79; Levke Harders, "Migration und Biographie: Mobile Leben schreiben," Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften 29 (2018): 17–36.

[24] Radford, "Everyday otherness", 2131.

[25] Winiarska, "Intercultural Neighbourly Encounters", 44.

growing, interdisciplinary research body that analyses the significance of contact with "difference" or "otherness" as a means to achieve social change.[26] It draws upon a qualitative biographical approach to comprehend hybrid, dynamic, highly individualised, contested and contextual encounter-situations through the eyes of the main proponents, thus examining how they narrate their experiences of cross-cultural contact upon their encounters. This is particularly important since encounters with and across difference can best be exemplified when analysed within the context of an individual's life story.[27]

Upon their arrival in Australia, all of the persons whose lives were researched for this study had no previous connections to Australia and thus occupied positions of "strangers" in the sense that they "observed specific behaviours, habits, and lifestyles" and experienced "norms of conduct which might be surprising or strange to them, both in a positive and negative way."[28] Memories of their encounter experiences offer a reflective judgment of the meaning of their experiences. They show, how refugees recalled their experiences of "everyday otherness" upon their arrival, a process that, as I argue, sustainably affected the formations of their identities in Australia.

The following case studies derived from a research project about Austrians who fled to Australia after the 1938 *Anschluss*.[29] The material researched in this study includes a series of semi-structured interviews with 13 participants.[30] As geographers Gill Valentine and Joanna Sadgrove argue, biographical narrative interviews are "particularly useful in enhancing under-

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[26] See for example: Gill Valentine and Joanna Sadgrove, "Biographical Narratives of Encounter: The Significance of Mobility and Emplacement in Shaping Attitudes towards Difference", in: *Urban Studies* 51/9 (2014): 1979-1994; Radford, "Everyday otherness"; Helga Leitner, "Spaces of Encounters: Immigration, Race, Class, and the Politics of Belonging in Small-Town America", in: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 102/6 (2011): 1-19; Winiarska, "Intercultural Neighbourly Encounters"; Ien Ang, Beyond Chinese Groupism: Chinese Australians Between Assimilation, Multiculturalism and Diaspora, in: Ethnic and Racial Studies 37/1 (2014): 1184-1196; Johan Anderson et. Al., Consuming campus: geographies of encounter at a British university, in: Social and Cultural Geography 13 (2012): 501-515.

[27] Valentine and Sadgrove, "Biographical Narratives", 1982.

[28] Marinus Ossewaarde, "Cosmopolitanism and the Society of Strangers", in: *Current Sociology* 55 (2007): 367–388.

[29] The project entitled "Österreichische Migration nach Australien (1938-1947)" is funded by the Austrian Science Fund and was conducted at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne and the University of Innsbruck.

[30] The quotes from the interviews, used in this paper are original and not copy edited.

standings about the situated and relational nature of people's identities, attitudes and values" and provide a "unique type of evidence as to when and where prejudices are shaped, reinforced and interrupted", which helps us to comprehend different forms of "everyday otherness".[31] Additionally, this study draws upon diary entries, letters, autobiographies, governmental migration records stored at the National Archives of Australia, as well as newspaper articles.[32] The samples were chosen to represent the diversity of the overall group of Austrian refugee migrants[33] in terms of gender, place of birth, demographics and family composition, date of naturalisation, nationality, place of residence in Australia.

3 Hybrid Identity Formations – A Theoretical Framework

The classical image of immigrants and refugees is that they make home in a foreign place, adapt to another environment, and then assimilate the culture of the receiving country. They are expected to reduce and finally terminate their linkages and ties with their home country.[34] This picture has lost much of its relevance since research has shown that transnational ties in many cases remain important determinants of identity shaping processes. Due to the increased research on migration and the realisation that migrations are complex, reciprocal, and dynamic processes, assimilation theories are increasingly inappropriate to explain the interacting identities, migration processes create. Recent research particularly stresses the role of imported and adapted cultural capital as the migrant's and refugee's "treasure chest"[35] and increasingly discovers migrants and refugees as "cul-

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[31] Valentine and Sadgrove, "Biographical Narratives", 1982.

[32] All persons interviewed have agreed to be interviewed and expressed their wish to be identified in the study.

[33] A throughout analysis of naturalisation records in the National Archives of Australia (NAA) has recently been undertaken as part of the project mentioned in footnote 29. It allows a fact-based analysis of the whole group along the above-mentioned criteria. The analysis showed that 1,509 certificates of naturalisation had been issued to 2,655 Austrians between 1939 and 1949 and that Austrian refugee-migration to Australia was predominantly urban.

[34] Kenneth D. Madsen and Ton van Naerssen, Migration, Identity, and Belonging, in: "Journal of Borderlands Studies 18 (2003): 61-75.

[35] Strobl, Langer.

tural translators" and "agents of knowledge" who live, work and think between at least two different spaces.[36] Building on ideas of multiple and diverse identities, political scientists Hani Zubida, Liron Avi, and Robin Harper suggest a theoretical approach based on sociologist Mario De La Rosa's conceptual framework of identity formation to approach the topic. They identified four modes of identity:[37]

1)   Low level of cultural identity with the refugees' culture of origin and low level of cultural identity with the prevailing host society's mainstream values, described by the phrase "Neither here nor there"

2)   Low Level of cultural identity with their culture of origin and high level of cultural identity with the prevailing host society's mainstream values, described by the phrase "Here and not there"

3)   High level of cultural identity with their culture of origin and low level of cultural identity with the prevailing host society's mainstream values, described by the phrase "There and not here"

4)   High level of cultural identity with their culture of origin and high level of cultural identity with the prevailing host society's mainstream values, described by the phrase "Both, here and there"

Employing a non-directional and a multidimensional meaning to these four terminological modes is crucial, since labels alone are insufficient to shape our understanding of how refugee identities are being formed.[38] Thus, a more open perspective that recognised the hybrid nature of identities allows to understand and question the processes in which ties to the host country, the origin country, both of them or neither of them create dynamic patterns of identity. This helps us to gain insights into the "hybrid" nature of identities, showing that refugees can hold different, even contradicting

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[36]   Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg, "Knowledge on the Move: New Approaches toward a History of Migrant Knowledge", Geschichte und Gesellschaft 43 (2017): 313-346; Simone Lässig, "The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda", in: *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 59 (2016): 29-58; Philipp Strobl, "Migrant Biographies as a Prism for Explaining Transnational Knowledge Transfers," Migrant Knowledge, October 7, 2019, https://migrantknowledge.org/2019/10/07/migrant-biographies/; Andrea Westermann, "Migrant Knowledge: An Entangled Object of Research," Migrant Knowledge, March 14, 2019, https://migrantknowledge.org/2019/03/14/migrant-knowledge/; Philipp Strobl, From Niche Sport to Mass Tourism: Transnational Lives in Australia's Thredbo Resort, in: Leisure Cultures and the Making of Modern Ski Resorts, edited by Philipp Strobl and Aneta Podkalicka (London: Palgrave, 2018), 185-214.

[37]   Hani Zubida et. Al., Home and Away: Hybrid Perspective on Identity Formation in 1.5 and Second Generation Adolescent Immigrants in Israel, in: Glocalism: Journal of culture, Politics and Innovation (2013): 1-28, 3f.

[38]   Zubida, et. Al., Home and Away, 4.

identities with loose boundaries. Hybridity, as related to migration, is usually conceived as the process of cultural mixing in which immigrants and refugees "adopt aspects of the host culture and rework, reform, and reconfigure them in production of new hybrid cultures or hybrid identities.[39] Thus it can be promising to envisage the process of identity formation as "hybrid" in order to understand the complexities emerging from the encounter experiences of different cultures.

4 Encounter Situations

There were only very few organisations in Australia that dealt with the refugees during the late 1930s and the Second World War. Apart from a few denominational organisations such as the Australian Jewish Welfare Society (AJWS) and the Jewish communities of Melbourne and Sydney[40], refugees who made it to Australia had little official, institutionalised support. Those who were allowed to enter the country technically arrived as migrants: the government expected them to produce enough financial capital and the necessary skills to provide for themselves, thus it did not see any need to support them. Due to the official refusal of treating refugees differently to regular migrants, most of the new arrivals, particularly those who were not members of a religious community, were left on their own. To make things worse, public discourses were largely against them and they were widely perceived as a threat to the labour market as well as to the homogeneity of the "British" society.[41] Furthermore, Australians were not accustomed to encountering larger numbers of strangers.

In this context, it seems particularly promising to examine refugee memories of encounter experiences during their initial contact phase after the refugees' arrival to see how they remembered and depicted "everyday otherness". It is important to understand how locals and refugees responded to each other and how their individual response to the challenges of their intercultural encounters affected their identities. After arriving in their new host countries, many refugees built up social ties to respond to notions of

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[39] V.S. Kalrah, et. Al., Diaspora and Hybridity (London: Sage, 2005), 71.

[40] Lang, *Fahrt ins Blaue*, 36.

[41] Wiemann, *German and Austria Refugees*, 48; Eva Knabl, Sarah Petutschnig, David Röck, „But Sympathy cannot go so far as to Permit them to pour into Australia like a Cataract"– Die negative Rezeption von Flüchtlingen in australischen Medien, in: Philipp Strobl (ed.), *Die Flüchtlingskrise der 1930er Jahre in australischen Tageszeitungen. Eine medienhistorische Diskursanalyse* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac, 2018), 81-90, 81.

"everyday otherness" and promote themselves and their cultural capital. Their strategies of building up ties are also highly relevant for this study. The fact that almost all of them had hastily escaped into a different social and cultural context without having had any time for preparation and that they, as well as the members of the host society, had diverging definitions of how they ought to behave in everyday life situations, further affected the forming of their identities.[42]

Class affiliation was another important factor that determined the procedure of making contacts to members of the host society. Most of the refugees belonged to the educated Viennese upper and middle classes. A substantial part of them had pursued middle-class professions in Austria. Many worked as doctors, artists, lawyers or tradesmen before coming to Australia. Their escape in most cases meant a considerable biographical disruption for them. In Australia, refugees were expected to fully adapt values and norms and to gratefully carry out the jobs Australians did not want to do. In most cases, they ended up doing low paid casual and domestic work that differed greatly from their former middle-class professions.[43] These different expectations caused difficulties and tensions, as the refugees memoirs showed.

Depending on the refugees' needs and interests, as well as on the expectations of local Australians, the process of making contacts was highly dynamic and hybrid and turned out to be different in every single case. As we will see, refugees made very ambivalent experiences when interacting with their new fellow countrymen, ranging from friendly support and sympathy, tolerance, rejection, bullying, Anti-Semitism, to violent assaults. In many cases, they described more than one different type of experience. By and large, three everyday life situations of encounter with their new fellow citizens dominated almost all depictions:

-          Immediate encounters after their arrival
-          Everyday neighbourhood encounters
-          Encounters at the workplace

In the following, I will use these three situations to structure my analysis of the memories, refugees had on their encounter experiences.

a) Immediate Encounters after the arrival
The experiences refugees made upon their arrival after their long journey around the world were particularly important for the ways they imagined

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[42] Winiarska, "Intercultural Neighbourly Encounters", 46.
[43] Wiemann, German and Austria Refugees, 147.

their future in their new homeland. It was a time when they gained first impressions of Australia. Thus, it is not surprising that the moment of arrival dominated the refugees' depictions of their past. Most of them were in a precarious financial situation. Their sudden escape from Nazi-occupied Austria, had left them with scarce financial resources. By the end of 1938, it was practically impossible to take more than 10 *Reichsmark* out of Germany due to discriminatory Nazi taxation laws.[44] Consequently, refugees generally arrived in Australia with either very little financial capital, or with debts because of the high costs of the passage to Australia and the fact that most of them had borrowed the so-called landing money required to enter the country. "Those who arrived before the outbreak of the war had great difficulties to find a job. Their slender financial resources dwindled dangerously", as one refugee put it.[45] Since there was virtually no financial backing from the government, some of the refugees depended on the support of denominational aid organisation (such as the Jewish Welfare Society, or local Jewish communities). Many, however, were left entirely on their own, especially those who were no members of a denominational organisation.

Some had distant relatives or casual acquaintances to look after them and help them settle in. Some mentioned that Australians supported them by picking up at the port or assisting them with accommodation. Maria Bergel who arrived in Adelaide in 1938 with her husband and her two daughters recalled: "A Ms. Solomon picked us up with her car and wanted to show us the Synagogue. [...] We were welcomed by the rabbi. He offered us his help and support. Ms. Solomon organised accommodation for us."[46] Annemarie Mutton, who arrived with her husband in 1938 recalled being picked up at the port by acquaintances:

"We arrived in Melbourne for disembarkation very early in the morning. We were met at the ship by Dr. Bill Wishart and his wife Olive, who had guaranteed for us. They took us in their car to their house in Auburn Road, Hawthorn. They gave us a room with a double bed. [...] They had arranged a sort of housekeeping job for us [...] not far from them."[47]

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[44] For more information see: Hannelore Burger, *Heimatrecht und Staatsbürgerschaft österreichischer Juden* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2014), 150.

[45] Karl Bittmann, *Strauss to Matilda: Viennese in Australia 1938-1988* (Maryborough: Wenkart Foundation, 1988), 15.

[46] M. Bergel, personal communication, n.d.

[47] State Libary of Victoria, MS12651, Mutton Annemarie, Papers, ca. 1930-1987. [manuscript]., c. 1930 – 1987.

As the Viennese art historian Gertrude Langer described, she and her husband were welcomed at the port "with open arms." She even recalled having had "the most wonderful time socially, really immediately."[48] Australians also supported the Langers' search for a job. In her case, a local professor of architecture mediated a job in an architectural company for her husband. Elisabeth Ziegler, who arrived in Sydney in June 1939 together with her husband made similar experiences: "We came to Sydney and Mr. Starr was there waiting for us. [...] We were lucky that Mr. Starr had friends who lost their housemaid. And I started to become a housemaid with them. They were very nice. "[49]

Others had no personal contacts and received no support from aid organisations or private supporters. I their cases memories of isolation and loneliness were particularly dominant. Viola Winkler who arrived in Sydney described her feelings of estrangement: "Everything was strange in Australia: the landscape, the language, no one was friendly, and no one attempted to help us. I had the greatest difficulties finding a job."[50] Arriving in mid-1938 Kurt Selby was not welcomed at the port by anyone and had to organise himself accommodation. He even suffered from occasional Anti-Semitism, as his daughter recalled: "He lived alone in a boarding house when he arrived. He was attacked for being Jewish and went to the police."[51] Helen Roberts, who had organised a job for herself in Sydney prior to her escape had to find out after her arrival that the job was taken. "I put an ad in the Sydney Morning Herald. We got a letter from a man who said he was a doctor and he can send us a permit. When we came here there was nothing. And he said there was everything here for us but there was nothing," she later stated in an interview.[52] John Hearst who arrived in Melbourne together with his wife gave insights into another aspect of the treatment refugees in search of a job had to accept:

"In March 1939 we arrived here. The next day they [members of the Jewish Welfare Society] picked us up and brought us to the boarding house and then we were invited to go to the office of the Jewish welfare society and then they will see that they get us some employment. The easiest way to get

48 National Library of Australia (NLA), Gertrude Langer Interviewed by Barbara Blackman [sound recording], Oral TRC 1171 (transcript), 37.

49 Jewish Museum Sydney (JMS), Class: AU006, title: Liesel Ziegler Oral History Interview.

50 Verein Lernen aus Zeitgeschichte (eds.,) A Letter To the Stars. Holocaust – Die Überlebenden. Schüler schreiben Geschichte (Vienna: author's edition, 2005), 311.

51 Eleanor Hart (daughter of Selbys), in discussion with the author, Melbourne, June 2016.

52 SJM, AU022, title: Helen Roberts Oral History Interview.

employment was to work as a married couple... It was a fantastic thing. You should have seen how we were examined. There came a bloke named Joseph. He looked at Mummy and touched her arms and said: Oh, she is quite strong – should be alright. Looked at me: Oh, he's quite alright too. Could be quite useful. I felt like on a slave market – it was terrible."[53]

b) Everyday Neighbourhood Encounters
The neighbourhood was a very important place for encounters with the local population. Depending on the refugees' specific situation and the neighbourhood they choose, their experiences of encounter varied greatly. Some described that they came into a very friendly and supportive neighbourly environment. "As a corollary we appreciated the fast-instant assistance, given us from all of our neighbours when a grassfire broke lose in our back garden," Annemarie Mutton recalled in her memoirs and further stated:

"In Hawthorn, we had already established an image of ourselves as people, not only just aliens, or colloquially bloody reffos. [...] The Australians, we met through letters of introduction and then by being handed around a bit were hospitable and kind. An Australian friend even lend us his car."[54]

After her arrival in provincial Brisbane, Gertrude Langer described the fast and instant support she received by some of her neighbours:

"I was still in my room thinking what to do, not knowing quite where to turn, when all of a sudden, I was told to come down into the hall, there is a young lady there asking for me. So, I said, 'Well, that can't be so because I do not know a single soul in Brisbane'. 'Oh, yes. She said she wants to meet Dr Langer'. So, I said all right, so I went down and there stood a very tall woman, young, there with a bunch of flowers. [...] Well, anyhow, Margaret and I became friends almost immediately and I had my first friend in about 24 hours. She couldn't do enough for me. She said, "What can I help you with first?". I said, 'Finding a place where to live'."[55]

Eva Bostock, who arrived in Sydney in 1939 together with her husband described that one of their neighbours invited them to a holiday trip only one

[53] J. Hearst, personal communication, n.d.
[54] State Libary of Victoria (SLV), MS12651, Mutton Annemarie, Papers, ca. 1930-1987. [manuscript]., c. 1930 – 1987.
[55] NLA, Langer, 51.

month after her arrival: "We made friends in the bakery [the place where they lived] and they introduced us to other people. They had a 1927 Essex. And we went on a trip to Mt. Kosciusko."[56]

Elisabeth Ziegler, who moved into a small town in the Hunter Valley north of Sydney described some initial difficulties when she encountered her new neighbours:

"When we came to this little town, we were like a wonder to them [the neighbours]. They had never seen a Jew or a foreigner before. It was much harder for them than for us, [they were] a little bit suspicious at first probably but it worked out well."[57]

Before she moved to the small town, she had lived rather isolated in Sydney as she described.[58] The isolation they encountered in their neighbourhoods was a dominant issue in many memories. After his arrival in Melbourne, John Hearst described initial difficulties in finding local friends: "We had not many Australian friends - only one neighbour."[59] The Viennese writer Paul Hirsch-Hatvani who arrived in Melbourne aged 47 stated in one of his autobiographical post-war writings: "At first, there were not many Australians around when we [a group of German-speaking refugees] met." He further wrote in a letter to a friend in the United States: "To be honest, for years, we have been living here in complete isolation. There are almost no people to have at least some kind of interesting conversations with."[60]

Some refugees, on the other hand, described that they encountered an atmosphere of hostility and rejection in their neighbourhoods. Viola Winkler recalled:

"People were not used to refugees and kept away. There were no English classes and no welcoming things. I had to be on my own. People used to abuse me in the bus: 'reffo go home to where you came from' [...] From September 1939 on we became enemy aliens. We were treated as if we were one of the Nazis. [...] We were outcasts."[61]

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[56] SJM, Class: AU033, title: Eva Bostock Oral History Interview.

[57] JMS, Class: AU006, title: Liesel Ziegler Oral History Interview.

[58] JMS, Class: AU006, title: Liesel Ziegler Oral History Interview.

[59] J. Hearst, personal communication, n.d.

[60] Monash University Library (MUL), Paul Hatvani letter to Fritz Czucka, 20 Oct.1961.

[61] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), USC Shoah Foundation Institute testimony of Viola Winkler, Oral History, VHA Interview Code: 5134.

Annemarie Mutton recalled some Anti-Semitic encounters in her neighbourhood and a suspicious behaviour of governmental officials:

"Emil [a friend] and I were attacked by a stranger after leaving the office after hours. The police came and asked: 'Did he attack you because you are a Jew'?' We were kept over an hour to answer questions of our origin. [...] We confirmed the same story but were listened to with suspicion."[62]

Making local friends was a key event that featured prominently in the refugee's memories. Again, we can see from the memories that this game-changing event usually happened faster, in case the refugees had someone to support them, as the above-mentioned story of Gertrude Langer showed. If refugees were left on their own and thus felt isolated in their neighbourhood these key events took them much longer. Viola Winkler re-called such a game-changing event, that sustainably affected her further live in Australia:

"After some years in Australia, I met a painter who introduced me to local people and artists in Sydney. This woman changed my entire life in Australia. She showed me the best places in Sydney – sometimes it just needs a kind-hearted person to make the world a better place for others."[63]

Another space of encounter which concerned the refugees' children was the school. Joan Lynn who arrived in Adelaide aged three recalls: "I do not re-member any insults from Australians except for one boy in school. There was this kid who did not want to sit next to me because he claimed I was a Nazi."[64] Others felt isolated because of language and ethnic barriers: "My sister and I at first had only one friend in school. She was a German girl to whom we spoke exclusively German. We had problems learning English during the first years, "as Sue Copolov recalls, who arrived in Melbourne in 1939 at the age of 10.[65] Annemarie Mutton recalled the xenophobia, she and her husband encountered when they searched for a school for her oldest daughter and attended the open day of a local school:

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[62] State Libary of Victoria, MS12651, Mutton Annemarie, Papers, ca. 1930-1987. [manu-script]., c. 1930 – 1987.

[63] USHMM, USC Shoah Foundation Institute testimony of Viola Winkler, Oral History, VHA In-terview Code: 5134.

[64] Joan Lynn, Interview 28.02.2016.

[65] Interview with Sue Copolov, 14.08.2017.

"It had been announced by a note to the parents to make an effort to come and see the school, if possible fathers also. Ernest [her husband] made a valiant effort to desist from going to the office early but to come with me to see Muriel's school and meet her teachers. The headmaster was introduced to us, or we to him. He looked at Ernest and said: 'Well, thanks for coming Mr. Bowen, of course our men, our fathers have to go to work, they can't come.' Ernest was so devastated, so enraged, so hurt, he left at once. He never again came to any single function of any of the children's school or activities."[66]

Some of the refugees settled in ethnic or religious communities which offered them a place to live together with people sharing the same fate and ethnic or religious background. This helped them to overcome feelings of isolation, as Kurt Selby's daughter recalled: "He settled in a Jewish Community and had most of his contacts with other members of his group. It was a safer little world he created for himself and his wife."[67] Bruno Bush, who fled Vienna in 1939 also described that he found a home in a Jewish community in Sydney: "We spoke Yiddish at home. My children went to a Jewish Kindergarten and got a Jewish education."[68]

C) Encounters at the Workplace
The workplace was the third major place where refugees usually encountered local Australians. For many of them, the place of employment offered the most intense opportunities to make new social contacts. Viola Winkler's description of her hasty and unspectacular wedding three months after her arrival in Sydney, where only two of her husband's "workmates" participated, indicates the importance of contacts made at the workplace:

"We married in a registry office. He [her husband] brought two workmates with him as witnesses, they brought along a sponge cake, we had this for lunch, there was nothing else, my husband went back to work."[69]

Maria Bergel opened up a grocery store in Adelaide together with her husband in 1941. She recalled: "Many people came to see the new strangers

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[66] State Libary of Victoria, MS12651, Mutton Annemarie, Papers, ca. 1930-1987. [manuscript]., c. 1930 – 1987.

[67] Eleanor Hart (daughter of Selby), in discussion with the author, Melbourne, June 2016.

[68] B. Bush, personal communication, n.d.

[69] USHMM, USC Shoah Foundation Institute testimony of Viola Winkler, Oral History, VHA Interview Code: 5134.

with their strange accent. In the end – it [her shop] was like a club. We made many friends."[70]

The workplace however also offered the framework for tensions and negative encounters, especially during the first months after the refugees' arrival. John Hearst, who had managed a chain of furniture stores in Vienna, for example, had found employment as a domestic servant together with his wife after his arrival in Melbourne. He recalled being exploited by his employer: "We found a job as housekeepers: Alice [his wife] had to cook and I had to mow the lawn and wash the car. We got accommodation and very little pocket money. [...] I felt like on a slave market. Alice was crying all day 'we are treated like slaves'". [71] Helen Roberts, who also worked as a domestic servant after her arrival in Sydney described similar conditions: "I had to go there and do the sewing for them. They treated me like the last servant. I remember I was so hungry because they did not give me anything to eat. The things I had to sort of go through were just incredible."[72] Hans Eisler, who found a job on an agricultural farm described even worse conditions:

"That's probably the worst four months of my life because the people I worked for on the poultry farm were very cruel. They made me sleep in the barn. I was bitten by rats [...] They gave me food once or twice a day and if I asked for more, they refused it. No meat. One egg, and jam on Sundays was the big treat. They were the meanest people I have ever met. They were supposed to pay me five shillings a week. I did get it a few times but certainly not a weekly. I was completely dependent on them. I could not speak English. I did not know what to do."[73]

Besides poor working conditions, some refugees recalled being mobbed by their workmates. In an interview, Hans Eisler described:

"They were rather cruel, particularly to me because I was younger. It was bastardisation exercises – having to shove pears with your nose through cow dung. I remember very distinctly the day war was declared – I'd only been there about a month. It was Sunday night, the fire was going, and Menzies declared war on Germany. And I felt so good. They played the national

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[70] M. Bergel, personal communication, n.d.

[71] J. Hearst, personal communication, n.d.

[72] Helen Roberts, interview.

[73] Glen Palmer, Reluctant Refugee: Unaccompanied Refugee and Evacuee Children in Australia, 1933-45, Diss. Phil, University of Adelaide 1995, 277.

anthem, 'God save the King'. I stood up and they all laughed at me. Then, when I sat down, they removed the chair and I fell…They had a lot of fun at my expense, and that hurt at the time…Then came the Jewish holidays and I remember asking to be excused…and that sort of set me aside from the rest."[74]

Since the government was never tired to assure that refugees would not occupy jobs Australians could do, the public generally reacted very sensitively on that issue. Mobbing and negative public reactions were omnipresent whenever well-qualified refugees tried to obtain one of the more prestigious jobs. The announcement of the Sydney City Council to hire the highly skilled Viennese electro-technician Walter Diesendorf as an assistant engineer in December 1938, provoked an aggressive wave of resistance and a negative media echo. On March 1939, for example, the Queensland based Morning Bulletin complained about the cast, claiming that it is irresponsible to put "such a man [!] into a key industry. The man [Diesendorf] would be interned if we were at war with Germany."[75] Ernest Bowen' wife remembered the buzz caused by her husband's appointment as a foreman in a wool mill:

"Ernest was introduced to the Laycocks, owners of Laconia Woolen Mills. They employed him as a foreman. He was a well experienced, well trained textile man and well qualified to reorganize this or that procedure. However, the depression still left many people unemployed and the factory workers went on strike because they said this sort of job should be given to an Australian. It had not been proved that Ernest had qualifications not obtainable in Australia of an Australian born citizen. The case came to court."[76]

The architect Karl Langer encountered similar reactions when he was appointed town planner for Brisbane (Queensland), as his wife described:

"That was in 1946 and the returned soldiers made such a campaign against him that he declined the job before he even started it. They pulled his name through the papers and I do not know what all, even through parliament,

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[74] USHMM, Oral history interview with Hans Eisler, Accession Number: 2009.214.61 | RG Number: RG-50.617.0061.
[75] Morning Bulletin, 15 Mar 1939, 12.
[76] State Libary of Victoria, MS12651, Mutton Annemarie, Papers, ca. 1930-1987. [manuscript]., c. 1930 – 1987.

and Karl nearly lost his health over it. It was so upsetting, you have just no idea. [...] It was so absolutely terrible what they did to him."[77]

5 Analysis

The Australian government expected refugees from National Socialism to cater for their own needs and their own costs of living: not much was done to support their acculturalisation. There was generally little public knowledge about the refugees' sensitive situation. Some of them were able to gain support from Jewish communities. Non-religious refugees or those who belonged to different faiths, however, in most cases did not receive any support at all. These factors complicated the refugees' settling process and, in many cases, influenced their level of identifications with their new host society.

"Class" was an important factor that affected refugee encounters and offered additional points of rupture. Viennese refugees moved from a society characterised by a marked class distinction into one that was much less segmented socially. Most of them had belonged to the educated upper and middle classes and suffered from an intense biographical disruption. They had pursued middle-class professions in Vienna and, after their escape to Australia, were expected to do jobs, Australians did not want to do. Consequently, many recalled being exploited as cheap labour force, or even as "slave labour" as John Hearst put it. This sometimes led to tensions with the local population, what also affected encounter situations.

Refugees further recalled that encounters with locals during that phase took place mainly on three different occasions: Immediate encounters after their arrival, everyday neighbourhood encounters, and encounters at the workplace. The experiences they made on these occasions affected the kind of their cultural identification with their host society.

The first phase of encounters, immediately after the refugees' arrival, carried the most diverging memories. Some of the refugees recalled being welcomed at the port and having found shelter and accommodation. They even mentioned that their hosts had organised jobs for them. In those cases, the initial arrival phase was not remembered as a time of isolation and desperation but rather as a new, challenging but positive experience. Interviews

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[77] NLA, Langer, 51.

with Maria Bergel, Annemarie Mutton, Gertrude Langer und Elisabeth Ziegler who recalled having enjoyed local support show that they engaged themselves more intensely with their new host society and generally identified more positively with their host culture, at the same time either keeping up ties to relatives and friends in their country of origin, or to other members of the exile community. Others recalled the first days and weeks after their arrival as a period of isolation and estrangement. As John Hearst's memories show, they sometimes also felt exploited: many regarded themselves as helpless and felt that they were at the mercy of their fellow-Australians. Prevailingly negative reports on their early encounters and their isolated living situations indicated an initial low level of identification with the Australian society. As we can see, encounter experiences were extremely individualised. In general, there were no visible class, or age-specific differences: all of those interviewed for this paper came from an upper-middle class background. Roberts and Hearst had even established contacts to Australians before coming to Australia, however, despite their previous contacts, perceived their initial encounters as rather unsupportive.

Encounters in the neighbourhood were remembered similarly different. As many interviewees pointed out, social capital and networks played a substantial role in overcoming notions of isolation. Many stressed the importance of having been introduced personally or by letter to their neighbours. Thus, as they depicted, personal reference was quintessential for them to extend their social contacts in their neighbourhoods. In general, elderly refugees sometimes felt stuck "in between two worlds" thus keeping a lower level of cultural identity with their new host society. A good example can be the writer Paul Hatvani, who came to Australia at the age of 47 and later described his feelings of identification and belonging with the words "neither here, nor there."[78] In contrast, others such as Kurt Selby who decided to settle into ethnic or religious neighbourhoods created themselves a "new home away from home", incorporating many aspects of their old home context in Australia including culture and language.

The workplace was the last space of encounter analysed in this paper. In most cases, refugees were unable to find employment in Australian companies, since there were only few jobs available due to the tense economic situation. Consequently, most of them started their own businesses, based on their European knowledge and cultural capital. In some cases, they made

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[78] Paul Hatvani, Nicht da, nicht dort: Australien, in: Akzente 6 (1973): 564-571.

a living by referring to and identifying with their Austrian or European culture. The Adelaide based refugee Maria Bergel, who opened up a European Deli, or Charles William Anton who founded the first Austrian style ski club in New South Wales are only two of many examples of refugees who identified themselves professionally with elements of their former home culture. In those cases, ties with the old home country remained strong and the refugees also maintained a high level of cultural identification with their new host society. Refugees who were able to compete on the labour market because of their sought-after professional know-how usually made different experiences. They almost unanimously faced waves of resistance and hostility directed against foreigners who were suspected to steal high profile jobs from Australians in times of economic tension, as the life-stories of Karl Langer, Walter Diesendorf and Ernest Bowen show.

6 Conclusion

History allows us to see the present in a new light. It highlights the peculiarities of the status quo and suggests affinities between what was and what is. In this sense, historians have been making countless efforts to analyse and understand the complex processes of migration and forced-migration. By analysing biographical case studies, this paper offered an insight into the complexities and divergence of identity forming processes related to forced migrations. As the journey through the memories presented here indicate, the formations of identities are highly individualised and hybrid. What I particularly intended to show is that many different degrees and kinds of cultural identifications deployed once refugees who were forced to flee their home countries had entered a host society. These identifications were hybrid and could change depending on the experiences the refugees made. Comprehending these processes by firstly locating them through the narrations of the protagonists' experiences as well as by contextualising them against their background of their cultural domain can help shaping our understanding of the complex processes related to forced migrations.

The level of cultural identity among the people analysed here was fluid. Over time, many refugees reduced the bonds to their old homeland, because of many different reasons: Some did not have friends and family in Austria anymore, some consciously cut their ties to a society that had forced them to leave. Others, contrarily, intensified their contacts, visited Europe several times after the war even making new friends and ties. People such as Sue Coppolov, Gerry Felser, or Charles William Anton, for example, used

their ties to build up solid businesses in Australia based on contacts with their former home society.

As we have seen, the study of encounter experiences of historical actors allows comprehensive insights into everyday encounters in so called contact zones that shaped identity processes. They could be explored much more intensely and much more research is needed in this field. Thus I hope that the approach demonstrated in this study will offer a starting point for further socio-historical analyses in the field.