



The Blank Spots: Making Migratory Archives Visible by Exploring Photographs

Gaby Fierz

To cite this article: Gaby Fierz (2021) The Blank Spots: Making Migratory Archives Visible by Exploring Photographs, *Visual Anthropology*, 34:4, 368-384, DOI: [10.1080/08949468.2021.1944775](https://doi.org/10.1080/08949468.2021.1944775)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08949468.2021.1944775>



Published online: 30 Jul 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 20



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



The Blank Spots: Making Migratory Archives Visible by Exploring Photographs

Gaby Fierz

Globalized cities, like Basel with its pharmaceutical industry, are shaped by migration. At the same time migration, one of the driving forces of urbanization, scarcely surfaces in public discourse. Due to a dominant codified remembrance politics that unfolds along the lines of national discourse, official archives and museums fail to integrate evidence and objects testifying to migration into their collections. This article presents three case studies of another type of archive—namely the Özlem Fotostudio, The House of Resistance and Solidarity, and Novartis and the *Papageienhäuser* (Parrot Blocks)—all of which were studied in a research project conducted in Basel in preparation for the exhibition “Çok Basel Transnational Memoryscapes Switzerland—Turkey,” during May 3–June 30, 2019. This article challenges the common understanding of an archive as a static form of storage. It shows how photographs, as triggers of memory and storytelling, can be interrogated and function as apt tools to make migratory archives, hidden memories, and narratives of migrant communities visible.

INTRODUCTION

Over centuries, different movements of migration have shaped cities such as the highly globalized contemporary city of Basel (Bale) with its international pharmaceutical industry. Migration is constitutive of urbanization. In this sense migration after World War II was only a new phase in the transformation of cities such as Basel and not the beginning of migration to Switzerland, the latter being a widely held conception. Today migration is part of everyday urban reality, even though this dynamic scarcely surfaces in public memory. To shed light on the unseen contribution of migration to urban transformation and development, and to understand the causes for these blind spots, in 2018 I initiated an exhibition project in collaboration with Bilgin Ayata, Professor for Political Sociology at the University of Basel. At the same time we ran a course called Migration and Memory for students of Sociology at the University. The main reason that both the exhibition project and Migration and Memory course focused specifically on migrants from Turkey is that these migrants represent a significant group that is well-established

GABY FIERZ is a social anthropologist and independent curator. She has been teaching courses in cultural diversity at the University of Teacher Education in Lucerne since 2018. Her key interests are migration and postcolonialism. E-mail: gfierz@bluewin.ch; website: <https://www.gabrielafierz.com>

in the city and which shapes Basel's politics, businesses and art scenes. For example, two of the five members of the National Council representing the Canton Basel-City have dual citizenship and are Kurdish, originally from Turkey. This is rather exceptional in Switzerland, where people with a migration background who grew up and were socialized in Switzerland face many obstacles on the way toward political participation.¹ Despite this visibility their memories, as well as those of other migrant groups—in other words, the diasporic history—are still not reflected in official archives or museums and remain largely overlooked in both Basel's and Switzerland's culture of remembrance.

Some of the students who attended the Migration and Memory class belonged to exactly this constituency. Together with their peers they conducted fieldwork in the city, focusing on migration from Turkey, for the planned exhibition on the subject. The main question here was: How and where is migration from Turkey remembered in the city of Basel? To answer this question, they did research in archives and conducted audio and video interviews, before presenting their findings in short film and audiovisual installation formats in the exhibition "Çok Basel Transnational Memoryscapes Switzerland—Turkey" (2019).²

As the curator of the exhibition I undertook further fieldwork with activists of the solidarity movement for refugees from Turkey, following and looking for visual traces. This article is based on findings of the students as well as my own research. The students and I conducted interviews, did research in archives, and started to patrol the city in so-called "walk-alongs" (Degen and Rose 2012, 3281). We also used the photo-elicitation method to recall memories (Collier 1957, 843–59). Three case studies emerged: the *Özlem Fotostudio* (Figure 1); the photograph of *The House of Resistance and Solidarity* by Gertrud Vogler (Figure 2), and Ali Meraiha's photograph (Figure 3) documenting the demolition of the *Papageienhäuser* (Parrots Houses) for the development of the new neighborhood Novartis Campus, a large gated area on the margins of the city reserved for the Novartis company and its employees. The three case studies show that to make migratory archives visible, the classical concept of archive as a static and narrow form of storage has to be questioned and broadened. The archive itself, as will be shown in this article, has to be discussed, interrogated and constructed in a new way by combining sources from different contexts.

The three case studies confirm what Hintermann and Rupnow (2016, 60–61) write on migrant archives in Austria and other European countries: owing to a dominant codified remembrance politics that unfolds along the lines of national discourse, official archives and museums fail to integrate collections of objects of memory, letters, diaries or photos of migrating subjects and thereby neglect an important body of knowledge. Migrants' private archives, histories, and the narratives of individuals, families and larger community groups about experiences of displacement, movement, arrival, and everyday life in a transnational space between the new homeland and their country of origin form a significant part of social knowledge, but are at risk of being lost or destroyed.³ There are many reasons for this precarious situation. Foremost among these are, first, the failing recognition of migration as a driving force for social and cultural developments as well as urban transformation and, secondly, the

state's perspective on migration—with the exception of the welcomed migrants, or so-called expats (highly qualified researchers, executives)—as a socially problematic and dangerous development. These conditions have led to a one-sided perspective and non-representation in the cultural institutions responsible for the creation and preservation of collective memory.

As in other cities urban development in Basel is primarily associated with the dynamics of capital accumulation of neoliberal capitalism. The resultant urban landscapes are characterized by the segregation and marginalization of migrants, as well as by the erasure of the notion of the city as a place where everybody is entitled to recognition of his/her citizenship rights. This marginalization and sociospatial segregation of migrants is mirrored in collective memory institutions—namely museums and official archives—of the city; therefore new approaches are needed to make migrant archives visible. In the context of the three case studies, the *city-as-archive* concept coined by the anthropologist and theoretician of critical urban studies, Vyjayanthi Rao, is of great interest. She points out that as “a principle of order, the archive provides a base upon which history, memory and recollection takes place. Such memory structures relations between strangers thereby producing a sense of urban locality and space” (Rao 2015, 185). The archive is not limited to official memory institutions but functions as a principle of order linked and related to urban spaces and their inhabitants in general. The archive influences and is influenced by urbanization, the perception of an urban landscape, and the collective memory and identity of different social groups interacting in urban spaces. Rao considers the archive as a process, not as a static institution. She focuses on the void, on the non-built and the invisibility of the past as she emphasizes history and memory beyond the visible, the built infrastructure, and the stored past in official archives.

The *city-as-archive* concept highlights cities as physical spaces where power structures, but also where various social practices and processes such as migration, memorization, emancipation and resistance become visible. With regard to the three case studies, understanding the city as archive allows us to notice the often-hidden structures and dynamics that are creating and reproducing social injustice, reflected in a grand narrative that eliminates the small narratives. But the *city-as-archive* concept also allows us to focus on the city as a space of social and cultural practice that challenges the official narrative and remembrances, confronting these with narratives that elevate and center the messages and articulations of those who generally are not heard in public discourse.

When archives are understood as processual and interconnected, or as open and democratic, it becomes possible to make out the *blank spots* as well as to shed light on them, thus making invisible hidden memories and narratives visible.

Michael Rothberg's ([2009] 2018) approach to memory as *multidirectional* is helpful too: *multidirectionality* explores the hidden memories of migrant groups, organized by the majority, but also unmasks the majority group's attitudes as not being universal and highlights power relations. Rothberg argues:

The archive of multidirectional memory is irreducibly transversal; it cuts across genres, national contexts, periods, and cultural traditions. Because dominant ways of thinking (such as competitive memory) have refused to acknowledge the multidirectional flows of influence and articulation that collective memory activates, the comparative critic must first constitute the archive by forging links between dispersed documents. (*idem*, 5)

The methodology used to explore the three case studies is influenced by Rothberg's understanding of the archive as a constitutional process "by forging links between dispersed documents." It included research in official archives, as well as qualitative methodological tools like interviews, so-called "walk-alongs" (Degen and Rose 2012, 3281), and photo-elicitation (Saini and Schärer 2014, 314). "Walk-alongs" means experiencing the city on foot, to study urban landscapes and citizens from the sidewalk. Degen and Rose, for example, contend that so-called "walk-alongs" can "produce richly evocative sensory impressions" (2012, 3281). The ethnographer and the research participant can engage in a dialog that reveals diverse contextual knowledge of spaces and their functions (Ley 2021). The photo elicitation method is one of the most widely known and frequently used techniques in ethnographic research. It is based on the fairly simple principle of using one or more images (usually photos, but also videos, drawings, or other types of visual material) to promote discussion in an interview, asking the informants to comment. The images may be produced by informants or provided by the researcher (Bignante 2010, 2); in this case I provided the photos.

In addition to research in archives, these two methods seemed to me appropriate to create a new type of archive. In other words, using these ethnographic bottom-up approaches, I shed light on hidden interrelations between urban development, migration and the blank spots in remembrance culture.

INVISIBLE, SILENCED, FORGOTTEN

There is hardly any visual material of immigration from Turkey stored in Basel's official institutions of memory. This echoes the observations made by Edwards and Mead (2013) on the failure of British museums to represent their colonial past. They speak of a "double invisibility" caused by the absence and disavowal of the images and histories of the colonial past, which is responsible for blanking out the colonial history in the nation's museums. They write that "photographic invisibility is both a symptom of and metaphor for the 'invisibility of the colonial past'" (*idem*, 19). Such double invisibility can also be found in the lack of documentation and representation of Turkish immigration in Basel's collections of memory institutions, such as the state archives, museum collections, or the large photo collection at the Basel Mission headquarters. Consequently migrants' contribution to the urban and cultural development remains a *blank spot* in the official historical narrative of the city of Basel.

This is no surprise when considering Foucault's (1970) and Derrida and Prenowitz's (1995) general reflections on archives as hegemonic institutions with

the archivists as their gatekeepers. The non-recognition of migration as a constituent factor of urban and cultural history is due to the fact that migration has only recently become a concern for historians, while previous research on the history of immigration to Switzerland focused primarily on the changing migration policies and migration regimes of the Swiss state (Lüthi and Skenderovic 2019, 11).

This one-sided focus on national or federal migration regimes in academia is mirrored in the archival situation. For example, the State Archive of the Canton Basel-Stadt houses up to 500,000 immigration files and records of individuals who have violated the applicable immigration laws in one way or another. The shelf space for these documents exceeds one kilometer, forming the largest collection of its kind in Switzerland. Setting aside the fact that this documentation is a testimony to Basel as a border city (neighboring both France and Germany), this situation is based on a one-sided, mostly negative attitude that considers migration as a cultural, social and political problem, as the exhibition "magnet basel. Migration im Dreiländereck," during April 28–October 10, 2017 pointed out (magnet basel 2017).⁴

Furthermore archives focused on migrants' perspectives barely exist in civil society or private organizations. The associations established by migrants from Turkey in the late 1970s and especially in the 1980s kept no records, meaning that banners, photographs, meeting minutes, programs, manifestos and flyers have been lost. Among other reasons for this, police raids, rent increases and cramped living conditions have over the past 40 years forced the associations to find new premises on several occasions; and only very few archival objects moved with them.⁵ There are thus large gaps in the physical material and a general lack of visual data, including photographs. Additionally, a lack of recognition of their contribution to cultural and urban development—not only from the majority group in Basel society, but from Switzerland as a whole—influences the attitudes and conduct of immigrants from Turkey or other immigrant communities toward their own estimation of these contributions and their visual memory. Only recently have people with migration histories started to raise their voices, demanding that their economic, social and cultural contribution over the years to Swiss society be recognized. The foundation of the Institute New Switzerland (INES) in 2016 is an example of this.⁶ The act of forgetting is also crucial for understanding the dimensions in which our discussion of endangered visual archives of immigrants from Turkey in Basel is situated. Archiving requires decisions: decisions about what to keep and what to discard, decisions about what is worth remembering and what can be forgotten. Scholars such as Aleida Assmann have thematized this aspect. She describes archives as liminal zones, situated between memory and forgetting. Her conclusions are clear: we have to forget in order to remember; and she reminds us that "what is forgotten is not necessarily lost forever" (2010, 105–06). In the context of Basel's archival situation on migration, this means that even if migrants' archives are invisible or forgotten, they don't have to be lost forever, as the three case studies presented in this article point out.

To conclude this section I want to come back to the broader understanding of an archive, to Rao's city-as-archive concept. In the context of visibility and recognition,

that concept is an apt tool to shed light on hidden and non-valorized memories and narratives of migration linked to urban and cultural development. Even if silencing is always part of archiving, within the city-as-archive concept new types of archive yield other possibilities for making hidden archives visible. The concept considers the diverse connections between official institutions of remembrance, state archives, museums, municipal offices, informal meeting places, private collections, and individual spaces of experience and memories. As a method that creates new types of archive, this means that research is not limited to institutional archives but, as David Zeitlyn points out, it may include interviews with living informants (2012, 473). It is obvious that a search for and examination of visual evidence of migration will reveal uncharted territory and gaps, and at the same time show that these gaps and *blank spots* have turned out to be productive. In the preparatory research for the “Çok Basel” exhibition three photographs caught my interest and led to the three case studies presented here (Figures 1–3).

ÖZLEM FOTOSTUDIO — THE VIOLENT CLOSURE OF A SITE OF MEMORIAL PRACTICE

Following a break-in at the studio, I lay in a coma for a few weeks in intensive care. Since then, I can remember nothing of what happened before. (Bayram Senpınar, former proprietor of Özlem Fotostudio in Basel [this business closed in 2017], personal communication, October 16, 2018)

I became aware of the Özlem Fotostudio through a reproduction of the photograph (Figure 1) in an edition of *du*, a monthly Swiss arts magazine, which had an article about Kleinbasel, the part of Basel located on the right bank of the Rhine (1995, 9). In the early 1990s most of its residents did not hold a Swiss passport, and it was home to many migrants from Turkey (Braunschweig and Meyer 1995, 16). Basel’s Swiss majority residents therefore labeled it “Little Istanbul” (Suter 1993, 39)—a pejorative nickname that the mostly Kurdish inhabitants did not use. Referring to Rao’s city-as-archive concept, the labeling of “Little Istanbul” can be seen as a product of a specific perception of an urban landscape by the dominant social group. As such it became part of a collective memory of migration—as perceived by this majority group but not by the migrants themselves.

The photo of the Özlem Fotostudio taken in the 1990s caught my interest precisely because I had hoped to find a photo archive of pictures made by migrants for migrants, that is, making some migrants’ perspectives and narratives visible. The photographer Bayram Senpınar had opened the Özlem Fotostudio in Kleinbasel in the early 1980s, shortly before Basel became an important city of refuge for people from Turkey who had fled political persecution following Turkey’s military coup of 12 September 1980.

For almost 35 years Özlem Fotostudio was *the* place to go whenever members of the diaspora from Turkey (mainly Kurdish refugees) in Basel needed photographs taken. It issued photos for passports and for job applications. It photographed practically every wedding and every *sünnet* celebration



Figure 1 Özlem Fotostudio. (Photo Barnabás Bosshart/Fotostiftung Schweiz)

(circumcision), and it also arranged and developed group portraits, with clients choosing backdrops according to their taste.

I met the photographer Bayram Sempinar in October 2018, unfortunately a year too late to see the studio in action or to see his archive. During our meeting in a coffeehouse close to his former place of business, he told me: "There are great gaps in my memory. In 1999 I was severely beaten during a break-in at the studio. I barely survived. When I regained consciousness, my memories were gone. I now remember nothing of my life before the attack. We had to close for financial reasons. The demand for studio photos was going down.

The archive, the negatives, the prints, I had to throw them all in the garbage. I couldn't afford to rent a bigger storage location" (pers. comm., Oct. 16, 2018).

The loss of that photo archive is a loss of visual testimony. The images would have offered insights into esthetic developments and changes in how migrants represented themselves and were represented in photographs over the past forty years. This visual archive would have shed light on migratory memory culture like the few still existing photographs of H d r Emir presented by Burcu Dogramaci in the Journal *Fotogeschichte* (2019). Only by chance could the son save some of the prints, namely leftover prints that customers had failed to pick up. Parallels can be drawn to the archival situation of Özlem Fotostudio concerning the limited space and precarious living situations. As Memet Emir, a son of H d r Emir, said in his interview with Dogramaci, his father had lived with three men in a 15m² room and was not interested in keeping negatives and prints. He saw in his photographs no other value than a monetary one—the modest additional income that his work as an itinerant photographer for Vienna's migrant communities had generated (2019, 53–54).

The story of the loss of Özlem Fotostudio's archive is a tale of implicit "silencing." There is an interrelation between the marginalization of migrants and the failure to recognize the work and day-to-day cultural activities of migrants as being relevant to the history and cultural development of the local urban society. As the case of photographer H d r Emir suggests, the fate of the Özlem Fotostudio is not unique. Both are part of a more general narrative: a lack of recognition or valorization of the contributions made by immigrants from Turkey and other immigrant communities leads them to underestimate their own visual memory. This is a major reason why visual migratory archives are lost and migratory memories become invisible.

THE HOME OF RESISTANCE AND SOLIDARITY—PHOTO ELICITATION AS A FILL-IN

Yes, this building looks familiar. I think it was somewhere in Basel's Gundeldingen district, where exactly I can't say off the top of my head... (Sadık Küşne, activist, personal communication, Dec. 14, 2018)

While doing research in the Swiss Social Archives (*Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv Zürich*), I came across the work of the photographer Gertrud Vogler. Commissioned by the *WochenZeitung* and other newspapers, she created a photographic record of social movements, including demonstrations and solidarity meetings held by the mostly Kurdish diaspora in Switzerland. These include a record of demonstrations in Basel in the early 1980s, held in protest against Turkey's military dictatorship and its torture and repression of Kurds. Her images prompted me to start exploring visual memories of resistance and solidarity. This photograph caught my special attention (Figure 2). It shows an apartment building covered in banners bearing slogans such as "On hunger strike in protest against the massacres, executions and torture in Turkey and Kurdistan." This photograph appeared to me as having an iconic role as a repository and trigger for collective memories of resistance and solidarity



Figure 2 Protest in Basel, June 19, 1982. "On hunger strike in protest against massacres, executions, and torture in Turkey and Kurdistan." (Photo Gertrud Vogler, F_5107, Schweizer Sozialarchiv)

in the 1980s and 1990s. The caption informed me that the house was located in Basel and the photo was taken between 1983 and 1984. I did not have more information about the photograph, beyond knowing the photographer Gertrud Vogler to be a politically committed person and a press photographer.

It therefore seemed to me, in the context of our research on visual traces of immigration from Turkey in Basel, that this photo could be an important testimony of the resistance and solidarity activities in the early 1980s. But as Reinalter and Brenner (2011) point out, concerning the ability of a photograph as witness, “it loses all value as soon as no one is left to identify it” (2011, 233–34).⁷ Or, in the words of Aleida Assmann and Siegfried Kracauer, a photograph without frame (Assmann 2008, 5), without context and without stories becomes not a medium of memory, “but rather the sign of a loss of memory” (Kracauer [1927] 1963, 26). As the photo historian Peter Geimer points out, “photography has no identity, no unique character, no specific meaning independent of the one ascribed to it by the cultural, social, and institutional contexts of its diverse applications” (2009, 71). It was obvious that we should find contemporary witnesses, that is, people who lived in the house shown in the photograph at that time (Figure 2), in order to better understand it.

The photograph in hand, I went in search of the building and showed the image to activists originally from Turkey, as well as to Swiss activists who had helped organize demonstrations and solidarity meetings in Basel at the time. Using the photo-elicitation method as an aid in recalling memories, I asked them: “Do you know this house?” and “Where was it?” “Yes, that’s what some houses looked like back then”; “I think it must have been in Kleinbasel or maybe in Gundeldingen, or yes, it might have been at Heuwaage. There was a center there at one time”; “That building isn’t in Basel; it must be in Bern or Zurich,” were just some of the replies I received. I started to walk the city, to experience it on foot. I had one specific goal: to find the house which I was to call “House of Resistance and Solidarity.” From the people I asked in the street I got some indications about which neighborhood the house could have been in. On my walks I asked around 30 persons about the building. Most of them found that the house looked familiar and felt they had an idea as to where it could have been located; yet in the end, despite all efforts, I was unable to find the house or its former inhabitants. I had to give up the original plan to conduct oral history interviews with the former residents. Only recently—and accidentally—I saw the photograph again in an activist magazine from the 1980s with a caption indicating that the house was in fact located in the city of Zurich.

In the course of my inquiries I changed my plans and focused on interviews with activists and the stories they told me in response to that photo. I learned where in the city migrants from Turkey held association meetings and where political activists used to gather. Their stories opened up a new perspective on the city—a city map of constantly moving sites of resistance and solidarity emerged before my inner eye. The activists, most of them former refugees from Turkey, recounted that their associations often changed location because rents kept rising. The police regularly conducted searches of the premises and had people under constant observation. Swiss immigration authorities kept threatening them with deportation for their involvement in political activities. Private homes were raided and private possessions confiscated (C.E.D.R.I (Comité Européen pour la Défense des Réfugiés et Immigrés) 1987). The story

of the “House of Resistance and Solidarity” tells us something about the ambiguity of visibility and invisibility of migrants and Swiss activists remembrances. We have visual testimony, such as Vogler’s photograph, in the *Schweizer Sozialarchiv*, an official memory institution. But due to an incorrect caption the specific local context was lost and became invisible.

However, triggered by the photo of that house, memories surfaced in the interviews and conversations which actively involved Kurdish, Turkish and Swiss individuals—memories of places, memories of political activities, memories of a life in an insecure, half-clandestine situation, memories of lives at risk. In these stories, multiple memories became alive and visible. Even if the photograph of the “House of Resistance and Solidarity” (Figure 2) eventually led me to a house in Zurich, the gap and *blank spot* also brought visibility to places of resistance and solidarity in Basel. In line with Rao’s city-as-archive concept, tracking the interrelations between urban space, the memories of its inhabitants, and the official records of institutions helped me shed light on otherwise invisible history. These findings, the places, and their stories of the resistance and solidarity movement in Basel in the 1980s and 1990s, were presented to a wider public in the form of short films in the exhibition “Çok Basel”

NOVARTIS AND THE “PAPAGEIENHÄUSER” — MAJORITY NARRATIVES AND THE COUNTER-GAZE

Yes, I remember this photo—I forget who took it, I think it was an artist who lived there. I’ll ask around in Bollag [an artist collective] and hopefully get back to you soon... (Stella Händler, personal communication, March 20, 2019)

The third case study deals with a photograph showing the demolition of the so-called *Papageienhäuser* apartment blocks (“Parrot Blocks”) in June/July 2006 (Figure 3). In April 2009 this photograph was reproduced on the front cover of a magazine called *Bruchstücke* (“Fragments”), published by activists opposed to the gentrification of Basel’s St. Johann district, a part of the city that was completely transformed in the first ten years of the new millennium. At the time the global pharmaceutical company Novartis had set about expanding its Basel headquarters in St. Johann, and commissioned high-profile architects such as Frank O. Gehry, David Chipperfield, Tadao Ando, Herzog and de Meuron, and Alvaro Siza Vieira to develop its corporate campus. To do so, Novartis purchased land from the city of Basel: land occupied by green and yellow apartment blocks that, to a large extent, were home to Basel’s working-class community, mostly families from Turkey, but also people from Spain, Portugal and Italy. Tenancy agreements were terminated, and some of these homes were demolished. As Özge Akyol and Orhan Kemal Yüksel (2019), two students of the Migration and Memory course, found, the name *Papageienhäuser* was invented by nonresidents, that is, by people of Swiss nationality living in the same neighborhood, and was used by authorities, teachers or the staff of Basel’s Planning and Building Department.



Figure 3 Demolition of apartment blocks known as the “Papageienhäuser,” in Bruchstücke Basel Nord, 2009, 1. (Photo Ali Meraihia)

In contrast the actual residents never used this name to describe their homes. A former tenant recalled her school days, when she and others who lived there were described as “the kids from the ‘Papageienhäuser’” (pers. comm., Sept. 20, 2018). As a child she felt ashamed and excluded, marked as a foreigner. Other former residents were unfamiliar with the name *Papageienhäuser*. A negative, stigmatizing connotation seems clear from the fact that the label *Papageienhäuser* was given to the block by the majority group of the city, especially since a *Papagei* (parrot) is characterized by its exotic or foreign nature. In this context, a parallel

can be drawn with the labeling of the neighborhood Kleinbasel as “Little Istanbul.” These attributions by the majority group of the city are acknowledgments of migrants’ existence in the city. At the same time these pejorative references make visible the dominant view on migration. The image of the demolition of the so-called *Papageienhäuser* is iconic: it speaks of issues of globalization, gentrification and destruction—of power relations and violence. Who was the photographer? The *Bruchstücke* article gives no such details, and its editors used pseudonyms.

Akyol, Yüksel and I showed the photograph to staff members of Basel’s Planning and Building Department, as well as to academics who study the city’s development, artists who once had a studio on the land that is now part of the Novartis Campus, managers of what used to be the local community center, lawyers who worked for the Tenants’ Association, and others. It was ultimately one of the artists who provided the crucial clue, by recalling that the image had been among a series of postcards on display in the nearby Alter Zoll restaurant. Its proprietor was able to give the photographer’s name to us: Ali Meraihia, a man who had lived for many years in one of the *Papageienhäuser* that was spared from demolition as the Novartis Campus expanded. In June/July 2006 he documented the demolition process in about 100 photos. They offer a visual counter-narrative to the official narrative surrounding the development of the Novartis Campus and its images of buildings designed by some of the world’s leading architects.

Visual traces like Meraihia’s photograph, published in an activist’s magazine opposing the process of gentrification as initiated by the global pharmaceutical company Novartis in the 2000s, are important visual witnesses of the disappearance of affordable living space, which members of the lower and middle class more generally depend on. These kinds of photograph, as pointed out in this case study, are not part of the common visual representation of the city of Basel; rather, they are hidden and dispersed. You may find them in minority community archives or in the personal archives of activists like the subcultural magazine on gentrification with Meraihia’s photo as cover image. To discover them researchers have to interrogate and to interrelate sources from different cultural, social and political contexts, and to create archives to link what at first glance seems to be separated. Rothberg’s ([2009] 2018) theoretical approach of understanding remembrance as *multidirectional* and *multiperspectivist* allows for marginalized and hidden documents such as Meraihia’s images to offer counter-narratives to the widely propagated success story of the Novartis Campus’ development.

Furthermore, Rao’s statement that “the question of what sort of archive corresponds to the city as demographic space is fundamentally connected to the problem of belonging to the city and to the establishment of rights to the city” (2015, 179) is of importance for this case study, too. Taking into consideration her reflections when examining the case of Novartis and the *Papageienhäuser*, an inequality concerning the rights to the city becomes apparent. The position of the international company Novartis within the city of Basel stands in contrast to marginalized migrant communities that are struggling for their right to belong to the city and their right to have their experiences and stories remembered.

Meraihia's photo archive was discovered thanks to a productive application of the photo-elicitation method and by sourcing from the visual and oral memories and archives of Basel's population. In Rao's words: "... because the city draws together disparate groups of people it is also necessary to consider that the city—as multiple forms of media—might serve as an archive actively *producing* connections amongst its residents rather than merely reflecting them" (*idem*). This case study shows how productive it can be to follow a visual trace focusing on connections amongst the city's residents.

ARCHIVES AND REMEMBERING IN PLURALISTIC URBAN SOCIETIES

In pluralistic urban societies many social groups of differing socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds share the same space. Different social groups construct their culture of remembrance embedded in social and political power structures and in relation to one another. In this urban fabric of social and political structures, migratory archives remain invisible at first glance. The reasons for this invisibility are manifold. I would like to point out two: first, migratory memory is absent in the cultural institutions responsible for the creation and preservation of collective memory even if there are tentative signs of efforts being made to embrace a migratory culture of remembrance; and secondly, migrants' attitudes toward and appreciation of their own visual memory are highly influenced by the lack of any recognition of their contribution to cultural and urban development by the majority group in society. The fate of the *Özlem Fotostudio* is an example of this "double invisibility."

However, analyzing and interpreting the case studies by following Rao's city-as-archive concept is promising, as it allows us to understand visual archives as a process and as being interconnected, thus helping us to conceptualize migratory experiences, lack of recognition, silenced stories and hidden documents, and to provide a space where they might be seen. Understanding the archive as relational, subject to permanent negotiation and repositioning, and understanding that memory and re-collection are subject to a constant process of negotiation within society, permits previously ignored or overlooked sources and archives of cultures of remembrance to acquire visibility and thus be recognized for their impact in the present and their potential to shape the future.

In the case study of the "House of Resistance and Solidarity," the journey tracing back the remembrance of the resistance and solidarity movement in Basel started with Vogler's archival photograph (Figure 2). However, only archival research combined with the photo-elicitation method succeeded in making the former activist's memories visible.

Equally, the case study of Novartis and the "*Papageienhäuser*" shows that interrogating a photo (Figure 3) as a repository of and trigger for memory has great potential, not only to expand official cultures of remembrance but also to open up new perspectives on urban development: that is, the ability to challenge the "grand narrative," or to go against the grain of the hegemonic narrative. We can see in the case study of Meraihia's records that photos taken by

private individuals allow a change in perspective. Through Meraihia's images the consequences for local residents of the expansion of the Novartis Campus become the focus of attention, rather than the exclusive architecture of the new campus as highlighted in the official narrative. Tracking down Meraihia's photograph by means of oral history sheds light on urban developments from the perspective of those affected by them, rather than reiterating the vantage point of power-brokers and decision-makers such as Novartis management and the city authorities. It tells a *multidirectional* story (Rothberg [2009] 2018).

In this article, I have made an appeal for keeping the eyes open for visual traces of migrants' acts of remembering that appear in urban cultural, social and political contexts; and to focus on the manifold interrelations between official institutions of remembrance, state archives, museums, municipal offices, informal meeting-places, private collections, and individual spaces of experience and memories. The three case studies show how fruitful interrogating a photograph can be to unveil hidden memories and narratives on urban development and transformation from a minority's and migrants' perspective. Future research in the field of visual migratory archives should therefore focus on creating *multidirectional* and multiperspectivist archives based on sources from different contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Bilgin Ayata for the opportunity to realize the exhibition project in collaboration with herself and the Sociology students at the University of Basel: Özge Akyol, Açelya Aydın, Sophia Egli, David Fretz, Jonas Hinck, Lisa Marti, Dustin Rosenfeld, Juri Schmidhauser, Raymundo Stadelmann, Erdem Tertemiz, and Orhan Kemal Yüksel. I also thank Cathrine Bublatzky and Fiona Siegenthaler for inviting me to present my work at the workshop 'Aesthetics and Materiality of Knowledge: Un/sighted Archives of Migration' in Heidelberg (16–17 Nov. 2018), and their careful editing. A big thank-you goes to Sibylle Brändli for her great help in bringing my thoughts to paper.

NOTES

1. The main reason for under-representation in Swiss politics of the permanent resident population having a migration background (38%) is that a high percentage of the Swiss population has no Swiss citizenship (25%; FSO 2021; <https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/integration-einbuergierung/schweizer-werden.html>). Switzerland is noted for its long and complicated process of naturalization; and it recognizes *ius sanguinis*, meaning that citizenship is determined or acquired by the nationality of a person's mother or father or other ancestors. This stands in contrast to the *ius soli* approach, i.e., the rule that citizenship, as in the USA, is acquired by being born in the country (SEM [State Secretary for Migration] 2021; <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population/migration-integration/by-migration-status.html>).
2. The collaborative exhibition project called "Çok Basel. Transnational Memoryscapes Switzerland—Turkey" was held in Basel during 2 May–30 June 2019. (Çok is a Turkish word meaning "very much.") On display in "Çok Basel" were photographs, videos, audiovisual works and soundscapes that allowed participants to take a fresh look at the development of Basel's urban spaces and societal change since the 1980s and as linked to migration. A selection of films from the BAK program (a program run by the Istanbul-based cultural organization Anadolu Culture Foundation, <https://www.anadolukultur.org/>) gave insights into Turkey's recent history. The

videos show the destruction of Kurdish cities and how individuals have dealt with both the legacy of policies of expulsion as well as contemporary urban migration. The exhibition created a transnational memoryscape between Switzerland and Turkey. More information is available on the website: www.cok-basel.ch.

3. Bublatzky, Cathrine, and Fiona Siegenthaler. 2018. *Workshop Lab: Aesthetics and Materiality of Knowledge—(Un)sighted Archives of Migration*. Nov. 16–17, Heidelberg: Center for Transcultural Studies.
4. The State Archive of the Canton of Basel City contains a few written documents and files of the Basel Police Archives under the heading "Migration (Turkish)," but no photographs—Hermann Wichers, State Archive of the Canton of Basel City (pers. comm., Dec. 12, 2018). The Historical Museum Basel—another important memory institution—is still considering how to establish a collection on migration. According to Patrick Moser, the institution's curator of Contemporary History: "Our collection is unfortunately devoid of objects generally (not just in terms of banners) that relate to groups with a migration background. At present, we are selectively expanding our holdings in that direction when the opportunity arises. If we are to expand our collection on the topic of migration in any meaningful way, I think a bigger project is needed and relevant groups need to be involved" (e-mail conversation, Dec. 19, 2018).
5. Through personal conversations with activists I learned about the precarious archival situations of their associations. One of my interviewees, Sadık Küşne, talked about her fear that the associations would be prosecuted by the Swiss Foreign Police because of their political activities. Therefore associations had no interest in keeping their meeting minutes, banners, and other campaign materials. Memduh Özdemir, who runs the unique book- and music-shop of Kurdish and Turkish literature in Basel, Özgür Kitabevi, told me that most of their archival material was lost due to flooding in his basement. Others told me that they couldn't afford more space because of rising rental costs.
6. The New Institute Switzerland (INES) is a think-and-act tank working on migration issues; <https://institutneueschweiz.ch/En/Community>.
7. The original citation (Reinalter and Brenner 2011, 233–34) is in German, and has been translated by Nigel Stephenson.

REFERENCES

- Akyol, Özge, and Orhan Kemal Yüksel. 2019. Basel *Papageienhäuser*. Video in Exhibition "Çok." Accessed March 24, 2021. <https://cok-basel.ch/einblick>.
- Assmann, Aleida. 2008. "Das Rahmen von Erinnerungen am Beispiel der Foto-Installationen von Christian Boltanski." *BIOS Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung, Oral History und Lebensverlaufsanalysen* 21 (1):4–14. <https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/27011>.
- Assmann, Aleida. 2010. "Canon and Archive." In *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 97–107. Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter.
- Bignante, Elias. 2010. "The Use of Photo-elicitation in Field Research. Exploring Maasai Representations and Use of Natural Resources." *EchoGéo* 11:1–20. <https://journals.openedition.org/echogeo/11622>.
- Braunschweig, Sabine, and Martin Meyer. 1995. "Zählt die Völker. Nennt die Namen. Einwanderung nach Kleinbasel." *du* 9:11–16.
- Bruchstücke Basel Nord. 2009. Accessed January 11, 2021. <http://wasserstrasse.ch/images/artikel/Bruchst%C3%BCcke.web.pdf>

- C.E.D.R.I. (Comité Européen pour la Défense des Réfugiés et Immigrées). 1987. *Dokumentation zur Pressekonferenz anlässlich der Operation der Bundesanwaltschaft gegen Kurden und Türken in der Schweiz*. Basel, Switzerland: C.E.D.R.I.
- Collier, John. Jr. 1957. "Photography in Anthropology. A Report on Two Experiments." *American Anthropologist* 59 (5):843–859. doi:10.1525/aa.1957.59.5.02a00100.
- Degen, Monica Montserrat, and Gillian Rose. 2012. "The Sensory Experiencing of Urban Design: The Role of Walking and Perceptual Memory." *Urban Studies* 49 (15):3271–3287. doi:10.1177/0042098012440463.
- Derrida, Jacques, and Eric Prenowitz. 1995. "Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression." *Diacritics* 25 (2):9–63. doi:10.2307/465144.
- Dogramaci, Burcu. 2019. "From Vienna with Love. Burcu Dogramaci und Mehmet Emir im Gespräch über den Fotografen H d r Emir." *Fotogeschichte. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie* 39 (151):47–54.
- Edwards, Elizabeth, and Matt Mead. 2013. "Absent Histories and Absent Images: Photographs, Museums and the Colonial Past." *Museums and Society* 11 (1):19–38.
- Foucault, Michel. 1970. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences*. London, UK: Tavistock.
- FSO (Federal Statistical Office). 2021. *Population by Migration Status*. Accessed March 24, 2021. <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population/migration-integration/by-migration-status.html>.
- Geimer, Peter. 2009. *Theorien der Fotografie. Eine Einführung*. Hamburg, Germany: Junius.
- Hintermann, Christiane, and Dirk Rupnow. 2019. "Orte, Räume und das Gedächtnis der Migration. Erinnern in der (post)migrantischen Gesellschaft." *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft* 158:59–83. doi:10.1553/moegg158s59.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. [1927] 1963. "Die Photographie." In *Das Ornament der Masse*, edited by Siegfried Kracauer, 21–39. Frankfurt a. M., Germany: Suhrkamp.
- Ley, Lukas. 2021. "Go alongs. Urban 'Barfoot Research.'" *Urban Ethnography Lab*. Accessed March 24, 2021. <https://urban-ethnography.com/methods/go-alongs/>
- Lüthi, Barbara, and Damir Skenderovic. 2019. "Changing Perspectives on Migration History and Research in Switzerland: An Introduction." In *Switzerland and Migration. Historical and Current Perspectives on a Changing Landscape*, edited by Barbara Lüthi and Damir Skenderovic, 1–32. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- magnet basel. 2017. *Migration im Dreiländereck. Exhibition*. April 28–October 1 2017. Accessed March 24, 2021. <http://www.magnetbasel.ch/>.
- Rao, Vyjayanthi. 2015. "City as Archive: Contemporary Urban Transformations and the Possibility of Politics." *Education. The Present in the Future* 4:178–86. Accessed March 24, 2021. <https://www.edcities.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/04/Vyjayanthi-V-Rao-EN.pdf>.
- Reinalter, Helmut, and Peter J. Brenner. 2011. *Lexikon der Geisteswissenschaften: Sachbegriffe – Disziplinen – Personen*. Vienna, Austria: Böhlau.
- Rothberg, Michael. [2009] 2018. *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Saini, Pierrine, and Thomas Schärer. 2014. "Erinnerung, Film und Fotoelicitation." In *Methoden der Kulturanthropologie*, edited by Christine Bischoff, Karoline Oehme-Jüngling and Walter Leimgruber, 313–330. Berne, Switzerland: UTB.
- SEM (State Secretary for Migration). 2021. *How Do I Become a Swiss Citizen?* Accessed March 24, 2021. <https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/integration-einbuengerung/schweizer-werden.html>.
- Suter, Ruedi. 1993. "Über den Rhein nach «Klein-Pazarcik»." *NZZ Folio*, Nov. 39–42.
- Zeitlyn, David. 2012. "Anthropology in and of the Archives: Possible Futures and Contingent Pasts. Archives as Anthropological Surrogates." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (1):461–480. doi:10.1146/annurev-anthro-092611-145721.