



It's Saturday morning and I find myself sitting in a meadow. I am on the hills of Soblahov, a village next to my HOMETOWN Trenčín. It's a humid summer day and I am waiting for the storm to arrive. Looking towards the town centre, I feel at peace. I am HOME. Ever since I moved to the UK six years ago, I would return to Trenčín every summer. Seemingly, not much has changed. My room still looks the same, with teenage selfies hanging on the walls and Jacqueline Wilson's books covered in dust. The habits with my family and friends remain unbroken. We wake up, do sports, catch up with our grandparents and then walk to the town centre for ice cream and drinks. Every July, the community reunites at the Pohoda music festival, during which reality seems timeless. The same scenario, older people. But as I am sitting at the viewpoint surrounded by greenery, a scary thought disrupts my peace. Somehow, I realise, I cannot escape detachment. Every year, I feel more detached from the Trenčín community and its streets. I am detached from my old self – my high school, my childhood memories and activities that no longer feature in my days. Marked by the many experiences I have lived abroad, I am becoming less and less anchored in Trenčín. To be here is more of a numbing comfort than anything else. Today, I cultivate meaningful relationships with all sorts of people, and these relationships navigate my sense of HOME. But they are not tied to any specific place. My memories and relationships are scattered across the world. Each time I am back home, I want all my companions to gather with me on the hills of Soblahov and wonder how much Trenčín has changed. But they can't. And even if they did, they couldn't possibly feel the same excitement I get about Trenčín becoming the European Capital of Culture in 2026. They could barely dream about biking from Brezina to Ostrov for beach volleyball after getting a ham and mayo baguette on the way. They wouldn't understand the concept of eating Pizza Uno after a tipsy evening in Ovca. They would listen to the stories my grandparents told them, but they wouldn't really grasp the ideas that are tied to Slovakia's collective historical memory. They have their own roots, far away from my own. The discrepancy between my childhood and adult selves, which are ultimately shaped by people and places, leaves me increasingly distant from Trenčín. At the moment, the only thing that anchors me is knowing that I am not alone. Wherever we are, each one of us might struggle with the concept of home. Finding a sense of rootedness through mutual understanding, I ask my friends to share their thoughts.

- ① Maryna Kovalyova, Ukraine. @ted.anthony - Maram, Syria
- ② Ted Anthony Zandvliet, Netherlands. @ted.anthony - Maram, Syria
- ③ Nadrah Izmi, Malaysia. Faissal Sharif, Afghanistan
- ④ Eliška Kalinová, Czechia. Peter Noblet, Hungary. @peter.noblet
- ⑤ Daniar, Slovakia.

- ① "Home is where your soul feels hugged. And it doesn't matter if it is a place or people: if you live there or just stop for a day. You just feel right. Like you just are in the right place, every cell of yours belongs to the environment. And it's worth all of it."
- ② "I feel most at home when I know I have a memory of nearly every street I walk through. It is home if I can tell you that that specific building did not burn down during the Great Fire or that a certain street used to be crawling with Victorian-age criminal activity but is now the best place to get artisanal carrot cake. These 'Memories' can obviously, also be my own. When I walk through the flower fields just outside my hometown in the 'Tulip Area (NL), it is specifically the smell of orchids and daffodils and the childhood memories that were decorated with them, that anchor me. But home is a fluid concept. It is where my daily activities feel both familiar yet still exciting enough. That means that one day, a repetitive feeling can set in, and I need to adapt my home to that; go to a new coffee place, redesign my living space, or simply leave for a while. The poet Simon Carmiggelt expressed the wonderful love/hate relationship some people have with their homes: 'Amsterdam is a wonderful city to leave... and to come back to.'"
- ③ "My life could be described as sort of nomadic – what 'home' was to me shifted roughly every half a decade. Perhaps because of that (or for other reasons too) a 'home' is something I am trying to find and build. It isn't something I feel like I can claim to understand. The term conjures up an image of a construction site without a blueprint."
- ④ "Home to me is a space where I'm loved, and where I have space to love others. Whilst I've spent years making a home out of the UK with good friends I've made from all walks of life, my homeland ('tanah air') in Malaysia grounds me because of my family and my deep-rooted culture that have played large parts in shaping my identity. It is my place of safety and comfort and healing; something I can always go back to when my spirit needs a rest. At the same time, it drives me, and reminds me that there's something worth fighting for."
- ⑤ "As a third-culture kid, I have never felt attached to a specific land. My home is my parents. It is where I feel loved, I feel safe, and most importantly, I feel at peace. However, attaching home to people makes it a flexible concept. I make sure to surround myself with people that feel like home and luckily, I have been able to build so many homes across the world."
- ⑥ "Home is a place where I feel like I can always and whenever return, and I will be welcomed. It is my parents' house. The feeling of warmth, calm, and being completely myself. Escaping the rush of city life (which I also love) and having time to process my thoughts and feelings. Having someone there, who will listen, and if I need to, always be there for me. Maybe it's a cliché but as I write these sentences, it feels true to me."

- ⑦ "Growing up, 'Home' was what everyone around me – except myself – seemingly had: All your immediate and extended family in one place, a tight social network, participation in local traditions and so on. My family and I were outcasts, we never chose this home. Because of war and displacement, and at the mercy of arbitrary German asylum law, I grew up in a tiny village in the middle of nowhere. Fast forward two decades later and I find myself having lived in seven cities across three continents. I swapped the German countryside for skyscrapers in Hong Kong, gridlock traffic in LA and non-stop bustle in hyper-capitalist London. In all these years of escaping the trauma of my rural upbringing, I still haven't found a home. My friends are as dispersed as ever and feeling 'Home' became a matter of identity, a term heavily politicised, radicalised and abused by many. Thus, I gave up on finding my home. British-American writer Taiye Selasi famously demands to not 'ask where I'm from, ask where I'm a local. Sometimes I feel local to London, sometimes Berlin, other times Philippines even though I used to live there almost 7 years ago. The real home is my connection to these places. I carry them within me, for what it's worth."



- ⑧ "Buda-pest Budding tulips. They humbly bow. Anxiety bedewed my brow. This is the first slide. Buda. Big trees, gardens a view. Daylight with lunch. Rumbling trams. Pest, elongated figures along. The illuminated cobbled stones. Crooked noses and voices. Coughing darkness. A bridge curves over the river. From the middle you reach the sky. Looking down you see a red buoy Fighting with the currents. A bellybutton emerges from under the top of a curious child reaching to touch a doorknob. Pigeons scatter as an ice cream falls as a frail hand grips tight on the leash of a dog. And a baby from a pushchair cries out. Mama. A brief shower washes away the worries I had before on the side of the street. And a sigh of joy is released from between my lips. A kiss of love."