

Birgit Blättel-Mink · Torsten Noack ·  
Corinna Onnen · Katrin Späte ·  
Rita Stein-Redent *Editors*

# Refuge

Social Science Debates



Springer

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Editors

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## Preface

The volume “Flüchtigkeiten. Sozialwissenschaftliche Debatten” was published in 2019. It has been second in the series, Social Sciences and Professional Practice (SuB). This series is intended as a successor to the journal SuB, which was published by the “Berufsverband deutscher Soziologinnen und Soziologen (BDS)/Professional Association of German Sociologists.” Dr. Wolfram Breger, a colleague who was committed to the cause of SuB for many years, most recently serving on the editorial team, passed away in 2018. This volume is dedicated to him.

The topic of this volume, “Refuge”, is a very current topic, to which many sociologists have devoted themselves in recent years and will probably continue to do so in the years to come. It was a particular concern of ours to compile findings from research and practice on the focal points of flight, experiences of flight, and (societal) dealing with refugees in this volume. Accordingly, the authors of this volume work on these topics in very different contexts at universities and state, private, or voluntary institutions. We would like to thank them for their valuable contributions and are sure that they will meet with great interest in the academic community, but also among politicians and civil society actors.

The reviewers have contributed to the quality of this volume through their critical review and helpful comments: Junior Professor Dr. Karolina Barglowski; Dr. Hans-Werner Franz; Dr. Maria Kontos; Professor Kyoko Shinozaki, PhD; and Dr. Janina Söhn. We would like to thank you all very much for your support.

For the editors.

Frankfurt/Main, Germany  
March 2023

Birgit Blättel-Mink

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# Refuge: Social Science Insights into the Practice of Refugee Integration: Introduction

Corinna Onnen, Rita Stein-Redent, Birgit Blättel-Mink, Torsten Noack, and Katrin Späte

## Abstract

The welcome culture of 2015 in Germany has, not least due to the (re)definition of safe countries of origin, turned into a deportation policy. How can this change in policy be understood and is it also accompanied by a change of attitude among the population? Which reasons for and which reasons against the admission of refugees are cited in social debates? This volume brings together analyses of the social discourse on dealing with refugees, questions of labour market integration and the practice of counselling refugees. Alongside academic analyses are reflective contributions from the practice of migration policy.

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The emergence, functionality, reproduction and stability of social systems and the social actions derived from them are classic sociological topics. Today, in an increasingly global and complex world, these are undergoing a reinterpretation, also because the character and quality of the social have visibly changed and will continue to change. Fritz Schütze argues “that the knowledge landscapes of modern complex societies have become extraordinarily complicated (...). The knowledge landscape is thus becoming more and more fluid, more and more multi-aspectual, more and more competitive and contradictory, more and more theoretical and reflexive – in short, more and more confusing” (Schütze 2002, p. 59, cited in Keim and Schütte 2002). According to Anselm Strauss (1978, p. 120), social worlds are phenomena within a social constellation that is fragmented and in a state of constant change. As a result, “sociologists face three major theoretical challenges and related efforts: first, the work of substantiating the social, a constitutional theory of social action and social meaning; second, the project of a social theory, including the foundation of a distinct as well as operationalizable concept of society; third, a theoretical contribution to modernity or to what characterizes modern or late-modern society in terms of contemporary diagnosis” (Ziemann 2011, p. 103).

Everyday social practice lives from attributions and accessibility of social phenomena, especially in relation to their spatial setting. In this context, boundaries are drawn that are set both physically and meaningfully. In this context, Niklas Luhmann (1984, p. 92ff) emphasises the importance of the difference of social systems and refers to the dimensions of meaning of social systems, which have inherent time, material and social dimensions with their respective double horizons. Social boundaries can be of a diverse nature, whether symbolic, linguistic or shaped by actions. In the final analysis, they illustrate postulates of power and domination. Nevertheless, social boundaries are subject to arbitrariness, ambivalence, flexibility depending on the perspective from which they are viewed, and with the increasing complexity of modern society, ephemerality becomes a “leading metaphor for the present stage of the modern era” (Bauman 2000, p. 2, cited in Junge 2006, p. 110). “Volatile modernity is a constant process of relationalizing interests, needs and relationships without achieving longer-term stability. This brings into focus the process of relationalizing, of arranging as the basis for order. Volatility results from the pure processuality of arranging, of relating” (Junge 2006, p. 110). According to Matthias Junge (2006, p. 109) “(...) means (volatility) that an order, if at all, can only be found in the relation of parts and their mutual mobility”. At the same time, with the dissolution of a formerly existing seemingly stable order, a new kind of order is emerging in modernity, whose main characteristics, according to Zygmunt Bauman, are volatility, instability, and fragility, and which has no stabilizing point (Junge 2006, p. 109f). “Perpetually socialization

among men knots and unknots and knots anew”, writes Georg Simmel (1984, p. 33), “an eternal flowing and pulsating that chains individuals even where it does not rise to actual organizations.” The process of this social change, and the institutional change embedded within it, provide the framing for the individual’s scope for behaviour and action to be renegotiated, though this holds an “infinite reservoir for misunderstanding” (Beck 1986, p. 206). This supports the paradigm of volatility, since decisions about behaviour and actions are or can be of a short-term nature, accompanied by considerations about their plausibilities and utility expectations on the basis of heuristics or decision strategies of perceptions and attributions in dealing with social phenomena.

In this volume, refugees in our contemporary society are examined and discussed from various theoretical and practice-oriented perspectives. Since 2015 at the latest, Germany has had to deal with immigration, and the “welcome culture” has changed into a deportation policy of the federal government with the help of the (re)interpretation of safe countries of origin. It is unclear how this policy change can be understood and what further questions arise from it: Is the change in policy also accompanied by changes in the attitudes of the population?

Which reasons for and which reasons against the admission of refugees exist or are cited in the debates? Germany, too, is experiencing some crisis phenomena that could possibly be alleviated by immigration. These include the change in labour markets due to computerisation and digitalisation, but also due to the migration of workers in rural areas, coupled with a low fertility rate and thus an overall predicted dwindling supply of labour. Added to this is the ageing of society and the associated crises in the supply systems. The immigration of young people can certainly be seen as a potential solution to such problems or challenges, but under what conditions? At the same time, the effects of digitalisation are disputed among experts – significantly less demand for work, qualitatively changed demand for work, flexibilisation of work. Another topic is the change of attitude towards refugees. Above all, the argument of cultural alienation and an associated loss of identity of the “Germans” are put forward here. Helpers who were heroised under the “welcome culture” are now ridiculed. What is going on in Germany? Who represents which opinion? How are they justified? Which groups dominate public debates? Are there changing dividing lines or coalitions between young and old, men and women, between inhabitants of urban and rural areas? This volume approaches this broad spectrum of topics.

In his contribution “Refugee Migration 2014 to 2018 and Labour Market Integration”, *Olaf Struck* examines factors for the successful labour market integration of refugees, surveys the situation in Germany on this basis and concludes by criticising the inadequate measures taken by German policy. He differentiates be-

tween individual factors, such as educational level and professional qualifications, institutional rules and procedures for integration, e.g. the recognition of foreign qualifications, socio-economic conditions in the host country, such as the situation on the labour market, and social factors, such as social contacts in the host country. It identifies specific challenges depending on the age of the refugees. For example, the youngest must be quickly integrated into the education system, young people must be quickly introduced to the training system and, finally, the qualifications and skills of adults must be assessed and recognised to enable them to be integrated into middle and higher employment segments as well. Struck notes, however, that German policy has so far failed in most areas of labour market integration. His outlook for the future is not exactly optimistic.

In his contribution “The Discursive Negotiation of ‘Welcome Culture’ in Germany Using the Example of ‘Welcome to the Hartmanns’”, *David Stiller* refers to the debate on migration in sociology that has been going on since the 1980s. Despite an extensive and ongoing scholarly engagement with the phenomenon of migration, he identifies gaps that he seeks to fill with his racism-critical, discourse-theoretical, and subject-oriented film analysis. This approach is supported by current socio-political reflections on this phenomenon. The range of topics, migration, flight and integration, which corresponds with the investigation of the “welcome culture” in the film, is brought into a context with society’s multi-layered understanding of it. Collective values, motives and the attitudes and behaviours derived from them reveal the problematic nature of the discourse on integration via the film presented here. The interpretative offers of the “welcome culture” are made recognizable by the author via tendencies of depoliticization. At the same time, the film analysis represents a critical discourse on current refugee policy. Stiller considers it indispensable to problematize everyday racism in the “welcome culture” more strongly in order to better understand power relations and positioning processes in migration events. According to his thesis, films as representatives of social phenomena can have a supporting effect here.

Escalating conflicts as a possible expression of a modern immigration society pose new challenges for politics, but also for the respective coalitions of interests. Can a culture of dispute be established that manages these crisis situations and resolves them as far as possible within our democratic norms? *Helge Döring* and *Sebastian Kurtenbach* attempt to answer this question in their article “Escalation and Dialogue: Contours of a Peaceful Coexistence, using the example of the escalation processes surrounding the accommodation of refugees in the city of Bautzen. By reconstructing these crisis situations and their underlying dynamics, they show the potential of a culture of dialogue, but at the same time point out the situational dependencies and limitations of the dialogue formats used. In their opinion, dia-

logue can be used positively to shape social change, but more systematic knowledge about escalation processes and forms of dialogue is needed.

In their contribution “Conflict Dynamics in the Long Summer of Migration. The Example of Frankfurt am Main”, *Ann-Christine Lill, Janis Schneider and Sam Schneider* examine the change in the culture of welcome in Germany between 2015 and 2017. From a discourse-theoretical and historical-materialist perspective, they use the example of Frankfurt am Main to investigate how the shift of the hegemonic project from an unconditional culture of welcome to a conditional culture of welcome could occur. According to the authors, it is not only national-conservative counter-discourses that are responsible for this, but also the lack of ability of the social-liberal actors to cooperate or to enter into alliances. Negotiations within civil society are revealed as a laborious undertaking that requires further discursive work and material concessions.

The contribution “Migrant organizations in refugee work: New Opportunities for Municipal Integration?” by Kirsten Hoesch follows up on the research desideratum of examining the work of secular migrant organizations and asking whether migration since 2015 has opened up “windows of opportunities” for the participation of organizations as “pressure groups” in the field of tension between segregation and integration. With reference to ten guided interviews with voluntary and full-time actors, the author presents two empirical examples: the project Samo.fa initiated by the Federal Commissioner for Migration for “Strengthening the active members of migrant organisations in refugee work”, and the work of the VMDO as “Federation of social-cultural migrant associations in Dortmund e. V.”. Hoesch emphasizes the political importance of the alliances in order to increase visibility, professionalization and acting at eye level.

In her article “Dual apprenticeship training of refugees: Potential for integration and securing skilled labour? The importance of companies’ recruitment problems and digitalisation”, *Kathrin Weis* uses statistical data from the establishment panel of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training to substantiate the plausible assumption that problems filling apprenticeship training places in companies increase the likelihood that refugees are trained as apprentices. For refugees, this represents an opportunity to secure their residence and find access to qualified employment; for companies, it is a matter of securing skilled labour. In this context, Kathrin Weis also explores the question of the extent to which technology and digital infrastructure in companies increase the likelihood of training refugees.

Is the labour market in its social pressure to change attuned to the possible potentials of immigration? *Theresa Köhler* and *Kerstin Ettl* attempt to demonstrate this with case studies from SMEs in their contribution “The Integration of Refugees in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs): Case Studies from Practice”.



Even with only a small empirical basis for this study based on interviews, the results confirm the debates about the social, but also professional integration of refugees. The institutional framework conditions as direct results of political action should enable a more supportive structure in which the necessary motivations and language skills of the refugees meet with the acceptance and support of the management and employees. Then, according to the authors, the integration of refugees as part of a diversity culture to be established in SMEs can succeed better.

*André Pohlmann* shows in his contribution “Model Project LeLA: Integrative Integration – Reflections from Project Practice” how projects for the linguistic, vocational and social integration of refugees can be successfully implemented through municipal cooperation, in this case with three educational institutions. By structuring the various fields of work in the project, specific support and assistance instruments are developed for the immigrants, which make organisation, support and assistance possible. Such an approach also makes it possible to respond individually to the people to be supported and to support them in a competence-oriented way. The special practical orientation of the project presented is documented: with the help of internships offered and socio-pedagogical support and the activation of the various actors necessary for this, finding a profession and employment for the refugees is made possible. The text also draws attention to the weaknesses in the implementation of the project, such as problems of resource expenditure and personal responsibility, and makes clear the indispensability of a continuation of support for the project participants.

*Katharina Resch, Gertraud Kremsner, Michelle Proyer, Camilla Pellech, Regina Studener-Kuras and Gottfried Biewer* describe another applied project in the article “Integration of Refugee Teachers into the Labour Market by the Example of a Certificate Course at the University of Vienna”. The fact that people fleeing pose a particular challenge to the target societies does not stop at the respective educational systems, because the different systems are generally not compatible, so that the educational institutions of the target country must first establish a form of educational “compatibility”. The article shows how teachers with a refugee background are certified at the University of Vienna in order to be employed on the Austrian school “labour market”. The University of Vienna is addressing the problem that many refugee teachers in Austria are unable to find employment despite a high demand for recruitment and is developing job-specific measures for teachers who have completed their first university degree and gained initial professional experience as part of a certification programme. These certifications are intended both to support integration efforts and to remedy a shortage of teachers. The article deals with the concept of these qualification measures in a pilot course and

documents the cooperation between various actors, such as the City School Board, the university and the Public Employment Service.

*Doris Beer* reports in her contribution “Welcome Culture in Deportation Policy: Labour Market Counselling for Persons Entitled to Stay and Reugess”, Doris Beer reports on her experiences with the federal ESF (European Social Fund) programme for labour market support for refugees. The law supports persons entitled to stay and refugees if they can take up gainful employment that secures their livelihood without receiving social benefits. Beer describes the challenges for employers, education providers and authorities, especially in light of the debate in society as a whole as to whether immigration should be used, limited or even averted. From her own professional experience as a “job coach” for refugees, the author reports on an action model of counselling as well as its adaptation to political demands in the period from 2015 to 2017, on the basis of which she presents a change in German integration policy. In her article, she compares different political frameworks for regulating immigration from the 2005 immigration law reform to the 2008–2015 right to stay programmes. The counselling programme described originally focused on the subjective empowerment and self-responsibility of those affected and was expanded to include the involvement of employers and education providers so that they would recommend participants to the programmes in the first place. This is explained by means of two case studies.

“Continually socialization among men knots and unknots and knots anew” ... “an eternal flowing and pulsating that links individuals, even where it does not rise to actual organizations.” (Simmel 1984, p. 33) This quotation from Georg Simmel already mentioned above anticipates much of what the authors of this volume describe in their contributions on the basis of analysis, social practice and observation. The crisis nature of society does not imply that possible solutions are recognized and quickly implemented by the actors. Instead, we observe diverse processes of rapprochement and distancing, of the success and failure of cooperation and integration. We do not yet know where all these processes will lead us. In any case, there is a need for further research in sociology.

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