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Aspirations, capabilities and (im)mobility: Integration policy and migration experiences in Germany

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Abstract

This paper empirically maps the association between the German integration regime and the lived integration experiences of refugees and migrants through the lens of an aspirations-capabilities model. Field research in Berlin and the nearby town of Zehdenick in the Brandenburg state provides insight into how informants navigate their integration trajectories through local incentive and opportunity structures. The findings reveal different forms of social (im)mobility that can unfold during the integration process. These outcomes move beyond the colloquial and largely normative language used in German political discourse on integration (i.e. 'willingness' to integrate), and instead illustrate how integration processes conceal a deep-seated interaction between aspirations and capabilities. The personal narratives of informants are analysed in the context of Germany's political transformation – from the reluctance to identify itself as a country of immigration to the introduction of structural reforms in the form of the Integration Act 2016. *Fördern* (support) and *Fordern* (demand) emerge as key policy dogmas of the government that guide national policy-making in the area of integration. The policy approach produces additional venues for refugees and migrants to integrate but simultaneously ties these to specific integration commitments. These mechanisms are found to (a) increase integration capabilities through developing opportunity structures and (b) increase integration aspirations through developing incentive structures.

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Introduction

In recent political discourse, German politicians have argued that refugees and migrants must be 'willing' to integrate (De Maizière 2016; Spahn 2016; Dobrindt 2018). Couching political discourse in such colloquial terms risks the production of reductive and simplistic views that fail to capture the complexity of integration processes. Indeed, empirical findings suggest that 'willingness' is not a primary issue and policy-makers should instead concern themselves with the lack of access to labour markets and social life in Germany (IAB 2016). In microcosmic form, these perceptions conceal a much broader debate around a vexed question: whose responsibility is integration anyway? German integration governance has applied several approaches in pursuit of an answer: multiculturalism, assimilationism, universalism, interculturalism, and more recently mainstreaming. Despite their conceptual differences, these frameworks tend to focus on 'means and markers' to test the outcomes and measure the success of integration (Ager and Strang 2008). Meanwhile, empirical studies on the broader life chances and constraints that comprise the multi-layered processes of integration are underrepresented in social scientific inquiry.

The goal of this paper is to address this knowledge gap by conceptualising integration as a function of aspirations and capabilities through empirical research (Carling 2002; De Haas 2014; Carling and Schewel 2018). Doing so, it provides insight into the different types of (im)mobility that can unfold during the integration process. Specifically, my research deals with the tensions between the normative and institutional integration approach in Germany on the one hand, and the lived integration experiences of migrants and refugees on the other hand. Through field research in Germany's capital Berlin and the nearby town of Zehdenick in the Brandenburg state, I shed light on how informants negotiate their integration trajectories through local opportunity and incentive structures. Particular attention will be paid to the *Fördern und Fordern* (support and demand) approach that forms the basis of the 2016 Integration Act (IntG) in Germany.

There is both a causal and a descriptive question underlying the empirical part of my research. The broad descriptive question asks: how do integration trajectories of refugees and migrants deviate from those ascribed by the German integration regime, if at all? The causal question asks: What explains these differences? On a more theoretical level, this paper promotes to understand the process of integration as a form of mobility in the sense of navigating through social fields that condition integration aspirations and capabilities. By incorporating a broader understanding of the claim that 'theories of migration should not only look to mobility but also to immobility' (Arango 2000), this theoretical discussion questions whether (a lack of) integration can be tested against emerging theories of immobility.

Methodology and Informants

Research took place in Germany's capital Berlin and the nearby town of Zehdenick in the Brandenburg province. In Berlin, 83,344 asylum seekers have been registered since 2015 (Landesamt für Flüchtlingsangelegenheiten 2018). In addition, latest estimates suggest the city hosts 690,210 immigrants that account for approximately 18.5 percent of the total population (Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg 2017).

By comparison, Zehdenick has registered only 104 asylum seekers since 2015, comprising 0.8 percent of the population (Landkreis Oberhavel 2018). Similarly, Oberhavel - the district in which Zehdenick is located - is estimated to host 6,143 immigrants, totalling roughly 3 percent of the district's total population (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018). Table 1 provides a map that visually reflects these statistics.

This multi-sited fieldwork approach further allows for frame alignment for two different research sites in the same national context (Dekker et al. 2015). In this way, I move beyond focusing on the state as the main unit of analysis and instead produce insights into the local opportunity structures through which migrants navigate their integration trajectories. This allows me to discern national-local differences, including specific policy settings as well as local modes of 'pragmatic problem-coping' (Breeman, Scholten, and Timmermans 2014).

Respondents were sampled using gatekeepers and subsequent snowball sampling was applied. I recruited 16 informants, 11 male and 5 female (see Appendix 1). All respondents are between the ages of 19-45, with mixed occupational backgrounds and nationalities from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, and Turkey. Some of the previously-held positions reported during interviews include doctor, architect, military guard, businessman, electrician, and student.

The choice of informants is important for several reasons: first, all respondents arrived in Germany after 2015, which means they were subject to the legal changes introduced through the 2016 Integration Act (IntG) early on in their integration trajectory. Second, and more importantly, rather than interviewing either refugees or migrants, my participant sample deliberately cuts across these categories. I follow previous research that highlights the analytic merit of analysing integration experiences in ways that go beyond a focus on legal protection status (Cook 2013; Kovacs 2015; Spencer and Charsley 2016). Notwithstanding the fact that legal status defines the legal rights of refugees and migrants respectively, this research acknowledges that integration barriers can be faced and contested in ways that transcend the binary refugee and migrant distinction. Other scholars have already highlighted how restrictions which are structurally embedded in legal frameworks, such as limited access to welfare and employment opportunities, afflict refugees and migrants alike (Strang and Ager 2010: 599). Shifting the focus away from this binary formulation allows my informants to assert aspects of their identity *they* deem most relevant to their integration experience. Third, rather

than making one ethnic group the main unit of analysis[1], I seek a more dynamic approach that takes account of the heterogenous social fabric shaping integration experiences outside of the 'ethnic lens' (Brubaker et al. 2004; Glick-Schiller and Çağlar 2006).

Next to secondary sources, the research instruments used in this study include in-depth and semi-structured interviews as well as official documents (i.e. local council meetings, language and integration course guidelines, government speeches, and the 2016 Integration Act).

Figure 1: Share of foreigners in Germany in 2017
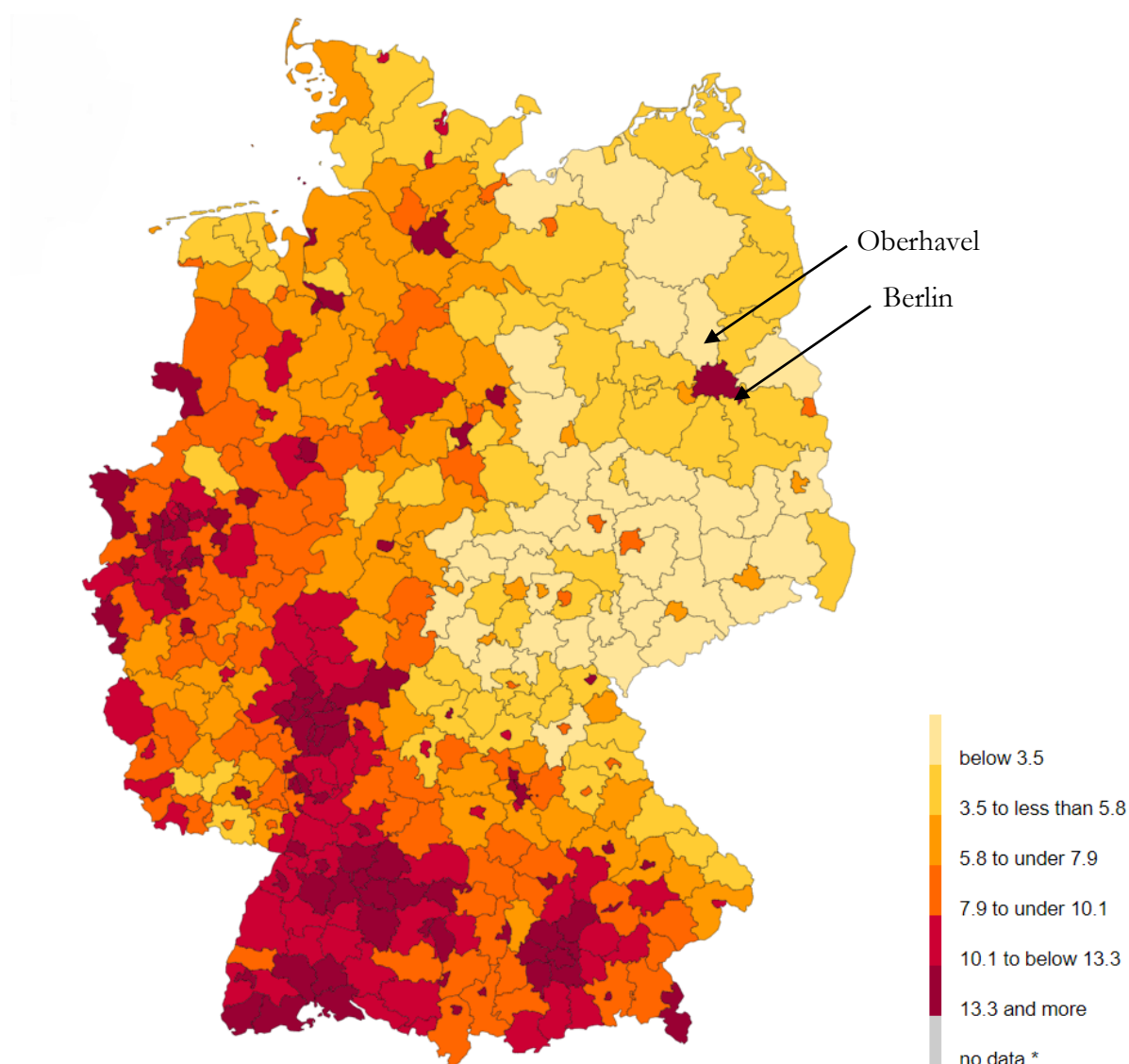
Source: Joint data offered by Destatis , BA and BAMF

Developing Integration Research: A Conceptual Analysis

a. The epistemological break between migration and integration theory

This paper promotes the process of integration as a form of mobility. In this way, it does away with the *a priori* epistemological break underlying the migration-integration nexus. It maintains that migration theory dealing with geographic mobility and integration theory dealing with social mobility lack scholarly exchange. In his seminal work on comparative social mobility, sociologist Seymour M. Miller (1960) noted that conceptual boundaries between different theories of mobility are difficult to sustain:

> 'The study of social mobility is a study of change, of movement. It is no easy matter to set it off precisely from the other types of changes which sociologists investigate, e.g. geographic mobility'.

As Latour (1993) suggests in his seminal work *We Have Never Been Modern*, the formal and informal communication between scientists is essential in uncovering and balancing asymmetries *between* disciplines. Extending this argument to this discussion, these asymmetries are also found *within* disciplines such as that of migration studies. Categorising movements into neat analytic pieces is misguided since different modes of mobility bleed across borders and penetrate the internal functioning of states and societies. By contrast, extending concepts from international migration theory to the field of integration can produce significant insight into the ways in which mobility corresponds in spatial and social terms. The remaining part of this literature review will therefore introduce two theoretical frameworks at the crux of this research and extend their application from the study of international migration to that of integration.

b. Extending aspirations and capabilities to integration analyses

To build a deeper understanding of how migrants negotiate their integration trajectories through the opportunity structures laid out by the state, this research draws from De Haas' (2014) aspirations and capabilities model, which itself is based on Carling's (2014) aspirations and abilities model). While the general relevance of aspirations has been recognised by integration scholars (Freeman 2004), only a handful of studies have applied aspirations *and* capabilities in the field of integration. Boccagni (2017) investigates the development and implications of migrants' aspirations over the life course; (Lutz 2017) uses a capability-aspiration framework to test the effects of policy intervention; (Van Heelsum 2017) compares aspirations with frustrations of refugees as they manage their lives in The Netherlands. Still missing, however, is a systematic and empirical conceptualisation of integration as a function of aspirations and capabilities. Specifically, this paper aims to move beyond seeing aspirations as a form of agency and ability as a matter of structural constraints and opportunities, but rather focus on the interplay between these porous analytic containers. It follows

earlier literature which calls to investigate broader life aspirations of individuals communities, and on this backdrop, to explore how these aspirations interact with real or perceived opportunities and constraints (Carling and Schewel 2018: 10). In turn, this shifts the attention away from normative, largely policy-driven, integration categories.

To investigate Germany's integration regime, it is crucial to provide a conceptual framework from which to explore the link between integration policies and individual aspirations and capabilities. In view of the salient political discourse on refugees and migrants, German policy-makers have implemented specific policies to facilitate integration. These transformed into institutions impacting the integration experience much more directly than the institutional architecture of the state (Pierson 2006). From this viewpoint, integration policies comprise both an opportunity and incentive structure that condition the aspirations and capabilities of refugees and migrants (Lutz 2017). On the one hand, incentive structures affect the attractiveness of integration, thus either increasing or decreasing the aspiration to integrate: the more policies develop incentives, the more likely integration is to take place (Freeman 2004). On the other hand, opportunity structures influence the viability of integration, thus increasing the capabilities to integrate: the greater the repertoire of integration opportunities, the more likely integration is to take place. These structures have been defined as 'institutions that define access and for channels of participation for immigrants in mainstream society' (Kolbe 2016: 421).

c. Why consider (im)mobility in integration research?

Literature dealing with integration has increasingly criticized the 'normative basis of the integration discourse' (Spencer 2016:3). This demonstrates the need to expose the assumptions and biases underlying colloquial terms such as 'willingness', which attribute unsuccessful integration outcomes to refugees and migrants. However, if willingness is defined as 'an individual's openness to opportunity' (Pomery et al. 2009), then exogenous factors (i.e. opportunities) are a necessary condition for the integration process to mature. A recent development in migration scholarship raising similar points is the study on immobility. The term has been applied in various forms, including 'voluntary immobility' (i.e. those without the aspiration to migrate), 'involuntary immobility' (i.e. those with the aspirations to migrate but who lack the ability to do so), and 'acquiescent immobility' (i.e. those who lack both the aspiration and the ability to migrate) (Arango 2000; Carling 2002; Schewel 2015). Studies on immobility typically challenge the sedentary assumption that migration is abnormal. This view beleaguered migration studies prior to the 'mobility turn' in the early 2000s, which shifted the focus toward the importance of movements and the interplay between spatial and social mobility (Urry 2000; Faist 2013).

If integration is part of a broader process of mobility, the question arises whether its absence can be understood and analysed through the lens of (social) immobility, as well as to what

extent this immobility is of a voluntary or involuntary nature. The challenge then lies with the lack of objective and reproducible measurements: whereas the absence of migration is a rather straightforward and objective condition measured by a lack of physical movement across geographical space, the absence of integration is difficult to capture given the need to make normative assumptions about what can and what cannot be deemed 'successful' integration. Academic literature has pointed out that such efforts become quickly compounded with biased conclusions (Phalet and Swyngedouw 2003; Bommes 2012; Spencer 2016). Moreover, whereas spatial mobility takes place along one single geographic scale, social mobility is a process that transcends different domains (Brubaker 2001: 542–44). To address these challenges, this paper refrains from making myopic statements about whether integration trajectories resemble one category of (im)mobility or the other. Instead, it views these as existing along a continuum of experiences embedded in the transient nature of individual aspirations and capabilities.

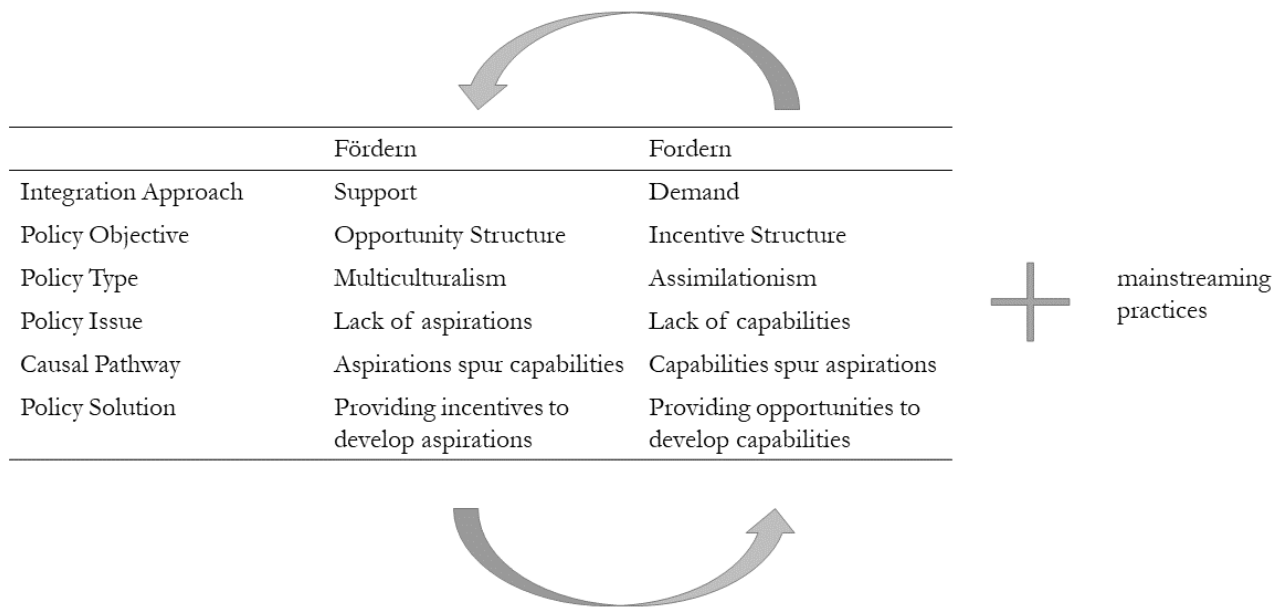## I. Opportunity and Incentive Structures in Germany

a. Fördern und Fordern

This section applies the conceptual framework on aspirations and capabilities to the field of integration policy-making in Germany. This provides a strong foundation to translate the normative policy regime into an analytical framework from which to evaluate the motivation and reasoning behind the country's integration approach. As previously mentioned, the 2016 Integration Act (IntG) forms the legal and political basis for current integration policy-making in Germany. The underlying logic of this law can be summarised as *Fördern und Fordern* (support and demand). Leading politicians, including Chancellor Angela Merkel, have presented this slogan as a key pillar around which Germany's integration regime is built (Bundesregierung 2016a; BMAS 2016). The approach incorporates both incentive structures and opportunity structures, thus unsettling claims that Germany's integration regime is rooted in either assimilationism or multiculturalism. Rather than following one logic, it ensures that individuals receive support for their efforts to integrate at an economic and socio-cultural level (i.e. *Fördern*) but in turn demands them to demonstrate a willingness to co-operate and achieve the essential prerequisites for this process to take place (i.e. *Fordern*). The law further introduced mechanisms, such as social welfare cuts, intended to punish those who refuse to undertake the required integration efforts (Ausschuss für Arbeit und Soziales 2016).

The policies emerging from this integration approach do not necessarily target specific migrant groups, but oftentimes scope the 'whole of society' (Scholten, Collett, and Petrovic 2017: 284). They draw from so-called universalist policies that are a core characteristic of what has been labelled 'mainstreaming integration' (Bendel 2014: 21). Previous scholarship has unpacked this term as a process aimed at developing generic and poly-centric policies that are 'colour-blind' and address

the rights and obligations of individual citizens and foreigners alike. Table 2 visualises how these different typologies constitute an interconnected framework that facilitates both the aspiration and the capability to integrate.

Figure 2: Conceptualisation of German integration policy approach

	Fördern	Fordern
Integration Approach	Support	Demand
Policy Objective	Opportunity Structure	Incentive Structure
Policy Type	Multiculturalism	Assimilationism
Policy Issue	Lack of aspirations	Lack of capabilities
Causal Pathway	Aspirations spur capabilities	Capabilities spur aspirations
Policy Solution	Providing incentives to develop aspirations	Providing opportunities to develop capabilities

+ mainstreaming practices

Source: Own representation based on Lutz (2017: 6).

b. Key Policy Areas: Language, Labour, Location

Having unpacked the principle approach informing German integration policies based on the 2016 Integration Act (IntG), the following gives attention to the specific policies that constitute its emerging opportunity and incentive structure. According to Andrea Nahles, former Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, access to the labour market and vocational training are main venues for 'successful integration' (BMAS 2016). Through the introduction of the IntG, asylum seekers and *Geduldete* (tolerated persons) are no longer obliged to undergo a so-called *Vorrangprüfung* (priority check)[2] for three years provided they live in low-unemployment regions. In contrast, this new policy significantly extends the individual equality and rights of asylum seekers and *Geduldete* vis-à-vis their native counterparts – a process that has previously been linked with multicultural dimensions of policy-making (Lutz 2017: 4). At the same time, however, they reinforce inequalities between different migrant groups given that such labour benefits only apply to those with a good *Bleibeperspektive* (perspective to stay). Increased access to vocational training benefits a wider audience: immigrants allowed to stay in Germany despite having their asylum case rejected can now

maintain the right to residence until successful completion of their vocational training. This provides an additional venue to formally integrate into the labour market.

Aside from the structural integration into the labour market, the acquisition of the German language is referred to as 'key to integration' (BMI 2017). Basic knowledge of German (i.e. A2 of the Common European Framework) is required to enter vocational training in the first place. The IntG 2016 sets out several opportunities and incentives that support and demand integration in this area. This support is, for instance, presented in the form of cost-free access to 600 hours of language courses for those entitled to asylum, recognised as refugees, or under subsidiary protection (i.e. holder of a residence-permit according to § 25 Abs. 1 or Abs. 2 AufenthG). This law falls under the category of opportunity structures insofar that it empowers migrants to achieve the goal of language acquisition. On the other hand, the demand for integration is presented, for instance, in the form of rendering these language courses compulsory with few exceptions in place. The refusal to participate can result in social welfare cuts as well as *Flüchtlingsintegrationsmaßnahmen* (FIM), which translates to 'refugee integration measures'. FIM programmes offer 100,000 additional employment opportunities, however, rather than framing these as an opportunity, they have been heavily criticised for their low pay and sluggish take-up rate (IntG 2016). This law falls under the category of incentive structures insofar as it motivates the action to acquire language skills. In addition, language courses are accompanied by 100 hours of orientation courses aimed at teaching German politics, history, and culture alongside universal values and democratic principles. At the end of the orientation course participants complete the 'Living in Germany' exam[3].

Finally, the IntG introduced a so-called *Wohnsitzzuweisung* (residence allocation), according to which beneficiaries of protection are placed in a province based on the 'Königsteiner Schlüssel' principle (BAMF 2018). This quota is determined through a yearly calculation of tax revenues (two-thirds of the equation) and population share (one-third of the equation). It supposedly prevents the social clustering of migrant groups, which is said to produce 'parallel societies' that operate in exclusive social environments and inhibit successful integration (Bundesregierung 2016b). The measure targets specifically persons entitled to asylum, foreigners with recognised refugee status, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and foreigners with first-time residence permits. This is an area where legal status indeed impacts the integration experience of migrant groups differently. Not least, it undermines the rights of refugees and asylum seekers according to the Freedom of Movement Article 26 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, whereby contracting states 'shall accord to refugees lawfully in its territory the right to choose their place of residence to move freely within its territory' (UN General Assembly 1951). While residence allocation increases the overall capabilities to integrate through cost-free accommodation, it also marks a departure from a human rights-based approach to refugee integration.

In sum, the principle of *Fördern und Fordern* (support and demand) provides additional venues for refugees and migrants to integrate but simultaneously ties these to specific integration commitments. Three developments result from this synthesis: first, migrants must navigate their integration trajectories by constantly moving along a continuum of two interacting and oftentimes overlapping poles: opportunity (i.e. to work) and incentive (i.e. threat of social welfare cuts), support (i.e. cost-free integration courses) and demand (i.e. compulsory integration courses), control (i.e. residence allocation) and freedom (i.e. of movement). If opportunities are plenty, so are the capabilities to move in between both poles. If incentives are plenty, so are the aspirations to move in between both poles. Second, the emphasis on incentives produces an image of migrants and refugees as *a priori* unwilling to integrate and therefore subject to control by necessity. Previous scholarship has criticised this approach, noting that failed outcomes of German integration policy are an issue of supply rather than demand (Bruecker et al. 2016). Third, the principle renders additional integration venues largely inaccessible to migrants without a 'good perspective' to stay, thereby creating a legal mechanism that increases the cost of integration for certain migrant groups.

c. From National to Local Integration

This section will consider the local political structures that may go unnoticed at a national level. This is relevant since mixed migration flows as part of global migration trends have increased the policing of foreigners *within* national borders (Haugen 2012). Social scientific inquiry in this area has produced little consensus: a number of scholars have analysed migrant integration policies under the conception of national approaches to integration (Brubaker 2009; Castles and Miller 2009). Several others have instead pointed to the influence of local governments over decision-making in this policy area (Penninx 2009; Caponio and Borkert 2010). One strand of scholars suggests that both of these approaches fail to capture how local policies are tied to specific problems and policy frameworks that differ according to city (Alexander 2003; Scholten 2013). Particularly in federal Germany, where policies trickle down multiple levels of governance before reaching their target group, normative integration frameworks drafted at the national level do not necessarily yield the desired outcomes at the local level. In addition, previous research suggests that migrants may be more likely to identify with the city rather than the host country (Spencer and Cooper 2006: 7). Recognising the importance of the 'local turn' in the study on integration enables researchers to move away from 'methodological nationalism' and instead establish 'a comparative theory of locality in migration studies' (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002; Glick-Schiller and Çaglar 2009).

In the case of Berlin, integration is oriented towards participation. This is reflected in the 2010 Participation and Integration Act of Berlin (PartIntG), which primarily regulates the institutional setting conditioning migrant integration, and aims at facilitating equal participation of migrants in all social areas (Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin 2010). In addition, PartIntG emphasises the political

contribution of migrants and refugees, for instance, through the selection of commissioners, agencies, and advisory boards at the city level. This type of enabling integration opportunity at the city-level places emphasis on *Fördern* (support) rather than *Fordern* (demand), thereby reinforcing a multiculturalist institutionalist setting. At the same time, other studies have demonstrated that policy implementation at the local level in Berlin has resulted – at times due to economic necessity – in practices that largely reflect mainstreaming policies: integration programmes in Berlin do not target individual migrant groups specifically but instead young people in difficult conditions more generally (such as the initiative Jugend Stärken, or Encouraging Youth). This is important to note, as broader constraints experienced during the integration process may equally impact other vulnerable segments of society without a migration background.

Zehdenick, which is part of the Brandenburg province, is not subject to any federal integration law and therefore more closely tied to the national level of policy-making. Similar to Berlin, however, official documents from council meetings suggest Zehdenick favours opportunity structures that enable migrants to integrate locally. In contrast to Berlin's mainstreaming approach, however, it singles out specific migrant groups rather than targeting a broader population. While integration is approached as a two-way street it is specifically asylum seekers who 'should be actively incorporated into social life and integrated to the best possible way' (Maßnahmeplan Zehdenick 2015; Amtsblatt 2016). This process comes primarily in the form of support through German language lessons, introductions to the town and its history, assistance in accommodation arrangements, and family sponsorship (ibid. 17).

In line with previous scholarship, this paper maintains that local policies in Germany are found to resemble their national policy frameworks in terms of their broader approach; however, integration outcomes are contingent on local power structures (Dekker et al. 2015). In the following section, empirical findings based on interviews with refugees and migrants who live in Zehdenick and Berlin reveal patterns of mobility that emerge from the aforementioned opportunity and incentive structures.

2. 'Doing' Integration as a Function of Aspirations and Capabilities

a. Integration Aspirations

Similar to the normative conceptualisation of integration at the institutional level, the majority of informants described language as the most immediate need for leading a life in Germany. It is generally perceived as a means to an end, particularly in the form of gaining access to the labour market. This is in part due to the formalisation of German language requirements through the IntG 2016, which sets new language regulations for refugees and migrants seeking to take up formal employment and education. Among Arabic speakers, the utilitarian function of language was

expressed through terms such as *muftah* (key) and *wasta* (clout or 'who you know'). The latter term is often used to figuratively connect language to a network of local residents that can support the integration process. Moreover, its use implicitly points to language being a gateway for social capital. In this way, it is a utility as well as a precondition to access nodes in social networks.

The aspiration to acquire language skills was expressed during several interviews with informants. This is particularly the case among respondents seeking access to formal employment and inclusion in their local community. Mustafa[4], who arrived in October 2015 together with his wife, says he is required to complete a B2-level language course to continue his profession as a lift technician in Germany. Until then, the 33-year-old Turkish immigrant searches for opportunities in the informal labour market, where demand for cheap labour is literally around the corner: 'My neighbour asked me if I wanted to work and I said why not? I had to earn money'. In a similar vein, Yara, who comes from an upper middle-class family and studied architecture at a university in Homs, attended the mandatory A1-level language course shortly after her arrival in Germany in early 2016. The 19-year old Syrian woman has since progressed to a B2-level language course – a minimum requirement to continue her architecture degree at a German university. According to her, 'what is most important for integration is first language and then education'. Similarly, 29-year old Amir, who has lived in Zehdenick since January 2015, notes that 'without language you cannot do anything'. His motivation to reach the C1-level in German is rooted in his hopes of being admitted to medical school. This would allow him to finish the degree he started in Syria four years ago. These narratives seem to stand in contrast with the often-cited view that integration mirrors a multi-directional and non-linear process (Spencer 2016: 6). They reflect how access to formal employment or education is contingent on language acquisition, thereby rendering the initial integration phase relatively linear and one-dimensional.

Aside from being a venue to gain access to formal employment, informants further framed language as a pre-condition for 'knowing how Germans think' (Yara). This aspiration is partly driven by curiosity but primarily by a perceived need to gain acceptance as a foreigner through language. Zouhir describes how language helps him to overcome stereotypes when working with elderly Germans:

> 'Language is like a key. I have a lot of contact with German people and they think Arab people are bad (…) when I speak some German words they gain trust. They do not think too badly of us. I'm not just a human they think, but a good person as well. Why? [Because] I can explain myself well. And maybe it's not only me who is kind but also others.'

In addition to describing language as a communication tool, the quote offers several other layers of meaning. From a Bourdieuan perspective, language becomes an instrument that can be exploited in the production of social capital. Where Bourdieu (1997) applied social capital as a resource of the dominant, Coleman (1988) developed it under a broader conception of values and networks. This

latter type of social capital is reflected in Zouhir's perception of language being a vehicle for trust – in this case between 'Arab people' and Germans. Indeed, following the assumption that 'social capital is the glue that holds society together', language can be identified as one of its central ingredients (Putnam 2000; Clark 2006). On top of these mechanisms, the quote indicates a belief that trust may spill over into acceptance of others. This relationship has been noted by several other scholars in the field of sociology and sociolinguistics more specifically (Glanville and Paxton 2007; Dinesen and Sønderskov 2016).

These findings stand in contrast to another pattern represented by two of the interviewees who reported a lack of incentive to actively partake in German language classes. According to Mustafa and Baddar, this phenomenon is particularly widespread among those who work in the informal sector but nevertheless need to complete the compulsory B1-level language course. One explanation for this is that migrants who work informally are not required by their employers to provide German language certificates; this therefore limits the incentive to acquire German language abilities in the first place. In these cases, attending compulsory language classes can *de facto* become an obstacle to social mobility, since time spent learning could otherwise be spent working. As previously mentioned, however, missing language classes can result in being subjected to *Flüchtlingsintegrationsmaßnahmen* (FIM, or refugee integration measures). Although FIM were introduced by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as 'meaningful employment for the common good' (BMAS 2017), interviewees saw them as punishment due to the low financial compensation of 80 Euro cents per hour. To avoid these consequences, informants chose to 'sit in' during language classes or sign-in their attendance in advance. This behaviour suggests that policies intended to *Fördern* (support) integration capabilities (i.e. language classes) are partially contingent on the individual aspirations of refugees or migrants. If capabilities and aspirations do not match, the intentions behind such measures fail to materialise (i.e. not attending language classes). Likewise, policies intended to *Fordern* (demand) integration aspirations (i.e. FIM) do not necessarily yield the desired results in practice. This is illustrated by cases of migrants and refugees who passively attend language classes to avoid FIM. Dividing the analysis into aspirations and capabilities to analyse such scenarios allows decision-makers to isolate these policy problems at the level of implementation.

b. Integration Capabilities

As previously illustrated, for integration policies to yield their desired outcomes refugees and migrants must be willing *and* able to integrate – both aspirations and capabilities are thus required factors for integration. Here, capabilities to integrate can be defined as 'the positive freedom to integrate, both the doing in the sense of the actual ability to participate in society, and the being in the sense of a personal identity as a full-fledged member of society' (Lutz 2017: 8). This section analyses these notions against the background of my empirical findings.

Interviews with participants in two different research locations – Zehdenick and Berlin – provide insight into how lived integration experiences differ across spatial and social environments. Zehdenick's small population of approximately 14,000 residents has generally lived without exposure to foreigners until the first refugees from Syria arrived in early 2015. Unlike Berlin, where various grassroots networks (e.g 'Berlin Hilft', or Berlin helps) create platforms for migrants to meet and connect with locals, Zehdenick provides limited opportunities for cultural and language exchange. Although one informant notes that 'not all problems are because of Zehdenick, some of it is also because of refugees', the general perception is that 'they don't want contact with refugees' (Omar). These feelings come to surface as interactions with locals are few in number and frequently racist or xenophobic. Stories range from 'they never smile back at you' (Daywa) to more extreme incidents including 'an older man spit into the face of my wife… twice' (Amir). Muhammad, a young Syrian living in Zehdenick, even moved out of his apartment in a multi-storey building after his downstairs neighbours regularly hit a broom against their ceiling – at times at night – without good reason. 'Psychologically I don't feel comfortable living here,' he says. The lack of openness among the local community produces a feeling of uncertainty over future life chances[5] in the small town.

Informants from Zehdenick consistently expressed a sense of exclusion from the native local community, which gives rise to the perception that opportunities to socially integrate are far greater elsewhere. Amir summarises this sentiment:

> 'I think there is no city like Berlin. It's big and the people are great. There are a lot of strangers and foreigners and they do not argue with other people… because everyone is a stranger. Here in Zehdenick [there] are just natives [literal translation: originals].'

This quote not only reflects the desire to move elsewhere, but further conceals a deeper aspiration to forge links with 'strangers and foreigners' in search of a network. Perceived as a relatively closed community, Zehdenick offers few opportunities for social interaction. In contrast, Amir thinks of Berlin as a 'big' place with ample opportunities for self-realisation. This excerpt mirrors Amir's character more generally, who appeared ambitious and hopeful during the interview as he eloquently described his aspiration of becoming a doctor in Germany. On a different level, however, the quote also illustrates how the cultural production of 'otherness' becomes encoded in spatial and social registers. As Amir feels a sense of attachment with strangers and foreigners, he views Berlin's diverse social environment as a space to connect with likeminded people. Although political discourse in Germany has entertained the idea that group attachment among refugees and migrants risk the production of *Parallelgesellschaften* (parallel societies), previous research suggests that 'modes of transnational participation have complex and generally positive relationships with processes of integration' (Vertovec 2010: 90).

It should be noted that although these impressions give insight into the ways in which the social environment can alter social mobility, they are neither representative of all foreigners living in

Zehdenick nor are they particular to a specific place. Moreover, native residents are not the only actors within social environments that condition and enable integration capabilities; as the above quote by Amir suggests, 'strangers and foreigners' play an equally important role in determining well-being among the local community. Yet, these cases highlight the importance of thinking beyond the state as the main unit of analysis when exploring lived integration experiences (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002). Notwithstanding the fact that the state largely sets the tone of Germany's integration approach, it is not the only structure that conditions integration. This highlights how institutional support and demand structures oftentimes conceal broader constraints and life chances that are removed from the state's integration control.

In this vein, informants repeatedly mentioned 'private sponsors' as a decisive factor in the production of aspirations and capabilities. In the context of this research, private sponsors should not be confused with street-level bureaucrats who are defined as people that 'meet citizens at the interface between citizens and government (…) so the teachers, police officers, social workers are the people who actually deliver the policy that has been constructed elsewhere' (cf. Düvell 2016: 8). Private sponsors, as understood by my interviewees, typically referred to a category of locals who assist with the integration of refugees and migrants. They are not individual agents linked to the government with the agenda to implement policies at the micro-level. Instead, they reportedly connected with informants primarily through informal and social events, described further below.

Seeking assistance from private sponsors who facilitate integration is not a new phenomenon. Canada, for instance, formally introduced a Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSR) in 1978 to provide an alternative to the state-led integration model. In Germany, private sponsorship programmes have obtained formal footing in 15 of Germany's 16 federal states. This practice is typically tied to financial support which, in the case of Germany, must be at least 'equivalent to the social welfare rate prevailing at the intended place of residence' (Kumin 2015). However, so far it is only Syrians who can legally be sponsored in the country. Despite these restrictions, the principle of outsourcing integration support to private actors equally applies in the context of my informants' integration experiences, irrespective of their nationality and legal status. Instead of being formally introduced by federal agencies or local authorities, first-contact between sponsors and migrants or refugees reportedly occurs either by coincidence or through the local church and other religious networks. While the relationship between religion and integration in Germany has been comprehensively reviewed elsewhere[6], it can be noted here that several informants used religion as a vehicle for inclusion in the community. Zouhir, for instance, participated in Sunday morning prayers in a Christian church while Yara attended congregations organised by the *Diakonisches Werk* (Diaconal facility), which is a charitable organization of Protestant churches in Germany.

According to my informants, private sponsors assisted in various tasks including language and culture exchange, finding housing, translating and explaining official documents, attending meetings, and providing psychological support. In the case of Majeed, who arrived in Zehdenick in 2015, private sponsorship significantly increased not only his capabilities to integrate but also his aspirations to do so: after his arrival, the Pakistani immigrant received support from a family father who works for a local housing association. He enabled Majeed to circumvent the complex German bureaucracy by arranging accommodation for him. Majeed explains that building a strong bond with the family not only introduced him to the local community but also alleviated the psychological trauma of losing both his parents in a bomb attack in Pakistan. As a result of the strong bond, the family initiated an adoption process in court. Unlike other respondents from Zehdenick, Majeed plans to stay in the small town in hopes of assisting the family in the future. Although this case does not represent the integration experience of most refugees and migrants in Germany, it testifies to the positive impact of private sponsorship on the integration process. Specifically, it highlights how strong connections with private sponsors enable access to integration opportunities outside of the state's reach and, in turn, increase the 'aspiration to stay' (Schewel 2015; Carling and Schewel 2018). This has also been the case for Zouhir, who met a German woman soon after his arrival in Germany during one of his weekly visits to the local church. She has since accompanied him through several stages of the integration process. During the interview he notes 'before I found her I wanted to go back to Syria'. In Berlin, a similar narrative emerged from my interviews. Four of the respondents[7] noted that their continuous contact with private sponsors was crucial for dealing with German bureaucracy, increasing their language skills, and finding accommodation. On the other end of the spectrum, Somali-born Hani who did not benefit from any type of private sponsorship explains how he feels isolated and struggles to learn German without being able to practice the language outside the classroom. This identifies gaining access to nodes within a social network as an important element of capabilities, which, in turn, develops capabilities in a wider sense 'through flows of financial, human and social capital' (Carling and Schewel 2018: 957).

Rather than seeing willingness as a mere result of individual agency on behalf of refugees or migrants, these findings suggest this quality is as a function of aspirations *and* capabilities; both are the dependent variables that need to be analysed in order to explain integration outcomes. It would be simplistic, for instance, to say that Amir is less willing to integrate compared to Majeed. The difference between them is not their aspiration to integrate, but instead their capabilities to do so. Amir's relative 'unwillingness' to integrate, for instance, is rooted in his limited access to local opportunity structures in Zehdenick to which Majeed gained access through his private sponsors. Although it could be argued that the process of building connections with private sponsors itself requires an aspiration or a general 'willingness' to do so in the first place, it is their interaction with capabilities that produces different outcomes of social mobility.

This chapter discerned specific opportunity and incentive structures that condition integration capabilities, including different social and spatial environments as well as access to institutions and local opportunities in form of private sponsorship. Doing so, it unsettled the normative statement that refugees must be 'willing' to integrate (De Maizière 2016; Spahn 2016; Dobrindt 2018), and instead argued that social mobility is most productive when aspirations and capabilities correspond positively. On a theoretical level, this section thus promotes an understanding of integration as an intersectional process that cuts across the structure-agency binary discussed in migration scholarship (Bakewell 2010). The German *Fördern und Fordern* approach incorporates this rationale insofar that it (a) increases the capabilities to integrate by developing opportunity structures (Fördern) and (b) increases the aspirations to integrate by developing incentive structures (Fordern).

3. Moving Beyond Willingness: Social (Im)mobility

a. Between geographic and social (im)mobility

In her research on Nigerians in China, Heidi Østbø Haugen (2012) explores the lives of migrants who arrive successfully to their destination country but become spatially entrapped in new or unexpected ways. She refers to this situation as a 'second state of immobility' (ibid. 65). Many of the respondents I interviewed narrated similar experiences. For instance, those who arrived in Brandenburg seeking asylum reported being stuck in a reception centre in a town called Eisenhüttenstadt. Only after several weeks and sometimes even months they would be resettled to cities or small towns in the East German state. Moreover, with the exception of Majeed, all respondents who moved to Zehdenick expressed an aspiration to migrate elsewhere (typically Berlin), but an inability to do so. This phenomenon resonates with what Carling (2002) refers to as 'involuntary immobility'. Bridging the geographic and social character of mobility, the previous chapter already illustrated ways in which spatial immobility restricts integration aspirations and capabilities. As this section illustrates, however, emerging theories of (involuntary) immobility as by Haugen and Carling also prove resourceful in cases where social immobility goes beyond its relationship with geographical constraints.

In this vein, during a visit to a family in Zehdenick my gatekeeper informed me that Fatima, a 19-year old woman from Syria who lives together with her husband and two young children, would feel uncomfortable discussing her integration experience in front of her husband. When interviewed in a separate room, Fatima explained that she wants to attend language school and learn German but is unable to do so since she must take care of her children. Information provided during the interview and in conversations with the gatekeeper indicated that the children were previously offered a place at a kindergarten outside of the small town. This would have enabled Fatima to

attend language classes, however, her husband objected to the idea without providing clear reasons. This case embodies several elements that speak to literature on involuntary immobility. First, fixed inside the household Fatima is not only denied the positive freedom to participate in society but also the opportunity to develop her personal identity as a member of the local community. Second, her case suggests that social immobility scopes different levels of constraint that reach beyond the control of the state. To be sure, the state plays an indirect role through the financing of childcare, but Fatima's immobility is further rooted in a household decision that follows a specific gender pattern: she takes care of the children for her husband to be able to go to language school. This example resonates with approaches in the study of integration that illustrate how the organisation of livelihoods is not an individual affair, but negotiated within wider social contexts (De Haan and McDowell 1997).

This paper maintains that such forms of social immobility are rarely fully voluntary or forced, but instead exist along a continuum of experiences. Migration scholarship has produced similar views in the field of geographic mobility (Richmond 1988; De Haas 2011; Erdal and Oeppen 2017). Similar to the case of Fatima, for instance, Daywa and her husband need to take care of their youngest child Eliyas during the day. In this case, however, the parents found a way for both to take advantage of the opportunities provided under the *Fördern* (support) principle: soon after Daywa completed her state-financed language courses up to level C1, she secured an internship as a translator. During this time, her husband stayed at home taking care of Eliyas. Thereafter, they switched responsibilities and Daywa stayed at home while Daoud completed his language classes. Once their youngest child is old enough to go to a kindergarten, both parents will be prepared to join the labour market. In order to acquire German language skills and join the labour market in the longer term, each parent needed to forego such opportunities in the shorter term. In other words, they experienced a period of immobility that traversed the forced-voluntary distinction in a simple cost-benefit calculation at a household level. This reflects the need to pay attention to the purpose of short-term concessions when making long-term investments during the integration process. However, the relationship between these two practices is difficult to capture given the ever-shifting repertoire of future life chances and the 'potentially transient nature of aspirations' (Carling and Schewel 2018: 6).

The phenomenon of temporary social immobility surfaced during interviews with both migrants and refugees, highlighting the need to look beyond legal status in analyses on integration. Periods of social immobility are not uncommon even among German citizens who struggle to mobilise resources for labour market integration (Kohlrausch 2012: 6). The recent development of mainstreaming integration policies acknowledges this fact by applying the principles of *Fördern and Fordern* to a larger population base rather than specific migrant groups. Particularly in Berlin, mainstreamed integration activities feature prominently in policy-making with the aim to improve the economic status of people with an immigrant background more generally (Bendel 2014: 17). While some of these initiatives were developed prior to the IntG 2016, a majority of them grew out of the

institutionalisation of the *Fördern and Fordern* principle. The process of political transformation, in this case toward a more long-term and generalised form of refugee and migrant integration, has thus evolved into a type of national policy approach that shapes social mobility and capabilities in a broader sense. This argument supports the notion that migration, and by extension integration, is 'part of change itself, and can therefore not really be conceptualised separately' (De Haas 2014:18).

b. Freedom of Alternative

From the previous section the question emerges whether (and what) alternative forms of integration are available to migrants and refugees who face periods of social immobility during the integration process. Exploring the consequences of social immobility on the integration trajectory is crucial for understanding the strategies employed when navigating outside of the country's integration approach. When the state-led integration model of *Fördern and Fordern* fails to match integration aspirations with capabilities, refugees and migrants typically have two possibilities: either they rely on social safety nets to cope with downward social mobility, or they pursue alternative forms of integration that deviate from the state-led integration model. According to Olsarettis's (1998) study on 'freedom, force, and choice', however, a decision is only voluntary when it is made in the context of acceptable alternatives or if the lack of alternatives itself is acceptable to the individual making the decision. The question is therefore whether these scenarios actually describe two 'possibilities' offered in a context of choice, or whether they are merely two forces to be reckoned with.

Several of my informants chose alternative over norm when navigating around the surrounding incentive and opportunity structures. Baddar, an Afghan migrant living in Berlin with a temporary residence permit, initially came to Germany in order to establish the necessary social and economic ties for his family to join him. During the interview he explains that he does not want to rely on the German Jobcenter to provide adequate work opportunities and accommodation. Baddar circumvents this arm of the state-led integration regime and instead chooses to work informally in a restaurant. When he starts the B1-level language class he will continue his informal job despite the potential prospect of being caught and charged under the Act to Combat Undeclared Employment (SchwarzArbG). In the interview, Baddar notes: 'I don't have time to meet anyone. But I'm free to do whatever I want. So, I work and save money (…) I want a driving license and an apartment'. Baddar's plan deviates from the normative approach to participate in society, however, he is confident that it provides him with better opportunities in the shorter term. Here, freedom of choice enables Baddar to pursue alternative forms of integration beyond the state's control. In this sense, he capitalises on alternative venues of integration to satisfy his immediate need (i.e. saving money) despite the risk of facing longer-term consequences (i.e. legal punishment and failure of family reunification). This decision is both rooted in short-term problem-solving as well as a 'bounded rationality' that (mis)informs expectations about future life chances; as noted long ago,

people's rationality is limited by 'access to information, cognitive limitations and the finite amounts of time' (Giddens 1984; De Haas 2010). Narratives of practical problem-solving and 'bounded rationality' recurred during interviews with informants who described language barriers, complex bureaucratic processes, long periods of decision making at the institutional level, and a lack of trust in street-level bureaucrats. These capability constraints also played heavily into the production of uncertainty on behalf of refugees and migrants about their future in Germany. In this vein, the Somali migrant Hani who lives in Berlin describes his frustration about the inability to think about integration in the longer term:

> 'Really I have worries because I am here since 2015 (…) and still my situation is not clear. I'm not sure even that I will… they will tell me to… go back to Somalia or maybe to live here. I'm not sure. I'm expecting a positive answer still and it is good to always have hope to get positive things, but I'm not sure really. I'm worried. I'm also worried my children are still in [Somalia] and I don't have ability for them to get out from there.'

Unlike Baddar, who claims to be 'free to do whatever [he] want[s]', Hani expresses no awareness over this freedom of choice. His social immobility is rooted in an uncertainty over alternative forms of integration. This resonates with previous research by Colburn (2008), who writes that perceptions of adequate alternatives are conditioned by personal beliefs and access to information. In the case of Baddar and Hani, the availability of integration alternatives partly depends on the type of aspiration, short-term or long-term, as well as the capability to access relevant information. In the presence (and awareness) of alternatives to a state-led integration model, Baddar could find other ways to cope with his social immobility. Through the absence of such alternatives this was not the case for Hani, whose lack of access to information and the inability to reunite with his family resulted in uncertainty, or even paralysis, during the integration process.

c. Experiencing German Integration(ism)

Finally, what do my findings reveal about the relationship between the above-described forms of social (im)mobility and the 'isms' that inform the German integration approach? As suggested, the *Fördern and Fordern* approach encompasses both assimilationist and multiculturalist policies while also drawing from mainstreaming practices at the level of implementation. This amalgamation of discursive and organisational strategies disturbs any easy generalisation about which 'ism' currently dominates the German integration regime, and indeed raises the question of whether such boxing of terms is constructive for social scientific inquiry in the first place.

While informants were quick in pointing out what they perceived to be the 'core domains' facilitating social mobility (Ager and Strang 2008: 170), their behaviour in the context of different institutional integration frameworks surfaced in less obvious ways. Most informants reportedly did not feel any social pressure to integrate when asked directly, however, their stories implicitly point

to an inescapable awareness over German cultural and social norms. This consciousness partially stems from the compulsory integration courses 'offered' under the IntG 2016, but is largely rooted in daily encounters with locals. Soon after their arrival in Zehdenick, for instance, Daywa and her husband experienced how encounters with locals in the community influence integration behaviour. For them, listening to stories of female friends being discriminated for wearing a headscarf produced a sense of otherness: 'when I wear a headscarf they look at me differently', Daywa notes. Later she adds '[my husband] said, 'you have to take your headscarf off. I don't want you to look differently'. Similar reasoning went into Amir's decision to shake hands when meeting other women in public:

> 'Many things of our culture have changed, and we fight to keep our identity. But sometimes [the identity] goes away. We are Muslims, we are Arabs. And we are not allowed to touch women... it is forbidden. But now we live here. People look weird when you do not touch a woman... they say you're radical.'

The quote highlights the existence of confrontation during the process of integration. It illustrates the struggle to produce a collective identity in 'transnational social spaces' vis-à-vis the nation state (Faist 2000: 189). As Spencer (2006: 21) notes, 'the diversity of identities within nation states and the fragility of national identities in some states is the context in which multiculturalism can be disturbing to many Europeans'. Shaking hands with a woman against one's own cultural registers is a minuscule form of acknowledging and seeking to alleviate this disturbance. It is a concession deemed necessary to shield oneself against the threat of being labelled 'radical' or an outsider. These excerpts describe only a portion of those practices reported to take place in the context of a consciousness over cultural boundaries. The normative logic behind assimilationism aims to do away with these boundaries over time. The conversation with Amir reflects his awareness of this idealised endpoint of integration. He claims that 'integration is like globalisation... you do not know if someone is originally German or not originally German'. Tying the above-mentioned examples together, integration can then viewed as a process that exposes otherness but at the same time idealises likeness; it gives rise to a consciousness of difference and simultaneously disposes of it.

These narratives stand in contrast with the multiculturalist approach of the *Gastarbeiter* regime in the 1970s and 1980s, which promoted the co-existence of different forms of appearance, identity, and belonging. Nevertheless, phrases such as 'we fight to keep our identity' (Amir) and 'everyone has to keep their culture, but not isolated from each other' (Omar) suggest a degree of aversion against assimilationism as an ideal endpoint of integration. Further, it points toward a recurring struggle whereby respondents perceived a need to negotiate partial inclusion in society without becoming bounded by it. This allows migrants and refugees to insinuate themselves in the networks that facilitate the process of integration – a process that neither assimilationism nor multiculturalism alone can adequately capture.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to empirically sketch the association between the German integration regime and lived integration experiences of refugees and migrants. Doing so, it conceptualised integration as a function of aspirations and capabilities to illustrate how informants navigate their integration trajectories through social and institutional fields. A focus on the relationship between opportunity and incentive structures at the national and local level formed a critical component of this analysis.

The analysis identified the *Fördern and Fordern* (support and demand) as key policy dogma of the government guiding national policy-making in the area of integration. By reconciling the historically dominant frameworks of assimilationism and multiculturalism, it described how this approach serves as a mechanism to develop incentive and opportunity structures. My empirical findings suggest that the introduction of such opportunities and incentives has produced additional venues for refugees and migrants to integrate, but simultaneously ties these to specific integration commitments. As not all informants shared an equal repertoire of aspirations and capabilities to negotiate their involvement with these mechanisms, their cost of integration significantly varied, thus producing different types of social (im)mobility. As a consequence, this increasingly institutionalised and normative process prioritises refugees or migrants with a 'good perspective' to stay – or what could bluntly be described as separating the 'wheat from the chaff'.

The findings from this research further reflect on the resourcefulness of bridging the epistemological break between conceptual models on migration and integration. The multi-sited fieldwork approach assisted this project by providing insight into the relationship between spatial and social types of immobility. This methodology reflected the importance of the city-level, or in a broader sense the 'local turn', in the study on integration (Glick-Schiller and Çaglar 2009). Although the body of data presented in this research only provides room for tentative conclusions, it supports the argument that social immobility is rarely fully voluntary or forced but instead presents itself along a continuum of experiences. The narratives offered in this paper also speak to a body of scholarly literature that illustrates how the organisation of livelihoods is built around multiple levels of integration decision-making (McDowell & de Haan 1997; Jacobsen 2002; Mazzucato 2008). Capability constraints, at times leading to a 'second state of immobility' (Haugen 2012), have been dealt with by informants through alternative channels of integration, such as seeking informal employment where no German is required. These strategies do not necessarily comply with government demands in the area of integration and foster only partial social inclusion, often only at the margins of society.

On a broader level, this paper has illustrated how an application of the aspirations and capabilities model enables researchers to (a) expand the theoretical concept of geographic mobility by including social (im)mobility; (b) improve our understanding of the ways in which integration opportunity and incentive structures affect individual agency; (c) reconcile the fluidity and diversity of

personal integration experiences with conceptual clarity; and (d) shift attention away from the outcomes of integration to the cognitive processes that precede this effort.

As the task of integration research is hardly straightforward, it is crucial to invest in empirical-driven categories to make sense of its transient nature. Imbued with different meanings, non-linear processes, and multiple dimensions of decision-making, analyses in this area could lead to a vacuous resignation in pursuit of conceptual clarity – or what Castles (2008: 9) calls a 'post-modern fragmentation of knowledge'. Opting to interview both migrants and refugees in the analysis could therefore seem like an additional layer of complexity, however, it allowed this research to discern patterns and contradictions from a diversity of integration experiences that move beyond legal status and ethnicity. The findings demonstrated that individuals who migrate through different points of the forced-voluntary spectrum can become socially and spatially entrapped in similar ways in their destination country.

To this end, my research focused on areas of integration deemed most decisive or immediate for their integration experience – language, labour, and location. While the personal narratives offered in this paper do not provide a comprehensive account of the various 'means and markers' (Ager and Strang 2008: 170) that define integration, they expose the deep-seated networks and spaces that take part in producing the 'willingness' to integrate. Instead of couching the language of political discourse in such colloquial terms, greater attention should be paid to the aspirations and capabilities that determine not only whether migrants and refugees *fit* in but also whether they *feel* in.

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[1] For instance, see Barth (1969) and Modood et al. (1997).

[2] These 'priority checks' previously ensured citizens were given priority on the labour market.

[3] The 'Living in Germany' exam is a multiple-choice test consisting of 33 questions, half of which must be answered correctly in order to pass.

[4] All names in this paper have been changed to ensure the anonymity of informants.

[5] Life chances (or, Lebenschancen) is a concept first introduced by Weber (1972) and later adapted by Dahrendorf (1979). It can be defined as 'the probabilities of the occurrence of certain events (namely, satisfying one's interests) which are anchored in structural conditions (i.e., income, property, opportunity, norms, rights, the probability that others will respond in a certain way)' (cf. Abel and Cockerham 1993: 553).

[6] See Maliepaard and Schacht (2017) in 'The relation between religiosity and Muslims' social integration: a two-wave study of recent immigrants in three European countries' as well as Leszczensky, Lars, and Pink (2017) in 'Intra-and Inter-group Friendship Choices of Christian, Muslim, and Non-religious Youth in Germany'.

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Appendix I: Respondents Information Sheet

Region	Name	Sex	Age	Nationality	Employed	Language Level
Berlin	Zouhir	Male	43	Syria	Yes	B2
	Mustafa	Male	31	Turkey	No	B2
	Yara	Female	29	Syria	No	B2
	Khalil	Male	42	Syria	Yes	B2
	Hani	Male	27	Somalia	No	B2
	Baddar	Male	25	Afghanistan	Yes	B1
	Azra	Female	28	Turkey	No	C1
	Faoud	Male	19	Syria	Student	C1
Zehdenick	Younes	Male	37	Afghanistan	No	B2
	Muhammad	Male	39	Syria	No	B1
	Omar	Male	36	Syria	No	B1
	Daywa	Female	30	Afghanistan	Yes	C1
	Majeed	Male	32	Pakistan	Yes	C1
	Edris	Male	20	Afghanistan	Student	C1
	Fatima	Female	24	Syria	No	none
	Amir	Male	42	Syria	No	C1