

Migration Policy Research Group, University of Hildesheim

Integration of Refugees in Small Territories

Municipalities as key actors in integration



Source: Wiebke Ostermeier/ by www.lichtmomente.net



Source: <https://www.ddpix.de/wp-content/gallery/dresden-von-oben/00522.jpg>

Two Worlds Apart? Local integration politics in urban and rural municipalities



Research aims

- Comparison of local integration politics in urban and rural municipalities
- Analysis of institutional change in 96 municipalities after the increased arrival of asylum seekers in 2015/2016

Methods

- Selection of 96 municipalities across Germany based on: rural character, socio-economic factors, number of inhabitants, political orientation
- 2 interviews/municipality (local administration + NGO)
- Analysis of local integration concepts

Funded by:  **Robert Bosch
Stiftung**

Project data

- **Collaboration between**



- **Team**



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How local governments and communities shape multi-level governance of (forced) migration

MPRG's ongoing research projects on local integration policy:

Two Worlds Apart

- compares local integration politics in urban and rural municipalities
- analyses institutional change in 96 municipalities after 2015

96 municipalities in 12 *Länder*:

- 24 towns with district status
- 24 districts
- 48 district municipalities

Prospects of Refugees in Rural Areas

- investigates potentials of rural districts to integrate refugees
- analyses how local integration politics may support rural districts in this endeavour
- analyses the ensuing potential for local development

32 municipalities in 4 *Länder*

- 2 districts per *Land*
- 4 municipalities per district

When Mayors Make Migration Policy

- evaluates the impact of transnational cities' networks on European migration policies
- examines activities of formal and informal networks as well as strategies of individual cities in those networks

- European cities' networks
- 8 European cities: Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, Munich, Wrocław, Leeds, Ljubljana, Palermo, Nantes, Vienna

Districts and municipalities covered in Germany



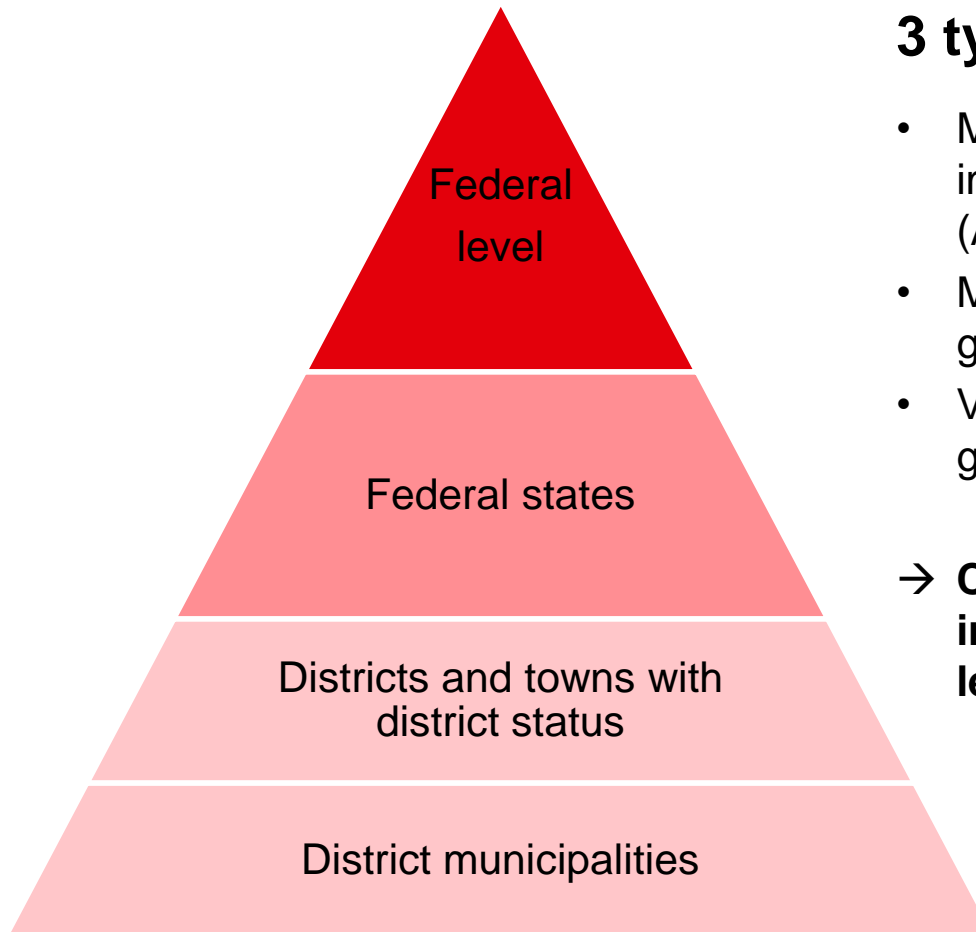
Source: Migration Policy Research Group

Contents



- 1. Is there a tendency to territorialise or to centralise policies related to integration in Germany?**
- 2. Is there an urban/rural divide in terms of integration capacity?**
- 3. Does national harmonization reduce the divide?**

The local level in the German federal structure



3 types of local responsibilities

- Mandatory delegated responsibilities, e.g. implementation of the Residence Act (AufenthG)
- Mandatory tasks in the context of local self-government, e.g. youth welfare
- Voluntary tasks in the context of local self-government, e.g. coordination of volunteers

→ **Complex interplay of responsibilities in all sectors coalescing at the local level**

→ **intermunicipal variance**

The local level in the German federal structure: tendency to centralisation or territorialisation?

Language acquisition: integration courses

- Federal level
 - „Coordinated and carried out“ by BAMF
 - financing
- Local level
 - in practice carried out and coordinated by local operators
 - support allocation and registration

Occasional call for decentralisation but no action taken yet

Humanitarian residence title

- Federal level
 - BAMF responsible for carrying out asylum procedure
- Level of federal states
 - Humanitarian residence title (for groups subject to approval by Federal Ministry of Interior)

Deliberation on decentralisation but no action taken yet

Residence restriction for protection status holders

- Federal level
 - Residence restricted to federal state assigned
- Level of federal states
 - May decide whether or not to introduce residence restrictions on local level

Decentralisation realised

→ In all sectors: many actors beyond administration involved

Is there an urban/rural divide?

Is it even possible to compare urban and rural areas in terms of their integration capacity?



- Integration is **multilayered** (social inclusion vs. social cohesion)
- **Plurality** of rural and urban contexts: multiple structural conditions play a role, incl. the municipality's self-perception
- **Prevalence-bias**: migrant population in rural and urban contexts often do not share the same socio-demographic profile (e.g. residency status, level of education)

Is there an urban/rural divide?

Some particularities of integration in rural contexts nonetheless

- Often **no continuous experience** with migration
- **Mobility** as a challenge for both migrants and service providers
 - Migrants: more difficult access to services, support measures
 - Service providers: challenge to bring actors together
 - Different departments of local administration spread across district
 - Large territory may hamper frequent contact of integration coordinators with local associations, volunteers, sports clubs etc.
- No or only **little representation of migrants' perspective** as a result of absence of local migrant organisations
- **Less representation** at regional or federal level
 - Less professionalisation: variety of responsibilities covered by only few people → little time left for exchange and networking
 - Representation by local umbrella organisations, yet several platforms address bigger cities



Recommendation: capacity building by way of a network for rural districts

Harmonization: a way to reduce the divide?

Examples for national harmonization efforts:

- National integration plan: formulation of shared goals and measures (non-binding)
- Commission of the federal government on integration capacities (experts and practitioners)

Multi-level exchange fora:

- National conference of national, regional and local integration commissioners (BuKo)

Challenges for smaller municipalities:

- Harmonized standards should not be at the detriment of local flexibility
- How to monitor the implementation of standards?
- Representation of „rural perspective“ needs to be guaranteed

Conclusions



- Municipalities are key actors in integration: interplay of responsibilities in all sectors coalesce at the local level and lead to intermunicipal variance
- Difficult to compare urban and rural areas in terms of their integration capacity due to a plurality of structural conditions and differences of socio-demographic characteristics of migrants
- Only little representation of “rural perspective“ at regional and federal level as compared to “urban perspective“
- Need to provide capacity-buiding measures for rural districts that do justice to plurality of rural contexts



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Thank you for your attention!

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Selected publications

Bendel, Petra; Schammann, Hannes; Müller, Christiane; Stürner, Janina (2019) **A local turn for European Refugee Politics: Recommendations for Strengthening Municipalities and Local Communities in Refugee and Asylum Policy of the EU**. Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.

Heimann, Christiane; Müller, Sandra; Schammann, Hannes; Stürner, Janina (2019) **Challenging the Nation-State from within: The Emergence of Transmunicipal Solidarity in the Course of the EU Refugee Controversy**. In: Social Inclusion 2019/2 (in press).

Schammann, Hannes; Kühn, Boris (2016) **Kommunale Flüchtlingspolitik in Deutschland [Governance of Refugee Matters at the Local Level]**. Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.