Integration of Refugees in Small Territories
Municipalities as key actors in integration

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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

Project data

- Collaboration between

Funded by: Robert Bosch Stiftung

Team

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- Prof. Dr. Hannes Schammann, University of Hildesheim
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- Tobias Wittchen, University of Hildesheim
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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, Wroclaw, Leeds, Ljubljana, Palermo, Nantes, Vienna
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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language acquisition: integration courses</th>
<th>Humanitarian residence title</th>
<th>Residence restriction for protection status holders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Federal level</td>
<td>• Federal level</td>
<td>• Federal level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• „Coordinated and carried out“ by BAMF</td>
<td>• BAMF responsible for</td>
<td>• Residence restricted to federal state assigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• financing</td>
<td>carrying out asylum</td>
<td>• Level of federal states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local level</td>
<td>procedure</td>
<td>• Level of federal states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• in practice carried out and coordinated by local operators</td>
<td>• Level of federal states</td>
<td>• Humanitarian residence title (for groups subject to approval by Federal Ministry of Interior)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• support allocation and registration</td>
<td>• Humanitarian residence title (for groups subject to approval by Federal Ministry of Interior)</td>
<td>• May decide whether or not to introduce residence restrictions on local level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Occasional call for decentralisation but no action taken yet  
Deliberation on decentralisation but no action taken yet  
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-building measures for rural districts that do justice to plurality of rural contexts
Thank you for your attention!

Contact

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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).