

Thank you for the opportunity to read this paper, which I believe has the potential to provide important insights regarding the differential inclusion of refugees into the German labour market, while contextualizing these dynamics of differential inclusion within the policy changes in the field of asylum in the previous years.

The paper takes its point of departure in the past years' changes in asylum policies in Germany, focusing on the enhanced temporariness of protection and the «paradigmatic change»<sup>1</sup> towards a framing of asylum seekers as potential labour power. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, the author seeks to show how the current German migration regime works to produce ethnically sealed zones of economic activity where newly arrived migrants are subject to exploitation.

The paper is an intervention into a rich and growing literature on (the changes of) the German migration regime in the years around and following “the long summer of migration”. The intervention is promising and has the potential to provide important insights: I agree with the author that there is little ethnographic work on the relation of newly arrived refugees to employers with background from their own countries or regions, and that such relations shape migrants' navigations and sense of themselves in Germany in manifold ways.

I however find that the paper needs to be substantially revised before publication. Since I propose that major revisions need to be done, I will not focus on details in this review, but rather on a few substantial points, thereby providing a few examples. These examples should not be read as exhaustive, however.

## 1. ARGUMENT – VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

After having read the text several times, I still cannot see that the main arguments the author makes are convincingly substantiated through his use of data and subsequent analysis of this data. The author aims to explore and show the relation between migration policy and the production of «sealed zones of economic activity that display auto-ethnic» properties. His concern is how migration policy works to produce such zones. Yet, while the description of the developments in German migration policy is present (that said, the discussion of these needs reworking in terms of accuracy, see below), the author does in my opinion not convincingly show HOW the policy regulations and practices he describes work to produce such communities. In other words, I am not convinced when it comes to how he traces, establishes and demonstrates the connections between the broader policy realm and the “auto-ethnic” relations and dynamics he explores. The author needs to give more data and to build a more consistent theoretical framework to show how “the bordering practice” “sorts asylum seekers into different segments of the formal and informal economy on the basis of national identity.” (p.12).

There is also other arguments and analytical claims made that remain unsubstantiated. A few examples might be helpful to explain my concern (I will write down only the start of the sentences making up the examples):

- Page 10: «Haider's South Asian employers were able to draw on their reservoirs of social and cultural capital to read...» The author does not show convincingly *that* the employers do this or *how* they were able to do this. «show, and then tell» would be good here. More ethnography needed.
- Page 9 - «What we are seeing is an intensification of this structure of migrant labour exploitation where migrants are put to work by other migrants...». This claim needs to be substantiated with reference to secondary literature or firsthand data. Furthermore, after the author has substantiated this, this reader still needs a more thorough analysis of HOW this “intensification” can be traced back to/connected to the broader developments in the policy field. While I appreciate the three cases the author works with, I do think he needs to broaden the empirics and his analysis to demonstrate this connection.
- Page 10. «The current model makes it possible to enlist...» Again, while I at this point went back and started reading the paper again for the third time, I cannot see that we are convincingly shown, through analysis, HOW this model makes this possible.
- p. 11: «Arabic speaking Africans are frequently absorbed...» Firstly, the general argument here about the «absorption» of different categories of migrants is not substantiated in the text through empirical

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<sup>1</sup> The trope of “paradigm change” as a periodising device calls for critical engagement, see for instance Drangsdal on the German paradigm change in the thesis “Working to Wait Well” (2021).

data. On what does the author base this statement? Secondly, I am not convinced when it comes to the «relationship» the author establishes between the German policies and the segmentation of economic activity for asylum seekers – this must be demonstrated in the text. Another concern pertains to the politics of representation at play here and the homogenizing (and stigmatizing?) effects– I will elaborate on this point below.

- P. 14. “Asylum seekers learn early into their stay, as Khaled did, one of the easiest paths to a job - one that requires the least amount of time, and the least amount of context specific knowledge (like German language skills) is that of “Sicherheit”, or private security.” How does the author know this about what the asylum learn? Source is needed. Furthermore, does this go for all asylum seekers? (Women? Old people? Sick people? Children?). Rewriting would be good here.

## 2. PRECISION AND PRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL DATA

The text is unnecessarily spoiled with empirical inaccuracy and lack of sources. This should however be easy to correct, as the author proves to know the German context well! I will provide a few examples (there are more):

- p. 7 «Most newcomers applying for asylum have their asylum application rejected». Please present source (the author does so on the previous page). Which year are we talking about here? These numbers have changed during the past years.
- p. 7 about tolerated migrants. It seems from the way this sentence is written that these people became tolerated in 2021. This is of course not the case. Also, it could be noted that not all tolerated are rejected asylum seekers (while most are).
- p. 10. It is a simplification to state that that «asylum cases are linked not to personal history». In court hearings for instance, the personal history is key. This simplification is not necessary for the author to make his point. It could also be noted that the concept of «country of origin» has a long history in German asylum policies.
- P. 7. The notion «Permanent refugee status». This is not a legal category. Might it be that what the author means here is refugees with permanent residence status? More generally, I would recommend looking through the uses of the notion «refugee» and «asylum seeker» and clarify if/when they are used as legal categories/as analytical concepts – and, in the latter case, how the author understand them. This is to some extent discussed at page 10, but overall, the paper remains fuzzy when it comes to the use of these categories. For instance, on p. 23 the author writes “Second, is the reminder that most new asylum seekers are not, in fact, people with refugee status, but tolerated foreigners”. Legally speaking, one is not any longer an asylum seeker when the claim for protection has been recognized (refugee status) or rejected (and one becomes tolerated). So, it seems here that “asylum seeker” is not put to use by the author as a legal or policy category (since people remain asylum seekers in the author’s view also after the decision on their claims for asylum). It is not clear to me how the author understands this category.
- p. 6: «Thus, most asylum seekers (...) work has been experienced less as a right» - How does the author know this about asylum seeker\*s experiences? On which basis does he claim this?
- “Few jobs in the formal economy are easily accessible to newcomers in Germany” (p. 14). Source?

Another point: I appreciate the argument the author makes regarding the Duldung in the third paragraph at p. 11. However, there has been an ongoing discussion regarding how to understand the Duldung as a category of protection («status of refugee-ness”), and referring to this would make for a thicker discussion. See for instance Mitric’s dissertation «In a castle between the earth and the sky», where he discusses the use of the toleration permit as a form of humanitarian protection.

## 3. USE OF SOURCES (empirical and theoretical)

I would appreciate a more extensive use of sources. There is general few sources used in large parts of the text, and a more extensive use of sources would help to substantiate claims that in their present form take the shape of mere «opinions». I would also appreciate are more *precise* use of sources.

For instance (to provide one example) the author writes on p- 5 about the «policy meant to dissuade people thinking of asylum» - is this the author's opinion about this policy (then some data would be appreciated), or does he base this claim on existing research? I have no problems with the statement, which is demonstrated in much research the past years (see for instance Hruschka's later work), yet all readers do not know this literature, so it needs to be made explicit through use of sources.

Another example on p. 6 pertaining to the precise use of and reference to sources. It is not an accurate description of the work of Schultz nor Drangslund referred to here, that they focus on the «acceptance of refugees». It might be the notion of «acceptance» that is confusing here, however – is it «deservingness» or acceptance in the sense of the «legal recognition of refugee status» which is at stake here? A little reworking of the text would allow a more precise use of these sources – which otherwise are well suited here.

On page 4 the author lists different ways of theorizing «differential inclusion». (The author writes «differential exclusion» with reference to Mezzadra and Neilson, but I guess he means «differential inclusion» which is also the concept used later on in the text). I would suggest rather to choose one (it seems the author prefers differential inclusion) and give a more thorough explanation. In the present brief engagement with this theoretical frame on page 4, for instance the centrality of class to the theoretical framework of Mezzadra and Neilson disappears from view. A good read here: Karlsen's book "Precarious inclusion" gives a good theoretical discussion of the epistemological underpinnings and implications of the different concepts listed here by the author.

#### 4. HOMOGENIZING, DICHOTOMIZING

The author several times states his intention not to homogenize, yet I find that the text nevertheless falls into this trap several times. One example is the distinction between "newcomers" and "locals". From the text I understand that «newcomers» are refugees? But who are the locals? Can these newcomers (a temporalised category) become "locals" (a spatial category). Are there "non-refugee newcomers" amongst the locals? I miss some reflexivity on the implications of using these terms.

It seems that all the «Asian» and the «Arab» employers are categorized by the author as «refugees» – what are the implications for knowledge and the political implications of this categorization of the employers? Does the author here not contribute to a homogenization and «migrantization» of these employers? In my opinion, he does so in problematic ways. When do people stop being refugees? Do the employers self-describe as refugees, or is this the author's description of them? (I guess the latter). I believe that dealing with such questions in a reflexive way in the writing process is important (that does not mean that this reflexive work must be written out in the finished text).

Regarding arguments made about the social networks of refugees: Are there not «Germans» in the «social networks» of refugees? Indeed, research has underlined the immense importance of white, German middle-class Ehrenamtliche as «labour brokers» in Germany (see for instance, Drangslund, «Working to Wait Well», for a discussion and reference to other works on this topic).

Who is «the Arab man» the author writes about on page 16? I find this notion highly problematic – especially in the current political climate - , and it made me think of the discussion of Ann Stoler of the use of the concept of «the Arab» in Camus's work (see Stoler «Duress»).

The issues I want to raise here, also concerns the politics involved in how the author presents his interlocutors. Were they really «united by their need for safety» (p.3). Did they feel united (the reader does not know, there is only the author's word for this) or did the author conceptualize them as united (and homogenous?). And were they «formerly JUST asylum seekers» (p. 3) to the author or to themselves and each other? My point is that this description strips people of biography, of character, of life, and I would go so far to say there is a kind of epistemological violence to this. A more sensitive and reflexive engagement with the ethnographic material and its representation is needed.

#### 5. A FEW OTHER POINTS

- It is not clear to me how the author understands «identity» and «community». This would be good to specify – also because doing so could help to avoid the traps of homogenizing and foster a more reflexive analysis.
  - o For example: “The final tier of this hierarchy is constituted by a very specific set of identities. Syrians and Eritreans are often the only good candidates for asylum, along with a rare assortment of other religious, political, and sexual identities from across the world”. (11-12). Identities are here “candidates for asylum”. I do not understand this. Another example: “Yet attempts at distancing himself from his identity as a young, dependent, Syrian refugee were more complicated” (16-17). Is this a self-ascribed identity? Or an ascribed identity?
  
- References: The reference to Ramsay is missing in the reference list. The reference to Drangslund should be, Drangslund, Kari Anne.
- “A straightforward instrumental response by asylum seekers to the range of options laid out in front of them, should perhaps be neither surprising nor alarming, except when one realizes that the security industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the country.” (p. 14). Alarming to whom? To the author? To the society? I find this normative kind of judgement on the author’s behalf of the response of asylum seekers problematic. It seems to put the author in a hierarchical position over his interlocutors – a position from where he can make judgments.
- The title with its reference to guest works made this reader believe that the guest worker history/the comparison is an important aspect of the paper. Yet this comparison is not important to the argument. I would suggest changing the title, since the reference to the guest worker regime requires a more serious engagement with this topic than the author seems to want to enter into. Also, a critical reflection on the use of the notion of “guest” would be appreciated. (For instance, the literature on hospitality within geography takes up this issue).
- The author could valuable go through his use of “references words” (like “this”) at the start of his sentences, because it often remains unclear what is being referred to. Examples: “The current model” (p.10). Model of what? Of bordering? Of labour marked policies? or “For Khaled, this structure was what made guard labour unbearable.” (p. 15) What structure?
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