

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript, which I believe has the potential to make an interesting contribution to Migration Politics. To this end, I would encourage the author to engage with the following points and suggestions:

Abstract

1. In its current form the abstract does not capture the content of the article. I would recommend to make the abstract less descriptive, centre the article's central argument, stress its novelty and foreground the conceptual contribution: what does the concept of auto-ethnic economies allow us to see or capture what we did not see before?

Structure of the paper

2. In its current form, the manuscript jumps back and forth between empirics, previous literature / conceptual discussions and background information about the German asylum regime and policy changes. I would recommend to have a more 'traditional' paper structure, with a background / policy section and one section that is dedicated to existing literature and theorising the relation between protection status and economic integration (what one may call assimilability) as well as auto-ethnic economies.
3. Relatedly: Currently, essential existing works on links between protection and employment status – e.g. Chauvin & Garcés-Masareñas come rather late in the paper, though they would allow for a theoretically more sophisticated framework for the paper
4. The part about the 'Bleibeperspektive', which is now an 'interlude' would fit better in a background section on the different statuses and the overall 'sorting logics' of the German asylum system.
5. I would suggest to have a roadmap at the end of the intro, which provides an overview of the structure
6. Overall, the article would benefit from more signposting (especially in the introduction)

Main argument

7. It remains unclear what the central argument and key contribution of the paper is. The way the vignette sets up the puzzle – which is indeed intriguing! – suggests that the paper is about (economic, work-related) stratification among refugees. The next section though, 'Asylum and the Neoliberal Turn', is mainly about how refugee protection hinges on economic performance and employability. What the author seems to argue is that the former (neo-liberal stratification within asylum seekers) is the consequence of the former, but this would need to be more fleshed out. The sentence on p. 8, 9 "With the increasing proliferation of legal statuses and labour-centred incentives to residency, what we are seeing is an intensification of this structure of migrant labour exploitation, where migrants are put to work by other migrants" seems to capture it – I would suggest to move this up and streamline it as an argument throughout.
8. There is definitely an argument to be made about how protection status is made dependent on employment status (in Germany and elsewhere). Yet, I find the article's argument about 'asylum and the neoliberal turn' a bit too sweeping and mono-causal. For instance, what to make of the fact that for the longest time especially the Duldung hampered access to education and the labour market, and changes are – as the author also mentioned – due to

advocacy work of pro-refugee NGOs? Also the claim that neo-liberal considerations were one of the main reasons for Germany's welcoming attitude towards refugees ignores the complexity of interest groups (broadly understood) and the overall (European) situation at the time.

Auto-Ethnic Economies

9. Conceptualising the ways in which the interlinking between protection and employment status create hierarchies within refugee groups is definitely worthwhile and has the potential to make an original contribution to scholarship. Yet, the way the author introduces the concept is difficult to follow. First, the term is not very self-explanatory and it remains unclear why this particular notion was chosen and what it captures (p.4)
10. The empirical part makes the concept more concrete and gives it more flesh. These elements should, in my opinion, already be flagged in the introduction of the paper or in a separate theoretical section. For example the points about auto-ethnic wage appropriation, or the disciplining elements should be highlighted early on and brought back in the conclusion as key 'take home' messages about what auto-ethnic economies are and what this lens allows us to capture.

Methodology

11. I find the description of the research approach rather superficial and would encourage the author to be more specific about some of the details: how much time did they spend in Berlin overall, how much time in the reception centre, and how many formal/informal interviews were conducted.
12. At least a few sentences on research ethics, anonymity and relations with research participants are necessary. On p. 8 the author mentions they were 'tasked with convincing Haider to enrol into vocational education', which to me raised questions about the author's relationships with respondents and social workers.

Minor points

13. Asylum is capitalised on p. 5
14. Pro Asyl should be referred to as an NGO, or 'the major German NGO in the area of asylum'
15. I find the wording that 'numbers of asylum seekers ... swelled to unprecedented numbers' (p. 5) problematic and would consider revising
16. Haider or Hiader?