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Anxieties of Migration and Integration in Turbulent Times

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Chapter 1

Migration and Integration in Turbulent Times



Mari-Liis Jakobson, Russell King, Laura Moroşanu, and Raivo Vetik

1.1 Introduction

‘Nowadays, we are all on the move’ wrote Zygmunt Bauman in his book *Globalisation* (1998, 77). He noted how globalisation was making natural borders meaningless and bringing out the natural traveller in humankind. The end of the twentieth century was indeed a time for optimistic outlooks.

Fast forward to the third decade of the twenty-first century. Bauman was right – up to a point. A growing number of people *are* on the move. In 2020, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2022), 281 million people were estimated to live in a country other than that in which they were born – an increase of around 65% compared to when Bauman wrote those lines. Of the 281 million – which, incidentally, represents 3.6% of the world’s population – most were to be found in Europe (86.7 million, 30.9% of the total global ‘stock’ of migrants), Asia (85.6 million, 30.5%) and North America (58.7 million, 20.9%).

Migration and mobility are, at one level, the fruit of individual decisions but, crucially, also subject to powerful macro-structures dictating the ability to move. The Covid-19 pandemic, which dominated global health concerns throughout 2020 and 2021, imposed severe restrictions on mobility. Even when the world is emerging from this era of forced immobility, new borders have sprung up as a result of Brexit but, even more vehemently, as a result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. For Russian citizens, a new iron curtain is drawn by both the Russian regime and states that have barred Russian citizens’ access to their territory.

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Moreover, even in pre- (and post-) Covid times, not all migrants move of their own free will, taking advantage of the benefits of globalisation. Witness Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which forced more than ten million people to flee their homes in a matter of days.¹ At the time that this book went to press, more than seven million Ukrainians had sought refuge abroad. As Douglas Massey (2020) has presciently noted, crisis-induced migration is likely to define the face of migration in this century. Climate change, political instability and conflicts, as well as demographic transitions and fluctuations in the economy, have mixed together into a cocktail of turbulent times, where it is often hard to tell where one crisis ends and another begins. So, while some people are embracing their inner natural traveller as part of their lifestyle or in the hope of improving their living standards to some degree, others are hitting the road because they have no other option.

Crises also affect migrant-receiving societies and those for whom migration has been more of a choice. When crises, especially of financial nature, hit host countries, migrants – who were once welcomed as complements to the labour market or in the spirit of hospitality and solidarity – are suddenly expected to disappear or are perceived as a problem. Anti-migrant hostility, increasingly restrictive immigration policies and securitisation efforts can result in various kinds of protracted situations, disrupted mobilities or migrants' 'dis-embedding' from host societies, as Louise Ryan, in the next chapter in this volume, points out.

If, a few years ago, state borders might have seemed to be losing some importance, recent developments, including the 2015 refugee arrivals in Europe, Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, have shown that they stand as firm as ever before, guarded by cutting-edge surveillance technologies, restrictive immigration legislation and anti-migrant discourses and sentiments. In these turbulent times, deeply felt anxieties often come to mark the experiences of those migrating or trying to settle in a new society and of those members of receiving societies who perceive newcomers as an economic, social or cultural 'threat'.

This is the state of affairs which this volume aims to address. How do migrants cope with such turbulent times? How does this affect their migration trajectories, their patterns of integration in the host society or their transnational linkages to their countries of origin and other places? Likewise, it is equally relevant to ask what effect turbulent times might have on host societies – how do perceptions of migration change and how does that translate into immigration and integration policy? Last but not least, it is also important to assess what such turbulent times mean for migration research: how to research migration in a context of turbulent times – i.e. with sensitivity towards the context, which is not defined by just one crisis but by multiple layers of crises.

The following sections of this chapter provide a framework for answering these questions. In the next section we draw on the literature on crisis and migration to explain the multi-layered nature of 'migration crises'. This leads on to the

¹ See <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/iom-regional-ukraine-response-situation-report-10-25-march-2022> (accessed 11 November 2022).

introduction of the core concepts of the book – turbulence and anxiety as an optic for making sense of the complex relationship between migration, integration, and migration and integration governance in contemporary times. The chapter concludes with an overview of the subsequent chapters of the book.

1.2 The Complex Relationship Between Migration and Crisis

Migration has a complex relationship with the notion of crisis (Collyer & King, 2016). Migration is often the result of a crisis, can create a crisis or can be constructed as a crisis in itself (Menjivar et al., 2019; Virkkunen et al., Chap. 3 in this volume). However, often the concept of ‘migration crisis’ remains largely undefined and little attention is devoted to the complex relationship between crises and migration.

1.2.1 *Crisis Theory*

Typically, a crisis is understood as an unexpected and undesirable circumstance which requires an urgent response (Boin et al., 2016, 5). According to Boin and ‘t Hart (2007, 42), a crisis is a situation ‘where a community of people – an organization, a town, or a nation – perceives an urgent threat to core values or life-sustaining functions, which must be dealt with under conditions of uncertainty’. Thus, a crisis is a situation that has both objective and subjective qualities: crises are basically caused by objective factors but a crisis becomes a crisis if it is constructed as such. However, crises can be notably different – e.g. in terms of their causes, dynamics and duration.

Based on their causes, crises can be subdivided into natural disasters (e.g. floods, droughts, wildfires, mudslides) and human-made disasters (e.g. wars, collapsing buildings, terrorist attacks). So-called natural and human-made crises can also interact, such as when the effects of an earthquake or flood are magnified by human error, examples being the poor construction techniques of buildings and lax planning allowing building on floodable plains. Furthermore, crises can also be systemic – i.e. not stem from a sudden onset of extraordinary events but, rather, be slow-onset crises which can arise from a systemic error, fallacy or injustice leading to undesirable outcomes. For instance, financial crises are built into the logic of the capitalist system and, when preventive safeguard mechanisms fail to work, they are bound to occur. Jürgen Habermas (1971) builds his theory of legitimation crises on similar assumptions, suggesting that such crises are a part of virtually any political order and bound to occur when a certain balance is tweaked. Thus, crises can be either exogenous – i.e. caused by external factors (disasters) – or endogenous, i.e. caused by systemic factors.

Crises can also be typologised based on their dynamics: they can either be triggered by quickly escalating events or be so-called ‘creeping crises’ (Boin et al., 2020), which manifest early signs long before events actually start to escalate. The same applies for how crises end: this, too, can be quite rapid and concrete or can take a long time and cease gradually. Based on this, ‘t Hart and Boin (2001) have divided crises into fast-burning ones, cathartic ones, long-shadow ones and slow-burning ones. Fast-burning crises emerge suddenly and escalate quickly but do not last very long, whereas long-shadow crises also emerge suddenly but then tend to linger on. Slow-burning crises emerge much more gradually (similar to creeping crises) and endure over a longer period, while cathartic crises start out similar to creeping crises but end abruptly, when decisive action is taken and the situation is contained. In some cases, crises can also occur as cascades (Pescaroli et al., 2018) – where a crisis transcends from one domain to another – e.g. starting out as a man-made disaster but then turning into a systemic crisis of trust in an inefficient government or morphing from a slow-burning demographic crisis into a fast-burning one of civil unrest.

Finally, we can focus on the predictability of crises. In risk management, a known/unknown framework is used to assess how easily predictable – and thus preventable – crises may be (see e.g. Lindaas & Pettersen, 2016). Some risks are dubbed the *known knowns* – where the planners or managers are aware of both the likelihood of the occurrence of the risk as well as of the potential effects. For instance, occasionally, there is less precipitation in the farming season and farmers have already calculated whether or not it makes sense to invest in additional watering systems for their crops or simply to harvest poorer crops in those years as a less-costly solution. Such risks are easy to manage. However, some risks are *known unknowns* – risks we are aware of but whose occurrence or managing costs we cannot yet estimate. For instance, with climate change we are aware that so-called super-droughts are more likely to occur although we do not yet know how often or what kind of watering system would actually help to prevent their consequences. There are also *unknown known* risks, where the likelihood and consequences of a crisis can be assessed but are simply not dealt with – thus implying negligence. Finally, there are also *unknown unknown* risks, which risk managers are neither aware of nor can predict and prevent – and which result in the so-called Black Swan crises (Taleb, 2007).

A glance at these heuristics already shows us how difficult, if not indeed impossible, it is to pinpoint exactly what a migration crisis is. Migration crises can, in principle, pass as ‘fast-burning crises’, especially in cases where migration occurs on a smaller spatial scale and in lower numbers and remains temporary. However, when the disaster affects vast populations – and/or they are forced to seek safety across longer distances or without a realistic prospect of return – or when they are poorly managed, they have the tendency to turn into protracted crises and cast long shadows, sometimes for decades, as in the case of the Palestinians displaced as a result of the 1948 Arab–Israeli war. However, there are also slow-burning migration crises – for instance, situations where systemic factors cause sustained emigration

flows, which then cause notable population decline – which eventually become recognised as an emigration crisis (see, e.g., Lazutka et al., 2018).

Despite their differences, events that come to be known as migration crises tend to share two characteristics. One, they involve a large-scale movement of people and a degree of unexpectedness; two, they tend to roll out as ‘cascading crises’. To explain this better, we have developed a heuristic model to demonstrate the cascaded nature of the so-called migration crisis.

1.2.2 Migration Crisis as a Cascading Crisis

We argue that migration crises actually consist of up to four different sub-crises (see Table 1.1) and can thus be defined as cascading crises. These are events where vulnerabilities accumulate across different domains when not properly managed (Pescaroli et al., 2018): where a first-order crisis or the chosen (non-)response to it can lead to increased damage (Zuccaro et al., 2018) or prompt a crisis in another domain (Bernburg, 2019). While sometimes likened to the domino effect, cascading crises are not necessarily linear but can, to an extent, unfold in parallel – and mitigating the different sub-crises can require different means (Pescaroli et al., 2018).

The first-order migration crisis is typically set in motion by a crisis in another domain – e.g. by a natural disaster like a flood, earthquake, volcanic eruption or desertification, by a human-made disaster like an armed conflict or major accident, by a systemic crisis such as an economic downturn or by a systemic dysfunction like widespread corruption. We remind ourselves here that some crises represent a combination of natural and human-made disasters, such as a flood resulting from deforestation or desertification caused by human-induced climate change. While, sometimes, such disasters can be avoided, the first-order migration crisis is more typically a *known unknown* crisis, i.e. it can be predicted but is hard to prepare for. Often, migration is actually a best-case scenario for avoiding casualties and further damage; if the damage from the disaster can be quickly repaired, return migration can be swiftly undertaken and the next cascades of the crisis will not ensue.

Table 1.1 Cascades of a migration crisis

	First-order	Second-order	Third-order	Fourth-order
Substance	Onsets migration	Migration systems overwhelmed	Moral panic	Integration challenges
Type	Disaster or systemic crisis	Systemic crisis	Systemic crisis	Systemic crisis
Predictability and preventability	Typically known unknown but also other	Typically unknown known	Known unknown	Should be known known, but often is unknown known

Source: authors’ compilation

The second-order migration crises are primarily experienced by the receiving or transit contexts for crisis-induced migration: for instance, situations where there are insufficient or inadequate facilities to house refugees, where asylum-processing systems receive high numbers of asylum applications or where border guards or sea-rescue teams are no longer able to perform tasks assigned to them. These crises are no longer disasters but, rather, systemic crises, where certain services or operations fail to respond promptly and effectively. Here, dealing with the crisis requires adequate response measures, which help to bolster existing systems (e.g. through organising international humanitarian aid to refugee camps, employing more staff to work on asylum applications etc.) or the declaration of an emergency where the regular systems get substituted by alternative, crisis-time measures. Yet, in many cases, the second-order migration crisis is an *unknown known* risk – something that could be prevented (especially with migration crises becoming more frequent) but was not adequately predicted and for which governance structures are simply not properly prepared.

Occasionally, the second-order migration crisis can be the result of incompetent governance, although it can also be a deliberate strategy of hiding one's head in the sand – pretending that the crisis does not exist in order to avoid public backlash against preparations and the costs these might entail (Geddes, 2021) – or simply a result of the path dependency of international law (Ramji-Nogales, 2016).

However, situations described as 'migration crises' are often also third-order crises; these are in essence legitimisation crises, whereby the host society perceives the whole system to be under urgent threat because of migration. Performing such legitimisation crises is particularly common among populist radical-right parties, which construct situations as crises in order to delegitimise the ruling elites (Moffitt, 2016). Third-order crises can, to a certain extent, be prevented through adequate management and communication of the first- and second-order crises: in cases where the situation is effectively managed and adequately communicated, there is little space for constructing the situation as problematic. If the response to the second-order crisis is inadequate, stakeholders may make use of the crisis frame to legitimise their response (e.g. advocacy organisations aiming to get the attention of policy-makers or policy-makers trying to (de)legitimise a crisis-response bill or budget); a third-order migration crisis is then likely to erupt. Thus, the logic of party democracy and contemporary accountability mechanisms do not really warrant the prevention of third-order migration crises.

Third-order migration crises tend to be *known unknowns*; under current circumstances where populist radical-right parties are a force to be reckoned with, they are easy to predict but difficult to prevent or contain. Over time, however, these may shift to the category of *known knowns*, e.g. when political parties which are not running on anti-immigration agendas learn to cope and respond to such framing.

Finally, migration crises can, over time, also morph into fourth-order crises, which we can call 'integration crises'. As a result of second- and third-order crises, migrants may experience difficulties embedding in their host societies – either because the problems and limitations with service provision uncovered during the so-called 'second-order crises' have not been addressed properly and/or because

they fail to address the needs of specific migrant groups. Integration crises can also be triggered by the societal reaction to the third-order crisis, which affects the extent to which migrants feel accepted and are able to become members of their settlement society. The integration crisis is perhaps the closest to the *known known* type of risk which all modern societies experience. It is also quite easy to predict that at least some of the migrants who have arrived in the host society will remain there for a longer time; therefore, with sufficient research into migrant communities, appropriate support can be provided. Yet, in practice, integration issues are often neglected – deliberately overlooked in the hope that migrants will eventually return when the first-order crisis ceases – or constructed with particular agendas in mind (*unknown knowns*).

1.2.3 How Long Do Migration Crises Last?

The cascading nature of migration crises also makes them difficult to position with respect to duration. As mentioned, migration crises can be very different in their dynamic and can vary from fast- to slow-burning. However, those which become dubbed as migration crises typically tend to be long-shadow crises.

The structure of migration crises is complex and an evolution from first-order to fourth-order crises typically takes years. Indicative of this is how impossible it is to precisely date migration crises. For instance, when exactly did the so-called European migration crisis begin? Has it ended? Will it ever end? Has it become, or has it been constructed as, a kind of permacrisis?² Many migration crises become protracted crises, where a large number of people remain at heightened risk for a long time. According to the UNHCR (2021), 77% of all the world's refugees (almost 16 million) are caught up in protracted crises. Typically, systemic crises, like third- and fourth-order crises, tend to cast long shadows.

The longevity of migration crises and their cascading from one type to another can also be explained by a feature inherent to the definition of crisis – that there is 'a community of people' who perceive a threat to their 'core values or life-sustaining functions' (Boin & 't Hart 2007, 42). Thus, the definition of crisis rests on an assumption of a cohesive community based on their values and needs. While migrants can and often do function as organic members of communities, they can have different values and needs in a crisis situation. For instance, while migrants may perceive visiting family and friends in their country of origin as an essential need (see Miah, Chap. 7 in this volume), members of the host society might not see travelling abroad as a pressing need. An *a priori* division into 'insiders' sharing core values and 'others' who might have a different outlook often leaves migrants as the

²In November 2022, 'permacrisis' was announced as Collins Dictionary's 'word of the year' and was variously defined as 'an extended period of instability and insecurity' or as 'a feeling of living through a period of war, inflation and political instability'. The latter definition applied especially to the UK context, where 'permacrisis sums up how truly awful 2022 has been for so many people'.

‘outsiders’ or ‘inbetweeners’, which bears not just on political identity but also on practical consequences. While citizens can influence decision-makers through the existing accountability mechanisms to hasten the pace at which they contain a crisis, migrants – who are often non-citizens – cannot. Being an ‘outsider’ or an ‘inbetweeners’ is thus a position that devalues migrants’ concerns in a crisis situation, as those of ‘insiders’ take precedence. This explains particularly well why migration crises as second-order crises are not managed more efficiently or why fourth-order crises are so persistent. A protesting asylum-seeker who has been waiting for months or even years to be able to go to work because their asylum application is stuck in a backlog is not seen as a particularly pressing issue for society as a whole. While ‘poorly integrated immigrants’ have become a rallying cry for the populist radical-right, reserving public funds for supporting their integration and pre-empting the alleged problem is not on their agenda.

1.3 From Migration Crisis to Turbulent Times

In a way, the notion of ‘migration crisis’ has become an oxymoron – a contradiction in terms. Because crisis-induced migration is becoming more common and migration crises are often long-lasting, we are in a situation in which ‘crisis mode is the new normal’ (Geddes, 2021) but where measures remain designed for times when crisis-induced migration is an exceptional phenomenon. We have thus arrived at a paradoxical situation where, as Dines et al. (2018) affirm, there is too much ‘crisis talk’ and not enough crisis response. Due to their longevity, migration crises often coincide with other crises or ‘unsettling events’ (Kilkey & Ryan, 2021), which adds even more to their complexity and duration. For instance, this volume introduces the effects of the Covid-19 crisis which followed and affected mitigation of the so-called European refugee crisis;³ it speaks of how the legitimization crisis of the European Union affected dealing with the refugee crisis in the first place and how the crisis of democracy in Latin America is affecting perceptions of the Venezuelan migration crisis and *vice versa*.

In order to grasp the situation, we borrow the concept of turbulence from complexity theory (Drucker, 1993), which we see as wider in scope and better suited in the current context than ‘crisis’ *per se*. Turbulence denotes a situation of tension and change that occurs when the structures and processes that sustain world politics are unsettled or are undergoing rearrangement (Rosenau, 1990, 8). Thus, turbulence incorporates not just crises but all kinds of ‘unsettling events’ such as political, social and economic transformations which have the potential to disrupt pre-existing migration projects (Kilkey & Ryan, 2021; Ryan, Chap. 2 in this volume). Other

³We want to draw attention to the fact that this term is widely used but highly problematic, questioning refugees’ motivations and entitlement to protection and offering a limited, if not inaccurate, picture of their journeys, some having been displaced and stuck in other countries for years before heading for Europe (see Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Goodman et al., 2017).

definitions reveal further differences between the two concepts. Ansell et al. (2017, 7) have notably defined turbulence as ‘a situation where events and demands interact in a highly variable, inconsistent, unexpected and/or unpredictable manner’. Turbulence and crisis hence share traits such as uncertainty and time constraints but turbulence additionally incorporates complexity (Ansell et al., 2017, 1).

The concept of turbulent times is then also somewhat more neutral than that of crisis, since it does not distinguish between an insider and an outsider position. While the concept of crisis presumes a threat to in-group values and welfare, the concept of turbulent times acknowledges the multiplicity of perspectives but does not position them in hierarchies. In times of constant turbulence, the various members of society can perceive hardships differently and experience anxieties over different matters. Turbulence can also be caused by major events, which affect the life of society as a whole, as well as by meso- and micro-level life events such as the birth or passing of a loved one, job loss, etc. Furthermore, turbulence is not essentially or uniformly negative. For instance, a liberalisation of the migration regime can also act as an unsettling event – one which can be interpreted as negative by some but as a wondrous opportunity by others.

In this book, we use the notion of ‘turbulent times’ to emphasise the increasingly routinised nature of the transformative situation brought on by cascading crises and their (mis)management, as well as the bundling together of various unsettling events. The co-occurrence of unsettling events causes interactive effects, which make turbulent times even more difficult to predict and control. It is no wonder, then, that such an amount of indeterminacy and complexity, along with alarmist discourses that exaggerate or construct them altogether, generate a sense of anxiety in both migrants and non-migrants. This is our second key concern, which switches attention to the subjective, emotional dimensions and implications of migration in turbulent times. We turn to this next.

1.4 The Anxieties of Migration in Turbulent Times

Emotions are a constant presence in our lives and have a strong bearing on how we think and behave (Smith & Lazarus, 1990; Wagner & Morisi, 2019). Migration is no exception. A major life decision, such as migration, comes with a variety of intense emotions, from the guilt of leaving loved ones behind to the anxiety about a perilous journey and settling into an unfamiliar place or the excitement about new opportunities and adventures abroad. At the receiving end, migration has often been met with fear, suspicion and hostility, spurred by alarmist news and political elites that present migrants as a societal threat and frame migration in ‘crisis’ terms. Yet, migration can also generate positive emotions, as the outpouring of sympathy and solidarity in response to Ukrainian refugees has recently shown.

Despite their centrality in migration experiences and events, however, emotions have only recently drawn the attention of migration researchers (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015). Existing studies in this area highlight the wide reach of the

emotional dimensions of migration. As Boccagni and Baldassar (2015) observe in their work on ‘emotions on the move’, individual migrants may experience profound emotions as a consequence of leaving ‘home’ and settling in a new and often hostile place; however, those connected to them are no less affected. This includes people in ‘home’ societies, who stay behind and become embedded in transnational networks, as well as locals in ‘host’ societies, who interact with migrants and see their environment transformed by migration (Duyvendak, 2011).

Furthermore, as the examples above suggest, migration can generate a wealth of positive, negative or mixed emotions amongst those affected. That said, it is negative emotions that often take centre-stage. As Boccagni and Baldassar (2015, 77) note, ‘what we may call negative emotions need not be the only emotional currency of immigration-elicited interactions, although they are probably the most visible and best researched’. Of these, anxiety in particular emerges as emblematic of turbulent times. Suffice to consider the many examples of natural, societal or personal crises that put individuals into motion or situations where migration itself is perceived as a crisis. Examining the anxieties surrounding migration is therefore indispensable for understanding its consequences and reception in contemporary societies.

Anxiety is usually understood as a negative emotion, which arises when individuals confront uncertainty, limited control or accountability in their evaluation of a particular situation or its outcomes (Wagner & Morisi, 2019). For example, anxiety may emerge in the context of economic crises – where responsibility is difficult to attribute – or political developments, which create a profound sense of uncertainty and powerlessness. A telling example of the latter is the Brexit vote, which threw many migrants’ rights, status and sense of belonging suddenly into question (Guma & Jones, 2019; Lulle et al., 2018).

It is important to note, however, that the same situation may be evaluated differently by different actors, resulting in different – and sometimes opposed – emotions. Studying how people relate to their local area in Peckham, London, Jackson (2014), for example, reveals how the culturally mixed neighbourhood could be a source of comfort, pleasure and nostalgia for some residents, whilst generating feelings of alienation and even disgust amongst others. In a similar manner, the tightening of immigration restrictions may trigger anxiety in those concerned about their or their family members’ status, whilst leaving others less affected if they have reached a certain degree of security. Likewise, political or media discourses warning about a ‘migration crisis’ or ‘threat’ may not only or necessarily trigger anxiety in their recipients but also anger, indifference, sympathy, disagreement or frustration.⁴ Yet,

⁴For a recent example of this, we can cite UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman’s attempt to win political capital for the Conservative Party by talking up the ‘crisis’ of cross-Channel boats bringing asylum-seekers across from France. In a statement to Parliament, Braverman used the inflammatory term ‘invasion’ for these boat-arrivals and attempted to demonise Albanians as the nationality responsible for this ‘human trafficking’. For a reasoned dismissal of these claims, see Albanian academic Lea Ypi’s full-page article in *The Guardian*, 5 November 2022 (Ypi, 2022) as well as numerous press and media interviews by Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama in early November.

whilst not uniformly experienced, anxieties are essential to examine because, like other emotions, they are known to impact on one's attitudes and behaviour – resulting, for example, in greater opposition to migration (Brader et al., 2008).

Whilst acknowledging the richer emotional register of migration, this volume thus focuses on the anxieties of migration and integration as emblematic of turbulent times. Research suggests a clear linkage between these concepts. Numerous studies have shown that economic downturns can heighten anti-immigrant attitudes (Kunz et al., 2017; Pichler, 2010) – meaning, therefore, that crises hamper integration preconditions in host societies. Turbulent times can also affect migrants' integration sensibilities and practices (Finotelli & Ponzio, 2018; Ryan, Chap. 2 in this volume). Furthermore, unsettling events have been known to affect migration volumes (Tilly, 2011) and disrupt mobilities (O'Regan, 2011; Koplaku & Çaro, Chap. 3 in this volume; Miah, Chap. 7 in this volume). Interaction effects between multiple unsettling events can amplify these anxieties and create a kind of false mirror, which makes attributing blame incorrectly a likely scenario. The Sikh turban in cartoons depicting Islamist terrorists or the sinophobia following the Covid-19 outbreak are just two examples of the misattribution of blame and associated racist tropes and practices that permeate discourses around migration and migrant integration.

Here, a clarification is in order. We acknowledge the difficulties to define 'integration' (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016) and the multiple critiques which the concept and its various academic and non-academic uses have received (e.g. Favell, 2019; Schinkel, 2018; Vertovec, 2020). Discussing the 'work of "integration"', Vertovec (2020) identifies no fewer than 20 grounds on which the concept has been criticised. At the same time, he reminds us of its continued and pervasive presence in everyday, policy and political discourses. Hence, when we talk about 'integration', our focus is on existing discourses, policies and attitudes towards 'integration' in receiving societies. Following Ryan (this volume), we also examine how these shape migrants' embedding there; that is, the 'dynamic processes through which migrants develop attachments and belonging to particular people and places over time', which vary depending on the opportunities and reception they encounter. In sum, when examining the anxieties of migration and integration, we are primarily interested in how anxieties caused by turbulent times affect people's migration decisions as well as their reception and 'embedding' in societies of settlement, depending on the different obstacles or opportunities they encounter there.

1.5 Structure of the Book

The nature and consequences of turbulent times and the anxieties which they cause are further explored in the chapters of this book. The chapters are based on selected presentations to the conference 'The Anxieties of Migration and Integration in Turbulent Times', held on 14–15 January 2021 in the framework of the MIRNet project. Initially planned to be held in Tallinn, Estonia, the conference itself

experienced an unsettling event – that of the Covid-19 pandemic – and was consequently forced to take place online.

The chapters in this volume cover a broad spectrum of cases from Europe and beyond and connect the macro level of turbulent times with the micro level of anxieties in various ways. They disentangle different moments in recent turbulent times, brought about not only by the so-called European and Venezuelan migration crises but also by the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit, together with more-localised systemic crises related to demography, labour markets, welfare systems, human rights, political legitimacy, etc. The chapters employ various theoretical and methodological starting points. Underlining the constructivist component in crises, many chapters rely on narrated stories, which give good insights into how migrants perceive and cope with turbulent times. Meanwhile, other chapters deconstruct the narratives of the institutions in migrant-receiving societies, encompassing various government institutions and the judicial system, as well as institutions mediating between the state and society, like the media or political parties. Yet, as Umpierrez de Reguero et al. (Chap. 11, this volume) remind us, the anxieties of migration and integration are also important on a more latent psychological level. Many contributions to the volume are also insightful in terms of how the pandemic altered not just conference organisation but also empirical research. Online research methods that were once a research topic to a small handful of methodologists, suddenly became a practical necessity for a lot of scholars, not least in the field of migration studies (Lobe et al., 2020). Due to pandemic-related restrictions, we had to find new ways to reach out to our informants – mostly online – which was also where they found new ways of coping with everyday practicalities. Thus, online data collection was no longer just a method of convenience for reaching out for inquiries but was part of the ‘new normalcy’ for researchers and informants alike.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part consists of six chapters focused on exploring the anxieties and impact of turbulent times from the migrants’ perspectives. The chapters move through all the steps of the migration and integration processes, discussing how perceptions of crisis and anxieties as well as the practical conditions of turbulent times affect migration decisions and migration flows, migrant integration and mobilities.

In Chap. 2, Louise Ryan analyses how turbulence can affect migrant integration. She introduces the concept of ‘embeddedness’ as a more migrant-centric optic also accounting for emotion in integration processes. Based on the example of Brexit and by using longitudinal interviews, she explores how migrants embed, dis-embed and re-embed in the home and host society over time and in response to unsettling events.

In Chap. 3, Joni Virkkunen, Saara Koikkalainen and Minna Piipponen analyse the migration stories of Syrian and Iraqi asylum-seekers who arrived in Finland in 2015–2016. By adopting the concept of ‘ontological crisis’, they demonstrate how forced migration is not necessarily fuelled by a disaster type of crisis but, rather, results from systemic crises. Their findings suggest that many asylum-seekers were forced to migrate due to a ‘crisis of trust’ and a lack of opportunities and personal advancement in either Syria or Iraq – or in the so-called ‘safe countries’ from where

they migrated to Finland. As such the study highlights how contemporary asylum systems fail to take account of the complexities of turbulent times.

Bresena Kopliku and Erka Çaro, in Chap. 4, document the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on Albanian seasonal migration. They demonstrate that the economic and policy effects of the pandemic did not affect the push and pull factors of migration but, rather, shifted migrant labour from one economic sector to another and from one country of destination to another. They also show how a macro-level unsettling event combines with turbulence in migrants' individual lives and how economic survival becomes more important for the vulnerable seasonal migrants than the risk of infection.

Petra Aigner and Almina Bešić then explore, in Chap. 5, the labour-market integration impediments which result from the interaction effects between the European migration crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic in Austria. The assembly restrictions and adverse economic effects of the pandemic forced an already vulnerable group – refugees – into further isolation, thus contributing to an integration crisis. The chapter demonstrates the effects of the pandemic-related restrictions on integration support measures for migrants, who faced various challenges (both social and technological) in coping with the changes – and how, for them, entering the labour market became even more challenging.

Ourania Vamvaka-Tatsi explores, in Chap. 6, the anxiety-inducing effects of the United Kingdom's refugee reception and settlement system. The chapter follows the arrival, application processing and settlement experiences of LGBTQ+ forced migrants who were settled in Wales under the UK's 'Hostile Environment' policy. She demonstrates how migrants who were forced to flee their homeland after micro-level unsettling events and the fear of persecution for their sexual orientation have to relive traumatic episodes and experience discrimination in a destination country presumed to be 'safe'. Furthermore, the chapter documents the challenges of integration of a minority within a minority.

Farid Miah, in Chap. 7, discusses the effects of the pandemic on British-Bangladeshis who engage in the transnational practice of visiting friends and relatives in Bangladesh. He points out how the pandemic, as an unsettling event, reinforces inequalities in society. Migrants who are already on the margins of their societies are often disproportionately affected by the crisis measures which, in this case, either distanced them from their families or forced them out of employment and depleted their savings. The chapter also casts light on the variety of effects which the same unsettling event can cause even within the same migrant group.

The second half of the book is devoted to how turbulent times cause anxieties about migration and integration in host societies. The chapters focus on how turbulence manifests itself in policy reforms, in changing public opinion and in framing migration.

Mechthild Roos, in Chap. 8, compares how Germany and Sweden reformed policies regarding asylum-seekers' access to health-care services in the wake of the European migration crisis. The chapter demonstrates how, fundamentally, welfare models can change in times of crisis, when the interests of asylum-seeking 'outsiders' are in question, even in countries which appear as moral superpowers. However,

Roos' findings also attest to the complexity of negotiating between second- and third-order migration crises, i.e. dealing with an overwhelmed asylum system, whilst simultaneously trying to avoid voter frustration.

In Chap. 9, Giovanni Cavaglion analyses Italian court decisions related to the cultural rights of immigrant-origin minorities both before and after the European migration crisis and the subsequent wave of right-wing populism. His analysis demonstrates that, while jurisprudence followed the multicultural integration model instituted in the Italian constitution before the crisis, a much more assimilationist and securitising approach was adopted after the European migration crisis escalated, thus demonstrating one possible effect of the third-order migration crisis.

Leif Kalev, on the contrary, demonstrates, in Chap. 10, how migration policy can remain unchanged despite turbulent times. He discusses the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on Estonian migration policy. Unsettling events can function as focusing events or catalysts for policy change and the members of Estonian government tried to use the Covid-19 crisis to curb seasonal and student migration by proposing stricter rules, yet without success. Kalev's study demonstrates that, although unsettling events can open windows for policy change, it is not easy to utilise them for highly politicised issues such as migration.

In Chap. 11, Sebastián Umpierrez de Reguero, Santiago González-Paredes and Ingrid Ríos Rivera demonstrate how, even in the Latin American context – which has been characterised by a multi-ethnic population and relatively relaxed attitudes toward immigrants – anti-immigrant sentiments and rhetoric are gaining ground due to the Venezuelan migration crisis. Based on a survey conducted in Ecuador, a country where there is, as yet, no significant anti-immigrant political force, the authors show how emotions conducive to anti-immigrant sentiment are already there and pair well with the populist sentiment.

In Chap. 12, Sevgi Temizisler comparatively analyses the immigration discourse in Denmark, Germany and the UK in 2015–2017 and demonstrates how the second-order migration crisis turns into a third-order crisis and 'travels' into the field of EU legitimacy. While the European migration crisis emerged around asylum-seekers from third countries, the conservative-right tabloid newspapers, in particular, associated the causes of crisis with European free-movement policies.

Katrina Koppel and Mari-Liis Jakobson's Chap. 13 delves into the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the populist radical-right party – the Conservative People's Party of Estonia – and how it is used to induce immigration-related anxieties in the host-country population and to articulate an antagonism between immigrants and so-called 'virtuous people' in populist rhetoric. However, they also demonstrate that populists do not perceive immigrants as a completely homogeneous group but construct hierarchies between 'bad' and 'even worse' migrants, which allows them the leeway to introduce more-nuanced policies when in power, which target scapegoating strategies in the wake of new unsettling events.

Finally, Andrea Carlà explores, in Chap. 14, how anxieties related to migration pair with sub-state nationalism. He analyses immigration discourses in the Italian region of South Tyrol, where the historical multicultural mix of German-, Italian- and Ladin-speakers and their power relations are altering, due to new waves of immigration. While the German-speaking group still remains in the majority within

the region, migration-related framing is used to spark anxieties about becoming a minority due to new migrants integrating into the Italian-speaking community. The chapter thus demonstrates the anxieties related to immigration among the ‘old’ minorities, which the ‘new’ minorities might not be aware of, adding new tensions into the mix.

1.6 Conclusion: Coping with Turbulence

The effects of turbulent times on migration and integration are thus manifold and complex and are often a poor fit with the formal regulations or informal traditions governing the field. This raises the question of how to cope with turbulent times. While the crisis-management literature presumes that crises can be avoided or contained, the turbulence-governance literature does not aim to ‘solve’ turbulence but simply assumes that it can be factored into the governance model. According to complexity theory, the key in actively adapting to turbulent times is to ‘seek, design and pursue superordinate values or ideals’ in order to resist the disintegrative influences of turbulence (Babüroğlu, 1988, 183). It is important to revisit and articulate the purposes and values associated with migration and migrant integration and to reassess whether the existing regulations are in accordance with the respective values. These latter can both guide policy-making for society as a whole and also build resilience at the micro, meso and macro levels, which is key also in reducing anxieties.

Given the ever-changing nature of turbulent times, we can expect a continuous process, where deliberation procedures are central. Also, as Babüroğlu (1988) emphasises, the solutions should not underestimate the complexity of society. The search for resilience-inducing values does not have to take place only at the macro level of society but can also do so within and between various groups, so that the perspectives and needs of the different members of society are met. As both Ryan and Miah (the authors of Chaps. 2 and 7 in this volume respectively) suggest, networks and cooperation are key to overcoming the anxieties caused by turbulent times. As are concerted efforts to expose and challenge the agendas and misconceptions behind discourses and practices that routinely create turbulence by framing migrants and migration in ‘crisis’ terms.

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Part I
Migrants' Perspectives

Chapter 2

Dis-embedding or Re-embedding? Exploring Migrants' Responses in Contexts of 'Unsettling Events'



Louise Ryan

2.1 Introduction

Over the last few years, a series of 'unsettling events' has profoundly impacted on migratory projects (Kilkey & Ryan, 2021). As noted by Jakobson, King, Moroşanu and Vetik in the editors' opening chapter of this book, migrants are impacted by 'multiple layers of crises'. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the climate emergency, the Taliban take-over in Afghanistan, the war in Ukraine and the evolving immigration regimes following Britain's departure from the EU (Brexit), people's migration plans and trends have altered in varied and complex ways.

In relation to Brexit and its aftermath, there has been a plethora of recent articles (e.g. Godin & Sigona, 2022; Grzymala-Kazłowska & Ryan 2022; Lulle et al., 2018; Markova & King, 2021; Ranta & Nancheva, 2019; Sotkasiira & Gawlewicz, 2021; Tyrrell et al., 2019). In this chapter, I contribute to this body of scholarship by using longitudinal data, a social networks lens and the conceptual framework of embedding to explore how migrants respond to unsettling events such as Brexit.

Along with my colleague Jon Mulholland, I introduced 'differentiated embedding' (Mulholland & Ryan, 2022; Ryan, 2018; Ryan & Mulholland, 2015) as a conceptual framework to analyse dynamic relationality, belonging and attachments in particular places over time. Unlike the notion of embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985), which suggests a static, achieved state, embedding acknowledges the need for continual effort, negotiation and adaptation over time and reveals how such processes are differentiated across various domains of society and by structures of inequality. Of course, the contexts in which migrants are embedding are also dynamic and subject to geo-political transformations with implications for migration projects – so-called 'unsettling events' (Kilkey & Ryan, 2021).

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Unsettling events are ‘transformations on the structural level that have implications on the individual level in ways that provoke re-evaluation of migration projects’ (Kilkey & Ryan, 2021, 234). This chapter seeks to understand how unsettling events at the macro, geopolitical level, such as Brexit, can impact on the micro level to re-shape migrants’ embedding practices, potentially provoking dis-embedding or re-embedding. Moreover, between macro-structural forces and the micro agency of migrants is the important meso level of social networks. As noted by classic network scholars (Bott, 1957), structural influences can be mediated through an individual’s network of ties to family, friends, neighbours and colleagues.

Drawing on longitudinal data generated over a decade, I apply qualitative social-network analysis to explore how inter-personal relationships with significant others may shape the ways in which migrants respond to and cope with recent unsettling events. In so doing, I aim to advance understanding of the role of social networks in processes of differentiated embedding in the contexts of unsettling events.

2.2 Theory

The term ‘embedding’ (Ryan & Mulholland, 2015) seeks to describe the dynamic processes through which migrants develop attachments and belonging to particular people and places over time. In addition to being dynamic, we see embedding as multi-layered and spatially differentiated. It involves different degrees of attachment and depths of trust and reciprocity across various sectors. For example, migrants may establish deep embedding in local networks of family and friends, while simultaneously experiencing only superficial embedding in the economic sector, through precarious and insecure employment. Hence, it is useful to think of differentiated embedding (Ryan, 2018) as a way of understanding the multi-dimensionality of migrants’ attachments, connections and belonging in different contexts. Thus, rather than a single measure of embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985), differentiated embedding captures the dynamism, nuances and multi-dimensionality of diverse attachments across a range of places, relationships and sectors (Mulholland & Ryan, 2022).

However, this is not to suggest that all migrants are embedding in the same way or to the same extent. It is necessary to pay due attention to the different opportunities, obstacles and strategies. Thus, despite the agency of migrants in attempting to gain familiarity and belonging in new places, it is important to note that some places may enable migrant belongings, whilst other places may be marked by hostility (Hickman & Mai, 2015) and hinder migrants’ opportunities for embedding. Hence, embedding, through forging a sense of connectedness in place, takes not only time but also requires opportunities (Ryan & Mulholland, 2015). It should be acknowledged, therefore, that embedding in a particular place of residence is not inevitable. Indeed, some migrants may never develop this level of self-identification in a place and may continue to feel alienated (Trąbka, 2019). Moreover, as discussed below, embedding may be reversed over time. Changing personal circumstances, as well as

wider socio-political contextual factors, may undermine belonging and attachment in particular places, resulting in processes of dis-embedding (Mulholland & Ryan, 2022).

In the opening chapter of this book, the editors refer to examples of turbulent times. Elsewhere, with colleagues (Ryan et al., 2021), I use examples of the Windrush scandal,¹ as well as Brexit, to show that, even for migrants who have lived in Britain for many decades, feelings of belonging in place may be conditional and contingent and undermined by anti-immigration policies and associated hostility in wider society. Therefore, while acknowledging migrants' active agency in place-making, it is also necessary to pay attention to the changing materialities and symbolic meanings of places through time as well as the wider political processes that provoke unsettling events (Kilkey & Ryan, 2021). Thus, far from being static or taken-for-granted, processes of embedding in place remain complex, contingent and dynamic through the life course.

While embedding cannot be reduced simply to relationality and while structural conditions in the labour market and wider immigration regimes are also crucial, it is fair to say that inter-personal relationships are a key dimension of embedding (Ryan, 2018). Social ties to family, friends, neighbours, classmates, work colleagues etc., can support or, indeed, hinder opportunities for forging a sense of belonging in specific socio-spatial contexts. Thus, combining the conceptual framework of embedding with a network lens can provide useful insights, especially when seeking to understand how migrants may react to potentially unsettling events.

2.3 Using a Social Networks Lens

I have long been interested in the potential of social network analysis (SNA) as a well-stocked toolbox with which to help migration scholars explore, theorise and understand migrants' webs of relationships and the resources therein (Ryan et al., 2008). In seeking to gain deeper insights into the diverse relationships between social actors, I have drawn on classic social network research.

One of the most influential early studies of networks was Elisabeth Bott's (1957) research on conjugal roles and the division of labour among married couples in East London. Although not setting out to research networks, Bott quickly noted how relationships with family, friends, work colleagues and neighbours seemed to impact on couples' everyday lives. Bott observed that social networks seemed to operate at a sort of meso level between individual actors and wider social structures. In this way, broader societal expectations, for example about gender roles, were filtered through the advice and influence of particular social ties, such as extended

¹The so-called Windrush scandal emerged in 2018, when long-term British residents, mainly Caribbean-born, were targeted by immigration officials as 'over-stayers' because they did not have British citizenship. Having arrived in the 1950s and 1960s, as British subjects, their status changed as their origin countries gained independence.

kin, in ways that could reinforce or challenge specific patterns of behaviour. Thus, rather than assuming that gendered divisions of labour were simply a product of social determinism or individual choice, Bott identified the mediating role of interpersonal networks.

Bott's analysis has proven influential and underlines a key appeal of a social network perspective – by overcoming 'methodological individualism' (Wellman, 1979), while at the same time avoiding structural determinism. Within migration studies, this feature of network analysis has been especially helpful. As Monica Boyd noted in her seminal paper, a key advantage of a network perspective is being able to avoid an under-socialised view on the one hand, where all migration is motivated by individual choices and, on the other, an over-socialised view whereby structural factors determine international movement. 'Social relations both transmit and shape the effect of social and economic structures on individuals, families and households' (Boyd, 1989, 642). Echoing Bott's earlier observation, Boyd concludes that networks 'mediate between individual actors and larger structural forces' (1989, 661).

Moreover, it has been argued that network analysis offers a snapshot of relationality and is of limited use in understanding change over time (for a discussion see Lubbers et al., 2021; Mazzucato, 2021). In this chapter, addressing the challenge of understanding temporal dynamics in network analysis, I turn to the life-course framework (Elder et al., 2003) and apply longitudinal methods to explore how interpersonal relationships are situated within the intersections of biographical and historical time.

The concept of the life course helps to bring together individual biographies and wider socio-historical structures: 'Time operates at both a sociohistorical and personal level' (Elder et al., 2003, 9). Through this principle of timing, Elder and his colleagues argued that the 'same events or experiences may affect individuals in different ways depending on when they occur in the life course' (2003, 12). So, the personal time of an individual (e.g. being a teenager, middle-aged or old-aged) needs to be contextualised in the wider context of historical time (e.g. in a global economic recession or during a pandemic). Hence, as Elder et al. argue: 'lives are influenced by an ever changing historical and biographical context' (2003, 7). However, this is not to suggest that these experiences are negotiated by individuals alone. The principle of 'linked lives' is especially relevant in understanding social networks within these temporally dynamic contexts: 'Lives are lived interdependently and socio-historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships' (Elder et al., 2003, 13). Hence, echoing earlier observations (Bott, 1957), we again see the salience of networks as a meso level between the individual and wider socio-historical structures.

Thus, in exploring migrants' dynamic processes of embedding or, indeed, disembedding over time in response to wider geopolitical unsettling events, this chapter builds on my recent work to advance understanding of how social networks play a key mediating role. In order to understand these dynamic processes, it is necessary to consider the appropriate research tools, discussed in the next section.

2.4 Method

I have been researching migrants' social networks for almost two decades in the course of which I have conducted hundreds of interviews across numerous qualitative studies. In so doing, I have sought to advance the field of qualitative social network analysis (Ryan, 2021). In a forthcoming book (Ryan, 2023), I bring my large dataset together but for the purposes of this chapter. I will draw upon three rich case studies to explore how interpersonal networks may help to mediate unsettling events.

In recent decades, SNA has become particularly associated with quantitative approaches influenced by advanced computational capacity and big data (Tubaro et al., 2021). Consequently, as Sue Heath and her colleagues note, SNA has developed into a quantitative approach 'with a language, toolkit and methodology which often seem alienating to more qualitatively oriented researchers' (2009, 646). However, in advocating the value of SNA, I am not proposing a quantification of social ties analysed through advanced statistical computation.

Following the cultural turn, there is growing interest in qualitative and mixed-methods approaches to networks (Ryan & Dahinden, 2021). Moreover, there have been calls for more attention to meaning-making and perception among some network scholars (D'Angelo & Ryan, 2021). I have long been interested in migrants' relationships and attachments as a way of understanding feelings of belonging and dynamic processes of embedding in different places over time (Ryan, 2018). Hence, my work contributes to that of migration scholars who seek to go beyond taken-for-granted views of networks as fixed entities to be captured, studied and measured (Ryan, 2021). Rather than seeing networks as objective entities, I highlight the benefits of qualitative network analysis to understand relational meanings, emotions and tensions, including negative ties and power dynamics. Moreover, drawing upon narrative analysis and the concept of storytelling, I consider how the meaning of relationality gets filtered through processes of perception and self-presentation (D'Angelo & Ryan, 2021; Ryan, 2021).

The notion of telling stories – the interview as a story – has been particularly influential in my work (Ryan, 2021). Moreover, I am interested not only in how migrants tell their network stories but also in how these are visualised as pictures. Over the last decade or so, I have been using sociograms, incorporated within in-depth interviews, to generate richer data about relationality (Ryan et al., 2014) and embedding (Ryan, 2018).

I invite participants to indicate their contacts on a target diagram consisting of three concentric circles divided into four quadrants labelled as friends, family, work, neighbours/hobbies/others. This type of visualisation, especially when drawn directly by the respondent and combined with interviews, has enormous potential to add valuable detail on network size, structure and interpersonal closeness while also prompting memories and stories about particular relationships (Tubaro et al., 2016). The sociogram is completed by the participants in the context of an interview setting and I am present to observe the process. Hence, in addition to the completed

image, I also have a record of the questions and remarks of the participants as they produce the visual representation of their social ties (Ryan, 2021). In order to generate rich data on how participants perceive their socially significant relationships, I do not place limits, *a priori*, on who is considered relevant. Thus, rather than a prescribed list, such as a name generator, I use ‘free listing’ (Widmer, 2006). Hence, I avoid prescribing how many or how few alters should be named and the size and boundaries of the network are left to the discretion of the participants.

Once the sociogram is completed, usually signalled by the participant saying ‘I can’t think of anyone else’, I begin to ask specific questions about particular relationships such as ‘If you had a personal problem, who are the people you would feel able to speak to?’ This sometimes prompts memories of other people not previously included in the sociogram. Of course, it is important to note that the sociogram is never an entirely accurate or objective record but, rather, reflects how a participant is feeling on the day and which relationships occur to them in that particular frame of mind (Heath et al., 2009). The sociogram is not a neutral tool for collecting pre-existing network data – indeed, the design and layout of the image shape which data are generated and how they are depicted (Ryan et al., 2014; Tubaro et al. 2016). Hence, the sociogram contributes to the co-construction of network data (Ryan 2021).

I analyse the data using thematic coding. *A priori* codes are generated from the original research questions but new codes are also allowed to emerge from the data. Each pair – the sociogram and the interview transcript – is analysed together, recognising the picture and the story as co-constructions which generated different but complementary data.

One criticism of sociograms is that they offer a snapshot of network composition at a particular moment in time and, hence, are not useful for capturing dynamism *over* time (Conway, 2014). Nonetheless, in my experience, as discussed elsewhere (Ryan & D’Angelo, 2018), combining a sociogram with a biographical interview enables that dynamism to unfold through the interaction between the visual tool and the interview discussion. Adopting longitudinal methods, such as follow-up interviews, is another important method with which to explore change over time.

There is growing recognition of qualitative longitudinal research (QLR) as a distinct methodological paradigm (Thomson & McLeod, 2015). Julie McLeod raises the concept of ‘perspectivism’ which comes from ‘comparing retrospective and prospective accounts of the self, from inciting degrees of reflexivity, and from self-consciously employing different analytical perspectives’ (2003, 209). This is particularly useful in understanding reactions to unexpected and unsettling geopolitical events, such as Brexit, through a longitudinal lens. In so doing, researchers can analyse how the shock caused by these social events can shift embedding practices over time (Mulholland & Ryan, 2022).

Having previously interviewed my Polish participants in 2014, I was curious to follow them up after the June 2016 referendum and gauge their reactions to Britain’s

impending departure from the EU.² I was especially keen to understand how Brexit might impact on their embedding in or indeed dis-embedding from the UK. Thus, as noted in the literature, while QLR studies may be designed as such from the outset, they can also grow out of other studies (Ryan et al., 2016). However, I had no funding to undertake such an unplanned follow-up study. Therefore, I was keen to find a way to contact them without incurring any costs and decided to email them a set of open questions.

While email-based surveys are familiar to most of us, the process of conducting interviews via email is emerging as a serious research method in the social sciences (Fritz & Vandermause, 2018). Unlike email surveys, interviewing via email is 'semi-structured in nature and involves multiple email exchanges between the interviewer and interviewee over an extended period of time' (Meho, 2006, 1284). Despite some challenges, Fritz and Vandermause argue that this is a 'reliable method of data collection' (2018, 1640).

In the summer of 2016, immediately following the referendum, I emailed 20 participants and eventually received 14 responses. Many replied to my open questions with lengthy and detailed answers. An advantage of this asynchronous method is that participants have time to reflect and respond at their convenience, unlike, for example, in a telephone or zoom interview. A disadvantage is the difficulty of achieving a rapport with participants via email. However, because I had already met all the participants, sometimes on several previous occasions, we had established a rapport together. For the 14 who replied, it seemed that they were pleased to hear from me – 2 years after our previous encounter – and welcomed the opportunity to express their views about Brexit. Given the volume of data generated over these various encounters, I have decided to focus in this chapter on three case studies in order to explore some of the most relevant themes in greater depth. As noted by Rachel Thomson (2007), QLR tends to generate a significant amount of data over various rounds of interviews. Without wishing to quantify these data, it can be challenging for those using QLR to present the richness, depth and nuances particularly within the limits of a journal article or book chapter. Therefore, it is not uncommon for researchers using this method to turn to in-depth case studies as a means of presenting their rich data (Thomson, 2007). The three case studies I present here are selected to indicate a range of different experiences and patterns in my wider dataset (for more examples see Ryan, 2023).

²All interviews were conducted in English. The participants had lived in London for many years and all expressed their willingness to be interviewed in English.

2.5 Case Studies

2.5.1 Case Study 1: Magda – Deep Embedding Across Varied Domains

Magda arrived in London in 2002. When first interviewed in 2006, she was a student at a London university. At that time her plans were short-term – to complete her degree and return to Poland with her Polish boyfriend to start a family: ‘because if I want to have babies, I want to have them in Poland’. Hence, it appeared that her embedding in London was rather superficial and narrowly focused on university life. She seemed to have no other connections with wider British society. I was curious to find out what had happened during the 8 years that had passed before our next interview in 2014. The follow-up interview revealed enormous changes in Magda’s life. Having decided to remain in London after completing her degree, she broke up with her Polish boyfriend and developed her career within her chosen specialism. Moreover, she had formed a new relationship with a British partner and they had moved to a commuter town outside London and had a baby daughter. Thus, contrary to her initial expectation that she would return to Poland ‘to have babies’, Magda had actually started family life in Britain. This mismatch between expected future plans and real-life experiences clearly illustrates the necessity for longitudinal research, as migrants’ projects evolve and change over time.

The extent of Magda’s embedding in 2014 seemed to have changed significantly across multiple dimensions:

I’ve made new friends over here, I’ve met the love of my life and we’ve started creating our home, our little family. I had [daughter] which kind of contributed to the feeling of, well, OK, this is my home; this is where my family is... I think this is where I will stay.

Magda’s narrative highlights the salience of specific social ties and so illustrates many features associated with relational embedding; her partner, daughter and new friends. Since the first interview, Magda had forged a completely new social network associated with a local Christian church. Most of her new friends, including her partner, were met through that congregation: ‘There’s quite a lot of dear friends that I’ve met through church’. It was apparent that this church network had facilitated Magda’s deep relational and spatial embedding in her new town and created a sense of belonging in place, among like-minded people. Asserting the true depth and trust of these relational ties, Magda recounted: ‘Through the church I’ve met one of my best friends that I know if anything happened I could pick up the phone and they will be there for me’. It is noteworthy that this was not a Polish church but, rather, part of an international Christian organisation. Hence, Magda’s friendship networks were ethnically diverse: ‘mainly English or South African, a few from Malaysia, Filipinos, it’s quite a mix to be honest’.

Economically, her degree had given her a foothold (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016; Grzymala-Kazlowska & Ryan, 2022) within a specific profession, facilitating

access to a career and, as a result, Magda was successfully embedding within the labour market – over time she had put down roots and established deep embedding across a number of domains, including the labour market, a geographical locality and relationally through family and friendship formations.

By contrast, after over a decade of living in Britain, Magda's sense of embedding in Poland was weakening: 'I don't miss it as much as I used to. I don't feel as attached as I used to be. I'm still quite proud to be Polish but I think that my loyalties are starting to lie more with Britain'. Interestingly, when interviewed in 2014, despite feeling more attachment to Britain than to Poland, Magda had not applied for British citizenship but thought that she might eventually do so:

I feel like I'm a little bit torn in between labelling myself as a truly Polish person or actually calling myself British. I don't have British citizenship but I feel like I finally have grown up to apply for one.... I think everyone needs to belong somewhere. And I think this will give you even more, like, a greater feeling of belonging.

Magda's story clearly reveals the differentiation of embedding across temporal and spatial contexts. When initially interviewed in 2006, her sense of embedding in Britain was superficial and temporary. Her strongest attachments were in Poland and she planned to quickly return there and start a family. Over time her plans changed as she established deep economic embedding through her career, forged new friendship networks through her church, started a new romantic relationship and had a baby, leading to deep relational embedding in a new town. However, she had been somewhat slower to establish what can be termed 'political embedding' (Mulholland & Ryan, 2022) via acquiring British citizenship. That decision required more time and thought. Back in 2014, there seemed to be no urgency in applying for citizenship. Instead, for Magda, this was an existential issue of identity, loyalty and feelings of national belonging. However, given her weakening attachment to Poland (dis-embedding), she speculated that British citizenship would be a likely prospect. This was borne out when I contacted her for the third time, 2 years later in 2016, following the Brexit referendum. Of all my participants she was the most adamant that, despite the referendum results, she was determined to remain because her life, work, home and family were in Britain.

I do not have any negative or positive feelings. I have dual citizenship and the 'OUT' vote will not affect me in the slightest. No change in plans. I already have one [British passport].

Magda's story, unfolding over three interviews in 10 years, clearly reveals the temporal and spatial dynamism of embedding across multiple dimensions: from somewhat superficial in 2006 through to deep connectedness and attachments in 2016 that even Brexit could not unsettle. The key role of relationality, through her evolving social networks over time, is clearly apparent and both reflects and reinforces her embedding practices. However, this is not to suggest that all participants were embedding across multiple spatial and relational dimensions simultaneously. Many narratives reveal the differentiated nature of embedding and the enduring complexity of relationality, attachment and belonging over time.

2.5.2 *Case Study 2: Mateusz – Embedding, Dis-embedding, Re-embedding*

Mateusz arrived in the UK as a student in 1998 and took various jobs, including as a waiter. In those years, before Poland joined the EU, Mateusz had very limited opportunity for embedding in London. As someone without official status, his work situation was precarious and his right to enter and leave the UK had to be continually re-negotiated at border crossings. Despite these limitations, he began to make friends and established an important relationship with his landlady – who was Polish – and her English husband. The couple were a great source of support and provided Mateusz with advice and information, as well as a friendly home environment. Over time, this older couple became ‘super friends’: ‘They are like friends who became like family... like parents’ (Interview 2014). Indeed, Mateusz placed this couple as his closest friends on his sociogram, reflecting their deep and enduring friendship over almost 20 years. Thus, despite his insecure legal status, Mateusz had started embedding into a pleasant domestic environment and strong supportive inter-personal relationships.

EU enlargement and the expansion of mobility rights to eight new ‘eastern’ accession countries in May 2004 made a huge difference to the mobility and settling opportunities of many millions of people, including those, like Mateusz, who had already moved to the UK prior to accession. Newly acquired rights as an EU citizen marked a major transformation in his lived experiences in British society. He then began embedding across multiple dimensions of society. With the advice and support of his landlady/friend, who was a former health worker, Mateusz registered to train in the health service and now works as a healthcare professional. He married a Polish woman whom he met in London and had two young children. When I interviewed him in 2014 he felt very settled in London. He said that parts of his Polishness were ‘evaporating slowly’ as he had never known adult life in Poland. By contrast, as his sense of Polishness was decreasing, his sense of being a ‘Londoner’ was gradually increasing. Having lived in the city for 16 years at that time, he felt at home in London and had no plans to leave.

Interestingly, Mateusz noted that, when he visited outside London, he felt more foreign: ‘I spent a holiday in Nottingham after being here in London and it was dreadful to go in the countryside to some rural area where I think my status as an immigrant could stand out more’. For migrants like Mateusz, becoming a Londoner is a process that may take time but, unlike Englishness or Britishness, is possible. As a world city, London is not particularly British. It does not belong to the British: ‘Migrants in London enter a space that is not only already marked by diversity, but also understands itself as such’ (Hatziprokopiou, 2009, 26). The narrative of the multicultural city ‘reflects a powerful imaginary’ in which the visibility of migrants is apparently reduced (2009, 24). Hence, it can be argued that Mateusz was embedding in London but not in Britain as a whole, a point which becomes important when Brexit occurs.

When I reconnected with him a few months after the referendum in 2016, Mateusz seemed to be experiencing an emotional dis-embedding, as his sense of belonging and attachment was dramatically undermined. Indeed, of all the interviewees' reactions to Brexit, that of Mateusz was the most powerful, angry and emotional. This may be because he had lived in London longer than any other of my participants. Having lived in the country for 18 years and despite having a British passport, Mateusz now felt like an 'immigrant' in the midst of rising xenophobia – like he was living 'in a different country'. This is a revealing observation and reminds us of his earlier statement about London being different from the rest of Britain. However, despite London voting with a large majority to 'remain' in the EU, the results of the referendum made it clear that London was part of a wider country and had to accept the results of the British electorate. As Russell King (2021) noted, Brexit posed a 'wicked problem' for many migrants who had hitherto felt a sense of belonging and acceptance. Being a 'Londoner' may be an open and available identity but it is not a legal entity and does not confer a special relationship with Europe, regardless of how cosmopolitan the city may feel.

Nonetheless, Mateusz planned to stay, reflecting the extent to which he had been embedding over many years across a range of domains, including his healthcare career, friendship networks and family ties. He stated succinctly in 2016: 'My home, my family, my work are all here'. Therefore, he now had to undertake a form of re-embedding in Britain as a country outside the EU.

Embedding is not an all-or-nothing state; one can be embedding in one sector of society – e.g. interpersonal networks or the labour market – but not in other areas such as the nation-state as a whole. Hence, I argue that the multi-dimensional and multi-spatial concept of embedding captures differentiated degrees of attachment and involvement in diverse dimensions of societies. A differentiated conceptualisation of embedding helps not only to go beyond a simplistic, one-dimensional, 'all or nothing' view of migrant settlement or 'integration' but also to understand the complex and diverse ways in which migrants may respond to Brexit and its aftermath.

Moreover, adopting a qualitative social networks lens, and drawing upon the classic analysis by Bott (1957), reveals the ways in which inter-personal ties at the meso level can help individuals to adapt to and make sense of macro-level structural transformations like Brexit, as discussed in more detail in the final case study.

2.5.3 Case Study 3: Martyna – The Salience of Relational Embedding to Withstand Unsettling Events

Martyna met her London-based boyfriend during his frequent visits back home to Poland. For a while the couple commuted back and forth but then, in 2005, Martyna decided to join him in London to give the relationship a chance to develop. She arrived with 'open' plans, unsure how the relationship would proceed. Underpinned by the rights associated with EU freedom of movement and, indeed, the freedom to

settle at that time, Martyna explained: ‘So I sort of thought, OK, I’ll give it a go and, well, I’ve stayed’.

By the time we met in 2014, Martyna had been living in south-east London, in a largely English working-class neighbourhood, for almost 9 years. Her two sons attended the local primary school. Her sociogram was very densely populated with many ties to family, friends and neighbours (see Fig. 2.1). It was apparent that the school was a hub for local connections. Martyna described how she had made lots of friends through the school:

We go camping together, we do drinks, and went for a wedding last month, almost the whole school was there. So it’s really nice. It’s a very small primary school, so people are quite close.

The school provided a chance to develop friendships with diverse local people: ‘Polish, English, Chilean, Spanish, French’. Schools can provide opportunities for sustained interaction and so enable embedding in local forms of sociality (Ryan & Mulholland, 2015). Attending the same primary school for over 5 years afforded opportunities for Martyna to engage in regular social encounters with other parents which carried over into shared social activities such as camping holidays.

In the neighbourhood quadrant, Martyna’s sociogram was particularly densely populated, especially in the outer circle of closeness. While completing the sociogram she remarked: ‘I’ve got really nice neighbours’. As noted in the network

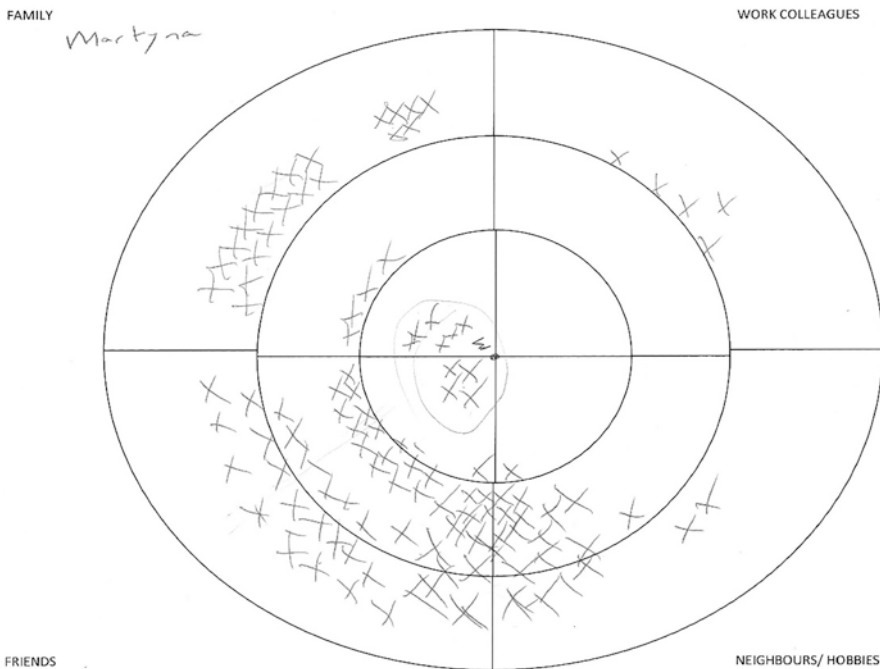


Fig. 2.1 Martyna’s sociogram

literature (Wellman, 1979), although neighbours may not be intimate friends, nonetheless, because of their close spatial proximity, neighbours can be a valuable source of practical support and assistance. Beyond merely vague metaphors of networks, I was keen to understand the nature of local ties and if participants, for example, exchanged favours with neighbours. Martyna told me: 'One of the neighbours, she has our cat for the holiday every time we go'. This example suggests a trusting and reliable relationship with a neighbour and is indicative of embedding in neighbourhood-level supportive ties.

Language can be the key to local embedding. Although Martyna spoke some English prior to arriving in London, she found it very hard to understand local accents. She joked that, while she had expected people to ask 'How do you do?' (imitating a posh English accent), she found that people actually said 'Alright mate?' (imitating a cockney accent). However, over time her linguistic confidence and familiarity with local accents grew – another indication of her local embedding.

When interviewed in 2014, Martyna eloquently described her gradual process of embedding in London through her shifting sense of home and belonging over time.

One leg there but one leg here and I, I think I had to decide, you need to know where your home is and you know, I know plenty of people who, when they go to Poland, they say 'We're going home'. Well, we sort of were coming back home *from* Poland maybe two or three years ago... home is here... I belong more in London than Gdansk.

This quote reflects Magda's earlier observation that everyone has to belong somewhere and Mateusz's remark about gradually becoming a Londoner. Martyna gave a clear example of that sense of belonging in south-east London: 'I drive without satnav – Oh, I know my bit here'. Thus Martyna had come to know her local neighbourhood in south-east London and could confidently navigate this familiar terrain. Her story illustrates a key marker of embedding – growing familiarity with the geographical markers of a specific place (Trąbka, 2019).

In 2014, I asked Martyna about any plans to return to live in Poland.

We can't see actually starting our lives from the beginning when we've built quite a lot here. My husband has got very good job and he's been promoted. The older boy, he wouldn't, I don't think he would cope in Polish school.

It is noteworthy that her response is told relationally. Her reasons for not returning to Poland relate to her husband's 'very good job' in London and her older son's projected inability to cope with school in Poland (see Grosa's Chap. 14 in this book). Thus, her embedding is not an individual experience but, rather, is illustrated by what 'we' have built in London.

Although she retained strong ties to her family, she described how relations with friends in Poland had weakened over time. She explained this change in terms of differing lifestyles and attitudes:

We started to think differently... you meet and they're getting older, we're getting older and we don't see each other very often, and ... people have got their different things, different matters, you know, and I'm not part of it any more.

Her statement that she is ‘not part of it anymore’ suggests a sense of dis-embedding from friendship networks in Poland. Although the friendship quadrant of her sociogram was densely packed, she explained that these were primarily people living in London. This is underlined by the statement that, in Poland, she and her family are often perceived as ‘you Londoners’. Martyna’s narrative illustrates how networks can operate at a meso level (Bott, 1957) between the individual actor and the wider macro socio-structural context. Martyna describes her shifting relationships with Poland through her interactions with networks of friends and relatives back there. In other words, the attitudes, beliefs and reactions of her contacts in Poland serve as a marker of her own shifting positionality over time.

Given her apparent embedding in London and somewhat dis-embedding from Poland, I was very curious to see how Brexit had impacted on Martyna and her family. When I reconnected with her, asynchronously after the referendum, Martyna described being ‘upset seeing the results on Friday morning, I felt unwanted at that point but have lots of British friends who actually came to me to say that they were ashamed of what happened’.

This statement clearly illustrates two important points. Firstly, as noted earlier, Martyna lived for many years in a suburb of south-east London and had made a lot of local friends through the school and her good relations with her neighbours (as illustrated in her densely populated sociogram). Given the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood, she had many British friends. They appeared to rally around her after the shock of the referendum result. Secondly, this example also clearly illustrates the power of networks to mediate between individual actors and wider socio-political contexts. Her local friends helped to assuage her sense of shock and feeling unwanted after the referendum. They assured her that she was still their friend and that they did not reject her. Thus, her sense of local embedding was re-affirmed by her social ties to British friends and neighbours.

Having lived in the UK for over a decade, Martyna was concerned about how Brexit might impact on her family but also asserted the contribution that they had made to British society: ‘I hope it won’t affect my family too much; we’ve been in the UK for ten years, rather giving than taking, but we may be hit by some restrictions that would make our lives difficult’.

As noted elsewhere in the literature (Genova & Zontini, 2021; Godin & Sigona, 2022; Mas Giralt, 2021), post-referendum, many EU migrants sought to assert their right to belong in the UK through their hard work and active contribution to society. Moreover, using the lens of embedding, it is apparent that Martyna’s deep-rooted sense of belonging in Britain sought to withstand the potentially unsettling impact of Brexit: ‘We don’t plan to move away now as we haven’t planned before, our home is here and our kids consider themselves more British than Polish...’.

Of course, as noted elsewhere (Mulholland & Ryan, 2022), following Brexit, EU migrants cannot simply continue as before but are now confronted with the need to formalise their embedding through securing their immigration status (Sotkasiira & Gawlewicz, 2021). Unlike Magda and Mateusz, Martyna had not secured British citizenship. She explained: ‘We never thought we needed the citizenship’; however, now she was concerned about the expense and bureaucracy. Her situation reveals

the multi-dimensionality of embedding across diverse domains. Despite deep relational and spatial embedding in south-east London, Martyna seemed reluctant to engage in political embedding through citizenship. Now the reality, cost and complexity of that official process confronted her as uncomfortable and unwelcome but probably necessary.

2.6 Concluding Thoughts

We are living in turbulent times as migrants are confronted by multiple layers of crises. While Brexit can clearly be described as one such a turbulent or unsettling event, it is not experienced in the same way by all EU migrants living in the UK. This chapter has combined two approaches, qualitative longitudinal research and qualitative social network analysis, to explore migrants' dynamic processes of embedding or dis-embedding in the context of Brexit. Inspired by classic network studies (Bott, 1957), I have sought to advance understanding of the mediating role of interpersonal networks on the meso level between individual actors, on the micro level, and wider socio-structural forces on the macro level. Based on my extensive dataset generated over two decades of migration research, I selected three case studies to convey the nuances and richness of experiences (Thomson, 2007). Even though the case studies discussed in this chapter are all of relatively long-term residents who might be seen to be quite settled in Britain, nonetheless there are differences in their situations and experiences. This chapter shows that, despite their long-term stay in Britain, Brexit still confronted them in different ways.

Magda, for example, stated that Brexit would make little difference to her because of her deep embedding in local relationships through strong attachments to her faith community and the sense of home she had created with her British partner and their daughter. Moreover, because of this commitment to stay and make her life in Britain, she had already secured her political embedding through obtaining British citizenship prior to the referendum.

Martyna, by contrast, had felt upset and unsettled by the results of the referendum but her strong local ties to friends and neighbours (refer back to her sociogram in Fig. 2.1) helped to assuage these concerns by asserting a sense of solidarity in the face of anti-immigrant hostility. Furthermore, Martyna's familial ties also secured her embedding. Her husband's career and her sons' schooling reinforced her own sense of belonging in London. Hence, although they had not yet secured their embedding by obtaining British citizenship, Martyna and her family were now confronting the need to do so in order to protect the life they had built in London.

Mateusz expressed the most anger and concerns about Brexit. He had lived in Britain for almost 20 years at the time of the referendum. Having migrated in the 1990s, prior to Poland joining the EU, he had a strong memory of the complex and precarious process of crossing borders with insecure immigration status. In our 2014 interview, he seemed to be deeply embedding in London, through establishing his career in the health sector and starting a young family. He said he was becoming

a Londoner. The referendum result deeply unsettled his sense of embedding. When re-interviewed in the light of Brexit, he said that he felt like a foreigner, an immigrant, in a hostile land. Nevertheless, his ability to withstand that unsettling impact was shaped, in large part, by his social networks. His strong friendship ties, his wife and child, as well as his job, reflected but also reinforced his sense of embedding in London. He had made a life, a family, a home in the city. So, despite his anger at the referendum, he was determined to stay and begin re-embedding in a post-Brexit Britain.

Therefore, in exploring migrants' responses to Brexit, this chapter shows, firstly, the salience of adopting longitudinal methods to track how migrants' plans evolve over time. Conducting research at one point in time reveals very little about how migratory projects may adapt and change with unfolding life events and wider spatial-temporal shifts. For example, Magda's assertion in the 2006 interview that her migration was purely temporary and she would soon return to Poland to marry and start a family proved to be very different from her life choices as revealed in subsequent interviews over 10 years.

Secondly, the chapter has shown that adopting the concept of embedding can offer valuable insights into the unsettling impact of Britain's departure from the EU. In other words, the potential of Brexit to unsettle migrants depends, to a great extent, on the depth of their embedding within British society. As discussed elsewhere (Ryan, 2018; Ryan & Mulholland, 2015; Ryan et al., 2021), embedding takes place across a range of domains from the economic, to the spatial and relational. Rather than being separate processes, these are often intertwined so that deep embedding in one domain, such as the economic sector, may facilitate embedding within specific local contexts. However, as the notion of differentiated embedding suggests, embedding is not a single, one-dimensional, entity but may involve varied depths of embedding across a range of societal domains. Indeed, for many EU migrants, it was their very shallow 'political embedding' (Mulholland & Ryan, 2022), despite deep embedding in the economic sector, which caused the most practical challenges following the Brexit referendum.

Thirdly, this chapter has shown that the impact of Brexit should not be examined purely at an individual level. By adopting a qualitative social networks lens, informed by classic network scholarship (Bott, 1957), I have explored how macro socio-political events are experienced, negotiated and assessed at the individual micro level, through the mediating role of relations to significant others.

Therefore, in understanding the impact of unsettling events, not just Brexit but also other macro-structural transformations such as global recessions, pandemics or wars, I suggest the usefulness of combining longitudinal research, a qualitative social networks lens and the conceptual framework of differentiated embedding to help study and analyse the ways in which migrants navigate and resist such unsettling forces.

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Chapter 3

Migration Strategies at the Time of a Crisis: Asylum Applicants in Finland



Joni Virkkunen, Saara Koikkalainen, and Minna Piipponen

3.1 Introduction

Nearly two and a half million first-time asylum-seekers arrived in Europe during the so-called ‘European refugee crisis’ in 2015 and 2016. Many of the asylum-seekers used the Eastern Mediterranean route from Turkey to Greece and continued north through the Western Balkans. More than half of the arrivals in the European Union (EU) originated from countries with war or unstable, war-like circumstances, namely Syria (700,000), Afghanistan (360,000) and Iraq (250,000) (Eurostat, 2021). The movement and reception of these individuals created political pressure for the receiving and transit states from both the public and the media (Koikkalainen et al., 2021; Virkkunen & Piipponen, 2021a). Many of Europe’s borders were closed, and the unity of the EU and, ultimately, the rationale of the entire European free movement regime, were questioned. The sudden arrival of asylum-seekers in such high numbers at once was termed a ‘refugee crisis’ or a ‘migration crisis’ (e.g. Campesi, 2018; Triandafyllidou, 2018), even though people have sought refuge and better opportunities in Europe for years.

Menjívar et al. (2019) argue that the term ‘crisis’ is overused by the media and public officials when they describe migratory flows as crises, a point also emphasised in Chap. 1 of this volume. Furthermore, Kotilainen and Laine (2021) remind us that the crisis discourse is often framed by using politically or ideologically loaded metaphors that create and reshape meanings, and how we perceive and see things. Metaphors such as ‘migration waves’ are not just innocent figures of speech but strongly influencing manners of representation that structure our mindsets, what we notice and see, and how we act. They are also easily picked up by political actors who often ground their talk on fears of ‘invasion’ and ‘disruption of identities’.

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Andersson (2016) notes that the ‘European migration crisis’ was in fact ‘man-made’ and was created as the result of tightening border controls and visa requirements since the early 1990s. Legal pathways for migration to Europe have been gradually replaced by irregular ones. As new clandestine routes and increased border policing have grown in parallel, European countries have been faced with an increasingly frequent series of ‘migratory emergencies’. The international community has failed to see and react to the worsening security situation in key migrant and refugee-sending regions such as Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan prior to 2015. This was the consequence of the rise of the violent extremism of ISIS. Repression and atrocities have been committed also by groups like Boko Haram in countries such as Egypt, Libya, Nigeria and South Sudan (Crawley et al., 2018). As the European borders to the South across the Mediterranean Sea and to the East from Russia ‘opened’, the ‘crisis’ was about to transfer to the EU.

Within this broader context, we argue that, besides the ‘migration crisis’, there are at least two other crises at work: the immediate crisis created by wars and prolonged conflicts in countries such as Syria and Afghanistan, and the crisis caused by everyday insecurities related to poverty, ethnic and racist violence, unstable political regimes, bad governance, overt corruption, and impact of the climate change. Campesi (2018, 201–202) notes that in forced migration studies the word ‘crisis’ is mainly used to refer to situations in countries of origin. In 2015–2016, it became clear that the crisis was not only about the ‘destabilising effect’ in the countries of origin, or in different parts and institutions of Europe but also about processes and events in the countries of destination and transit. Crawley et al. (2018) aptly assess that ‘crisis’ became a lens through which a number of other issues came to be viewed and magnified when thinking of the EU’s and its member states’ responses.

In this chapter, we examine the ‘crisis’ from the perspective of the asylum applicants, rather than from the viewpoint of the receiving states. We ask, in which ways do ‘crises’ that materialise in insecurities and disillusionment with place function as drivers of migration for the people on the move? This approach transfers the focus about the ‘migration crisis’ from states and the EU to individuals, who migrate for safety and who want to improve their lives by leaving contexts characterised by poverty, war, conflict, violent extremism, poor governance, and weak rule of law.

We argue that the ‘crisis’ goes beyond the state to social, economic and political processes as well as to inequalities that impact migrants’ everyday life, sense of place, and future prospects on a very personal level. We explore this in more detail by analysing migration strategies of Iraqi and Syrian asylum-seekers who applied for asylum in Finland during the so-called 2015–2016 ‘refugee crisis’. In Finland, the 38,000 arrivals signified a more-than-eightfold rise in the numbers of asylum applications from 2014 – the highest rise in the whole EU (Eurostat, 2016; Laine & Rauhut, 2018; Migri, 2021). While Syrian citizens were the largest group among all arrivals into Europe at the time, among those who arrived in Finland the largest group was Iraqis (20,029, 63 per cent). The 1439 Syrians who applied for asylum in Finland accounted for less than 5 per cent of all asylum-seekers (Migri, 2021).

Up to 95 per cent of the asylum-seekers, including the Iraqi citizens in this study, arrived in Finland by using the Mediterranean route and then proceeding through

Central Europe, Denmark and Sweden. The rest, 1756 asylum-seekers, used the Arctic route through Moscow to Northern Russia and further across the ‘open’ border to Finland (Piipponen & Virkkunen, 2020, 648). As an empirical question, we ask how the feeling of belonging in place manifests in the migration narratives of Syrians and Iraqis who came to Finland in 2015–2016. What role did such a belonging in place play in the asylum-seekers’ decision to migrate?

3.2 Theoretical Background

Our study of Finland’s ‘migration crisis’ or ‘refugee crisis’ begins with an assumption that the events of 2015–2016 were broader than usually presented. The ‘crisis’ was multi-layered, again as stressed in Chap. 1. In order to grasp that, we will look at migration dynamics and migrants’ strategies, decision-making, and journeys, as well as geographical image and place-making practices. Collins (2018) notes that a migration management perspective often relies on an idea of the migrant as a utility-maximising individual whose migration is calculated and based on facts. Carling and Collins (2018) stress that economic narratives of migration are socially constructed and can only be interpreted in relation to migrant subjectivities, feelings and desires. Thus, a strict categorisation of migrants into ‘real refugees’ and ‘economic migrants’, which are common within media and political discourses on migration, are arbitrary and do not reflect the point of view of the individual on the move. Therefore, the Syrians and Iraqis of our study are not only ‘asylum-seekers’ or ‘irregular migrants’, but rather individuals with complex personal histories, motivations and narratives that influence their migration decisions.

Migration takes place in temporal, spatial and political contexts. Thus, a more sensitive reading of migrant stories can help us grasp some of the essential characteristics of migration strategies, which are often fuelled by personal crises. The three interrelated concepts that we draw from are *home*, building everyday life in one’s social and economic conditions; *place-making*, the attempt to accommodate in the local community and society; and *ontological security*, the fulfilment of the fundamental needs of existence.

Boccagni (2016) regards home as a unique source of attachments, desires, needs and dilemmas that are visible when people are transnationally mobile. According to Noble (2005, 108), migrant home-building ‘must, by necessity, constantly negotiate the affective and cognitive dissonance thrown up by the act of migration as it attempts to secure a place in a new world’. Thus, migrants attempt to find their place in social and economic contexts that are often characterised by racism and where everyday worries trigger feelings of insecurity and inability to look forward and give meaning to one’s life. This more abstract notion of ‘homing’ and place-making combines a threefold conceptualisation of ‘home’ – home as the symbol of identity, home as private (closed) space, and home as public (open/closed) space (Brednikova & Tkach, 2010; Buffel & Phillipson, 2016; Ralph & Staheli, 2011; Virkkunen, 2017). For many migrants, living a precarious existence in overcrowded flats

without privacy and secure employment, combined with structural and everyday racism, corruption and feelings of inequality are key obstacles in adapting to the new environment.

Massey (1993, 1994) suggests that space is constructed from the multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales, and place is a particular articulation of those relations, a particular moment in those networks of social relations and understandings. Based on this, Brun (2001) points out that refugees try to accommodate themselves with the (new) place, community and society, and to find a home, without losing their identity and ability to exercise power. For migrants, accommodation with the new place and the ability to create a meaningful home integrates existing identifications, mixing and reforming them with those of the new place. Using Giddens' (1996) concepts, these create (or do not create) a sense of security and belonging that responds to migrants' ontological needs in answering existential questions of existence, stability of life, self, and interaction.

In this way, the notion of ontological security is related to place-making and to the concept of home. Ontological security captures the integration and everyday experiences among both immigrants and people seeking asylum outside their countries of origin. That is closely interwoven with the notion of trust and safety that gives all kinds of people hope and courage against various everyday threats, pressures and fears in relation to the surrounding communities (Debuis & Thorns, 1998; Noble, 2005). At best, a sense of ontological security provides the person with a sense of autonomy. The feeling of security in one's everyday life is, in turn, also related to the kinds of futures one imagines for oneself in that place. Boccagni and Miranda Nieto (2021) propose the use of 'non-home' as a category of practice and a mode of analysis, and not only the antithesis of the more familiar concept of 'home'. When linked to ontological security, non-home is a space in which the routines of everyday life and existence can be performed relatively safely and free from external surveillance.

When people are not able to create a home or ontological security, and there is a serious discrepancy between the desired future and the experienced present, the option of migration emerges as a rational course of action. Often people are subjected to different rumours. Thus (incorrect) information about the possible countries of destination and 'cognitive migration', imagining a future abroad prior to the actual move, precedes the migration decision (Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016; Virkkunen & Piipponen, 2021b). Carling and Collins (2018) underline that the desire to aspire for change, and what we here call 'crisis', is a key component in migration. Collins (2018) advocates using the lens of desire for understanding migration, i.e. paying attention to how mobility choices are influenced by a range of conscious and subconscious influences. The importance of desire, which can be understood as a hope of a safer and better future, is according to Collins (2018, 966) 'expressed through the mobilities of migrants, the combinations of strategic planning, opportunism and fancies that manifest in movements to take individuals into other worlds, to achieve or avoid (un)desirable futures'.

Building on these foundations, we now proceed to examine the situation of two migrant groups through the lens of a personal crisis. Thus, the 'crisis' of physical

danger in one's country of origin (Iraqis in Iraq) and life as a migrant without trust and ability to secure social, economic and legal citizenship (Syrians in Russia) are key factors which urge people to migrate.

3.3 Data and Methods

The article is based on two sets of data collected separately in 2016 and 2017. Our data contain the stories, firstly, of Syrian citizens who were living as immigrants in Russia and arrived in Finland by using Northern Russia and the so-called Arctic route and, secondly, of Iraqis who used the Mediterranean route and travelled to Finland through Central Europe and Sweden. Both nationalities were among the three largest groups of asylum-seekers entering Europe during the 'crisis' and there are large diaspora populations of both Syrians and Iraqis living abroad (Eurostat, 2016). While acknowledging the different political and geographical contexts of migration, we note that there are some important similarities in the experiences of migration. However, there are also key differences.

The first set of data consists of asylum application protocols of Syrian citizens¹ who lived in Russia as immigrants and decided to join the Arctic route and to apply for asylum in Finland during 2015–2016. A total of 87 Syrian citizens – 69 on transit and 18 immigrants – made up a small share of our full dataset of 1164 protocols. Even though the media publicity usually portrayed asylum-seekers as young single men, most of the Syrians in our material travelled with family members. The group consisted of both men and women of different ages.

The evidence studied consists of asylum investigation and asylum hearing protocols. The former, conducted by the Finnish Border Guard or the Police of Finland, are fixed-form interviews that determine applicants' travel documents, identification, route and journey, border crossings, family members, and former stays, including possible asylum applications, in other countries. The latter protocols, conducted by the Finnish Immigration Service, determine the grounds for the applicant's asylum application. They are conducted in formal institutional settings, in an interaction between an interviewer (a representative of the authorities), the asylum-seeker, and a translator.

The second set of data consists of semi-structured interviews of 25 Iraqi citizens who arrived in Finland in 2015–2016 and were waiting for the processing of their claim for asylum. The interviews were conducted in English and the questions focused on the interviewee's background, reasons for leaving Iraq, refugee journeys, experiences in Finland, and future plans. It was impossible to obtain an even gender balance of interviewees, as more than 80 per cent of those arriving in Finland

¹The entire dataset included 1164 individuals from 32 different nationalities. The largest groups were Afghan (421), Nepalese (88), Syrian (87) and Indian (81) citizens as well as asylum applicants from 13 different African countries. About 75 per cent of all asylum-seekers used Russia as a transit country (Piipponen & Virkkunen, 2020; Virkkunen et al., 2019).

in 2015 were male (Migri, 2021). Thus, there was only one female interviewed. The ages of the interviewees ranged from 18 to 45 years. They were all Iraqi Arabs, mostly from the Baghdad region and had mixed religious backgrounds. In terms of their socio-economic backgrounds, they were a diverse group. However, each individual had invested thousands of euros on the trip to Europe, so they had the means required to take the journey.

In terms of method, we use qualitative content analysis of, firstly, the Syrians' asylum application protocols with an emphasis on their experiences and interpretations of their motives for migration and asylum, residence and daily lives in Russia; and, secondly, the Iraqis' stories on what motivated them to head for Europe. We analyse the protocols and interview data as narrated stories in which asylum-seekers reconstruct their migratory journeys, experiences and interpretations in relation to their social and cultural contexts. According to Patterson and Monroe (1998, 330), narrated stories are a source of information in which people make sense of their lives, assemble information, conceive of themselves, and interpret the world. Such stories include both the experiences and the means of interpreting them available to those telling the story in a given culture and context.

The protocol material concerning the Syrian citizens is characterised by various asymmetries (Tanttu, 2017) and the focal point of the interaction is in the kind of information the authorities are interested in for the purpose of processing the asylum claim. The Iraqi interviews, on the other hand, were conducted in an informal setting and the interviewees were free to talk also about other topics outside the interview framework. A true comparative analysis of the experiences of the two datasets and migrant groups is neither feasible nor desired. However, we are confident that they can be used in tandem to increase our understanding of 'crisis' and the relationship between the sense of place and international mobility in the context of humanitarian migration. In the following, we reflect on the trope of 'crisis', based on our material, as firstly the 'crisis of trust' reflecting the everyday insecurities among asylum-seekers in the countries of origin and as immigrants in Russia; and secondly as an 'ontological crisis', mirroring individuals' ability to create homes in contexts that, for them, seem not only insecure but also hostile.

3.4 Crisis of Trust: Immediate Motives for Migration

The first aspect that became evident in our empirical study was the crisis of trust and a desire to improve one's security and everyday life. In the context of everyday insecurity, narratives relating poor governance, different forms of discrimination, violence and racism were common and clearly indicated a lack of trust.

The Syrians living in Russia as immigrants had found their way into that country but, later, realised how difficult it was to apply for asylum or to legalise their status by residence permit. The applicants could not be sure if their temporary asylum or work permit would be renewed, and for how long. Even if the application was rejected, there were costs involved, the bureaucracy was unclear, and the authorities

were not willing to help. Only a small share of the 10–12 million immigrants living in Russia² reside in the country with an official work or residence permit and are, thus, entitled to social benefits and public health care (Reeves, 2013, 509; Round & Kuznetsova, 2016, 1018; Turaeva, 2019, 133). Most of the immigrants lack an official work permit, work license or residence registration. Related to this, they are in an extremely vulnerable position, facing possible arrests and a real threat of deportation.

The protocol material indicates how different temporary visa arrangements and changing regulations, and the ways in which they are enforced, cause chain reactions forcing the migrants to orbit between countries. Often neither settling nor making a life in one country is possible. Detours, breaks, and stays in-between, as well as changing destinations – instead of constant ‘flows’ – are part of global, irregular migratory movements (e.g. Crawley et al., 2018). These situations were very much part of the Arctic route from Russia to Finland.

A father of a Syrian family told a long story about his efforts to gain legal status for the family in Russia. He was able to renew his short-term visa once, but not for the second time. He ended up getting a three-month UN permission for staying in Russia after which he got a one-year permit but decided to leave the country for Poland through Belarus. The Polish authorities returned the family to Belarus where, in turn, the authorities ordered them to leave the country within three days. The family returned to Russia. The oldest son decided to try to go to Poland once more on his own, but he was caught in Belarus and ended up in prison.

The example of another Syrian man and his family shows the arbitrary character of the Russian immigration governance. The family entered Russia legally and tried to renew their legal status in Russia but, according to the man, the ‘authorities’ told him that getting refugee status is impossible, as Ukrainians get priority. In Russia, asylum is not necessarily based on a person’s individual need for protection, as it should according to the international conventions accepted by Russia, because the authorities make politicised judgements (about Syrian refugees in Russia, see also Kubal, 2016). The man and his family had tried 15 times to get to Sweden, where they had relatives, but they were returned every time. Similarly, in the case of another Syrian man in our protocol material, Russian immigration authorities had told him that Syria is a secure country, and it is the Syrians themselves who are fighting, so he has no grounds for getting asylum in Russia.

In Russia, narratives about the arbitrary conduct of the police were very common among Syrian and other immigrants. The asylum-seekers talked about illegal stops and document checks on the street. The ways police officers handled the immigrants did not depend on their status, as such, but on if a person was able to pay, and how much. Such corrupt practices gave space for immigrants to negotiate their ways when trying to survive as irregular migrants. Significantly, they also increased insecurity and lack of trust in the police and other authorities. A young Syrian woman

²During the Covid-19 border lockdown, the number of foreign citizens in Russia dropped from 10–12 million to about 5.5–6 million. Most of them are from the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

told a story of not being able to turn to the police. She also faced the attitudes of people in Russia.

They were persecuted because of their clothing in Russia, especially older Russians did so. [They said that the veil is a bad thing. Why are you in this country? They told us that we were bad Muslims. Once an older woman tried to rip off the veil that I was wearing from my head.] The applicant did not go to Russian authorities because she did not believe she would get help.

The main troubles and insecurities among Syrian immigrants in Russia related to everyday issues such as access to (paid) work, school, study, social and health services and free movement in the city space. They were able to get only occasional work, e.g. delivering goods for shops, or working during unsocial hours in the evenings and nights, but the missing residence permit or residence registration clearly made them vulnerable to abuse. The unemployment or extremely poor pay followed the economic difficulties, difficulties in accessing food, healthcare, medicine, and things like children's vaccinations. Thus, the Syrians, just like many other immigrants in Russia, lost their trust both in the system and for their future in the country in general.

A lack of trust in authorities was also visible among Iraqis, even though the situation was somewhat different as the interviewees were living in their own country of birth. Jawad,³ a computer scientist in his 40s, explains how his life in Baghdad was filled with fear of terrorist attacks and random violence. Unofficial militias were more powerful than the police and the authorities were unable to stop kidnappings that were a constant fear for those with opposing views, wealth, or other assets that the militias were interested in. According to him, the government was too weak to remedy the situation, so he chose to leave for Europe when his life was threatened at the university where he was working. The same despair towards the authorities was shared by most of the interviewees, and many explicitly stated that 'there is no hope for Iraq' (Koikkalainen et al., 2020).

Some of the Iraqis also already had quite complex migration histories. Zayd had found it difficult to get a job that matched his qualifications as a teacher in Iraq. He had worked in Egypt in 2014 and had taken a boat from Alexandria to Italy. After having been caught in the sea by Egyptian authorities, he ended up in prison for two months and then later returned to Iraq. He had been dreaming about travelling to England, but as he knew that crossing from Calais to Dover was near-impossible, he chose to head for Finland after hearing stories about this less-known destination. As a geography teacher, he was quite knowledgeable about the possible routes to Europe and had also compared his experiences with a Kurdish friend who had arrived via Russia. The friend had explained that staying in Russia was not an option as it was impossible to find work there:

You know it's different people and different governments, but it's the same Saddam Hussein, same Vladimir Putin, you know it's a very difficult government.

³The Iraqi interviewees are referred to with pseudonyms to protect their identity. The protocol material on the Syrians was also anonymised but they were not given pseudonyms because the whole dataset contains over 1000 persons.

In the case of Iraqi citizens, the feeling of everyday insecurity was mainly based on violence and the threat of car bombs or other random acts of terror. Yazid, an accountant and father of two boys, explains his life in Iraq was ‘dangerous anytime and anywhere’. You never knew when someone would come to your home, break your door, and kill your family, he explained. He was afraid of making new friends, as it was not safe to trust anyone whom you did not know. His sister lives in Norway and begged the family to come to join her there. After running into some trouble with a member of the militia and knowing that the police would rather invent a charge against him than help, Yazid finally decided that it was time to go.

I say to myself; Iraq is dead. Justice is dead in Iraq. So, I go directly to my home and take my children, take my wife, and go to another area, take my passport and go to Turkey.

These empirical examples of experienced insecurity and uncertainty demonstrate how a continued sense of failure in everyday life can lead to a fundamental crisis in trust in the government, the authorities and the system itself. For the Syrians, Russia was not a place where one could securely live as an immigrant, and for the Iraqis, their native country had time and time again proven to be a disappointment. This crisis of trust leads to another crisis of a very personal nature: if I cannot have confidence that the state is on my side – or at least are not actively working against me – then what is my place in this country?

3.5 Ontological Crisis: Lack of Opportunities, Future, Existence

Besides the lack of trust and immediate sources of insecurity, a more in-depth crisis in individuals’ home and place-making influenced our informants’ decision to migrate. This was a more profound question of existence and the ability to create ‘home’ in a place that may not only face war, conflict and violent extremism but was also characterised by corruption, structural inequality and everyday racism. With regard to personal security, the ability to adapt to pressure and fear in one’s everyday life and to build trust for the future, the experience is similar among those considering migration for the first time and among those who try to find their place in a new country. As our examples of Syrian and Iraqi asylum-seekers indicate, the 2015–2016 situation was not only a ‘crisis’ of border management – as it was often portrayed in European media – but also a crisis of lack of opportunities and personal advancement. In turn, this led to a failure of trust for the future that motivated even some seemingly settled people to migrate.

It is obvious from the Syrian protocol material that the insecurity caused by the everyday difficulties did not provide a sustainable basis for the future. Due to the worsening economic situation, they could not see any way to make a proper living in Russia. Due also to the constant struggles with authorities that forced them to stay low and invisible, they could not foresee any prospects for their children. It is difficult to build a sense of belonging when attitudes are such, as the following

quotation depicts. A Syrian mother of five talked about difficulties in getting her children to school and getting birth certificates for those two who were born in Russia. According to her:

In Russia, authorities made the problems but not the people – they tried to help. The people are afraid of the state. That is why we were moving all the time. Even if my children were born in Russia, the state did not take it into consideration.

She also spoke of her dispersed family: her husband's parents lived in Turkey, and he wanted to go to visit them before joining the wife and children who already left for Finland. Thus, he could not join his family before the Russian-Finnish border closed in February 2016.

For the Syrian immigrants who joined the Arctic route, the consequences of the everyday hardships made it difficult to belong and develop a sense of place in Russia. The implicit, and many times explicit, message both from authorities and the public was that they were not accepted. Another Syrian woman explained the attitudes of the authorities:

Lately, they did not grant permissions to stay to Syrians, as Russia is participating in the war there. They think that they went to fight instead of us, and we came to live in their country.

Living without legal status and trying to avoid the authorities does not give the opportunity to integrate into the society as a full member, not as a neighbour, colleague, friend or schoolmate.

Similarly, in the Iraqi interviews, it was clear that a deep disappointment in how the country has been run during the past decades made it impossible to have hope for a better future. The insecurity caused by fear of violence and arbitrary policing and governance had seriously impacted their trust in the state. For some interviewees, the situation had already turned personal as they report incidents of violence against themselves or close family members. This was the case for Abu Bakr, a 37-year-old father who arrived in Finland with his 10-year-old son. He had taken part in anti-government demonstrations and the son had been taken as a warning:

They kidnapped him for four days. (...) Because they say to me, if we give you your son, you must leave Iraq, don't stay here. If you stay, we kidnap all four of your children.

Also, Hadi explained that he was forced to leave Iraq because of a threat made towards his family. He had been working in the telecommunications sector and thus had access to the contact information of the clients of the company. Members of the militia came to his house to demand that he provide them with the addresses of people they wanted to find. This was valuable information, as in a country with 32 million people it is not always easy to locate a person. 'I went to my family and told them to start packing, we are leaving. And after 24 hours I lost everything', he explains. For some, the experience of a lost future was related to education or career opportunities, even though the precarity of everyday life in Iraq was an important push factor. Ibrahim explained that he considered heading for the United States because he has family there, but chose Finland instead because he wanted to finish his PhD with some Finnish scientists, who are among the most cited in the world: 'I did my homework. (...) Finland is first in the world in education'.

International migration is one solution to a fundamentally difficult situation where the current location does not provide any prospects. For the Iraqis, this meant contemplating possible destinations abroad in relation to what they hoped to achieve in life. For the Syrians, return migration was only a theoretical option due to the ongoing conflict and forced return was one of the threats they faced in Russia. Some had already gotten an expulsion order from Russia and some knew it would inevitably be coming later. One of the Syrians explained that he had been a member of an activist group and had participated in actions against fundamental Islamists in Syria. Family members and other activists of the group had already been killed, so he was sure that he would face the same destiny if he went back. For others, the return was not possible for other reasons, as the protocol of a woman who had been suffering from health problems describes: 'The applicant is ill and would not get treatment in Syria due to the war conditions. Would like to return, but it is not possible'. Considerations of the family were also strongly present in the protocols, as this mother explains: 'There is war in Syria, it is not safe there, and there is death. I fled death, and it is not possible to give future to my children'.

While the Russian authorities accused the Syrian migrants that their 'own country' was the reason for their problems and misery, these Syrians were sure that they would be doomed if they returned to their country of origin. Thus, the spreading of news and rumours about the Arctic route and 'open border' in the North to Norway and Finland seemed to be the best way to get away from the deadlocked situation in Russia. For the Iraqis, the opening of the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan route towards Europe seemed to offer an exceptional chance of fleeing a country with no hope. Many chose Finland because it was thought of as a lesser-known destination and a country offering peace, democracy and prosperity. Our informants showed agency in defining Russia and Iraq as 'non-homes' (Boccagni & Miranda Nieto, 2021) and therefore as impossible locations for a meaningful life. Based on our data, therefore, the crisis of trust and the crisis of ontological security were two important drivers of migration due to disillusionment in having a future in one's current location.

3.6 Concluding Discussion: Disillusionment with Place

The migratory situation in Europe in 2015 and 2016 shows the complexity of the 'crisis'. Based on our theoretical discussion and empirical study in Finland, we note how simplistic the assumptions of straightforward push-pull models frequently presented by the media and authorities are. The 'crisis' was not about the high number of incomers, Russia's hybrid attack or the failure of Finland's or the EU's border management but also about individuals experiencing a fundamental disillusionment in having a future in their current location. Migrants from different countries of origin used varied migratory routes and had different motives for migration – some fleeing immediate danger while others fulfilling a long-term plan to relocate somewhere abroad. The situation showed also how mixed the movement was: step-by-step migration, primary and secondary migration, and straight and transit

journeys. Crawley et al. (2018) point out that, even though migration across the Mediterranean was larger in scale than ever before, Europe's 'migration crisis' was still small compared with the number of refugees and displaced people in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, i.e. in countries neighbouring Syria. Moreover, if compared with the population of the EU at that time, 508 million, the number of migrants during the 'crisis' added to this only by 0.2 per cent.

Our datasets on the Syrian and Iraqi citizens show how the possibilities to settle in and build a home and sentiments of belonging are dependent on the ability to feel secure in one's everyday life, trust the system and be able to see a future in that place. The failure of this manifests as two types of crises in the lives of our informants: a crisis of trust, and a personal ontological crisis of existence. Moreover, there is plenty of convincing evidence in the migration literature, in addition to the empirical material of this study, that the consequences of disillusionment with the current home and place are of importance in irregular migratory processes. The choice of destination was based on two factors: available routes, and the preconceptions of Finland, often based on social media or word-of-mouth information, as a place where life could start anew. This was a highly idealised version of Finland as a prosperous and welcoming country at the northern edge of Europe, outside the beaten track leading to Germany or Sweden, for example (Koikkalainen et al., 2020).

Andersson (2016) criticises the mechanics and logic of the European 'border security model' which, rather than addressing the real causes of migration, has generated absurd incentives and negative path dependencies that fuel further migration and frame mobility-as-threat. We also note that the tools for governing these global migratory realities are out of date and there is a major discrepancy between the logic of border regimes and the expectations of those wishing to cross the said borders in search of a better life. Migrants are very much on their own and in a constant waiting room between states, between their lost pasts and only vague, uncertain futures.

From the perspective of migrants, the reasons for heading for Finland during 2015–2016 among the Iraqis using the Mediterranean route and 'the caravan of Europe' to the north, and among the Syrian immigrants in Russia using the Arctic route, are surprisingly similar. The Syrian immigrants in Russia faced severe everyday insecurities due to their immigration status and the related corruption, poor working and living conditions, and decided to leave. Similarly, many Iraqi asylum-seekers were disillusioned by their prospects in their home country and were eager to start life anew abroad. The hope of a brighter future convinced these individuals to leave but, unfortunately, their plans were often based on false promises of the asylum route being a real possibility to establish themselves in Europe.

Our research contains two datasets, but the different nationalities complemented each other. In both cases, everyday insecurities, alienation and a failed sense of place developed anxieties and urgencies that drove these people to migrate. We argue that crisis situations, such as the events of 2015–2016, also influence the mobility of individuals who do not necessarily flee war or personal persecution. Thus, we conclude that major migration events such as the 'migration crisis' show how seemingly settled individuals, migrants or other, may in fact be in vulnerable positions and thus willing to relocate quickly if an opportunity appears. The 'crisis' was, above all, multidimensional.

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Chapter 4

Adapting to the New Normality: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Seasonal Migration from Albania



Bresena Kopliku and Erka Çaro

4.1 Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic created economic turmoil and impacted various areas of life all over the world. One of the major socio-political aspects of this global crisis consisted of border closures and lockdowns imposed by governments. Migrant workers have been one of the most affected groups, because they are over-represented in vulnerable occupations and among workers with short-term labour contracts; hence, they are among the first to be laid off (Ullah et al., 2021). The loss of jobs and reductions in the wages of migrant and refugee workers as a result of the pandemic led to a decline in remittances globally of some USD\$109 billion. Dependent for years now on the financial capital coming from diverse types of migration – seasonal migration, circular mobility and remittances from international migration – the economy of Albania was negatively impacted by the consequences of these changes (OECD, 2021). Many migrant workers had to return to their country of origin and face the precarious situation from which they had already left (Bartlett & Oruc, 2021). A lot of seasonal and circular migrant workers were trapped and could not emigrate. Outward mobility shrank or was postponed because of travel bans (Mara et al., 2022). The more significant consequences were experienced by seasonal migrants who are used to generating incomes through temporary work and who were unable to continue doing so due to being stuck in Albania. The labour

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market of Albania in 2020 faced a loss of 34,000 jobs and another increase of the unemployment rate (OECD, 2021). The fall in remittances during this period was partially caused by the strong impact that the crisis had on emigrant workers, be they temporary or permanent: the measures that prohibited many economic activities in the host countries; the difficulties of transferring money; as well as a significant portion of remittances normally making their way to Albania through informal channels (Barjaba, 2021; Topalli, 2021).

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic first struck Albania, as it did most of the rest of the world, in early 2020. To thwart the spread of the virus, Albania imposed a full lockdown during the first few months, which left the migrant population stranded. Faced with this new normality – high levels of unemployment, borders remaining closed and restrictions on travel and work – seasonal migrants sought other coping modalities. At the political level, the governments of the main Albanian migration destination countries – Italy, Greece and Germany – eased their border regulations to allow seasonal workers in during the coronavirus crisis, which created new possibilities for employment, especially in agriculture and healthcare (Augère-Granier, 2021). Some international organisations operating in Albania offered employment possibilities for vulnerable groups of returned migrants because of earlier rejections of their asylum requests. At the same time, intermediators found new channels to transport seasonal migrants and continue their operations informally.

All these efforts to ease the effects of the coronavirus pandemic were driven by the changes in the demands of the economy. The pandemic highlighted the role of ‘essential’ workers, many of whom are employed in less prestigious and poorly paid jobs, such as caring, transport, cleaning and check-out staff (Settersten et al., 2020). On the other hand, there was an increased demand for seasonal workers in agriculture and healthcare. In this chapter we explore the coping mechanisms which seasonal migrants adopted to navigate through the new normality created by the pandemic.

Seasonal migration trends in Albania during the pandemic followed the rules set by international border-crossing protocols. Dependent on these protocols, seasonal migrants departed for their destination countries or found other means of living in Albania in the short term. We find that, despite the restrictions, informal seasonal migration from Albania to Western countries continued during the pandemic. Seasonal migrants who could not get past the restrictions shifted their labour supply to other, easier-to-reach, destinations instead, such as Montenegro. Their adaptation to the new normality turned out to be much quicker than regular seasonal-migration features would suggest. In this chapter, then, we aim to answer two main research questions:

1. How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected migrants in Albania who are used to making a living out of seasonal migration?
2. What have been the coping mechanisms that these migrants have chosen, or which they have been forced to choose, to adapt to the new situation?

4.2 Methodology

Our analysis draws on 60 in-depth semi-structured interviews with seasonal Albanian migrants who were in Albania at the time of the interview. Four in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants: with a regular seasonal migrant in Germany, a driver who manages a transport agency with Italy, a staff member of an intermediation employment agency and a representative from the Labour Office of the Shkodra region in northern Albania. The data were gathered between August and October 2020. The fieldwork was conducted in the Shkodra region. We gained access to Albanian seasonal migrants first through the main gatekeepers in the municipality of Shkodra, regional employment offices and international organisations which are focused on re-integration programmes addressing mainly vulnerable returnees. We also used the snowball technique to access and interview potential participants. All interviews were held in the Albanian language and selected quotes have been translated into English for this chapter. In what follows, interviewees are referred to by pseudonyms.

The interviews were transcribed preserving the original language, then coded, grouped in themes and analysed manually. The researchers assured all respondents that the information they gave would be used only for our academic research. Due to the decrease in the number of infections, we met the interviewees in person, in open-air settings and respecting social-distancing measures. The interviews typically lasted about 30 min, covering accounts of participants' migration history and their recent situation due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The questions were organised as follows: first the interviewees were asked to give some general information on their family status and profession. We then asked questions about their migration path – their previous experiences, destination countries and reasons for migrating. For the third group of questions, we focused on migration during the pandemic, in particular on the different ways of migrating, their rationale of choosing the destination, their fears of getting infected and the measures undertaken to prevent it, the role of networks and the migrants' strategies for adapting in the new normality.

Table 4.1 provides basic profile data on the participant sample. There were 50 men and 10 women with an average age of 45 years old. They worked mainly in Greece, Italy and Germany. One worked seasonally in the Netherlands and 10 in Montenegro. However, destination countries were not always the same, as some participants had worked in different European countries, depending on the job opportunities. The emigration route was generally undertaken by bus and the high season was from April to October. The main employment sectors in the destination country were construction, agriculture, services, cleaning, maintenance and factory work. For the most part migrants worked informally within the 3-month period for which they were allowed to reside in the destination country. The majority (65%) of the participants had an elementary education, 25% had completed secondary education and 11% had a university degree.

The main limitation of the study sample is the fact that all the participants were seasonal migrants who had remained in Albania following the pandemic outbreak. Another important group of informants would have been the seasonal migrants who

Table 4.1 Characteristics of informants

Gender	Women	10
	Men	50
Type of migration	Asylum-seekers	30
	Formal entry	10
	Mixed	28
Type of employment	Formal	10
	Informal	30
	Mixed	28
Sector	Services	3
	Agriculture	9
	Cleaning	8
	Domestic	3
	Construction	18
	Manufacturing	2
	Others	17
Destination	Greece	20
	Italy	17
	Germany	6
	Montenegro	10
	Netherlands	1

stayed in the destination countries throughout the pandemic. This would have allowed us to obtain a more thorough perspective on seasonal migration from Albania.

4.3 Seasonal Migration from Albania Before and During the Pandemic

Seasonal migration from Albania to Western European countries has turned into a way of life for many Albanian individuals and families. Regarded as a phenomenon which benefits all the parties involved – the country of origin, the destination country and the migrants themselves – it has helped, on the one hand, to relieve the pressure of increasing unemployment rates in Albania and, on the other, to satisfy the demands for seasonal workers in many countries (Nicholson, 2004; Vadean & Piracha, 2009). According to Mai (2011), this ambivalent circulatory movement represents a choice by migrants to adapt to and benefit from the different opportunities – economic, social and political – provided by both the origin and the destination countries. Compared to other forms of migration (international, internal or return), seasonal and circular migration are the least explored due mainly to their irregular nature, despite having traditionally been strategies for living for many Albanians, especially after 1990 (Azzarri & Carletto, 2009; Çaro et al., 2014;

Mai, 2011; Maroukis & Gemi, 2013; Nicholson, 2004). The main destination countries for seasonal migration were Greece, Italy and, recently, Germany. Geographical proximity, cultural closeness and social networks are the reasons shaping seasonal migration to Greece and Italy (Gemi, 2017). The economy of Greece depends heavily on the Albanian labour force which is used mainly by small and medium businesses (Gemi, 2017). Seasonal migration to Germany is nowadays based on the employment possibilities offered by different programmes or agencies operating in Albania, be they in healthcare, transport or services etc. Recently there has also been a growing number of countries, such as Malta, Sweden, France, the USA or the United Arab Emirates, employing seasonal migrants from Albania.¹ Unlike permanent migration, temporary migration was historically taken up by only one household member, mostly the male head of the house (Azzarri & Carletto, 2009). This trend has also changed recently due to the increase in the number of women working in the healthcare, elderly care or domestic and cleaning sectors. The governments of the main destination countries for seasonal migration – Greece and Italy – have signed agreements with the Albanian government for the seasonal employment of migrants.² International organisations also operate with programmes that assist the seasonal employment of Albanians in these countries. However, the number of seasonal migrants who circulate through formal avenues pales in comparison to the broader panorama of seasonal migration from Albania, which is generally based on irregular migration movements. Most of the seasonal migrants to Greece are irregular and work without health insurance or job contracts (Gemi, 2014; Ruedin & Nesturi, 2018). In Italy, seasonal migrants working informally are also very common (Danaj & Çaro, 2016; Fellini & Fullin, 2016). Based on our expert interviews with employment agencies, we understand that the same goes for Germany, where irregular migrants register as asylum-seekers but work informally while in the host country. Other Western European countries are less frequented for seasonal migration although, in the last few years, there has been an increased interest in contract-backed seasonal migration to Malta and the USA. This movement is facilitated via employment agencies which are related to employment offices in the destination countries.

There are several economic sectors which employ a seasonal workforce, depending on the time of year and the respective need for a labour force. This changing demand during the year defines seasonal migrants' flows from Albania to Western countries. Some of the main economic sectors in these countries which employ seasonal migrants are agriculture – for example, harvesting apples – tourism, construction, domestic cleaning and care services (Kodra, 2021; Maroukis & Gemi, 2013; Piracha & Vadean, 2010). Seasonal migrants work mostly in the so-called 3-D jobs – dirty, dangerous, and demeaning (Maroukis & Gemi, 2013).

¹This information was given by representatives of the employment agencies contacted for this chapter.

²<http://www.ambasadat.gov.al/italy/sq/marr%C3%ABveshje-dypal%C3%ABshe-nga-viti-1991>

This dynamic framework of seasonal migration changed abruptly with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Legal flows of seasonal migration completely ceased; yet irregular movements continued, albeit with a much slower rhythm. We understand from our informants that, even during peak pandemic measures (March to May 2020), there were some seasonal employment opportunities, especially in the healthcare sector. When the measures began to be eased, job positions restarted that were offered by private employment intermediation agencies – which have gradually established themselves in the market over the years. Posts kept appearing on social media, mainly Facebook, which helped with seasonal employment in Greece, Germany, Italy and Malta. The ever-expanding social networks, a consequence of the growth in mobility of Albanians, also served as sources of information for potential seasonal employment, which was mostly undocumented.

Albanian migration has always been a clearly gendered phenomenon, with a changing gender balance over time (Vullnetari & King, 2011). Traditionally, Albanian migration featured predominantly men but, according to recent official data, the distribution is nowadays more equal – 52% men and 48% women (INSTAT, 2020). The more-balanced gender structure is attributable to two factors: the family-reunion stage that has followed male-led migration and the fact that most return migration (more than three-quarters in fact) is of men, many of whom then seek to re-migrate (INSTAT, 2014, 9). Male emigrants were particularly hard-hit by the post-2008 economic crisis in Greece, which decimated the construction sector where many Albanian men worked on an informal basis.

In our interview sample there were 10 women, all employed as domestic workers and cleaners. Although some of them lost their jobs in the destination countries during the pandemic, they continued to find work by circulating to different countries, benefiting from personal connections and cross-border networks. As Ida (55) told us:

I have been a domestic worker for several years now. I usually work in Switzerland in the winter, staying there for three months, returning to Albania for one week and then back to Switzerland... In the summer I prefer to work in Ulcinj [a tourist town in Montenegro, close to the border with Albania] in different hotels. I managed to work in Switzerland during the pandemic too... I travelled with the group I always go with, with the same two old drivers who will probably continue taking women to work in Northern Italy or Switzerland as domestics and cleaners until they retire [laughs].

4.4 Seasonal Migration According to Traditional or New Destinations

4.4.1 *How Can We Live on 40 Euros per Month of Social Assistance?*

The ongoing phenomenon of high migration rates from Albania may be considered a ‘wicked problem’. According to King (2021), a wicked problem is a problem that is extremely difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete information,

contradictory forces, changing circumstances, multiple layers of complexity and interdependencies with other problems. We classify the mass out-migration from Albania as a wicked problem, since this phenomenon is characterised by young, educated and qualified people while, at the same time, there are still high potential rates of migration. At the same time, there is no obvious ‘silver bullet’ to settle this problem. Albania is still locked in the phase of on-going large-scale migration (Gëdeshi & King, 2021; King & Gëdeshi, 2019). In addition to high unemployment, endemic corruption, the unfavourable business climate, informal markets, low-standard education and health services and widening socio-economic and spatial differences, the Covid-19 pandemic has added to these structural push factors. As migration is still regarded as a valve to counter high unemployment rates, the closure of borders raised the pressure on the scarce employment possibilities. This was more evident for the group of migrants who depend exclusively on seasonal migration to make a living, and for whom the nominal social assistance of 40 euros per month constituted an ‘unliveable’ wage. They adapted to the new normality by shifting to new destinations, finding gaps in the outbreak limitations, following new paths of migration or temporarily changing their ways of living, as evidenced by Zeni, a 28-year-old male:

Before the pandemic started, I worked as an assistant cook on cruises. Hard work but well paid ... During the summer (2020) I worked in a restaurant in Montenegro but mainly with their delivery service. It's not the same thing, but at least I'm not out of work ...

Our informants tell us that seasonal migrant employment opportunities during the pandemic era have been in the economic sectors sustained by labour migrants. The pandemic has affected economic sectors differently. According to studies on the impact of Covid-19 on EU industries (De Vet et al., 2021; Juergensen et al., 2020; Uğur & Akbıyık, 2020), the digital industry and the healthcare sector have performed well during the pandemic, enabling industries like chemicals, construction and the food and drinks sector to probably experience a V-shaped recovery from the crisis. However, sectors that are dependent on human contact and interaction – such as cultural and creative industries and the tourism, travel and aerospace sectors (due to the decrease in mobility and tourism activities) – have been substantially hit by the crisis (Nižetić, 2020).

While there was a decline in demand for labour in the sectors of tourism, services, construction or maintenance, the same does not hold for the agricultural and healthcare sectors. The agricultural sector is directly linked to the demand for food, which has not diminished during the pandemic, reflecting a different consumption behaviour when compared to tourism, hospitality, restaurants or construction, which have seen a significant decline (Newson, 2020). Overall, despite the restrictions, the demand for migrant workers remained as high as before, especially in the agricultural and healthcare sectors (Gamlen, 2020). Looking at the importance of the so-called ‘critical professions’, including healthcare, food, services like childcare, elderly care and critical staff for utilities, the European Commission released new ‘practical advice’ on 30 March 2020 to ensure that cross-border and frontier workers within the EU, particularly those critical professions, could reach their workplace (Marcu, 2021).

This fact is also confirmed by the bilateral agreement between Albania – traditionally an origin country for seasonal migrants – and Greece, traditionally a destination country in need of workers.³ Following the same logic and looking for seasonal migrants, Italy clearly delineated the number of jobs available for seasonal migrants.⁴ The seasonal migration routes to Germany and Malta were, in contrast, channelled mainly through intermediation agencies. On the flip side of the coin, irregular seasonal movements continued almost all year, except in March and April 2020 when border restrictions were too tight.

4.4.2 *Seasonal Migration to Greece*

During the 1990s, the migratory movements of Albanians to Greece were mainly irregular, circular or temporary (Maroukis & Gemi, 2013). Migrants worked in agriculture during the harvest seasons and, especially during the summer, in tourism, construction, small-scale factories or housekeeping. In the late 1990s there were some 550,000 seasonal migrants working in Greece informally (Maroukis & Gemi, 2013; Reyneri, 2001), equivalent to one in six of the entire Albanian population. Due to the legalisation procedures set by the Greek government in 1998, most of these seasonal migrants became permanent and decided to stay indefinitely in Greece (Gemi, 2017). After 2008, however, especially with the economic crisis, it was estimated that nearly 140,000 Albanian migrants returned to the home country from Greece, with some re-migrating to Western European countries (Çaro, 2016).

The seasonal movement of migrants also continued during the hard pandemic years of 2020–2021. This movement was undertaken either in a regular fashion – through employment contracts signed by Greek employers and Albanian employees – or irregularly. In May 2020, after 2 months of complete lockdown in March and April, Albanian media outlets announced the signing of a bilateral agreement between Albania and Greece for seasonal employment in Greece, which requested a much larger number of seasonal workers than in previous years. Greece needed 10,000 employees, most of them in agriculture.⁵ This news was immediately followed by massive numbers of applications, exceeding 7000 per week.⁶ This sudden increase in the number of applicants can also be explained by the simplification of the procedures: the application was made free of charge, without visa restrictions or consulate procedures, with a low cost of movement and with priorities for workers

³ <https://ata.gov.al/2020/05/02/marveshja-shqiperi-greqi-per-punesimin-sezonal-deri-ne-10-000-shqiptare-perfitues/>

⁴ <https://shqiptariitalise.com/dekret-fluksesh-2020-kete-vit-edhe-per-punonjes-jo-sezonale/>; <http://www.scan-tv.com/punesim-sezonal-ne-itali-federicci-aplikimet-jane-hapur-ofrojme-edhe-formim-profesional-dhe-mesim-gjuhe/>

⁵ <https://www.balkanweb.com/arrihet-marveshja-me-greqine-per-punesim-sezonal-perfitojne-10-mije-shqiptare-ja-si-do-te-veprohet-nga-kostot-e-udhetimit-te/>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/punenegreqi>

with previous seasonal migration experience. However, with the deterioration of the pandemic situation, in June 2020 Greece announced the complete closing of borders for new seasonal job-seekers and, at the same time, postponed the expiry date of the work permits for seasonal workers already in Greece to 31 December 2020.⁷ Based on the data announced in media outlets, the last quarter of 2020 saw between 20,000 and 24,000 Albanian seasonal workers in Greece and 2000–2500 workers who had Greek citizenship and documentation but who lived in Albania and moved continuously.⁸ Most seasonal migrants were employed in agriculture – the harvesting of fruits such as cherries, grapes and lemons, as well as olives. Some of these workers were employed in tourism – mainly on the Aegean islands – and some skilled workers in construction. Fluctuations in the numbers of Covid-infected people in Greece also defined the restrictions in travel across the border, ultimately reducing access to employment opportunities, despite the latter being plentiful, as Agron (45, male) confirms:

I worked in agriculture in Greece. I usually worked around three months a year and earned enough to sustain my family, wife and two kids, for the entire year. This year the expenses of going to Greece – the PCR test, travel expenses, other documents – are too much but how can I live on 4,800 Lek (40 euros) a month social assistance?

More specifically, in August 2020, the Greek government announced that seasonal workers who had left Greece did not have the right to re-enter the country, whether or not they already had a residence permit. On 20 November, Kapshtica – one of the most important land border-crossing points from Albania to Greece – was closed until 4 December, while the remaining point (Kakavija) continued to have a crossing limit of 750 persons per day (essential travel only). Paulin, a 40-year-old male, explains the problem:

My brother, who lives in Greece, keeps trying to convince me to go there to work because there is much to do. But I can't go because of the restrictions. I would work on the farm, of course, without a contract. I am afraid I could get stuck there and my wife would be here alone with two children for an indefinite time.

4.4.3 *Seasonal Migration to Italy*

Although Greece remains by far the main destination, Italy is also a favourable country for seasonal transnational migrants. Those employed in 'essential' sectors during the pandemic – such as healthcare or the agri-food sector – benefited from special decrees issued by the Italian government which aimed to ensure the normal functioning of these sectors. Italy also implemented a regularisation programme

⁷ <https://www.balkanweb.com/greqia-shtyn-serish-hapjen-e-kufirit-tokesor-me-shqiperine-policia-kufitare-e-kapshtices-masat-deri-ne-7-qershor/>

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sy5DSvP89E4>, Episode of 'Wake Up' entitled 'What is happening with employment in Greece?').

with the goal of providing a legal status to migrants working illegally in these sectors (Triandafyllidou, 2022).

Starting from June 2020, the Italian government eased quarantine measures and facilitated the circulation of seasonal workers, particularly in agriculture, by re-opening the border. While most productive sectors in Italy were affected by the crisis, the agricultural sector was the only one that had maintained employment rates close to those of 2019 and had been growing (Palumbo & Corrado, 2020). The circulation of seasonal workers was facilitated by the intervention of the Italian government which, through a special decree in July 2020, determined the quotas of seasonal migrants for the year. Of the total quota of 30,850, 18,000 were reserved for employees in agriculture and 6000 in transport, construction and touristic-hotel services. Albania was one of the countries benefitting from this decision.⁹

From our interview with Ardian, a male employee (aged 46) of an overland transport agency which generally focuses on transporting seasonal workers from Albania to Italy, we heard that the pandemic months saw an increase in employment-related travel as opposed to family and tourist visits, which were very limited. There was a high demand for labour in these sectors (agriculture, health and care) but, due to the restrictions, only those who had a work permit or contract could travel:

This year [2020] there is a surprising increase in circulation for employment purposes generally in the agricultural, healthcare and family assistance sectors. Seventy per cent of my passengers during this period have travelled for employment purposes in these sectors.

The movement of healthcare personnel gained more media attention due to the sensitivity of health matters during the pandemic. In March 2020, the Council of Ministers of Albania decided in favour of helping the Italian Republic with healthcare specialists, physicians and nurses, in light of the challenging conditions presented by the pandemic. The fund for their compensation was fuelled by a reserve budget, with a monthly salary of 2500 euros for nurses and 3000 for physicians. The Albanian and Italian media outlets interpreted this initiative as a good diplomatic move but it is worth mentioning that there were at least 3000 applications to join this group completed by Albanian medical staff. It seems as though the primary goal of this category of migrants was to take advantage of the possibility to be paid better than in Albania, at least for some months. In fact, fear of infection was scarcely mentioned by the interviewees – their economic survival under the conditions of the pandemic seemed to prevail compared to preserving their health.

4.4.4 Seasonal Migration to Germany

Germany typically needs 300,000 seasonal workers per year (Augère-Granier, 2021). The typology of seasonal migration to Germany is still underexplored as it is a relatively new trend in migration from Albania. Seasonal and circular migrants are generally subsumed within asylum-seeker flows – which is related to how they

⁹<https://www.oecd.org/south-east-europe/COVID-19-Crisis-in-Albania.pdf>

register as asylum-seekers and, at the same time, work informally, mainly in low-skilled sectors such as agriculture, maintenance, cleaning and nursing (Gëdeshi & King, 2022; Guichard, 2020). Considering the recent trends in the shaping of the labour force in Albania according to labour demands in Germany, we believe that the number of regular Albanian migrants to Germany, whether seasonal or permanent, will continue to grow.

There is a growing number of programmes offered as professional or university-level courses which address the so-called regulated professions and through which a person could find employment in Germany (nurses, hairdressers, electricians etc.). Lessons in the German language are offered free of charge by multiple training centres. At the University of Shkodra, since 2018 the number of students registered on the BA in Nursing degree programme has increased from 80 to 120 per year. According to questionnaires organised by the Alumni Office of the University of Shkodra, 97% of the applicants registered with the goal of leaving Albania for an EU country.

In the case of seasonal migration to Germany, two main categories of migrant exist: irregular migrants who travel with the goal of presenting themselves as asylum-seekers and to work informally in the meantime; and students who travel via employment agencies which assist them in finding jobs. In addition to the private employment agencies, there are different international programmes operating in Albania as well, which play an intermediary role for potential seasonal migrants in Germany.

The pandemic disrupted this normality which temporary migrants had already created and built upon for years. Some, who were ready to emigrate and had a new job and a new life waiting for them in a new country, were left stranded, waiting for borders to reopen to foreigners (Triandafyllidou & Nalbandian, 2020). Some of the interviewees confirmed that they had already signed contracts with employers in Germany but ended up stuck in Albania.

Gjon, a 25-year-old male, interrupted his studies in Albania to work in Germany. His parents live in Albania, while his brothers and sisters live with their families in London. His pathway to Germany followed the route of many other migrants: first he was encouraged by friends who were already there and who told him about the large number of jobs that existed in Germany. He worked informally there for the first 3 months and then went back to Albania because his parents needed some support. For the last 3 years he has been leading this life between Germany and Albania. According to Schengen rules, Albanian citizens cannot stay for more than 3 months in an EU country and cannot work without a work permit. As Gjon worked informally, he had to go back after 3 months although, as he explains, this was not always the case: 'I know that I can't stay more than three months in Germany, but there is a solution to that too. My biometric passport can't stay, but I can'. When asked how that was possible, he answered: 'You just have to know the right people, you give them your passport and then they arrange everything'. As he says, it is not the person him- or herself who travels – only the passport. While the irregular migrant keeps working in the destination country, he gives the passport to someone to pass it through the border, get it stamped by border controls and then return it to the migrant, who never left the host country. After 3 years of temporary contracts, Gjon contacted a private employment agency in Albania which found him a job in a textile factory: 'The agency arranged everything – the transport, accommodation and

work contract for three months. But the prices I paid were much higher than if I organised it myself...’. He went back to Albania in February 2020 to stay for a few weeks but then found that he could not return to Germany because of the border restrictions. Meanwhile he had a new work contract waiting for him as soon as Albania and Germany both decided on the regulations of movement.

4.4.5 Seasonal Migration to Montenegro

Montenegro is another destination country for seasonal and circular migration from Albania. The migrants are mostly daily workers, generally in the construction industry and tourism. Montenegro is highly dependent on foreign seasonal workers in the construction sector (ILO, 2020). Moreover, a significant share of seasonal work in tourism in Montenegro is performed by foreign workers. The decline in tourism during the pandemic resulted in a reduction in labour demand in this sector, while there was still a need for workers in construction, mainly in private firms and households.

From the in-depth interviews we see that Albanian seasonal migrants work informally in Montenegro. Most have primary or lower-secondary education and, as there are more frequent opportunities for employment and better wages in Montenegro, they go there to work in agriculture, tourism and construction – sectors which pay much less in Albania. Their journeys are similar: they start out daily from the two northern customs points of Albania at around 3 or 4 a.m. – generally with friends in the same car in order to share the travel costs. They stop in Tuz, where they wait for potential employers from Ulcinj, Budva and Podgorica to come and choose the workers. The luckier ones have created and maintained stable connections with employers, so they go directly to their workplaces. Family connections or acquaintances also notify them as soon as an employment opportunity comes up. They usually get paid 15 euros per day. Some of the seasonal migrants who used to work in Greece and Italy and who subsequently could not travel there during the pandemic chose to work in Montenegro. The flows depended on the restrictions – higher when the restrictions were a bit more relaxed and lower when the restrictions were tight, depending on the cost and nature of the Covid test required. As Martin (54, M) said: ‘I always used to get high wages, because I am a specialist mason, a profession that I have practised for many years in Greece, Germany and recently in Montenegro’.

4.5 Emerging Key Players in the Field

4.5.1 Job Agencies

Job agencies and social networks play a key role in defining seasonal migration. Several such intermediation agencies operate in Albania for employment in Germany and Malta. Based on expert interviews with representatives of these

agencies, we understand that they offer advice only and are not based on any signed agreements between the destination and origin countries. They have connections to the employment offices in the destination countries, which send weekly updates on the number of vacancies and the nature of the available positions. For tourist destinations like Malta, the professions in demand are in hospitality and tourism: cooks, gardeners, security guards, hairdressers, child-carers etc. In 2020, since this sector suffered a decrease in activity, the number of applicants also fell. However, according to Oriola (32, F), a travel-agency representative, there has been a movement of people via informal means:

We arrange seasonal employment with Germany only for students since there is not yet an agreement like that with Greece or Italy. But we know that the number of irregular seasonal migrants is high – and it was high even during the pandemic.

For countries that are already EU members, the legislation of intermediation job agencies regulates the choice of destination country, the type of immigrant who will migrate and the treatment of the migrants during their stay in the destination country (Koroutchev, 2020). Albania also operates within a legal framework, according to which finding a job abroad can be done only by licensed employment agencies. To exercise its activity, the agency must be registered as a business and equipped with the relevant license for ‘Labour Market Mediation’.¹⁰ For the employment of Albanian citizens abroad, the agency implements all the bilateral agreements between the Albanian government and the respective host countries. Such employment agencies operate with Malta as well. Again according to Oriola:

Before the pandemic we sent seasonal workers to Germany, Belgium, Malta and other countries of Europe to work over the summer. We had a rented location in Germany which we were forced to give up because of the border closing, as we couldn’t afford the rent of the place due to the inability to send workers there.

4.5.2 *Family and Social Networks*

The pace at which the pandemic took hold around the globe, as well as the many unknowns surrounding the virus, caught countries off guard. The role of family connections and social networks that had always characterised Albanian migration showed itself to be even stronger during the pandemic. According to the Bank of Albania, in the last quarter of 2020 remittances appear to have rebounded to higher amounts than during the same period in 2019 (Topalli, 2021). This positive indication can be explained by the support that emigrants provide for family members and relatives in their country of origin, especially in times of crisis and difficulty.

A swift reaction from policymakers with regards to supporting seasonal workers, who compose one of the most impactful groups of employees in the lives of Albanian families, was clearly lacking. The influence of social networks and especially of

¹⁰Law no. 15/2019 ‘On the promotion of employment’ and DCM No. 101 dated 23.02.2018 ‘On the organisation and functioning of Private Employment Agencies’.

‘weak ties’ and ‘bridging ties’, has been shown to be powerful in generating employment opportunities. For many people during the pandemic, ‘strong’ ties remained strong, as family members and friends stayed in touch, although sometimes in not the most convenient, i.e. face-to-face, of ways (Settersten et al., 2020).

Family connections and other social networks impacted on the decision to emigrate and the destination country both before and after lockdown (Kopliku, 2016). The importance of networks is obvious when choosing the destination country and especially when securing an informal job. Joni (25, M) had this to say:

My two brothers live in Germany where I go often, stay and work for three months. Now they have found me a job there, as a driver, so I was planning to go again but got stuck because of the virus. I had even arranged a meeting at the German Embassy to get a visa.

Luigji (52, M), who works as a plumber in the Netherlands, told us that he has been in touch for years with an Albanian there who owns a real-estate company. The company buys dilapidated houses from the bank at low prices and sells them, completely restored, at a much higher price. The restoration work on the houses is done by Albanian workers whom he hires from Albania.

For years I have been working in the Netherlands with this company owned by a friend of mine. As soon as he obtains a new house, he gives me and some of my friends a phone call and we head there. This year we got stuck in Albania in March and April, despite having a lot of work ready to be done in the Netherlands. Right after the movement restrictions were loosened, around the end of May, we restarted work. We moved with fake vaccination certificates ... [vaccination in Albania had only begun for medical personnel]. Other than that, we also travelled by bus, not plane. The control is much stricter in airports because they mistakenly take us for drug-traffickers heading for Rotterdam.

4.5.3 *Employment in Albania*

The Albanian government has never managed to target seasonal or return migrants with specific and meaningful policies to facilitate their re-integration when left unemployed in Albania (Çaro, 2016). This lack of attention was emphasised even more during the difficult period of the pandemic, when seasonal migrants became stuck in Albania due to the sudden outbreak. According to Albanian procedures, they had to stop by the Regional Labour Office (RLO) and self-declare their unemployment. Our expert interview with a representative of this office stated that there was a decreasing number of ‘self-declared unemployed workers’ – returnees among them – because:

- of the limited possibilities for movement during the pandemic;
- of the fact that people do not trust these offices to provide them with a job according to their qualifications;
- young returnees do not want to be integrated in the Albanian labour market; they prefer to find ways to re-migrate – especially through vocational training;

- unemployed individuals in the 40–60 age cohort are not really interested in short-term contracts, because they do not want to lose their ‘economic assistance’ (a welfare payment allocated to poor and unemployed people), which is very difficult to be re-obtain once they are out of the system; and
- most of the jobs they offer are ‘women’s jobs’ (mainly in the chain production industry).

In Albania, seasonal and circular migrants are job-seekers in the same sectors (agriculture, construction, cleaning, caring). Most of them do not apply for RLO services because they do not believe in their efficiency or do not know about them at all. Very few are interested in the employment programmes, about which they are very sceptical and which they also consider to be bureaucracies which are impossible to follow through. Thus, they wait for the borders to be re-opened and to migrate again, as Andi (M, 30) suggests:

I will use the payments that I will get from this job [international programme support] to leave again. There are middlemen who have promised to ensure my re-emigration for a price of €1,000.

According to the interviews, within the group of seasonal migrants, the most vulnerable appear to be those migrants without a profession or trade, who had learned to work as assistants or basic helpers in the sectors of agriculture, construction or services. Workers with a profession, on the other hand, such as plumbers, electricians and flooring specialists, have managed to gain employment in private-sector construction companies or small businesses in Albania, as confirmed by Artan (45, M):

I work for a construction company in Italy, which has an Albanian owner. However, throughout this year [2020] there wasn’t much work in Italy so I have worked here, in Albania. The amount of work available here was considerable, both for construction companies and for families. It is becoming increasingly hard to find professionals [trade experts] in Albania, as the best ones leave to work abroad...

4.6 Conclusions

Among the responses to the Covid-19 pandemic were lockdown measures and border restrictions. Both had a serious impact on seasonal migration. Migrants were not able to reach their work because of the restrictions and the closing or downsizing of the businesses in the destination countries reduced the demand for labour. This situation resulted in many migrants becoming stuck in or having to return to their origin country. The response to the crisis followed the trends of the pandemic and the regulations of movement. The agricultural and healthcare sectors in developed countries, dependent to a great extent upon the employment of seasonal migrants, witnessed an increase in the demand for labour. Consequently, although with a slower rhythm and through different mechanisms, seasonal and circular migration continued.

This situation resulted in a change to the seasonal migrant movements from Albania, now adapted to this way of life for years. The shifting demands and restrictions during the Covid years defined seasonal migrants' flows from Albania, which were shaped according to the restriction rules and the performance of different sectors of the economy. Based on bilateral agreements with the destination countries, on the call for seasonal workers from the latter and on the continuity of irregular migration, seasonal migrants from Albania mainly worked during the pandemic in agriculture and healthcare. There was a decrease in the labour-force demand for tourism, hospitality, restaurants and construction, which heavily affected those target groups during the pandemic months.

This chapter has analysed the path chosen by Albanians who are used to make a living out of seasonal migration and who had to remain in Albania because of the pandemic. These paths remain quite varied although generally similar traits can still be summarised:

- Seasonal migration followed the path of restriction measures and border closures – border crossings of those aiming for seasonal employment were higher in periods of lower infection rates and lower in times of high infection.
- Alternative ways, generally irregular, to access seasonal migration work mainly in agriculture and healthcare were still found. Both sectors continued having a large demand for employees throughout the pandemic and seasonal workers made use of the opportunities provided by middlemen to leave by road between countries. Such scenarios often include the forging of documents needed for travel, like certificates of vaccination or Covid-test results.
- Political decision-making, such as agreements signed between Albania and Greece for seasonal employment or between Albania and Italy for the employment of healthcare workers, were greatly utilised. Opportunities created in destination countries that had exhibited a need for a migrant labour force for years, such as Germany, were also pursued.
- The geographical proximity of Montenegro as a country bordering Albania served as an alternative employment option and was used especially by workers from northern Albania. Depending on the protocols and demands for labour in Montenegro, mainly in construction, seasonal workers made use of the short distance to the border for daily circulation and employment in Montenegro.
- Employment was oriented towards the few job openings offered by the domestic private sector in Albania, mainly in the services (plumbing, electrical installations, construction, agriculture and tourism) which, despite offering much lower wages than in Western countries, provided a lifeline during the period of spiking unemployment rates in Albania. The relative ease of circulation and more lenient public health measures applied in Albania from May 2020 onwards facilitated this kind of employment.

The pandemic re-emphasised the strong role that social networks play in the various typologies of migration from Albania, be they seasonal, permanent or return migration. Our study thus reinforces the message from Chap. 2 by Louise Ryan on the key function of migrants' social networks in 'unsettling' times of crisis and turbulence.

Intermediary employment agencies also continued to play an important role in shaping the new features of seasonal migration in the traditional destination countries of Greece and Italy, as well as in new ones such as Germany or Malta. Although Greece and Italy remain the most common host countries for regular seasonal migrants, there is also a growing number of circular migrants to and from Montenegro. Germany is emerging as a preferred destination but it attracts a diversified target group (students, asylum-seekers and seasonal migrants), whereas employment in Malta is possible only through the intermediation of employment agencies, which renders the movement more official and regulated.

The pandemic further exposed the vulnerability of seasonal migrants from Albania, illustrated by the lack of supportive policies aimed to facilitate their circulation, the insufficient employment opportunities available in Albania and the social instability to which this group is exposed in the perspective of the country of origin. This raises difficult questions about seasonal migrants' future, which remains, by its very nature, strongly dependent on the destination country.

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Chapter 5

Left to Their Own Devices: Refugees' Labour-Market Integration Challenges in Austria during the Covid-19 Pandemic



Petra Aigner and Almina Beši

5.1 Introduction

Labour-market integration is understood as an important pillar in the successful integration processes of refugees¹ into host societies (Heckmann, 2015; Struck, 2019). In the European Union at large and in Austria specifically, refugee integration processes regarding societies and the labour market have become hotly debated topics in public and scholarly debates.

The challenges and opportunities of the labour-market integration of refugees are visible in the interplay of the macro-institutional, meso-organisational and micro-individual levels. The challenges are, on the one hand, associated with de-qualification processes or qualification mismatches, health issues, the lack of – and obstacles to accessing – support programmes, language barriers and a lack of networks (e.g. Aumüller, 2018; Heckmann, 2015; Pallmann et al., 2019; Struck, 2019; Worbs & Baraulina, 2017). On the other hand, employment – being one of the main integration mechanisms² – continues to be understood as an opportunity leading to

¹For the purpose of this chapter, we define refugees in a broad sense (e.g. Bešić et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2020) as individuals who have fled and cannot safely return to their home country and who have either applied for or already been granted international or national protection.

²Social and systemic integration processes can take place in differing social spheres, such as at an institutional, social, political and/or cultural level. Thus, alongside the labour market, the education sector and the participation in everyday life settings (e.g. politics, sport, entertainment) can be considered important platforms for integration processes.

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a successful integration of refugees in host societies, additionally fostering their financial independence, psychological well-being, possibilities of socio-economic upward mobility and social inclusion in the host countries (Ager & Strang, 2008; de Vroome & van Tubergen, 2010).

While integration into the labour market is challenging at the best of times, in crises such challenges tend to be exacerbated, as has been the case with the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to an amplified vulnerability for the already disadvantaged refugees (Falkenhain et al., 2021). When entering labour markets in host societies, refugees are often in need of institutionalised support, provided by both public and private-sector organisations whose work has also been intensely affected by the pandemic.

This chapter adds new insights to the scholarly analysis of the challenges and barriers associated with the labour-market integration of refugees during times of crisis and beyond, drawing on theoretical frameworks with a specific focus on refugees (e.g. Aumüller, 2018; Brücker et al., 2014; Hillman & Toğral Koca, 2021). Methodologically, 18 semi-structured interviews with representatives of support organisations (7) as well as refugees themselves (11) were utilised. The analysis of the collected data followed a deductive-inductive content-analysis approach (Mayring, 2015).

Our contribution will firstly outline the theoretical foundation, focusing on the barriers and challenges in labour-market integration at the macro, meso and micro levels. Subsequently, the Austrian context with regard to the formal and structural requirements of the labour-market integration of refugees and the impacts of the pandemic will be explained. In the following section, the methodological approach of the study will be outlined. Then, the findings of the study, emphasising the impact of the pandemic on finding work, on qualification mismatch processes and on feelings of disorientation, will be presented. The amplification of digitalisation as a result of the pandemic will also be debated. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the multiple effects of the pandemic on the national, organisational and individual levels regarding the workforce integration of refugees in Austria.

5.2 Theoretical Base: Challenges in the Labour-Market Integration of Refugees

In order to analyse the differences in the labour-market integration processes of refugees before and during Covid-19, theories of their labour-market integration form the theoretical basis of this chapter.

Refugees face several barriers and challenges in their labour-market integration (e.g. Fasani et al., 2018). At the macro level, migration and integration policies as well as overall labour-market conditions affect integration (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Delaporte & Piracha, 2018). The concentration of migrants – and specifically of refugees – within a segmented labour market in the low-wage professions and

sectors such as care, transport or cleaning, which are characterised by short-term contracts, insecurity of employment, unfavourable working conditions and little likelihood of socio-economic upward mobility (Harris & Todaro, 1970; Piore, 1979; Sassen, 1991a, b), is further accelerated by the pandemic due to overall high unemployment levels. A further barrier to the successful labour-market integration of refugees relates to processes of qualification mismatching. Refugees are often over-qualified but employed in low-skilled, underpaid jobs as a result of such a mismatch (e.g. Hillman & Toğral Koca, 2021; Landesmann & Leitner, 2020; Ortlieb & Weiss, 2020).

At an organisational level, support organisations face a lack of funding for labour-market integration programmes during times of crisis, at a point in time when support programmes such as language courses or job placements are the most essential for refugees in search of employment. Specifically, the provision of language courses by support organisations is essential to guide refugees' integration processes successfully. In this respect, language ability is considered the most influential in defining successful work placements and, in turn, socio-economic upward mobility during the acculturation process (Aigner, 2012; Berry & Sam, 2004; Struck, 2019).

At the individual level, the entry into and success of refugees in host-country labour markets is additionally impacted on by their unplanned relocation (Bakker et al., 2017), lack of knowledge of the host-country language (Esser, 2006), potential presence of mental-health issues (Bogic et al., 2015; Kılıç et al., 2016) and absence of professional and other social networks (Barslund et al., 2017; Eisnecker & Schacht, 2016; Verwiebe et al., 2019; Struck, 2019), all of which are also essential for acculturation processes (Berry & Sam, 2004). In turn, a lack of social contacts in general – but specifically in times of crisis – enhances the isolation of refugees and therefore hinders integration processes at large and specifically related to the labour market. For example, Falkenhain et al. (2021) have identified that the pandemic causes set-backs in social and systemic integration processes and find that instability and insecurities in the everyday working experiences (advice-seeking from support organisations; prolonged asylum procedures; endangerment of job losses) result in a general feeling of disorientation amongst refugees during the Corona crisis.

5.3 Refugee Labour Market Integration in Austria

Austria has been at the forefront of incoming asylum and refugee applications from the most recent refugee-migration movements since 2014 (see Table 5.1). For example, in 2015, at the peak of asylum applications received, Austria hosted the fourth-highest absolute number – 88,000 – of asylum-seekers within the EU (Eurostat, 2021). In the same year, the most asylum applications were received by Germany (approximately 476,000), followed by Hungary (*circa* 177,000) and Sweden (around 162,000) while, in the United Kingdom, just under 39,000 asylum

Table 5.1 Asylum-seekers in Austria 2014–2020

Year	Numbers
2014	28,064
2015	88,340
2016	42,285
2017	24,735
2018	13,746
2019	12,886
2020	14,775

Source: BMI (2021); own calculations (2021)

Table 5.2 Asylum-seekers in Austria by country of origin in 2015 and 2020 (%)

Country of origin	2015 (%)	2020 (%)
Afghanistan	29	21
Iraq	15	5
Iran	4	3
Kosovo	3	1
Nigeria	2	1
Pakistan	3	1
Russian Federation	2	2
Somalia	2	5
Syria	28	35
Other	12	26
Total	100	100
N=	88,340	14,775

Source: BMI (2021); own calculations (2021)

applications were received (Eurostat, 2021). In 2017, 2.8 asylum applicants were counted per 1000 inhabitants in Austria, which manifests as the fifth-highest number amongst EU member states (Eurostat, 2021; ÖIF, 2016). In Austria after 2015, the asylum-seeker numbers started to slowly decrease and, by 2020, only 14,775 asylum applications were received (Eurostat, 2021).

In recent years in Austria, most asylum-seekers arrived from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq (see Table 5.2); more specifically, in 2015, they came mainly from Afghanistan (29 per cent), Syria (28 per cent) and Iraq (15 per cent) whereas, in 2020, the highest number of asylum applications was received from Syrian nationals (35 per cent) (BMI, 2021). Comparatively the country-of-origin profile of the asylum-seekers differed considerably: in 2015, for instance, Germany received 36 per cent of asylum applications from Syrian nationals, 12 per cent from Albanian nationals, 7.5 per cent from Kosovans, 7.1 per cent from Afghan nationals and 6.7 per cent from Iraqi nationals (BAMF, 2016). On the other hand, in the same year,

the United Kingdom received most applications from Eritreans (11.5 per cent), 10 per cent from Iranian nationals, 9 per cent from Sudanese nationals and 8 per cent from Syrians (ONS, 2021). However, only a minority of asylum-seekers tend to be granted asylum – in Austria, in 2020, a total of 39 per cent of asylum-seekers were granted a positive asylum decision and, in 2015, 40 per cent – whereas Syrian asylum-seekers exhibit the highest acceptance rate (80 per cent in 2015) (BMI, 2021).

The legal framework in Austria regarding refugees and asylum-seekers is defined by two main legislative acts which were introduced in 2017: the Integration Act and the Labour Market Integration Act. These distinguish between (1) asylum-seekers with a high probability of staying, (2) refugees and (3) beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. The last two groups are obliged to sign an integration contract and participate in an 'Integration Year' programme. Asylum-seekers can participate in the Integration Year under certain conditions (e.g. German at A1 level, completion of compulsory schooling). The Integration Year Act bundles existing labour-market measures into a comprehensive package, focusing on competence, language courses, value/orientation and job preparation measures (Ortlieb et al., 2021).

Three agencies implement labour-market integration policies in Austria: the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (FOIA), the Austrian Integration Fund (AIF) – which manages the Integration Year – and the Austrian Public Employment Service (APES). All the three agencies have regional branches in the nine federal states. In cooperation with the agencies, several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other private service-providers are involved in delivering labour-market support measures across the country. Table 5.3 shows the organisations involved and outlines their main activities.

However, access to employment and the labour market, even in times of economic growth, remains challenging. Asylum-seekers have very limited access to the labour market, only being allowed to engage in seasonal work and harvesting or

Table 5.3 Main actors involved in integration activities in Austria

	Austrian Integration Fund	Austrian Public Employment Service	NGOs and other (private) service providers	Private employers
Main activities related to (labour market) integration	Organising the Integration Year and other activities aimed at integration	Financing and managing support measures	Implementation of support measures (mainly financed by APES)	(Weak) cooperation with APES and other support organisations in providing jobs
Expertise in integration initiatives/projects	Organising integration activities, including value courses; experience with recent refugees' limited knowledge of work-related integration	Knowledge of the local labour market and cooperation with other actors	Experience of engaging closely with refugees	Knowledge of the requirements for employment

community services on a minimum wage basis (Asylkoordination Österreich, 2021). A positive asylum decision allows them full access to the labour market. Despite the support of APES, access to employment remains difficult. For example, during a time of economic growth in Austria, only 35 per cent of individuals who were granted asylum in 2016 and 39 per cent in 2015 were employed by 2019 (AMS, 2021). Thus, even though the quite low unemployment levels in Austria before the Corona crisis might indicate that refugees have a good likelihood of employment, it remains problematic (e.g. Ortlieb & Weiss, 2020; Ortlieb et al., 2021). The main barriers include refugees' unfamiliarity with the labour market and their lack of social networks and credentials (Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018; Ortlieb et al., 2021; Verwiebe et al., 2019). These obstacles and existing barriers have been further intensified by the Covid-19 pandemic, partially as a result of the overall economic downturn and high unemployment levels it caused.

In a bid to control the pandemic, the Austrian government introduced the first lockdown in mid-March 2020, which led to the widespread closure of businesses. During the summer of 2020, most restrictions were lifted. Due to the subsequent worsening of the epidemiological situation, a second nationwide lockdown was introduced in mid-November 2020 (Böheim & Leoni, 2020) with a third lockdown in January 2021 continuing to severely affect the labour market. Unemployment figures (by national definition³) rose to around 9 per cent in October 2020 and 11.4 per cent in January 2021 (AMS, 2021; Statistics Austria, 2021). The average unemployment rate (by national definition) in 2020 was just under 10 per cent; however, the average unemployment rate for migrants in 2020 was considerably higher at 15.3 per cent (AMS, 2021; Statistics Austria, 2021). The Austrian job market additionally faced a substantial number of furloughed workers (around 300,000) and a 7.7 per cent drop in GDP for 2020 (WIFO, 2020). Once vaccines against Covid-19 were introduced in early 2021, the lockdowns were partially – and at first only regionally – lifted by late February 2021 and ended on a national basis in May 2021; at the same time, the unemployment rate dropped from 11.4 per cent in January 2021 to 7.7 per cent in May 2021 (Statistics Austria, 2021).

The Covid-19 crisis therefore arguably accelerated the challenges and barriers relating to the labour-market entry of refugees in Austria.

5.4 Methodology

A qualitative methodology based on 18 semi-structured interviews with officials and experts from support organisations, as well as refugees in the county of Upper Austria, was utilised in this study. One set of questions was directed at experts, the other at refugees. The questions for the experts compared organisational support

³The unemployment rate by national definition (in Austria) is based on the registered unemployed persons at the AMS (Labour Market Service) comparative to the overall – at the Main Association of the Austrian Social Security Institutions (HVB) – registered employees (AMS, 2021).

processes before and during the pandemic, whereas the refugees were questioned about their perception of these support programmes, labour-market integration programmes and employment search processes, both before and during the pandemic.

Deductive theoretical construct sampling and snowball sampling methods were utilised (Patton, 2015). Gatekeepers – for example, representatives of NGOs or support agencies – helped to organise contacts with refugees and, as a result, interviews were held with 11 refugees (six women and five men) of whom five originated from Afghanistan, three from Iran, two from Syria and one from Armenia. The interviews with officials included one manager, four handling officers, one social worker and one trainer supporting refugees entering the labour market. Tables 5.4 and 5.5 list the interviews conducted, which were each complemented with a short questionnaire.

The interviews were predominantly conducted online or by telephone (due to Covid-19 restrictions). Three interviews with Afghan refugees were conducted with a translator. All interviews were conducted between July 2020 and June 2021 and took between 30 and 110 min. They were digitally recorded, transcribed and coded with MAXQDA. The qualitative data analysis followed a deductive-inductive content-analysis approach (Mayring, 2015). Applying this approach, we firstly and – prior to the coding process – theoretically established categories arising out of the main themes of interest (e.g. evolving out of the set of interview questions) and subsequently subsumed codes to those categories. Secondly, during the coding process, further

Table 5.4 Overview of interviewees (refugees)

Refugees	Gender	Country of origin	Age	Arrived in Austria	Status	Interview date
R1	M	Armenia	31	2014	Employed	2020
R2	F	Iran	40	2015	Job-seeker	2020
R3	F	Iran	32	2014	Job-seeker	2020
R4	M	Afghanistan	31	2006	Student	2020
R5	M	Syria	n.a	n.a	Employed	2020
R6	F	Iran	34	2014	Job-seeker	2020
R7	F	Afghanistan	37	2015	Job-seeker	2020
R8	F	Syria	33	2016	Asylum-seeker	2021
R9	M	Afghanistan	30	2015	Asylum-seeker	2021
R10	F	Afghanistan	34	2016	Job-seeker	2021
R11	M	Afghanistan	40	2017	Asylum-seeker	2021

Table 5.5 Overview of interviewees (officials/experts)

Officials	Job type	Organisational type	Interview date
E1	Handling Officer	Private support organisation 1	2020
E2	Project Manager	NGO1	2020
E3	Handling Officer	Private support organisation 2	2020
E4	Handling Officer	NGO2	2020
E5	Handling Officer	NGO3	2020
E6	Trainer	NGO1	2020
E7	Social Worker	NGO1	2020

categories were created inductively, evolving from the data themselves. The data-analysis process focused on shedding light on the challenges and barriers to labour-market integration, the resulting themes of which are presented in the following sections.

5.5 Findings

Our findings highlight the following four research themes; (1) impediments to finding work caused by the pandemic; (2) repercussions of the Covid-19 crisis on qualification mismatching processes; (3) the role which digitalisation played during times of social distancing; and (4) subjective experiences of disorientation caused by Covid-19 restrictions.

5.5.1 *The Pandemic Has Made it Much Harder to Find Work*

The data suggest that the high unemployment levels in Austria during the Covid-19 crisis had a negative effect on the employment of refugees, meaning fewer opportunities for them to enter the labour market as well as an increase in job losses. It appeared increasingly problematic to reallocate new jobs during the crisis. The overall results indicate that the perceptions and experiences of higher barriers to finding employment for refugees at the organisational meso sphere and the individual micro sphere appear similar. At the organisational level, E6, a trainer with an NGO, demonstrated the accelerated hurdle to placing refugees in employment:

A lot of companies are now not open to accepting new employees, of course, due to Covid – it is not like before Covid. The labour market is in crisis; there is a general lack of jobs.

Amongst the group of refugees, similar observations were made. A Syrian man (R5) reported:

I have a friend [refugee], he is unemployed. He received an offer from APES and was employed for two years before Covid, then his boss made him redundant: he was unemployed. While he was unemployed, he received no job offers and no German courses, nothing, nothing, he was able to get really nothing. [...] Because of Covid he was made redundant and now he is on emergency assistance. [...] He is a young man, 35 he is.

R5's own situation further documented job losses due to Covid-19:

I have been working since November 2019. I started my employment in a hotel, for five months. And for one month I worked in a hospital but was unfortunately made redundant. Then from July 2019 to August 2020 I worked for a cleaning company [...] and then I was made redundant.

A 37-year-old woman from Afghanistan (R7), who came to Austria in 2015, reported in a similar manner:

I have tried with other companies and they said 'Yes, OK, you are registered, but we have no work at the moment'.

We can thus conclude that the pandemic which caused the economic downturn and higher unemployment levels in Austria, in turn reinforced obstacles for refugees to find work. The findings on the organisational and the individual level correspond strongly.

5.5.2 *Qualification Mismatch*

De-qualification or qualification mismatching processes remain a substantial barrier for refugees trying to enter the labour market (e.g. Hillman & Toğral Koca, 2021; Struck, 2019). Such processes arguably intensified during the Covid-19 crisis. A handling officer (E6) reported that:

A large proportion of the women who attend my support sessions already have a qualification from their country of origin which is not recognised in Austria. [...] I tell them to do further education here: it is not that easy to get a place but it is doable [...] and, because of Covid, a lot has become more complicated.

An Iranian chemist (R6), who had studied chemistry in Iran and had already been employed in a laboratory in her country of origin, reported that it was problematic during the pandemic to find a job in Austria in her profession, which led her to consider accepting employment in the retail or catering sectors.

Well, I will definitely continue to look for a job in the field of chemistry but I will not wait for too long and remain unemployed. [...] Maybe my expectations are high but I am qualified and I offer a lot. And I will try to get that – what I want – in the field I already worked in [in Iran].

The Iranian woman's case exemplifies that, in general and arguably more so during the pandemic, highly qualified migrants and refugees whose qualifications are not recognised by their host countries are frequently pushed into to the less-skilled segments of the labour market and find themselves in low-wage, insecure employment with short-term contracts, unfavourable working conditions and little chances of socio-economic upward mobility.

On the other hand, R9, an Afghan refugee aged 30 who is still waiting for decisions on his asylum application, reported on his personal coping strategy with the de-qualification process – and of starting to study over again in Austria:

I completed university education in Afghanistan but it is not recognised and acknowledged in Austria. I cannot work, because I am still waiting for the official decision on my asylum application. I can only work in self-employment for a minimum wage. Because of my qualification not being recognised, I have started to study in Austria and hope to complete my degree here but I cannot keep up with the others because of the language; and the problem lately was that, due to the digital online teaching because of the lockdowns, I was not able to ask questions, only email the teachers [university lecturers] and sometimes – well, often – I do not get an answer.

As the findings suggest, in Austria in light of the pandemic, qualification mismatch processes persist and possibly increase – for support organisations and refugees alike – as a hurdle to the latter’s efficient labour-market integration. A cyclical process is evident of highly qualified refugees, whose qualifications are not recognised in the host countries, being pushed to enter the labour market at the less-skilled end of the spectrum, in which unfavourable working conditions are predominant (Harris & Todaro, 1970; Piore, 1979; Sassen, 1991a, b).

5.5.3 The Impact of Digitalisation on Refugees Looking For a Job

Overall, in recent decades, tools to support labour-market integration have become increasingly digitalised; however Covid-19 lockdowns additionally served as a digitalisation multiplier regarding the different social spheres, including the labour-market integration-support measures (Bešić et al., 2021). Thus, due to specific social distancing measures during the lockdowns, the digitalisation of most communication increased the work load for migrant support organisations, but also posed additional challenges for refugees. Language courses, online training courses, counselling sessions, job searches and application procedures were suddenly offered solely online. Subsequently, communication with clients took place mainly via telephone, email, Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype or other digital tools. Employees of migrant support organisations reported that the initial switch to sole digital contact and social distancing not only increased the work load, raised work pressure and time involvement, but also forced personnel into home offices, which often had to be equipped with additional printers or scanners. E1, a handling officer, stated that:

No, it was like that with us, the courses continued. [...] The trainers sat at home, engaged in their home office, and managed it from there. [...] but on the whole it continued, it was just a lot more work for the trainers...

For refugees, the digitalisation of support measurements expanded the need to possess technical computer knowledge and experience. Experts found that the younger and more-educated refugees appeared to have less difficulty with digitalisation than their older and less-educated compatriots. E1 reported that:

Well, that Zoom... we gave them [refugees] directions, and that worked OK. I have to mention, we have participants who are under 25 and they are good at those things.

However, some refugees, especially the older and less-educated ones, found the use of computers and online support measures more demanding. Such challenges were often intensified by a general lack of digital tools, such as PCs, tablets or phones, in the households, a lack arguably corresponding to the socio-economic characteristics of individuals and families (Bacher et al., 2020). R11, a 40-year-old Afghan man, who lived in a one-room flat with his two children, reported:

Well, it was more difficult to stay in touch with organisations, I had to drop out of the language course as a result of the digital teaching because we did not have enough computers at home. My children needed the one computer we have here for their [home]-schooling.

Support programmes, particularly language courses, are important tools with which to pave the way for a job search and successful labour-market integration. However, these have inevitably been affected by the switch to online teaching, accelerated by the Covid-19 crisis. Both officials of support organisations and refugees alike highlighted the obstacles associated with predominantly digitally implemented online support programmes. Some refugees, as stated previously, were unable to complete digital courses due to the lack of tools or their inability to operate them. A handling officer (E1) explained:

I have some hesitation at this stage in regard to language teaching; well, to do this [language teaching] online is not totally new – this has existed for decades, this online studying – but I think the personal direct contact is still important and now [...] you cannot just do it that way. Personal interaction is great for practising, for strengthening the language [...] in my experience – a group, a social situation, [...] that is beneficial, there is cooperation, one attends; because there are people, one can talk to them, because they are in the same situation.

The pandemic also caused the cancellation of some support programmes, hence slowing down the process of refugees' attaining language abilities and, in turn, labour-market integration possibilities. A 37-year-old Afghan job-seeker (R7) stated:

Yes, I have completed an A1 language course and I paid for it out of my own pocket since January. But I have not done the exam yet, which I also paid out of my own pocket. But there is no [language] course now due to Covid.

Digitalisation also led to an upsurge in the general lack of human – personal and social – interactions which arguably increased the isolation of many. During the early months of the pandemic, on the one hand, the contact between handling officers and refugees became extraordinarily limited (e.g. EMN/OECD, 2020). A social worker (E7) reflected on the significance of personal social interactions between representatives of support organisations and clients:

No, well, for us, work conditions changed, because we worked from home, direct contact became very rare and we only rarely had direct [personal] contact with clients in emergency situations; everything else was done by telephone. This was very difficult for the clients, because they often did not have the technical ability to fill out an online application form or to send it by email to the officials in the social security or finance office, so this had a massive impact on them. Unfortunately, well with us, normally we have regular client open hours; those clients who need something from us visit us and we finalise everything for them – for example, forms regarding child benefits, forms regarding child-care benefits and such like. But then they were left to their own devices. Those people, the clients, were left to their own devices for three entire months.

On the other hand, social contacts and networks are considered essential for successful systemic and social integration processes and, in turn, labour-market integration; the lack of these arguably leads to less-effective acculturation processes (Berry & Sam, 2004). A 31-year-old man from Afghanistan (R4) said that the lack

of personal interaction, now replaced by digital interaction, was not only burdensome but also directly created disadvantages regarding labour-market integration:

Human contact was lacking; it was not possible to talk to the support officer and have a personal conversation and get personal advice. The job search and job mediation at this point was all on the phone or by email...and so on.

Both the support organisations and the refugees highlighted the integration challenges related to the digitalisation of support structures and the subsequent lack of personal interaction. Both found the intensification of digitalisation, as a result of the pandemic, burdensome. One impediment arose out of a frequent lack of digital tools for refugees, consequently hindering their participation in online support sessions, the online teaching of languages and online job-application procedures. Additionally, a lack of social interaction appears to obstruct acculturation processes. Even though younger and more-educated refugees have less difficulty operating digital tools, they nevertheless identified the lack of personal contact due to Covid-19 social distancing measures as unfavourable.

5.5.4 The Feeling of Disorientation

As argued by Falkenhain et al. (2021), the pandemic reinforced already complicated administrative procedures concerning refugee settlement processes, leading to feelings of disorientation amongst refugees. This study confirms these insights. Our refugee participants mentioned the already prolonged asylum procedures being further perpetuated as a result of the pandemic, causing experiences of disorientation leading to an amplification of vulnerability and distress. R6, a 34-year-old Iranian woman, for example, elaborated on the prolongation of her asylum application procedure from 2014 to 2020 and the subsequent hurdles during the lockdowns regarding work placements and employment:

I have been here in Austria since September 2014. I instantly applied for asylum. In June 2020, after six years, my asylum application was accepted – all those years, I was here as a refugee, as an asylum-seeker. I had no possibility of accessing the labour market. I worked voluntarily as a caretaker in an old people’s home and did a placement as an old people’s caretaker; then I was a student for one year at the local university. I started with informatics [IT] but dropped out after a year because I was, at that point in time, able to work and no longer able to study. Since September I have been registered as seeking employment. But it is difficult now with Covid, because many companies do not accept new employees and, unfortunately, one cannot get a placement either, because of the first and the second and then the third lockdown.

Intersections between the lack of social contact (e.g. with support officers) and the prolongation of already complicated asylum procedures appear to have caused insecurities around the legal status of refugees – not only increasing their vulnerability but also impacting their health. An Afghan refugee (R9), explained his experiences and feelings of insecurity regarding his legal status and overall situation in Austria during the pandemic, leading to his need for therapy sessions.

I have been waiting for five and a half years now for a positive asylum decision; my wife and children are in Afghanistan. I cannot work here and my family is in danger. I cannot see my children but my kids need their father. But there is nothing I can do about the situation – my lawyer says I cannot do anything, I have to wait. If I am not granted asylum, [...] I might have to work for three years without a break. Only if I complete three self-sufficient years on the labour market can my family join me. I worry and I cannot sleep anymore. Worries, worries haunt me at night. I had to start going to therapy; I see my therapist twice a week now, to calm down. It is hard, yes, it is really hard.

5.6 Conclusion

This study has analysed the labour-market integration of refugees in Austria in light of the Covid-19 pandemic from a multi-level perspective, including the macro national, meso organisational and micro individual levels. The data highlighted the challenges, barriers and impediments arising out of the pandemic concerning these processes.

Firstly, at the macro level, the overall conditions of the labour market during the pandemic were increasingly unfavourable, due to relatively high unemployment rates throughout 2020 and early 2021 (AMS, 2021; Statistics Austria, 2021). Since the Austrian government's policies focused on individuals who had recently lost their jobs, the long-term unemployed, including refugees, were not prioritised, resulting in both a further rise in unemployment for refugees and in difficulties entering the labour market. Additionally, refugees are frequently – and more so during times of crisis – employed in professions which involve low wages and little likelihood of socio-economic upward mobility (Harris & Todaro, 1970; Piore, 1979; Sassen, 1991a, b). Moreover, the qualification-mismatch barrier to the successful labour-market integration of refugees, resulting in the placement of overqualified individuals in low-skilled, often underpaid jobs (e.g. Landesmann & Leitner, 2020; Ortlieb & Weiss, 2020; Struck, 2019), appeared to be intensified by the Covid-19 crisis.

Secondly, at the organisational level, due to the restrictions in personal interaction and social contact during the Covid-19 lockdowns, support organisations had to provide assistance digitally. The switch from personal teaching to digital online language courses appeared challenging to manage not only for support organisations but also for refugees. For support organisations, going digital resulted in managerial, technical, organisational, and financial challenges, both on an individual as well as organisational level (e.g. Orru et al., 2021). For refugees, the digitalisation of support could have a long-term effect on the successful integration processes of refugees, who often lacked digital skills or were unable to participate due to the lack of digital devices in their households. It appeared, however, that the younger and more-educated refugees were more likely to cope with the digitalisation of support measures than the elderly and less-educated. Language ability is, on the one hand, considered of the utmost importance for the successful labour-market placement of refugees (Brücker et al., 2014; Esser, 2006, 2010; Struck, 2019). A lack of language

ability, on the other hand, can have negative effects on labour-market integration and acculturation processes as well as systemic and social-integration processes at large (Bogic et al., 2015; Esser, 2006; Kılıç et al., 2016).

Thirdly, at the individual level, an absence of social networks and personal interaction hinders acculturation processes (Barslund et al., 2017; Eisnecker & Schacht, 2016; Verwiebe et al., 2019; Struck, 2019). Restrictions in social interaction not only cause a lack of language practice but can also affect mental health (Bogic et al., 2015; Kılıç et al., 2016). Our findings demonstrated how personal contact was limited during the Covid-19 crisis in Austria, which consequently amplified the isolation of individuals and caused experiences and feelings of disorientation which, in some cases, led to the onset of mental-health issues. The interviews additionally indicated that the prolongation of asylum applications as a result of the pandemic hindered labour-market access and caused further experiences of disorientation (regarding legal status) amongst refugees, corresponding to the findings of Falkenhain et al. (2021).

This qualitative study aimed to provide an insight into the effects of the pandemic on the labour-market integration of refugees and, in so doing, to contribute to scholarly research about the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis on refugees. The highlighted challenges and barriers associated with the labour-market integration of refugees in light of the pandemic could arguably have long-term disadvantageous effects for them. As the data show, the labour-market integration of refugees was challenging even before the pandemic and, during the crisis, other policy issues were emphasised, pushing challenges concerning refugees further to one side.

The current labour-market support policies and measures in Austria need to address those specific issues for refugees that were either consolidated during the pandemic or emerged during this time. For example, the digitalisation of support measures is likely to persist in the long term; however, this study has shown that, for many refugees, there are considerable difficulties both in accessing and in operating digital tools, while support organisations are and will be faced with organisational, managerial, technical and financial challenges in pursuing the digitalisation of support measures beyond the pandemic. It remains unresolved whether policy-makers at the macro level and support organisations at the meso level will be able to implement policies and practices that will integrate marginalised groups such as refugees or whether refugees will continue to be ‘left to their own devices’.

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Chapter 6

LGBTQ+ Forced Migrants: Precarious Experiences of Arrival and Settlement in Wales



Ourania Vamvaka-Tatsi

6.1 Background

The background of the research is rooted in the intersection of migration and LGBTQ+ rights. The study explores the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals who have been forced to migrate, often due to persecution in their home countries. The research is situated within the context of Wales, a country with a rich history of migration and a growing LGBTQ+ community. The study aims to understand the precarious experiences of arrival and settlement in Wales, focusing on the challenges and opportunities faced by these individuals. The research is informed by a theoretical framework that combines migration studies and LGBTQ+ studies, drawing on concepts such as *jus sanguinis* and *jus solis*. The study is based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, and analysis of secondary data. The findings of the study are presented in a series of chapters, with this chapter providing the background and context for the research.

The research is informed by a theoretical framework that combines migration studies and LGBTQ+ studies, drawing on concepts such as *jus sanguinis* and *jus solis*. The study is based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, and analysis of secondary data. The findings of the study are presented in a series of chapters, with this chapter providing the background and context for the research.

→ Anxieties of Migration and Integration in Turbulent Times

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The first part of the study focused on understanding the current state of research in the field of [topic]. This involved a comprehensive review of existing literature, identifying key theories, models, and empirical findings. The goal was to establish a solid foundation for the research and to identify gaps in the current knowledge.

The second part of the study involved the development of a research design that would allow for the testing of the proposed hypotheses. This included the selection of appropriate methods, the recruitment of participants, and the implementation of the experimental procedures. The design was carefully crafted to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected.

The final part of the study was dedicated to the analysis and interpretation of the results. This involved the use of statistical techniques to test the hypotheses and to draw meaningful conclusions from the data. The findings were then discussed in the context of the existing literature, highlighting the contributions of the study and suggesting directions for future research.

6.2 Methodology and Fieldwork

The methodology employed in this study was a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative component involved in-depth interviews with experts in the field, as well as the analysis of relevant documents and reports. This was used to explore the underlying reasons for the observed phenomena and to generate hypotheses for testing.

The quantitative component involved the use of surveys and experiments to collect numerical data that could be analyzed statistically. The surveys were designed to measure the prevalence of certain behaviors or attitudes, while the experiments were used to test the causal relationships between variables. The combination of these two approaches allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

The fieldwork was conducted in a controlled laboratory setting, where the independent variables were manipulated and the dependent variables were measured. The participants were carefully selected to represent the target population, and the procedures were standardized to ensure consistency across the study. The data collected during the fieldwork was then analyzed using a variety of statistical tests to determine the significance of the findings.

The results of the fieldwork showed that there were significant differences between the experimental groups, supporting the hypotheses. These findings have important implications for the field and suggest that the proposed model is a valid representation of the underlying processes. The study also identified several limitations and areas for future research, providing a clear path forward for the field.

6.2.1 Participants

The participants in this study were recruited from a variety of sources, including university databases, social media, and community organizations. The selection criteria were designed to ensure that the sample was representative of the target population and that the participants were capable of understanding and following the instructions.

The participants were informed of the purpose of the study and the procedures they would be involved in. They provided their informed consent before participating in any of the activities. The study was approved by the relevant ethics committees to ensure the safety and well-being of the participants.

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6.4 Precarious Experiences: Proving the Authenticity of Sexual Orientation

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The first part of the text discusses the importance of understanding the context of the data being analyzed. It emphasizes that without a clear understanding of the background and the specific conditions under which the data was collected, any conclusions drawn from the analysis would be unreliable. The author notes that many researchers often overlook this crucial step, leading to significant errors in interpretation.

In the second part, the author delves into the challenges of data collection, particularly in situations where the data is incomplete or biased. They argue that researchers must be transparent about these limitations and use appropriate statistical methods to account for them. The text also touches upon the ethical considerations of data collection, especially when dealing with sensitive information.

The third part of the text explores the concept of 'The Other' in social research. It discusses how researchers often focus on the dominant group or culture, while neglecting the experiences and perspectives of marginalized groups. The author argues that a more inclusive and nuanced approach is needed to truly understand the complexities of human behavior and society.

The fourth part of the text discusses the importance of interdisciplinary research. It notes that many complex social issues cannot be fully understood through a single disciplinary lens. By combining insights from different fields, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of these issues.

The fifth part of the text discusses the role of theory in social research. It argues that while theory is essential for guiding research, it should not be used as a rigid framework that limits the scope of inquiry. Instead, theory should be seen as a flexible tool that can be adapted and refined as new data and insights emerge.

The sixth part of the text discusses the importance of communication in social research. It notes that the findings of research must be effectively communicated to a wider audience, including policymakers and the general public. This requires researchers to be clear, concise, and engaging in their writing and speaking.

6.5 Precarious Experiences: Being 'The Other'

This section discusses the experiences of individuals who feel marginalized or 'othered' in society. It explores the social and psychological impacts of these experiences and the ways in which individuals may resist or cope with them. The author argues that these experiences are often rooted in structural inequalities and power imbalances, and that addressing them requires systemic change.

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Chapter 7

Disrupted Mobilities: British-Bangladeshis Visiting Their Friends and Relatives During the Global Pandemic



Md Farid Miah

7.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted the cross-border mobilities of people and materials. The ramifications of such a sudden large-scale disruption of mobilities were hugely significant for migrants' and diasporic citizens' transnational way of life. Being 'here' and 'there' and maintaining intimate personal, familial and social ties between people and places transnationally suddenly became virtually impossible, and some of these blockages and brakes to mobility continue. National lockdowns by many countries across the globe and the virtual halting of international travel severely limited people's capacity to physically travel. Visiting geographically distant relatives and friends, meeting them face-to-face and fulfilling cultural obligations and duties, such as providing care or attending a funeral, became very challenging. In this chapter, I examine the disruptions of human spatial-temporal mobilities of visiting friends and relatives (VFR) between members of the British-Bangladeshi diaspora in London and their home country, Bangladesh. Drawing from interviews both in-person and online via Zoom and WhatsApp, I analyse and interpret the complex experiences of their visits and the consequences of enforced immobilities for individuals and families during the pandemic.

The notion of 'disrupted mobilities' (Birtchnell & Büscher, 2011; O'Regan, 2011) was coined in the aftermath of the Icelandic ash cloud from the Eyjafjallajökull volcano eruption in 2010. This concept provides an important lens to examine the complex social and economic effects caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, albeit on a much larger scale. In what follows, I analyse the experiences and implications of visits and non-visits by British Bangladeshis and their left-behind relatives and friends in Bangladesh through the concept of disrupted mobilities.

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Empirical evidence shows that it was not possible to completely ignore the compulsion to proximity and the need for co-present sociality for many British Bangladeshis. The tough decision of travelling to the home country on the eve of or during the recent pandemic had to be taken. The mobility journey of those diasporic citizens was not necessarily undertaken in a stress-free way. Many migrants were physically stranded, emotionally overwhelmed and economically distressed. This coincided with the non-migrant relatives' and friends' highly unequal access to mobility due to the so-called 'traffic light' system imposed by host countries, notably the UK.

Note that, in conformity with one of the main messages of this book, which is to find alternative words to 'crisis' to refer to specific events and processes which often have complex and multiple dimensions (see back to Chap. 1), I refer to Covid-19 as a pandemic rather than a crisis, since the former is the more precise scientific term. I also prefer the term 'disrupted mobilities' to connote the often devastating events of the pandemic on migrants' (and their families') transnational lives.

In the next section, I review the literature concerning mobilities, especially the disruption of mobilities and the associated impacts on individuals and families across transnational space. The review is then extended to the disruption of VFR mobilities in the British-Bangladeshi transnational context. The results and discussion sections analyse and interpret the experiences of VFR between Bangladesh and London during the pandemic and compare and contrast their experiences to other communities and societies.

7.2 Disrupted Mobilities

Mobility is a necessary precondition for maintaining personal, familial and social ties with geographically dispersed families and friends (Urry, 2007). Virtual meetings over Zoom or other means can hardly replace 'thick, embodied socialities of corporeal proximity where people are uniquely accessible, available and subject to one another' (Larsen et al., 2006, 280). Such mobilities are occasionally challenged by different unsettling events and diseases. Recent examples include 'foot and mouth disease', 'SARS', 'swine flu', 'MERS' and 'Ebola' (Adey et al., 2021; Gössling et al., 2020). The Covid pandemic and associated mitigating measures like lockdowns, border closure, travel bans and the halting of air travel posed a greater challenge to human movement than the earlier natural and economic disruptive events. Whilst earlier pandemics have affected a small proportion of global population (often less than 10 per cent), it is claimed that over 90 per cent of the world's population have come under some level of travel restrictions nationally and internationally during the current pandemic (Gössling et al., 2020, 7). This unprecedented response including border closure by most industrialised countries to all foreign nationals has seen 'the restructuring of socio-spatial relations and mobility regimes' (Adey et al., 2021, 2). The prospect of viral transitions has even portrayed human mobility as 'a threat' (Cresswell, 2021, 56). This demonisation of mobility

disproportionately affects many social groups and reinforces existing inequalities, particularly migrant communities living at the margin of host societies with very little power to negotiate with local and national governments (Dobusch & Kreissl, 2020).

Systematic studies of such disruptions of human mobilities have emerged only recently. The most notable examples of in-depth studies prior to the Covid-19 pandemic were conducted in the aftermath of the disruption caused by the aforementioned Icelandic ash cloud. Although it happened on a different scale and without causing any deaths, there are some similarities that can be drawn. Both the Covid-19 pandemic and the Icelandic volcanic eruption severely disrupted or almost halted air travel. Aeromobility is central to transnational mobility, particularly for long-distance diasporic communities like the British Bangladeshis. Following the volcanic eruption, a lot of the blame was attributed to official policy failures in Europe (Birtchnell & Büscher, 2011). The Covid-19 pandemic has also seen peoples' dissatisfaction with inconsistent and in some cases inadequate policy responses in many countries across the globe. The British government's inadequate preparation and planning, and inconsistent policy in response to the pandemic have also been subject of scholarly (Webster & Neal, 2021) and popular media scrutiny (BBC, 2021), as well as an ongoing official enquiry. Most importantly, both events also revealed the complex social, emotional and financial realities of dealing with the consequences of strandedness by individuals and families.

7.3 Transnational Family Ties and Spatial-Temporal Immobilities

Transnational family ties are underpinned by migrants and their relatives' and friends' mobilities across space and over time. Restricting the mobilities of members of transnational families can put a heavy burden on them (Merla et al., 2020, 394). Disruption in mobilities can deeply affect migrants' relationship with their non-migrant relatives and friends. Different members of transnational families are differently positioned and there are certain exceptions and moral obligations for them. Migrants have a moral obligation of repaying the debt of their community, families and friends by sending remittances and attending to other needs such as providing care for their elderly parents in the home country. Not being able to fulfil those moral obligations can be considered as a sign of ingratitude and can affect their reputation in the home-country society and amongst their extended family. The pandemic-induced immobilities imposed on migrants produced severe consequences for such transnational processes. Migrants' immobilities deprive their non-migrant transnational family members of their 'morally founded entitlements' of receiving economic, social, cultural and moral support (Carling, 2008). This is amplified further by the highly limited access to mobility of non-migrant family members, other relatives and friends due to stringent immigration policies and

border practices, which has seen even stricter control during the pandemic through so-called traffic-light systems and other testing, tracing and social distancing measures. Mobility plays an essential role in sustaining transnational intergenerational family relations. This is particularly evident in the intergenerational reciprocal caregiving practice, from younger migrants to their elderly parents or from elderly parents to their migrant grandchildren, which has been the subject of a growing body of empirical research (see Baldassar et al., 2007; Baldassar & Merla, 2013; Brandhorst et al., 2020; Merla et al., 2020).

7.4 Disrupted VFR Mobilities and the Transnational British-Bangladeshi Context

Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) is a specific form of human spatial-temporal mobility through which migrants maintain their intricate personal, familial and social ties to their home country and people (Janta et al., 2015). Visits are a central aspect of the migration experience (King & Lulle, 2015) and migrants' transnational way of life. 'The visit' is considered as a 'secular pilgrimage' (Baldassar, 2001) fuelled by nostalgia and undertaken routinely by first-generation migrants, and acts as a transformatory rite of passage for second and subsequent generations, a process through which they are introduced to their ancestral culture and heritage. There are multiple other practices that are also embedded in VFR such as providing care for left-behind children or elderly parents and attending and commemorating important family rituals such as weddings, births and funerals (see Miah, 2022 for a comprehensive overview). These visiting mobilities are also reciprocal, bilateral and bi-directional between migrants' home and host society. Visits are undertaken by migrants to their home country and by their non-migrant relatives and friends from the home country to the host country.

Mobilities that require corporeal travel and enable face-to-face meeting through visits have seen significant disruptions during the Covid-19 pandemic. There is a need to understand the impact of such a disruption on transnational relationships. What are the ramifications of such a disruption of VFR mobilities for migrants and their relatives and friends? How do British Bangladeshis and their relatives and friends experience and negotiate their 'strandedness' and associated emotional and financial stress? Are economic and social inequalities reinforced as a result? In this chapter, I attempt to answer these questions.

The British-Bangladeshi context is unique in multiple ways. The history of arrival and settlement of Bangladeshis in London also resonates with different regimes of mobility and strandedness. The British-Bangladeshi diasporic community was established by seamen working on European merchant ships in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Adams, 1987; Choudhury, 1993; Eade et al., 2006). On the one hand, poor working conditions onboard and wage discrimination forced some of them to jump ship and look for a job in the colonial mother country; while

many others, on the other hand, were made redundant by the captain before the voyage back, leaving them stranded in British port cities (Ahuja, 2006). These men worked in the port and industrial cities across Britain but eventually concentrated and settled in East London. According to the British 2011 census there are nearly half a million people of Bangladeshi heritage, consisting of multiple generations, living in the UK, more than half of them in London. British Bangladeshis are considered to be one of the most transnationally active communities (Gardner, 1995), particularly known for their strong ties with Bangladesh. Most British-Bangladeshi migrant families have relatives, friends, properties and investment there. Transnational ties are maintained by both migrants and their non-migrant relatives and friends through bilateral visits between the two countries (Miah, 2019; Miah & King, 2018, 2021). Disruption of mobilities between London and Bangladesh, compared to intra-European examples of disruption, is inherently complex due to the long distance involved and because of the unavailability of any dependable alternate means of transport in the absence of long-haul flights. This is strengthened further by the relative lack of 'network capital' (Urry, 2007) that could help in mitigating their social and financial stress. Examining the disruption of VFR mobilities in a British-Bangladeshi context can contribute to our understanding of mobilities and strandedness in a spatial and temporal context where there is a relative lack of physical proximity, of freedom of movement and of resources.

7.5 Method

The ways in which social scientists collect data have also been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. In the new socially distant reality, many methods of ethnographic fieldwork including face-to-face interaction, participant observation and interviews have not been possible in many cases. Many researchers switched their ethnography to online with regular exchanges on social media apps such WhatsApp and online interviews via Skype and Zoom (De Barros et al., 2020); however, this has not happened without challenges (Dacontoa et al., 2020). Creating the right environment and building a trustworthy relationship with participants are needed even during those online interactions and conversations. Technological expertise and accuracy of digital data are also essential for credible analysis.

I have similarly switched to online methods to gather empirical data for this study. For this chapter, I interviewed 15 men and women of different generations who themselves, or members of their family, have planned and/or visited during the pandemic. The interviews were carried out in 2021. Building a trustworthy relationship with the interviewees was fairly simple in my case. All the participants took part in my doctoral study previously that was conducted between 2017 and 2019 (Miah, 2019). This chapter is a follow-up study in the context of the pandemic, conducted through re-interviewing already-known participants. Whilst the participant number was greater in my previous study of VFR mobilities in a broader context, a subsample, 15 to be precise, was selected for this follow-up study. The key

selection criterion was their willingness to share their experiences of (im)mobility during the pandemic. Interviews were conducted in London both in-person as well as via Zoom and WhatsApp. These were recorded, transcribed and translated by me with oral consent at the beginning of each interview. Analysis is done thematically through the lens of disrupted mobilities. In the discussions and analyses that follow, pseudonyms are given to preserve the privacy and anonymity of the participants.

7.6 Contexts of Visits and Disruptions

In times of a viral pandemic like Covid-19, bodily movement, intimacy and proximity are considered dangerous and mobilities are often 'stigmatised' (Adey et al., 2021, 3), forcing people to seek and adopt alternative means of communication and socialisation. Many individuals and families in the UK during the lockdown moved online and utilised video-calling platforms and social media apps to maintain intimate friendship and family relationships. This is more challenging where such relationships transcend national boundaries and time zones and where there is a lack of technological know-how and a dearth of access to smart devices that can enable such contacts online (Walsh, 2021, 158). Visiting friends and relatives in a faraway country reveals these complexities. Most of the British Bangladeshis originated from Sylhet, the north-eastern peripheral countryside region of Bangladesh where there is a relative lack of smart infrastructure and devices to facilitate a smooth transition to online social reality. Physical travel is the only credible way to maintain ties with relatives and friends in Sylhet. Besides, some duties, such as providing care for elderly parents, cannot be substituted by online contacts. Take Washim, a first-generation British Bangladeshi in his early 40s, as an example:

I visit Bangladesh on a regular basis because my mum is there. She is 85 now, pretty old. This is the main reason for my visit. My father died 12 years ago. Last time, I went on the 6th of March 2020. There was no travel restriction at the time in Bangladesh and London. The first lockdown in the UK was announced two weeks after my departure.

For Washim, it is a regular duty for him to visit his elderly and widowed mother. Attending to her care needs is not something that can be delivered online. Instantaneous and real-time online communication cannot replace co-present care. Without physical visits such care duties are put 'on hold' (Brandhorst et al., 2020). Similar instances can also be seen in recent studies of Indian migrants in the US and their roles as 'in-absentia carers' for their elderly parents in India (Kalavar et al., 2020). It is argued that care-giving practices without being physically present can add more burden and stress for the migrant offspring. Hence, the visits are persuaded to take place, as in the case of Washim, even in the face of uncertainties around transnational mobility. Predicting the shifting trajectory of a viral pandemic and associated disruptions is also challenging for people. Washim travelled to Bangladesh in the eve of the Covid-19 pandemic and the announcement of the national lockdown and border closure. Rifat, another British Bangladeshi, in his late

30s, who visits his relatives and friends in Bangladesh once every year, could also not cope with the lockdowns following this travel. In his words:

I go to see my parents and relatives once every year. I have always done that. Last time around, I went there on the 1st of March [2020]. I went there for six weeks but I was stuck for six months and came back in September [2020].

Many other British Bangladeshis like Washim and Rifat travelled to Bangladesh and were not able to return as they planned. On the eve of the pandemic and with uncertainty around, they had to take a tough decision to travel. For them, at that time, the necessity to travel physically to visit parents, relatives and friends outweighed the uncertainty of an extreme global event. There are also many others who would have done the same thing but were forced to abandon their plans at the last moment. Kabir, a first-generation British Bangladeshi in his late 60s, had to abandon his plan to visit because of the flight ban. In his words:

I was supposed to visit Bangladesh last April [2020]. I booked that flight back in March, in the first week of March. In early March, there was no lockdown. There were news circulating about the virus in China, but things were still normal in the UK and Bangladesh. Then, things started to become very different very quickly and my flights, all flights were cancelled by April. I wanted to go. This was my routine. Over the last seven years, I visited Bangladesh at least once a year, sometime twice. So, this visit was due for me. However, it did not happen because of this terrible pandemic. I am still planning to go early next year if the situation allows me. I don't know yet.

Kabir and other British Bangladeshis of his age, gender and generation have lived in the UK for decades and actively kept their ties with the home country through frequent back and forth visits. Their life is defined and characterised by their transnational practices and the ways in which they live life both here and there. In addition to relatives and friends, many of them have properties and business investments in Bangladesh that they need to attend to in person. Kabir continues to explain why it is necessary for him to visit physically even in times of a pandemic:

I own a flat in Sylhet city. My tenants left a while ago. I don't have a new tenant yet. I could have resolved it if I could go there physically. You know, it is not good for a house without people. It becomes bad over time and needs maintenance. It is better if you have people living there. So, the flat is now locked and the keys with someone else. My other house in the village is also locked up for a long time. I needed to go there to get some maintenance work done. Besides, my elder daughter got married two years ago. She wanted to visit Bangladesh and take my son-in-law there for holiday. He is very interested to go. However, I need to go there first to complete the maintenance and bring the house to order before they can go on a visit and stay there. This now has to wait till these pandemic restrictions are gone.

It is common practice among transnational migrants to have properties and other material interests in their home country. These properties are important for many reasons including as accommodation during migrants' home visits (see Miah, 2021). Such properties need to be periodically attended to and serviced to keep them in good order, particularly if they are rented out, as in the case of Kabir. The pandemic affected this regular transnational practice by restricting transnational mobilities. Apart from these maintenance and income-related issues, another aspect

of Kabir's account above highlights the cultural process of the visit as a 'rite of passage' (Baldassar, 2001). Houses in the home country provide accommodation and are always at the centre of planning upcoming trips to Bangladesh. They are also built and kept in good order to encourage second-generation British-born children of Bangladeshi heritage to visit their ancestral country. These visits (re)introduce them to and (re)affirm the second generation's hybrid cultural identities. Trips to the homeland function for them as a rite of passage and the first generation plays the key mediating role. The pandemic disrupted these important cultural practices and processes for many transnational British-Bangladeshi families, as well as affecting other parts of their social and economic life that are subjects of further analysis in the next section.

7.7 Experiences of Visits During the Pandemic

The British Bangladeshis who had to travel to Bangladesh on the eve of the pandemic were then mostly involuntarily stranded in their ancestral home country. Relatively economically underprivileged members of the British-Bangladeshi community in the UK carefully plan their visits in accordance with their personal financial capacities well in advance unless there is an emergency in the family. It is a carefully choreographed and labour-intensive act of mobility (Miah, 2019; Miah & King, 2021). Any disruption to their rhythm of movement has unwelcome consequences as this can expose their financial weakness and affect their status and dignity in the eyes of their family and community. Imposition of lockdown by the government and subsequent immobility 'reinforces already prevalent inequality regimes based on class, gender and migration relations' (Dobusch & Kreissl, 2020, 711). The experience of visiting British Bangladeshis of being stranded for a much longer period of time than their expectation throws their personal finances into chaos. Washim, whom I have quoted earlier, shares his experience of this:

My plan was to stay there for four weeks but I ended up staying for five months. I was worried for my job as I took four weeks holidays. I had to report every two weeks to my employer regarding my situation. I did not lose my job, but I did not get paid after the fourth week either. I attempted multiple times to come back earlier. I booked flights on two occasions, but both were cancelled at the last moment. Financially, I am devastated. I had zero income but still had to pay six months' rent as soon as I arrived back [in London]. I had to self-isolate for two weeks here. Besides, I spent a thousand pounds or so every month while I was there [Bangladesh]. Just consider these amounts, forget everything else. Luckily, I had some savings in my account, years of hard-earned savings, towards buying our first house. It's all gone now. This is painful. [...] It was hard for me to digest the financial shock of it. Besides, it was not a pleasant time either. There was a degree of panic everywhere.

Being stranded in Bangladesh meant financial ruin, the anxiety of losing his job and the postponement of his dream of buying their own house. The level of anxiety and complexity of strandedness was amplified by the obvious geographical distance between Bangladesh and the UK. Cancellation of flights meant no alternative way

to return to their place of work and residence. In the context of air travel disruption from the volcanic ash cloud, there were examples of people having the ability to self-organise and grouping together using their social network and resources to arrange alternative means of travel such as journeying from Norway to Britain in a hired coach (Barton, 2011). The same can hardly be imagined in the British-Bangladeshi context. For Rifat, the financial situation become even worse than for Washim. In his own words:

I was furloughed by my employer because the business was closed. However, this was not enough for me. I had regular expenses including all credit cards, loan payments, and utility bills were going out of my account. I borrowed money in Bangladesh whilst my wife borrowed money from her relatives in London. We were getting child tax credits etc. but these were not enough. I am still not getting full salary; they have not opened yet. I feel ashamed to share this, but you can guess my struggle.

Unlike Washim, Rifat did not have savings to help him cope with his financial struggle. He is living partly on credit. This has also brought a feeling of being ashamed and not being able to provide for his wife and children, something that is very much expected in his culture and religious belief. The moral obligation of migrant men to discharge care and fulfil financial needs for families both here and there has been challenged in Rifat's case. Apart from the economic consequences of immobility, many have experienced emotional hardships for not being able to attend sacred family rituals and other happenings. This is reflected in the account of Nahar, a first-generation British-Bangladeshi woman in her late 30s:

It was in 2017 when I visited Bangladesh last time. It was quite a while ago. We were planning to go again. My parents are quite old. And my father passed away in the middle of the pandemic, and I could not go. I could not see him for one last time. I have since not been able to go. There are always restrictions, sometimes they announce lockdown here and sometimes there in Bangladesh. There has not been a time that would allow me to visit my mum and siblings there. Sometimes, I feel like I have failed as a daughter. I could not even do the grieving with my family. I could not be present in any of the rituals. They pushed back the dates of some events a couple of times in the hope that things will get back to normal. But it never did. In fact, we still don't know when this pandemic will be over.

Nahar's recollections and emotional grief resonate with other examples of disrupted mobilities. Ash-cloud disruptions in aeromobility in Europe and beyond also revealed such experiences of emotional trouble (Jensen, 2011), where intimate personal and familial relationships were 'stretched and strained' (Adey & Anderson, 2011) in the absence of co-present sociality. Further evidence of such strains on relationships amongst the British Bangladeshis during the pandemic can be seen. Additionally, this is revealing of gendered and generational differences. In the account below, Rifat describes his complex experience of familyhood whilst he was stranded far away:

I have two kids. My wife and kids were here in London. I could not meet them for six months. We were speaking over WhatsApp regularly. But I have never been away from them for such a long time. My elder daughter thought I will never come back to them. It's not a good feeling, it's like when parents get divorced and kids are separated. My kids thought I did not want to live in London anymore and went back to Bangladesh for good.

Rifat's experience of mobilities and absence also indicates a gendered pattern of mobility amongst diasporic British Bangladeshis. Transnational visits are undertaken regularly by men; visits *en famille* happen only occasionally, generally coinciding with school holidays in the UK. There is also a generational difference where the first generation have a stronger tie with Bangladesh than their children and grandchildren. These generational and gendered dimensions of mobility and immobility can reveal more complex experiences when the whole family is stranded. This also indicates how intergenerational relationships and obligations can be affected when mobilities are interrupted. In the quotations below, a married British-Bangladeshi couple with their daughter explain their experiences of visits and strandedness in their home country during the pandemic:

Rakib (the husband): We went there [Bangladesh] in the last week of February [2020] with our daughter, she is four years old, but we were stuck there for almost seven months. Things were going fine at the beginning. We went to our grandparents' house in the village. We went out to restaurants and other places. However, from March the situation went out of control. We were staying home all the time. It became really boring. Sometimes, I spent all night watching web series on my mobile. I lost count of how many web series I watched over those few months. There was nothing much you can do.

[...]

Hasna (the wife): I don't like watching drama series on my mobile like he does. Honestly, I had a very good time there. I slept well. My parents took care of our daughter most of the time. They brought balloons and cakes and so many other things to keep her happy. They were very happy to have us for a long time. The most positive thing was that my daughter can now speak Bengali fluently. It would never have happened if we were not there for seven months. She did not have any alternative but to learn the language if she were to speak to our parents and relatives.

Rakib and Hasna's account above (re)illustrates gender relations and experiences in the patrilineal Bangladeshi society (see Gardner, 1995), where the male members of society enjoy relative freedom in public life outside home, whereas the female members' sphere of influence is restricted to the home environment. In the case of Rakib, he enjoyed travelling around and eating out in restaurants, but felt bored at home and moved online to mitigate his boredom. By contrast, his wife, like other Bangladeshi women, felt more comfortable at home and enjoyed spending family-centred time within the household where childcare responsibilities were shared, allowing her enough time to sleep and rest. This is something she can barely access whilst in London on her own. There is also a generational element to note here. Their daughter's rite of passage has become more successful. This is arguably a blessing in disguise. A long stay with family in Bangladesh meant there was no other option for the 4-year-old daughter but to learn and speak Bengali with her cousins, uncles, uncles and grandparents there. Her fluency in Bengali also allowed her to learn other customs and cultural traditions easily, which in turn informs her developing hybrid cultural identity of being both British and Bangladeshi.

7.8 Conclusion

My discussion and analysis in this chapter highlights the nuances and drawbacks of transnational visiting mobilities under an environment where physical mobilities are suddenly disrupted. As a caveat, the chapter draws from the accounts of a relatively limited number of research participants; therefore, scientific robustness of the claims and generalisations might differ from other studies with large research samples. Drawing from the British Bangladeshis' experiences, there are three key areas where this chapter contributes further nuances to our understanding of visiting mobilities as well as implications of disruptions to migrant mobilities.

Firstly, VFR mobilities take place even in the face of a perilous global pandemic like Covid-19. For many British Bangladeshis, the necessity of physical visits outweighed the unpredictable financial and health risks. So, visits still took place, albeit to a much-reduced extent. This also reaffirms the claim that co-present sociality can hardly be replaced with digitally transmitted social interactions. This is particularly the case for transnational migrant families and diasporic communities where the distances are long. Fulfilling cultural obligations, providing care and attending family rituals require physical co-presence. In the absence of this physical proximity, far-flung social relationships are stretched, strained and stained with feelings of grief and shame.

This, however, is not without other consequences. Most visitors experienced financial difficulties, in some cases devastation, as a result of the disruption caused by the pandemic. Unplanned and involuntary stays for a much longer period, often extended by many months, meant more spending from either hard-earned savings or credit cards. This is also coupled with anxieties around jobs and income. Whilst eroded savings meant the postponement of home-buying, keeping up with credit card payments and other bills meant a struggle to uphold dignity and manhood in the family and society. The pandemic and associated measures that halted or severely reduced non-local human mobility reinforce existing inequalities that migrant groups face in the host societies.

Finally, the experiences of mobilities and immobilities during the Covid pandemic also revealed and reaffirmed complex gender relations and generational processes. Being stranded in the home country was experienced differently. While men felt tired of staying at home, women considered lengthy time spent in the family to be pleasant, relaxing and worthwhile. Staying at home allowed women to temporarily escape intensive household duties such as cooking and childcare as these were happily taken over by siblings, cousins and grandparents in Bangladesh. An extended stay also provides the opportunity for the second generation to learn better their parents' language, customs and cultural heritage.

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Part II
Perspectives from Host Societies

Chapter 8

Different Systems, Similar Responses: Policy Reforms on Asylum-Seekers' and Refugees' Access to Healthcare in Germany and Sweden in the Wake of the 2015–17 'Migration Crisis'



Mechthild Roos

8.1 Introduction

Who has – and who deserves – full or partial access to a state's healthcare system? This question has become an issue of controversial political debate in many countries, not least in the context of recent crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic and, previously, the so-called 'migration crisis' of 2015–17. This chapter focuses on the latter crisis and its repercussions on the political regulation of healthcare access for a group at the very margins of society: asylum-seekers and refugees. By analysing recent asylum and health policy reforms in two main recipient countries in the EU, this chapter sheds light on the intensifying level of politicisation of both health and incorporation policies in times of crisis.

Specifically, this chapter studies recent developments in the political regulation of refugees' and asylum-seekers' access to healthcare in Germany and Sweden – two countries which stood out in various ways during the 'migration crisis'. Both countries underwent similar processes of initial demonstrative openness to incoming refugees, presenting themselves as 'moral superpowers' (Bradby, 2019, 185) in comparison to other European countries. They took in high numbers of people but, later, changed their stance towards refugees and asylum-seekers and adopted increasingly restrictive policies under the impression of growing anxiety *vis-à-vis* those seeking shelter in Europe. These similar reactions are particularly remarkable considering the fundamental systemic and normative differences between Sweden's and Germany's incorporation and healthcare regimes (Roos, 2020; Sainsbury, 2012).

This chapter contributes to a better understanding of how and why policy provisions in Germany and Sweden were changed, along similar lines, following the

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above-mentioned ‘crisis’. It seeks to do so by studying what drove governmental action – as a decisive factor in states’ crisis responses – in the two countries. To this end, the chapter seeks to answer the following research question:

- What objectives determined the German and Swedish governments’ similar responses regarding the political regulation of asylum-seekers’ and refugees’ access to healthcare in the wake of the 2015 ‘migration crisis’?

The answer to this research question is sought through the methodological approach of a policy analysis, following Treib (2014). This approach seeks to explain the emergence, adoption and implementation of policies with a focus on the objectives of the actors involved and on the respective institutional frameworks within which they act (Treib, 2014, 211). By studying the German and Swedish government’s behaviour and their underlying objectives, the following comparative analysis juxtaposes two cases which differ in virtually all dimensions when it comes to the systemic and normative parameters of the respective health and incorporation regimes but which, nonetheless, produced similar policies in the wake of the 2015 ‘migration crisis’. The chapter thus contributes to a better understanding of these similar outcomes, which stand in contrast to what established welfare, healthcare and incorporation-regime models would have us expect.

This analysis of policy change is based on a dataset consisting of policy documents such as government declarations, statements by ministries and responsible state agencies and speeches by members of government during parliamentary plenary sessions, providing insights into the examined policy-making processes. These documents are accessible and have been collected from the various official websites and digital archives of the examined actors (governments, individual ministries and agencies, parliamentary chambers).

After a section briefly outlining the theoretical framework of this chapter – the conceptualisation of policy change at the intersection of incorporation and healthcare regimes – the following comparative analysis identifies and discusses three main political objectives which both the German and the Swedish governments pursued and which shaped both countries’ political reaction to the ‘migration crisis’ in more generally turbulent times marked by a complexity of exogenous and endogenous challenges to incorporation, welfare and healthcare systems. In short, the analysis sheds light on the impact of both governments’ objectives:

- to communicate to (*potential*) *asylum-seekers* that only those with a rightful claim to protection would get (near) full access to the host country’s welfare and healthcare system, whereas those who unjustly sought asylum would have to count on significant access restrictions – to prevent rumours of a too-favourable healthcare and welfare access becoming a ‘pull factor’;
- to show *voters* that their government put them first and would be careful to prevent an overburdening of – already strained – national healthcare and welfare systems; and
- to emphasise – *vis-à-vis the EU and other EU member states* – exemplary compliance with international rules and conventions on the one hand (i.e. to uphold

their own image of a ‘moral superpower’) and the inability to uphold high(er) standards in the long term on the other. If other member states kept their standards low, (which the Swedish and German governments feared), it made those few in a vanguard position regarding asylum-seekers’ and refugees’ social rights target countries of greater numbers of asylum-seekers than their respective welfare systems could absorb.

As stated above, the target group of the policies analysed here is *asylum-seekers and refugees*. The applicability of the policies examined below regulating access to healthcare is determined not only by a person’s asylum application status but also by the length of their stay in the respective host country. Given that the majority of asylum-seekers wait for months, sometimes years, for a final decision on their legal status, they become part – even if a segregated one – of the host country’s administrative and social system for a notable period of time already prior to the determination of their status. Regardless of this latter, asylum-seekers and refugees may have to undergo medical treatment or enter preventive healthcare schemes beyond that which emergency care can provide. Consequently, this chapter examines the (changing) extent of asylum-seekers’ and refugees’ healthcare access regarding their rights both before and after their legal status is confirmed.

8.2 Conceptualising Policy Change at the Intersection of Incorporation and Healthcare Regimes

This chapter juxtaposes developments within the Swedish and German incorporation, welfare and healthcare regimes. To this end, it argues that, when it comes to explaining developments in migrants’ social rights – among them their access to healthcare – the comparative analysis of merely the examined countries’ welfare *or* healthcare *or* incorporation regimes does not suffice (cf. Sainsbury, 2012). Rather, changes in related national policies can arise from factors shaping either the entirety or only one of these interconnected regimes.

With regard to immigrants’ and, more particularly, asylum-seekers’ and refugees’ rights and duties and the state’s role and responsibility regarding their regulation and implementation, this research accepts Sainsbury’s (2012, 16) definition of incorporation regimes as ‘rules and norms that govern immigrants’ possibilities to become a citizen, to acquire permanent residence, and to participate in economic, cultural and political life’. Sainsbury distinguishes between inclusive and restrictive incorporation regimes. She identifies the Swedish incorporation regime as an example of the former and the German regime as an example of the latter (2012, 19).

Given that access to healthcare is regulated in Germany and Sweden in the context of social welfare, national welfare traditions have an impact on different groups of persons’ healthcare rights. In the typologisation of healthcare and welfare regimes, this chapter builds on Esping-Andersen’s seminal work (1990) and on Rothgang (2006) who – among others – rightfully argues that the three dimensions

underlying Esping-Andersen's welfare regime typology (de-commodification, social stratification and state-market-family relations) are not the only focal elements of distinction when it comes to the analysis of healthcare regimes. Instead, Rothgang proposes a typologisation of healthcare systems, taking into consideration further dimensions such as financing (state funding vs insurance contributions vs private funding), service provision (privately vs publicly operated and profit vs non-profit) and the role and interaction of different actors (e.g. financing actor, service provider, beneficiary) in the regulation and provision of healthcare. In his model, Rothgang (2006, 304) presents three ideal types (in the Weberian sense) of healthcare regimes:

- the state/public healthcare system, with Sweden as a model case study;
- the social insurance system, with Germany as a model case study; and
- the private healthcare system (which does not, in its 'ideal' form, appear in any EU member state).

In the combination of these three regime typologies, Sweden and Germany are model cases of a *most different systems* study: Sweden as a state with a social democratic welfare regime, a state/public healthcare system and a liberal incorporation regime is juxtaposed to Germany as a state with a conservative-corporatist welfare regime, a social insurance healthcare system and a restrictive incorporation regime. Considering their fundamental systemic differences, which include both rule and norm dimensions (see, *inter alia*, Roos, 2020), the regime models introduced above would, in their combination, lead to the expectation that the Swedish and German governments would have reacted entirely differently to arising (perceived) public anxiety about asylum-seekers' and refugees' access to the respective welfare state and healthcare system in the wake of the 2015 'crisis'. The following analysis scrutinises why that was not the case; indeed, why the opposite happened and both governments pursued similar paths in their reactive policy-making. By showing a) that both countries moved away from their model case position by adopting aspects of other regime types and b) that, in times of crisis, other factors seem to have a greater impact on policies and policy change than regime-type parameters, the analysis contributes to the growing corpus of literature questioning the applicability of static regime models such as those presented above for the areas of welfare, healthcare and incorporation.

8.3 Policy Analysis: Why So Similar?

Both Germany and Sweden experienced a significant increase in asylum applications, with climaxing numbers in 2015 (Sweden) and 2016 (Germany) respectively, way above those of previous years (Eurostat, 2020). In the years thereafter, application numbers decreased rapidly. Indeed, already by 2016, applications in Sweden fell below the level of 2010, whereas German numbers fell below the pre-2015 level in 2018 (Eurostat, 2020). Despite the swift turnaround of asylum application

numbers after 2015/16, the significant increase rather than the following decrease marked healthcare policy provisions for asylum-seekers and refugees in both countries beyond short-term measures, as this section shows. Following the above-mentioned changes in asylum application numbers, access to healthcare was restricted in both countries.

It should be noted that, in both Germany and Sweden, the national legislator is responsible only for setting the *rules and (minimum) standards* of healthcare provision for asylum-seekers and refugees, whereas the regional and communal levels are responsible for the *implementation* and actual *provision* of health services (Bradby, 2019, 188; Wenner et al., 2019, 53–4). In consequence, the *practical dimension* of governmental policy-making in the area during the ‘migration crisis’ was largely limited to the (short-term) objective of helping the implementation levels to handle the situation, implying mechanisms of burden-sharing and relief, administrative support and the provision of necessary resources – as well as the introduction of border controls to prevent an administrative overburdening to the point of inability to cope with the ongoing developments.¹

The *political dimension*, in contrast, which swiftly gained space alongside the above-mentioned practical measures (Beinhorn & Glorius, 2018; Fernández, 2020, 229), went beyond mere short-term crisis management. Governmental actors in both Germany and Sweden began to use tools such as adopted measures, draft bills, parliamentary debates and press briefs on asylum-seekers’ and refugees’ access to healthcare to transmit broader messages of political ambitions and ideological lines, thus contributing to the incremental politicisation of the policy area. In particular, both governments sought to demonstrate their power and willingness to regulate the level of arriving persons’ access to healthcare in the pursuit of three main political objectives. The following policy analysis sheds light on these three objectives and the resulting increase in politicisation in the wake of the ‘migration crisis’ in the two countries under examination.

8.3.1 The Objective of Preventing High Health-Care Standards as a Pull Factor

Following the first months of sharply increased numbers of arriving asylum-seekers – marked by a demonstrative openness and intensive short-term crisis management – the German and Swedish governments perceived mounting pressure to develop mid- to long-term perspectives of tenable incorporation strategies for

¹ See Swedish Government: Regeringens skrivelse 2016/17:206. Riksrevisionens rapport om läromärken av flyktingsituationen hösten 2015 – beredskap och hantering, 1 June 2017, *inter alia* pp. 3 and 20; German Ministry of the Interior, Communication ‘Vorübergehende Wiedereinführung von Grenzkontrollen’, 13 September 2015 (<https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/kurzmeldungen/DE/2015/09/grenzkontrollen-an-der-grenze-zu-oesterreich-wiedereingef%C3%BChrt.html>) (accessed 16 January 2022).

administrations and society.² A necessary element of these strategies, in the view of both governments, was not only to either integrate into society, the labour market and the social system or to deport those who had arrived but also to lastingly reduce their number. Border closure was not considered a possible – or desired – long-term solution (at least not at the national level; EU border and asylum policy is not the subject of this analysis). Hence, governmental actors sought other options for action, among them to address (potential) asylum-seekers' possible reasons to pick Germany or Sweden as a target country.

Note that the tactics of making one's own country less attractive to those seeking shelter – in order to reduce their number – is no invention of the 2015 crisis. The German government – a coalition of Christian Democrats and Liberals – had resorted to this method in the early 1980s, when it 'sought to deter asylum-seekers by introducing welfare benefits in kind and removing their right to work' (Sainsbury, 2012, 182). This, in turn, forms the 'main principle of entitlement to social benefits' (2012, 56) in Germany. With regard to healthcare, the German government applied this strategy of deterrence even more clearly in the wake of the Yugoslav Wars – which brought about a sharp increase in arriving asylum-seekers – with the introduction of the German Asylum-Seekers' Benefit Act. This act was specifically meant to prevent asylum-seekers from choosing Germany as their target country – because of material incentives – by introducing lowered benefits (Kuhn-Zuber, 2018, 23). Article 4 of the act set the tone of asylum-seekers' access to healthcare for the following decades: it stipulated the entitlement to healthcare during the first 15 months of stay in Germany only in the case of an emergency, pregnancy or childbirth and introduced the need for health vouchers to access care, issued by administrative (rather than medical) staff (Wenner et al., 2019, 53).

During the 'migration crisis', both the German and the Swedish governments resorted to similar strategies in pursuit of making their country less attractive in asylum-seekers' eyes. While neither government lowered healthcare levels collectively for all groups of asylum-seekers and refugees, both introduced restrictive measures notably for one group: those applying for asylum and all concomitant rights with a low probability of being entitled to a refugee/subsidiary protection status – for instance because of their nationality from a 'safe country of origin'. For this group of persons, the German governing coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats proposed in late September 2015 – as part of the draft Asylum Procedure Acceleration Act (adopted on 20 October 2015)³ – that benefits, not least in the area of healthcare, were henceforth to be granted as in-kind (rather than cash) benefits wherever administratively possible. The political intention behind the benefit-in-kind principle, which came with greater administrative efforts than the

²See, *inter alia*, a speech by Thomas de Maizière, German Minister of the Interior, during the plenary debate of the *Bundesrat* on 16 October 2015 (Plenarprotokoll 937, p. 388); Regeringens proposition 2015/16:174: Tillfälliga begränsningar av möjligheten att få.

³Draft bill: Entwurf eines Asylverfahrensbeschleunigungsgesetzes, Drucksache 18/6185, 29 September 2015. Adopted law (Asylverfahrensbeschleunigungsgesetz): see Bundesgesetzblatt, Part I No 40 (2015), 23 October 2015, pp. 1722–1735.

previously provided ‘pocket money’, was to convey the message of controlled and limited access only to what could be justified as absolutely necessary. Implicitly, such rules were meant as ‘disincentives’ – namely, to counter the image among potential asylum-seekers of immediate and automatically granted access to high German living standards, including welfare and healthcare. In the same vein, the Asylum Procedure Acceleration Act stipulated that, once a person’s asylum procedure was concluded by a negative decision and with the enforceable obligation to leave the country, access to healthcare (amongst other benefits) would be significantly restricted to merely the utmost necessary – i.e. emergency care – regardless of how much time had passed between the decision and the person’s actual departure.

In a similar pursuit of abolishing ‘incentives’, the Swedish government introduced a bill providing for the primary issuance of temporary rather than permanent residence permits, which had been ‘the general rule in asylum policy’ in Sweden until then (Boräng, 2018, 155). This bill was introduced by the government in April 2016⁴ and adopted by parliament in June 2016. It entered into force on 20 July 2016, with an initial applicability of three years, which was later extended to 20 July 2021.⁵ The new law did not explicitly change asylum-seekers’ and refugees’ access to healthcare. In Sweden, however, healthcare access depends on residency. This means that refugees and asylum-seekers with temporary residence permits are only entitled to ‘care that cannot be delayed’ and maternity care (somewhat more favourable rules apply to minors).⁶ The interpretation of which health services can or cannot wait, in turn, is up to individual clinicians, leading to very different levels of care access for those concerned (Bradby, 2019, 189).

The Swedish government’s course of action to restrict access to healthcare on temporary residence permits was, again, no invention of the 2010s. It had already been applied in another period of turbulence and resulting political anxiety: in 1993, the centre-right government under Prime Minister Carl Bildt introduced the strategy ‘of issuing temporary permits which limited access to regular medical care’ (Sainsbury, 2012, 224) – alongside the halving of costs for asylum-seekers’ medical examinations – in an attempt to reduce ‘the rising costs of asylum-seekers’ in times of financial crisis. Rather than merely seeking to reduce costs (which evidently also carried a broader message of prioritising some target groups of public expenditure over others), the Swedish (centre-left minority) government’s post-2015 pursuit of restricted healthcare access for asylum-seekers followed another course. Its main objective was to ‘temporarily adjust the [Swedish] asylum regulations to the minimum level in the EU so that more people choose to seek asylum in other EU

⁴ See Regeringens proposition 2015/16:174, *op. cit.*

⁵ See Lag (2016:752) om tillfälliga begränsningar av möjligheten att få uppehållstillstånd i Sverige, 22 June 2016.

⁶ See Lag (2008:344) om hälso- och sjukvård åt asylsökande m.fl., in force since 1 July 2008, §6.

countries’,⁷ as the government expressly and repeatedly declared in the wake of the 2015 ‘crisis’.

8.3.2 *The Objective of Pleasing Voters*

In a democracy, the extent to which a group of *outsiders* is admitted into a contribution- and/or tax-based healthcare system comes with costs beyond the mere financing of the additional demand for the actors who hold the responsibility of regulating access standards. These actors have to consider the political costs of providing aid and enabling integration at the expense of the *insiders*. Such considerations played a significant role in both the Swedish and the German governments’ policy-making with regard to asylum-seekers’ and refugees’ access to healthcare in response to the 2015 ‘crisis’. Evidently, the question of these persons’ healthcare access could not be regulated as an isolated policy issue, given that it inextricably links the two – in themselves complex and increasingly politicised – policy areas of incorporation and healthcare. In consequence, governments could not, for instance, simply weigh arising short-term healthcare costs borne by the current tax/contribution payers against potential long-term contributions by those now admitted into the healthcare system. Nor could governmental actors refer to the universal right to healthcare⁸ without taking into account what impact the outsiders’ admission into the system would have on insiders’ (perception of their) own healthcare access. Rather, governmental decision-making in the area was strongly influenced by a dense web of policy issues and societal dynamics connected by voters to policy outcomes.

Among the most notable such issues faced by political actors holding governmental responsibility in both Germany and Sweden were shifts in public opinion and media coverage regarding their country’s openness to refugees and the limits of its incorporation capacity (Heath & Richards, 2019). Another, to some extent, related factor with an impact on governmental policy-making was the perceived threat of far-right parties’ electoral success in the respective national elections (Germany in 2017; Sweden, 2018) – the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*, SD) and Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD).⁹ The looming electoral gains of these parties became relevant for policies regulating asylum-seekers’ and refugees’ access to healthcare because of the far-right parties’ immigration-critical campaigns and promises of more-restrictive migrant- (and

⁷Quote from a press release by the Swedish Prime Minister’s Office: ‘Government proposes measures to create respite for Swedish refugee reception’, 24 November 2015 (<https://www.government.se/articles/2015/11/government-proposes-measures-to-create-respite-for-swedish-refugee-reception/>) (accessed 16 January 2022).

⁸See, for example, Article 35 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.

⁹The impact of the Sweden Democrats on Swedish asylum and incorporation policies and party discourses is addressed below. For the impact of the AfD on German asylum and incorporation policies and party discourses see, amongst others, Atzpodien (2022); Heinze (2021).

particularly refugee-)related policies.¹⁰ Such promises, in turn, have the potential to force governing parties either to adapt policies in similar directions in order to win (back) voters from the far-right parties or to make a point of adopting policies representing explicit openness to immigrants seeking shelter in the respective country, thus underlining the fundamental differences in attitudes and values between the far-right contestants and themselves (see Abou-Chadi, 2016; Boräng, 2018; Fernández, 2020; Sainsbury, 2012). In the case of the 2015 ‘crisis’ and its aftermath, both dynamics appear in the political and discursive (re)actions of the German and Swedish governments (Hertner, 2022; Krzyżanowski, 2018; Mushaben, 2017). When it comes to governmental action regarding asylum-seekers’ and refugees’ access to healthcare, however, pleasing voters by protecting the system from possible overburdening through outsiders seems to have been largely prioritised over making a point of their own humanitarian superiority by overcoming outsider-insider differences and equalising rights.

In part, this strong focus on voters in policy-making at the intersection of incorporation and healthcare can be explained by a significant level of politicisation of both areas. Whereas incorporation and asylum policy have been highly politicised areas across Europe for some time (Scholten & Verbeek, 2015; see also Hutter & Kriesi, 2021 on the catalyst effect of the 2015 ‘crisis’ on the politicisation of immigration), the area of healthcare has only lately experienced ‘a significant increase in party system attention’ (Green-Pedersen, 2019, 162). This is the case particularly in Sweden – and, according to Green-Pedersen (2019, 168), more generally in states with some kind of national healthcare system – whereas party attention to healthcare is less pronounced in countries with health insurance systems, such as Germany. However, even there, demographic development and the increasing economisation of healthcare with its consequences for the healthcare system and services, amongst other factors, have moved healthcare policy into the focus of election campaigns and party programmes.

In light of these developments, the intersection of healthcare and incorporation policies has become a lens of larger dynamics – and, indeed, of rising anxiety – in politics and society because ‘public debates about the welfare state increasingly place welfare beneficiaries in the spotlight and discuss whether people are taking advantage of the welfare system’ (Roosma et al., 2016, 178). In consequence, ‘[n]egative images of beneficiaries play an increasingly important role in political debates and the mass media’ (2016, 181) across Europe, with immigrants traditionally receiving the lowest level of solidarity when it comes to public perceptions of deservingness (Van Oorschot, 2008).

The question of deservingness is deeply ingrained in the normative fundamentals of both the German healthcare and incorporation systems (Roos, 2020). When it

¹⁰See, *inter alia*, the SD’s 2018 election manifesto ‘Sverigedemokraternas valmanifest 2018’ (<https://sd.se/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Valmanifest-2018-1.pdf> (accessed 16 January 2022, pp. 3–4 and 6–7); AfD’s 2017 election manifesto ‘Programm für Deutschland’ (https://www.afd.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/111/2017/06/2017-06-01_AfD-Bundestagswahlprogramm_Onlinefassung.pdf (accessed 16 January 2022, pp. 29–31 and 59–60).

comes to healthcare access, asylum-seekers and refugees consequently have to demonstrate their rightful and justified claims – even more so in times of crisis and the resulting fears of overburdening of the system, as the situation post-2015 showed. With a view to concrete policy change, this meant, in the case of Germany, that the government used healthcare (amongst other social benefits) to get asylum-seekers and refugees to play by the rules as regards integration measures – and to demonstrate to the resident population (read: voters) that non-compliance by immigrants would be punished. The government added several provisions to the Asylum Seekers' Benefit Act over the course of 2015 and 2016 which obliged certain groups of asylum-seekers to take part in integration courses or accept opportunities to work (within given limits) – or otherwise face a restriction of social benefits, including healthcare.¹¹ Importantly, instead of a collective reduction in healthcare access, these measures were addressed exclusively at select groups of persons, such as asylum-seekers with a higher or lower likelihood of getting refugee/subsidiary protection status and persons either waiting for their deportation because their asylum application had been refused or whose application was refused but who could not be deported because of threats to their health or freedom. In this way, the German government could demonstrate to its citizens that those seeking and deserving protection would receive it and that Germany would thus fulfil its moral and legal duties as a host country. At the same time, voters were shown that access to the healthcare and welfare system built on their taxes and contributions would not be granted freely and unchecked. In the same vein, the government was at pains to point out that 'there was no lowering of the well-known very high standard of [healthcare] provision for the German population' through increased efforts in the provision of healthcare for asylum-seekers and refugees.¹²

Interestingly, a similar deservingness factor for outsiders can be traced in the Swedish government's political response to the 'crisis'. This is noteworthy because the Swedish incorporation and healthcare systems are built on a principle of universality and asylum-seekers' and refugees' contribution to the state and society have been sought not so much in the past and present but, rather, in the future, as they have traditionally been considered potentially permanent members of, and hence contributors to, society (Roos, 2020, 5215; Sainsbury, 2012, 278). This perception evidently changed with the government's decision to grant temporary rather than permanent residence permits to persons arriving and to turn the temporary permits into permanent ones only for those who really need it – now implying a strong element of required individual deservingness.

¹¹ See Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration: 11. *Bericht der Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration – Teilhabe, Chancengleichheit und Rechtsentwicklung in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft Deutschland*, December 2016, p. 587.

¹² Speech by the German government's spokesperson Steffen Seibert during the governmental press conference on 9 December 2015 (<https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/regierungspressekonferenz-vom-9-dezember-845916> (accessed 17 January 2022; translation by the author).

Conditions for such deservingness were clearly expressed in the government bill on ‘temporary restrictions on the possibility to obtain a residence permit in Sweden’ from April 2016. These conditions reflect not only the government’s declared ambition to lower Swedish asylum and incorporation standards to the minimum EU level so as to make more persons choose other EU member states as host countries but also its intention to relieve the strained Swedish welfare and healthcare systems. The government bill provided that asylum-seekers and refugees could turn their initially issued temporary permit into a permanent one if they were able to support themselves financially, e.g. through employment taken up after their arrival. In other words, under this provision, asylum-seekers and refugees were entitled to full access to the Swedish welfare and healthcare system only once they could contribute to it. This deservingness dimension also becomes clear in the government’s provisions for persons younger than 25: permanent residence permits were to be granted to them only if they had completed high-school education (or an equivalent), thus lowering the likeliness of their becoming unemployed; in other words, becoming recipients rather than contributors in the social system.¹³ Children – as non-contributors *per se* – would have to suffer ‘particularly distressing circumstances related to a permanently impaired health condition’ to receive a permanent permit.¹⁴

The politicisation of full access to the Swedish healthcare system is visible not least in the fact that the government ignored different state agencies’ warnings that the intended – and later adopted – issuance of temporary instead of permanent residence permits might lead to a deterioration of asylum-seekers’ mental and physical health. This, in turn, might later produce an increased financial and administrative burden on the healthcare system.¹⁵ Despite these rational and economic arguments against temporary permits and subsequent restricted access to healthcare, the government pursued its course of action for the political reasons mentioned above, and in pursuit of alleviating related anxieties in society/among voters.

In the same vein, the government’s choice of action is also noteworthy considering the objective of preventing an overburdening of the state’s welfare and healthcare system.¹⁶ The Swedish government justified the introduction of ‘drastic restrictions [...] as a necessary but morally painful action to salvage the administrative functionality of the Swedish welfare state, not a prioritization of national interests over those of the refugees’ (Fernández, 2020, 229). This shows that the Löfven government was acutely aware of the moral U-turn which this course of action represented for Swedish incorporation policy and of the resulting pressure to justify it (see also Hagelund, 2020, 7–10). This pressure was particularly high considering that the positions regarding welfare-state capacity and incorporation now adopted by the governing coalition – consisting of the Swedish Social Democratic and Green parties – had previously ‘been reserved for the S[weden] D[emocrats]’ (Fernández,

¹³ See Regeringens proposition 2015/16:174, *op. cit.*, p. 56

¹⁴ See 2015, pp. 62–3 and 82.

¹⁵ See Regeringens proposition 2015/16:174, *op. cit.*, pp. 68 and 71.

¹⁶ Repeatedly emphasised 2015, for instance on pp. 3 and 21.

2020, 229), from which all other parties sitting in the Swedish parliament had previously sought to distance themselves. Indeed, demands for more restricted asylum and incorporation policies by the Sweden Democrats had been collectively rejected and, at times, even countered by the adoption of particularly liberal measures. An example from the area of asylum-seekers' healthcare regulation is the legal improvement of undocumented immigrants' access to medical care, adopted in the wake of the Swedish national elections of 2010 following which the Sweden Democrats moved into the *Riksdag* or parliament (Sainsbury, 2012, 227).

While the priority of preventing an overburdening of the healthcare system can also be found in the German government's policy response to the 2015 'crisis', it appears here in a different argumentative context. Specifically, the German government proposed measures a) to safeguard the health of all people residing in Germany by improving the general health status of new arrivals, and b) to reach a higher degree of efficiency in the provision of healthcare, alongside a decrease in the administrative burden notably on the part of regional and communal actors. Neither of these two approaches implied an extension of asylum-seekers' and refugees' entitlements regarding their access to the German healthcare system. Instead, the measures were distinctly addressed to the personnel and members of the German health and incorporation system, thus implicitly also to the host (i.e. voting) population.

Specifically, among other measures, the government proposed in the draft Asylum Procedure Acceleration Act to improve the vaccination protection of all asylum-seekers 'so as to protect the health of all people in our country' and 'reduce examination and bureaucratic efforts in the provision of services'.¹⁷ This improvement was to be reached via the stipulation of a federal-level common standard, replacing the previous regulation at the *Länder* level – which had in some cases been more favourable. In the same vein, the act sought to facilitate the introduction of an electronic health card for asylum-seekers at the regional level. This health card was intended to replace the previously established system of health vouchers issued to asylum-seekers by administrative – i.e. non-medical – staff of the responsible regional or local agencies (Kuhn-Zuber, 2018, 87–88; Wenner et al., 2019, 53). It allows asylum-seekers, instead, to go directly to a health professional and let them decide whether or not treatment is necessary and covered by legislation regulating asylum-seekers' access to healthcare. First it should be emphasised, however, that this health card did not extend the range of health services to which asylum-seekers and refugees were legally entitled. Second, the Asylum Procedure Acceleration Act left it up to the *Länder* to stick to the old health-voucher system or to adopt the electronic health card, instead of a uniform country-wide introduction of the card. The health card's primary aim was thus not an improvement of asylum-seekers' access to healthcare but a reduction of the administrative and financial burden on the German multi-level healthcare and incorporation system.

¹⁷ Entwurf eines Asylverfahrensbeschleunigungsgesetzes, *op. cit.*, pp. 26 and 46 (translated by the author).

8.3.3 The Objective of Upholding a Sustainable International Role-Model Position

The representation of a country's incorporation system as exemplary among EU member states played a significant role in the two governments' political reactions to the 2015 'crisis'. Moreover, both Germany and Sweden have been among the most outspoken promoters of more EU competence in the area of asylum policy (Boräng, 2018, 156–157), as well as – particularly in the case of Germany – in health policy,¹⁸ in the pursuit of higher EU-wide standards, increased efficiency and more-balanced burden-sharing among member states. Indeed, whereas the legal regulation of asylum-seekers' and refugees' incorporation in national healthcare systems remains largely a national competence, both the areas of health and asylum policy have experienced increasing – if still fragmented – integration at the EU level over the past three decades.

Yet, this integration process had not evolved far enough in 2015 to elicit a unified or even coordinated response among EU member states in times of crisis. As many member states closed their borders and/or refused to take in notable shares of the sharply increased numbers of people seeking asylum in Europe, both Germany and Sweden expressly went beyond EU-level agreements and EU legislation in initially opening their borders and letting in migrants seeking refuge who had entered EU territory in another member state. Thereafter, however, both governments declared that they could not uphold their openness unless other countries chipped in and contributed their part to a more even distribution of persons as well as financial and administrative costs. On this basis, the issues of solidarity among EU member states, of (moral and legal) duties and of capacities in particular became inherent elements of debate concerning incorporation policies at the national level in both Sweden and Germany.

In the case of the Swedish government's communication of crisis-induced measures, the EU played a particularly prominent role: governmental declarations and draft bills alike pointed out repeatedly that, because of its leading role among member states in accepting asylum-seekers, Sweden had reached a point in autumn 2015 where administrative, welfare and healthcare systems would be unable to cope with the situation if the influx of high numbers of asylum-seekers continued. Seeking to safeguard the systems' functionality by making displaced persons seek asylum elsewhere, the government declared – as mentioned above – that it saw no other way but to temporarily adjust asylum regulations to the minimum level in the EU and to bring Swedish legislation 'in line with the minimum requirements in international

¹⁸See, for example, the German Ministry of Health: Germany's Presidency of the Council of the EU 2020: Review by the Federal Ministry of Health, 31 December 2020 (https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/fileadmin/Dateien/3_Downloads/E/EU2020/Review_GER_EU_Presidency_EN_Version.pdf (accessed 17 January 2022)).

conventions and EU law'.¹⁹ This course of action explicitly included the policy measure of granting temporary rather than permanent residence permits: the government emphasised that Sweden did not have to offer the latter in order to fulfil its international and supranational legal obligations.

Despite being presented as a short-term crisis response enabling the Swedish incorporation and healthcare systems (amongst others) to cope with the situation, the government's policy measures turned out not to constitute a mere short-term emergency lowering of incorporation standards. Indeed, when the government outlined Sweden's future migration policy in June 2019, it declared that, for the country's migration and incorporation system to be sustainable, Swedish regulations should generally, now and in the future, 'not deviate significantly from those of other EU countries'.²⁰ Their low standards, together with the state and (non-)functioning of the EU's asylum policy, provided the Swedish government with welcome arguments to justify the legal restrictions discussed above.²¹

Whereas the German government – like the Swedish – demanded a better functioning EU asylum system with a higher degree of solidarity, its reference to its own 'moral superpower' role within Europe differs in one major aspect from the Swedish government's. While also emphasising that Germany had taken on a disproportionately high share of asylum-seekers and, hence, of the overall challenge facing Europe in 2015,²² Germany's model role was presented as an achievement of its short-term political reaction to the 'crisis' and as a lasting responsibility in the future build-up of a sustainable EU asylum system, rather than a (currently untenable and hence in part abandoned) status of the past. However, like one of the Swedish government's lines of argumentation, the German government emphasised that the country's high incorporation standards, not least in the area of healthcare access, could only be upheld if they were established across the EU.²³

Generally, it is noteworthy that the Swedish government made the EU one of its main references in justifying its action in the context of the 'migration

¹⁹ Press release by the Swedish Prime Minister's Office: 'Government proposes measures to create respite for Swedish refugee reception', *op. cit.* The same argument also appears prominently, amongst others, in Regeringens proposition 2015/16:174, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Kommitédirektiv Dir. 2019:32 'Den framtida svenska migrationspolitiken', adopted at the government meeting on 14 June 2019, p. 9 (translation by the author).

²¹ See Kommitédirektiv 2016:47 'Utvärdering av hanteringen av flyktingsituationen i Sverige år 2015', adopted at the government meeting on 9 June 2016, p. 2.

²² See, for example, Besprechung der Bundeskanzlerin mit den Regierungschefinnen und Regierungschefs der Länder zur Asyl- und Flüchtlingspolitik am 24. September 2015 <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/998616/435184/a0892e3d6adfcffbfefc537c19c25d99/2015-09-24-bund-laender-fluechtlinge-beschluss-fr-data.pdf?download=1> (accessed 22 March 2022), p. 1.

²³ See the speech by Thomas de Maizière, Minister of the Interior, during plenary debate of the German *Bundestag* on 1 October 2015 (Plenarprotokoll 18/127, p. 12270); also speech by Eva Högl (member of the SPD group in the *Bundestag*, former Minister on Employment and Social Affairs and former member of the party executive), during plenary debate of the German *Bundestag* on 15 October 2015 (Plenarprotokoll 18/130, p. 12581).

crisis' – indeed, attributing to it the role of a scapegoat for its political reaction to the situation. This discursive behaviour of shifting the blame for controversy or morally questionable politics at the national level to action (or a lack thereof) at the EU level fits in well with the larger phenomenon of blame games in multilevel governance systems (Heinkelmann-Wild & Zangl, 2020). The German government, in comparison, referred to the EU less often and not in as harsh a tone. While demanding more EU-level solidarity, it largely took on the responsibility for its own action. One reason for this differing behaviour may be that, considering the German tradition of incorporation policy-making, the government's answer to the 'migration crisis' constituted no U-turn but, rather, a recourse to political action taken in previous crisis situations. For the Swedish government, the break with the previously established perception of traditionally liberal Swedish incorporation policies was significantly more acute.

8.4 Conclusion

In mid-to-late 2015, in the face of drastically rising numbers of asylum-seekers, the governments of Germany and Sweden demonstratively opened their countries' borders and declared their will to stand up to a humanitarian challenge on which most other EU member states would choose to turn their backs. However, when *Willkommenskultur* gradually turned into mounting societal and political anxiety, both governments started to implement a series of measures restricting asylum-seekers' and refugees' social rights, amongst others concerning their access to healthcare.

This chapter has outlined three main objectives which shaped governmental actors' policy-making with regard to asylum-seekers' and refugees' access to healthcare post-2015 in Germany and Sweden. First, policy-makers sought to avoid (or abolish) the granting of extensive social rights to asylum-seekers and refugees – with access to healthcare beyond the utterly necessary as an element thereof – because they considered that these potential pull factors incited more persons to try and attain refuge in the respective host country. Second, policy-makers echoed growing concerns regarding the overburdening of existing healthcare resources and infrastructures. In this context, governmental actors connected healthcare access to fundamental questions of entitlement and deservingness, not merely with regard to the asylum-seekers' and refugees' individual situations but in comparison to the entitlement and deservingness of the host country's citizens. Third, both countries' governments emphasised, at the EU and international level, their model role as 'moral superpowers' during the 'crisis', whilst also pointing out that their high standards in accepting and incorporating asylum-seekers and refugees were unsustainable unless and until more solidarity in the distribution of persons seeking protection would be reached at the EU level.

Through its focus on these three main objectives, this chapter helps to explain why the two governments (re)acted similarly despite the fundamentally different

systemic contexts of incorporation and healthcare regimes and traditions. By analysing what induced the two governments to behave differently to what a regime approach might lead one to expect, this chapter contributes to the ongoing re-evaluation of the applicability of the established regime models presented at the beginning of the chapter and to the questioning of Germany's and Sweden's representation as respective model cases for certain regime types. It discusses why the Swedish government moved away from its liberal incorporation tradition and universal welfare and healthcare regime by restricting asylum-seekers' and refugees' access to healthcare (alongside a range of other social rights) and by introducing a deservingness dimension in the provision of care for 'outsiders' which had not previously figured prominently in the normative frame of its incorporation system. The chapter demonstrates, furthermore, that, while the deeply ingrained deservingness dimension of the German healthcare and incorporation regimes appears clearly in governmental action post-2015, further dimensions not traditionally embedded can also be traced in the case of the government's policy-making. Specifically, the measures introduced moved away from the tradition of decentralised care and incorporation organisation by setting German-wide standards regarding healthcare access and promoting (albeit not uniformly implementing) the country-wide introduction of an electronic health card.

The chapter also shows, however, that the deviation from established regime models was greater in Sweden than in Germany, where the government by and large followed previously established adaptation patterns of rights and restrictions. One factor facilitating the drastic U-turn in Sweden's incorporation politics might be the fact that politicians have traditionally been keen 'to uphold the image of a "generous" country', both in terms of incorporation and welfare (Boräng, 2018, 12, 77). The concept of generosity, however, 'implies that something is offered that did not necessarily have to be offered; the actual offer could then be seen as going beyond what could rightfully be demanded' (2018, 152), which means that 'generously granted' access to healthcare can legitimately be taken away if the state is – or claims to be – unable to afford the level of generosity any longer.

This underlines the fact that times of crisis and turbulence have the potential to make political actors question previously established policy lines and change their course of action in order to answer unexpectedly arising challenges. This chapter shows that the same is true for the German and Swedish governments' reaction to the 2015–17 'migration crisis'. The policy changes in the respective national regulation of asylum-seekers' and refugees' access to healthcare which the chapter has analysed were adopted in the context of crisis management. Yet, the lasting impact of restrictive measures with regard to asylum-seekers' social rights implemented both in Germany and Sweden in the 1990s demonstrates that political-crisis management can shape legislation far beyond the problem it was meant to remedy. In this light, we need to analyse the action taken by the German and Swedish governments under the impression of the 2015 situation as more than mere reactive politics with a short-term perspective. Processes of profound politicisation may well steer policy-making beyond times of acute political and societal anxiety and along paths once chosen under the impression of near-overburdened systems and unsustainable

situations. The governmental measures analysed in this chapter may thus shape German and Swedish policies at the intersection of incorporation and health for years to come.

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Chapter 9

The Assimilationist Drift of Italian Jurisprudence on Integration in the Years of the ‘Refugee Crisis’



Giovanni Cavaggion

9.1 Introduction

The coexistence of different cultures in the same legal system is a given fact of contemporary ‘Western’ societies, produced by structural migratory phenomena that are not realistically reversible and that brought about the advent of the so-called ‘multicultural state’. In a multicultural state, a cultural majority lives side-by-side with one or more cultural, ethnic or religious minorities, who sometimes identify themselves with a set of values and principles that could be regarded as incompatible with those of the host country’s legal system (Baldini, 2011; Bilancia, 2012; Fleiner & Fleiner, 2009; Taylor, 1992), thus generating what has been described by scholars as a ‘meeting’ (or a ‘clash’) of cultures (Huntington, 1993).

In this framework, the members of these ‘new minorities’ (Kymlicka, 1995) demand that their culture be recognised (Taylor, 1992) by the host legal system and invoke a right to maintain their unique ways of life. From a Constitutional Law perspective, the legal basis for the preservation of the cultural customs of the members of new minorities is usually attributed to a fundamental ‘right to culture’ (defined as the right to keep one’s original culture and not to be forcefully assimilated into the cultural majority) (Scuto, 2015) and to its specifications (such as the right to freedom of religion, linguistic rights and the parents’ right to educate their children according to their philosophical and cultural beliefs), which compose the category of the so-called ‘cultural’ (or ‘multicultural’) rights (Cavaggion, 2018).

However, the counter-majoritarian enforcement of these cultural rights can sometimes be problematic, especially when they are invoked to justify cultural

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practices that are prohibited by law in the host legal system¹ or even infringe on some of the fundamental and identifying values of Western constitutionalism itself (such as, for example, honour crimes, forced marriages, female genital mutilation, etc.).

From a constitutional perspective, cultural clashes are nothing more than conflicts between competing constitutional interests: on the one hand, the minorities' cultural rights and, on the other, the rival constitutional interest of the host legal system to defend its non-renounceable fundamental principles – its identifying core – as defined by its legislator. This constitutional conflict has become one of those factors of 'crisis' that in turn generate anxieties that affect the experiences of both those migrating or trying to settle in a new society, and the members of receiving societies who perceive newcomers as an economic, social or cultural 'threat' (as pointed out by Jakobson, King, Moroşanu and Vetik in the Introduction to this book). When faced with the new minorities' claims based on cultural rights and aimed at justifying cultural practices that are prohibited by the law of the host society, European policymakers have historically adopted two significantly diverging models, based on different balancing points between the new minorities' demand to be recognised and the host legal system's need to preserve a common core of identifying values.²

In short (and with some degree of approximation), the assimilationist model (originally adopted in France) fundamentally favours the second interest and aims to absorb the members of cultural minorities into the majority's culture. This is done with a range of proactive measures by the legislator which explicitly prohibit some specific behaviours that are regarded as incompatible with the identifying values of the French constitutional system – e.g. the ban on the face veil in public spaces or on *de facto* polygamy (Bilancia, 2012).

The multicultural model (originally adopted in the UK) favours the first interest and aims to accommodate multicultural claims whenever it is possible to do so (an example would be the Motorcycle Crash Helmets Religious Exemption Act of 1976, which allows men belonging to the Sikh minority to wear a turban instead of a helmet while riding a motorbike).

Other models, such as the German or the Dutch ones, are widely regarded as a mix of these two European historical models and, consequently, as an intermediate balancing of the two relevant constitutional interests. At any rate, it must be noted that every one of the aforementioned approaches seems to have failed in promoting

¹The reference is to the 'cultural defence', developed in American criminal law as a means to exclude criminal liability of the members of cultural minorities for acts that are illegal in the host legal system but legal in their original culture (Renteln, 2004).

²It has been argued that the concept of the 'model of integration' is a highly elusive and unstable one as, when it comes to integration, on the one hand it is extremely difficult to define what constitutes a 'model' and, on the other, all the so-called European 'models' underwent a degree of transformation in the last decade (Bertossi, 2011). Nonetheless, the concept of the 'model of integration' is useful (at least in law studies), when adopting (as I try to do in this chapter) a comparative perspective in order to describe the historically prevalent approach of a given national legislator (or judiciary) to the issues connected to integration (Cavaggion, 2018).

social cohesion and integration.³ This, in turn, led to a move beyond clear-cut, all-encompassing ‘models’ of integration, and to attempts at developing new and more flexible policies to deal with the issues of integration across Europe.

9.2 The Italian Jurisprudential Model of Integration

The approach of the Italian legislator to issues connected to immigration has historically been a passive one. The matter was regulated, up until the 1990s, by legislation adopted during the Fascist era that was never really updated – this also because Italy was, for the better part of the last century, a country of emigrants and that tendency slowly started to shift only during the 1980s (Scuto, 2012).

The Italian legislator’s attempts at regulating immigration have always been prompted by national and supranational contingencies and were never inspired by a far-sighted approach. Consequently, Italian policymakers constantly found themselves trailing, while trying to adjust to the subsequent gradual increases in the migratory flows directed towards Italy.⁴ The only noticeable exception was Law no. 40 of 6 March 1998 (the so-called ‘Turco-Napolitano Law’) which attempted to regulate the matter of immigration in a structural and comprehensive manner. However, the law was never fully implemented in the Italian legal system, due also to a significant (negative) shift in public sentiment on immigration at the start of the new millennium (Bonetti, 2004).

Consequently, just a couple of years after its entry into force, Law no. 40/1998 was heavily amended (or, rather, it could be argued, dismantled) by Law no. 189 of 30 July 2002 (the so-called ‘Bossi-Fini Law’). From that point on, the tendency of the Italian policymaker to deal with immigration as an emergency (rather than as a structural phenomenon) consolidated itself. The real magnitude of the phenomenon was sensationalised, amplified and distorted by a number of political parties and media outlets, which established a false correlation between immigration and public security, generating increasing levels of anxiety with regard to the perception of migrants in Italian society. This correlation was cemented by Law no. 94 of 15 July 2009, which operated on the basis of the presumption that the immigrant (and especially the illegal immigrant) poses a danger for the host society, thus criminalising several aspects of the migratory phenomenon (Scuto, 2012).

In light of the above, it could be argued that the obstinacy of the Italian policymaker in denying the structural nature of the migratory phenomenon and regulating it as a contingent emergency of sorts, kickstarted a vicious circle in which the legislator is consistently forced to chase the escalating issues (and anxieties) that are amplified by its own inactivity (Biondi Dal Monte, 2016).

³As proven also by the surge, in the last ten years, of acts of terrorism committed across Europe by young second- or third-generation immigrants (Joppke, 2017; Scuto, 2015).

⁴This was the case, for example, with Law no. 943 of 30 December 1986 and Law no. 39 of 28 February 1990 (the so-called ‘Martelli Law’).

In this context, it comes as no surprise that, when the issues connected to multiculturalism finally exploded in the Italian legal system and choosing a model of integration with the new minorities became a pressing necessity, the Italian legislator once again fell victim to its historical approach (Cerrina Feroni & Federico, 2017; Scuto, 2015), which was almost automatically taken from the issues of *immigration* (the regulation of migratory flows) and transposed to the issues of *integration* (the regulation of the interaction between different cultural groups in the legal system).

The result is that the Italian legal system, as opposed to those of other European countries, currently does not have (and never had) a recognisable model of integration or, at least, a defined far-sighted take on the issues of integration (Cerrina Feroni, 2015; Guolo, 2011; Michetti, 2015; Scuto, 2015). The legislator never adopted structural and coherent multicultural policies, not even at the end of the 1990s, when multiculturalism was not as divisive an issue as it is today (since Italy had just become a country of immigration). Once that occasion was lost, regulating the matter gradually became more and more problematic as the years went by, due to the so-called ‘consensus trap’ (Grosso, 2016) – the fear of an electoral backlash paralysed the policymaker, which effectively renounced its role on divisive issues such as immigration and integration (Guolo, 2011).

In the resulting legislative void, the task of balancing the cultural rights of the members of the new minorities with the interest of the Italian legal system to defend its non-renounceable fundamental principles and rights fell almost entirely on the judiciary’s shoulders. After all, ignoring the new minorities’ requests for recognition does not make them disappear: if these requests are deprived of any legislative regulation, they will naturally find their way to the courts (Olivito, 2012). In Italy this happened at all the levels and articulations of the jurisdiction and therefore cultural clashes reached both ordinary and administrative courts, up to the highest level of the national and supranational system of protection of fundamental rights.

It can be safely stated that, in the Italian legal system, when it comes to the matter of multiculturalism, the judiciary has been effectively compensating for the legislator’s shortcomings and, in most cases, Italian courts and tribunals have been posing a limit to the most assimilationist and discriminatory legislative policies (Di Marco, 2012). In order to do so, Italian judges had to become, in a way, ‘anthropologist judges’ or interpreters of the cultures of the new minorities (Ruggiu, 2012). The judiciary’s role was redefined under pressure from the multicultural society, as judges became the first-instance mediators of multicultural conflicts and the first respondents to the anxieties of integration. Judges had to start listening and understanding the reasons of the members of the new minorities while interpreting the law in an evolutive and, in some ways, interdisciplinary and intercultural manner (Caputo, 2005). The work of the judiciary brought about the evolution of many sectors of a legal system that was originally devoted to the protection of the majoritarian cultural and some ‘qualified’ historical minorities, by gradually (and tiresomely) adapting it to the new needs of the multicultural state.

Safe to say that, after a first phase of adjustment, the Italian judiciary managed to strike a precarious but reasonable compromise between the need to recognise and

protect the cultural rights of the new minorities and the need to maintain and preserve the non-renounceable and fundamental principles and rights of the constitutional system. The cornerstone of the Italian jurisprudence on integration was the principle that:

a multiethnic society, that more or less consciously accepts multiculturalism, cannot ignore a certain degree of cultural relativism, that allows to look at other civilisations without judging them according to our parameters [and that consequently, while balancing cultural rights, the judge] must be guided by a careful and enlightened interpretation of the relevant law.⁵

On the other hand, the Italian judiciary found that the limit to cultural rights was represented by:

the violation of the fundamental rules that shape and found the Italian legal system and the regulation of interpersonal relations [and in particular in respect of] the constitutional principles outlined by Article 2 of the Constitution, with regard to the protection of the fundamental human rights [and] Article 3 of the Constitution, with regard to equal social dignity, equality with no distinction on the basis of gender, and the Republic's duty to remove those obstacles which, while effectively limiting freedom and equality, hinder the full development of the person.⁶

One could speak, therefore, of a 'reasoned' opening to cultural differences which, moving within the aforementioned boundaries, granted the new minorities' requests for recognition of cultural rights in those cases in which the said requests did not infringe on the incompressible core of other non-renounceable constitutional rights or principles. Conversely, the requests for recognition of cultural rights were not granted if doing so would infringe on the core of other non-renounceable rights or principles of the Italian legal system.

Some scholars described this approach as the enforcement of a criterion of 'human reasonableness' (Di Marco, 2012, 29), which moves from the centrality of the individual and his/her rights recognised by Article 2 of the Constitution and recognises his/her specificities accordingly to Article 3 of the Constitution, thus avoiding an application of the law which would be formally equal but substantially unequal.

As I argue in subsequent sections, however, this jurisprudential model of resolution of the multicultural issues seems to be starting to show its limits, on the one hand due to the progressive increase in cultural pluralism that follows the growing multiculturalisation of Italian society (that results in the multiplication of judicial cases) and, on the other, more worryingly, due to some recent jurisprudential decisions that showed a significant drift from the 'reasonable balancing' that historically characterised the Italian courts' approach. In light of the above, in order to better understand the Italian jurisprudential model of integration (and its current transformations and struggles), I first review some of the decisions that best exemplify the Italian judiciary's take on cultural conflicts, both in cases in which cultural rights

⁵ See Cass. Pen., Sez. VI, Sentence no. 43646 of 22 June 2011.

⁶ See Cass. Pen., Sez. VI, Sentence no. 46300 of 26 November 2008.

prevailed and in those in which they were sacrificed. This will allow me to highlight the balancing point singled out by the judiciary (in lieu of the legislator), which was constantly enforced by Italian courts until recently and that had seemingly provided, in most cases, for a peaceful composition of the multicultural fractures in Italian society.

9.3 Cases in Which Cultural Rights were Enforced

9.3.1 *The Face Veil*

In the Italian legal system there is no law that explicitly prohibits the so-called ‘face veil’, while a relatively old anti-terrorism law (Law no. 52 of 22 May 1975, the so-called ‘Reale Law’) – adopted during the so-called *anni di piombo* (‘Years of Lead’) – prohibits, in general, the wearing of any means aimed at making a person difficult to recognise in public (or open to the public) spaces, unless the item is worn for a ‘just cause’.⁷ Moreover, Article 85 of the TULPS (public security laws)⁸ prohibits the wearing of ‘masks’ in public (or open to the public) spaces. Therefore, the scholarly and jurisprudential debate focused prevalently on the possibility of applying Law no. 52/1975 and Article 85 of the TULPS to women who wear a face veil, while the conduct of women who wear a veil that does not cover the face has always been regarded as a legal exercise of the right to freedom of religion recognised by Article 19 of the Constitution.

The case of the face veil is emblematic of the passive approach of the Italian legislator to the issues of multiculturalism, since the policymaker never tried to regulate the most problematic aspects of this cultural practice, which were, nonetheless, clearly perceived by public opinion. In the legislator’s silence and starting in 2004, a number of mayors of northern municipalities decided to step in and issued a series of emergency ordinances (Cavaggion, 2016) which stated that Law no. 152/1975 and Article 85 of the TULPS should be automatically applied to women wearing a face veil. This resulted in the historic Decision no. 3076/2008 of the Council of State⁹ which laid down the principles that have regulated the issue of the face veil for the years to come and which still (mostly) regulate it today.

Firstly, the Council of State ruled out the possibility of regarding the face veil as an illegal ‘mask’ under Article 85 of the TULPS, as the veil is clearly not a ‘mask’ but, rather, a ‘traditional piece of clothing of some populations, still used nowadays as part of a religious practice’.

⁷ During the period known as the ‘Years of Lead’ (the late 1960s to the late 1980s) it was common for members of Italian far-left or far-right political terrorist groups to hide their faces under helmets and other similar devices.

⁸ The TULPS is a set of security provisions, originally adopted under the Fascist regime, which still survives today (partly and with numerous subsequent revisions).

⁹ See Cons. di Stato, Sez. VI, Sentence no. 3076 of 19 June 2008.

Secondly, the Council of State ruled that Law no. 152/1975 could not be applied to the face veil, as the *ratio* of this law is ‘avoiding that the use of helmets or other similar means could take place with the aim of avoiding recognition’ (in order to anonymously commit a crime), whereas the face veil ‘is not used, generally, to avoid recognition but, rather, as the expression of a tradition of some populations and cultures’. The exercise of religious freedom under Article 19 of the Constitution represents, consequently, a ‘just cause’, as required by Law no. 152/1975; therefore the Council of State concluded that ‘Law no. 152/1975 allows, in our legal system, that a person wears the face veil for religious or cultural motives’ in a public space.

Lastly, the Council of State singled out some particular cases in which the otherwise legal face veil could be specifically prohibited. These include: assemblies in a public or open to the public space, the removal of the veil for the time strictly necessary to allow the identification of the wearer if demanded by a public security officer and in buildings and offices characterised by ‘specific and sectorial needs’ that demand a more strict balancing of the rights and interests involved (such as the possible targets of terrorist attacks).

9.3.2 *The Kafala*

Another example of the protection of the cultural rights of new minorities’ members in the Italian jurisprudential model of integration is the case of the *kafala*, which is the instrument of Islamic law that ‘replaces’ adoption in Muslim legal systems – as adoption is expressly forbidden by the Quran (Malingreau, 2014). *Kafala*, as opposed to adoption, does not establish an effective parenting relationship between the ‘adopter’ (*kafil*) and the ‘adopted’ (*makful*) and the latter does not take the surname nor becomes an heir of the former (Le Boursicot, 2010).

Despite the apparent harmlessness of the instrument from a public-law perspective, at an early stage the Italian courts refused to recognise it due to its alleged incompatibility with Italian public order, thus denying family reunification visas to parents who entered into a *kafala* in a foreign legal system where the instrument is legal.¹⁰ The courts argued that the *kafala*’s rules and effects differed too much from those of adoption or foster care in the European legal tradition and that *kafala* was incompatible with the principle of equality (Article 3 of the Constitution), as it required the *kafil* to be a Muslim. Moreover, there was a concern that the *kafala* could be used to circumvent the national law on international adoptions.

However, this earlier case law was overruled in subsequent years by the Italian Court of Cassation, which found that the *kafala* should instead be regarded as a legal instrument and, therefore, as a legal basis for the family reunification of

¹⁰ See Tribunale di Torino, Decree of 4 May 2007.

citizens and foreigners alike.¹¹ The court found that the right to the respect of family life and the right of families belonging to minoritarian cultures to be recognised and to preserve their unity should prevail on the state's interest in defending its laws on international adoption – as such an interest is not part of the core principles that compose Italian public order, even more so if one considers that the *kafala* is widely recognised as a valid legal instrument by the main sources of international conventional law (Malingreau, 2014).

9.3.3 *Inter Absentes* Marriage

Inter absentes marriage is defined as a marriage in which one or both of the spouses is not physically attending the ceremony. In a recent case, Italian local government bodies invoked public order to refuse recognition¹² of an *inter absentes* marriage that was celebrated via Skype between an Italian citizen and a Pakistani citizen, according to the Pakistani tradition.¹³ More precisely, the public officers argued that the simultaneous physical presence of the spouses in the same place amounted to a core principle of the Italian legal system. Moreover, they argued that the *inter absentes* Islamic-law marriage, which is legal in Pakistan, does not ensure a real possibility to assess the validity of the woman's consent, thus violating Italian public order in the form of the principle of gender equality.

Also, in this case, the higher Italian courts did not uphold such a wide compression of the cultural rights of the members of the new minorities, as the Court of Cassation found that public order consists only of the fundamental constitutional principles and rules that could not be amended even by the national legislator, of which the simultaneous physical presence of the spouses during the celebration of a marriage is not a part.¹⁴ Therefore, the wedding celebrated via Skype, according to the laws and cultural traditions of the spouses' country of origin, should be regarded as legal in the Italian constitutional system, as an expression of the fundamental right to family life of the members of the new minorities.

¹¹ See Cass. Civ., Sez. I, Sentence no. 7472 of 20 March 2008; Cass. Civ., Sez. Unite, Sentence no. 21108 of 16 September 2013.

¹² In the Italian legal system, a marriage celebrated abroad must be registered by the competent Italian municipality in order to be valid.

¹³ See Tribunale di Bologna, Sez. I, Decree of 13 January 2014.

¹⁴ See Cass. Civ., Sez. I, Sentence no. 15343 of 25 July 2016.

9.4 Cases in Which the Fundamental Principles and Rights of the Italian Constitutional System were Enforced

9.4.1 *Honour Crimes*

Honour crimes are one of the most troubling issues connected to cultural clashes in the multicultural state. The question that needs to be answered is, basically, whether it is possible to take cultural elements into account in order to exclude or mitigate the responsibility for crimes that are particularly disruptive for the fundamental rights of the victims, such as the right to health or even the right to life. In these cases, the defendants invoke the right to culture (to keep one's original culture) in its 'purest' form, as the right to continue to live according to a cultural code of conduct which openly violates the rules of the host legal system.

From this perspective, the first and foremost issue that the Italian judiciary had to tackle was determining whether recognising such a right could result, in some cases, in the acquittal of the defendant accused of an honour crime. The Court of Cassation was adamant in stating that cultural elements can never lead to the acquittal of the defendant in cases of honour crimes that controvened the right to life or to the right to health of the victim. This principle was affirmed by 2002, in a case that involved a member of the Muslim minority facing trial for repeated cases of physical abuse to his wife.¹⁵ The defence lawyers argued that the First- and Second-Instance Tribunals should have acquitted the man, because 'the cultural and religious education, that is known to be particularly effective for Muslim men (such as the defendant)' is so powerful that the defendant 'did not know that he was abusing his wife', since abuse is part of the 'normal dynamics of a marriage' in Muslim society. The court strongly rejected this argument, finding that it was contrary to 'the laws that found the Italian legal system', as the fundamental principles enclosed in Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution (which include the right to health of the woman and the principle of gender equality) are 'an insurmountable barricade against the implementation, in the Italian society, of customs and traditions that undermine the results of centuries of development of the fundamental human rights'.

Notwithstanding a slightly paternalistic (or even neocolonialistic) choice of language in the decision, the balancing outlined by the court seems acceptable in its core meaning and was sustained by the jurisprudence in the following years.

In 2008, the court reformulated the same principle, with a more appropriate language, as it stated that 'the applicability of criminal law to citizens of different ethnicities and cultures that invoke sociological traditions of anthropological customs, must be adjusted in the light of behavioral variables'.¹⁶ However, such an adjustment must always meet the 'limit of fundamental human rights' (as prescribed by Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution). Consequently, the court rejected the argument

¹⁵ See Cass. Pen., Sez. VI, Sentence no. 55 of 8 November 2002.

¹⁶ See Cass. Pen., Sez. VI, Sentence no. 46300 of 26 November 2008.

that the defendant could be acquitted because he, ‘as a Muslim citizen, understands family life and his powers and rights within it (as the *pater familiae*) in a way which is different to that of an Italian citizen’. The court argued that sustaining such an argument would be ‘contrary to the fundamental rules that found the Italian legal system and regulate interpersonal relations’.

9.4.2 *Sexual Assault*

The balancing act performed by the Italian judiciary with regard to cultural defences in cases of sexual assault reached fundamentally the same conclusions.

In 2016, the Court of Cassation had to assess the case of a man belonging to the Bengali minority who was accused of complicity in sexual assault for not having properly protected his 15-year-old daughter, because he made her enter into a forced marriage in which she was repeatedly assaulted and abused by her husband.¹⁷ The First- and Second-Instance Tribunals did not find the father guilty of complicity in the sexual assault but only of battery, as the judges argued that the man did not act (in his mind) in order to expose his daughter to the husband’s violence. In other words, the tribunals found that the father did not realise the implications of his actions because this kind of ‘abuse finds its roots in the defendant’s cultural education’, so he perceived the said abuse as part of a normal marriage.

However, the Court of Cassation overruled the first- and second-instance decisions and found the man guilty of both battery and complicity in sexual assault, arguing that cultural elements can never be invoked in order to justify such a severe violation of the incompressible core of a woman’s right to health and self-determination. More precisely, the Court stated that

finding, as the First-Instance Tribunal did, that the father, just because of an alleged cultural education (which, in any case, would be deprived of any justification) could legitimately force his daughter to submit to the will of his son-in-law, is a triviality that cannot be granted access into our legal system.

9.5 **The Shift in the Italian Jurisprudential Model of Integration in the Years of the ‘Refugee Crisis’**

In light of the above, the Italian jurisprudential model of integration seems to have reached a reasonable balance between the protection of the cultural rights of the members of the new minorities and the need to maintain and protect the incompressible core of the fundamental constitutional principles and rights of the host legal system. This is the result of a commendable and restless hermeneutic activity

¹⁷ See Cass. Pen., Sez. III, Sentence no. 40633 of 29 September 2016.

of the judiciary which, as the legislator remained silent, took on the task of answering the ever-increasing demand for recognition of multicultural claims. In this framework, the limit to the recognition of cultural rights was found in the incompressible core of the fundamental human rights recognised by the Italian Constitution, which cannot be entirely sacrificed in favour of cultural rights. Conversely, the demands for integration, aimed at imposing the majoritarian axiological system on the members of the new minorities, have found their limit in the incompressible core of the right to culture (to keep one's original culture) and its specifications.

From this perspective, in the Italian legal system the assessment of cultural rights and of the claims for cultural recognition of the new minorities in the absence of a defined legislative model of integration does not seem to have posed an issue but, rather, an opportunity. The jurisprudential recognition of the new minorities on a case-by-case basis, within the limits described above, has effectively facilitated a de-escalation of cultural clashes and Italy has not experienced the same integration problems as, for example, France, the United Kingdom or Germany (Cavaggion, 2018).

However, this framework has radically changed in recent years, as Italy was one of the European countries the most prominently impacted on by the so-called 'refugee crisis'. From 2015 to 2017, over 300,000 asylum-seekers applied for refugee status in Italy. Immigration was one of the main topics of the 2018 general election campaign and, as a matter of fact, the right-wing populist party '*Lega*', led by Matteo Salvini, which rode (and fuelled) the growing anxieties that the 'refugee crisis' generated in the Italian society, owes a great part of its electoral success to its promise to govern immigration with an iron fist.

The rise of '*Lega*' is, in turn, symptomatic of a significant shift in Italian public opinion, which is steadily trending towards a widespread anti-immigration sentiment. This is best exemplified by a number of quantitative indicators which reveal how, despite the commendable results of the jurisprudential model of integration, some worrying tendencies and anxieties are gradually developing in the population on the matter of multiculturalism. These trends, starting in 2015, have been undoubtedly exacerbated by the 'refugee crisis'. For example, in 2016, Italy came second, among European countries, in the unflattering ranking of the negative sentiment towards Muslim minorities. Similarly, in the same year, Italy was leading the ranking of European countries in sharing the belief that refugees commit more crimes than other social groups.¹⁸ Moreover, in 2017, one Italian in four stated that they would not accept a member of the Jewish minority into their family, while one in two said that they would not accept a member of the Muslim minority into their family.¹⁹

From this perspective, it could be argued that even the judiciary was not entirely immune to public opinion's tendency for populism and the rejection of immigration and integration. Several recent judicial decisions show a drift from the (precarious)

¹⁸ See the report *Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey* (Pew Research Center, 2016).

¹⁹ See the report *Being Christian in Western Europe* (Sahgal & Jo, 2018).

balance that was reached in recent decades and embraced more restrictive positions, thus allowing a further judicial compression of the cultural rights of the members of new minorities. This poses a severe risk for the Italian model of integration as a whole, as an assimilationist drift in the jurisprudence of a legal system (such as the Italian one), in which the judiciary historically functioned as a safeguard for the enforcement of the Constitution when it comes to regulating immigration, could ultimately amount to a drift of the integration model as a whole.

The new principles affirmed by these (currently still isolated) new judicial decisions are that the members of the new minorities must meet an ‘obligation for the immigrant to conform its values to those of the Western world, in which they freely choose to enter’²⁰ and to ‘verify in advance the compatibility of their behaviours with the principles’ that regulate the host society and ‘their legality with regard to the host society’s legal system.’²¹

One cannot help but wonder to what extent this judicial drift was influenced by the growing anxieties in Italian society and by the resulting changes in the tones and contents of the political, social and public debate on the issues of immigration and multiculturalism in the most difficult years (at least in the general public’s perception) of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’. The drift is perhaps best exemplified by two actual cases.

9.5.1 *Kirpan*

In 2017, the Italian Court of Cassation examined the case of a man belonging to the Sikh minority who was accused of illegally carrying an article with a blade or a point in a public place.²² The ‘article’ was a *kirpan*, the ceremonial dagger that all Sikhs must wear due to a specific requirement of their religion and which is regarded as a symbol of a Sikh’s willingness to fight and resist evil at every moment (Juss, 2013).²³ In previous instances, other Italian courts found that wearing a *kirpan* was not a criminal offence, as the practice amounted to a legal manifestation of the right to freedom of religion protected by Article 19 of the Constitution, which could not be compressed in the absence of a real threat to another constitutionally relevant interest.

²⁰ See Cass. Pen., Sez. I, Sentence no. 40849 of 6 May 2016; Cass. Pen., Sez. I, Sentence no. 24084 of 31 March 2017.

²¹ See Cass. Pen., Sez. III, Sentence no. 14960 of 29 January 2015; Cass. Pen., Sez. I, Sentence no. 40849 of 6 May 2016; Cass. Pen., Sez. I, Sentence no. 24084 of 31 March 2017.

²² Which is a crime under Italian law. See Article 4 of Law no. 110 of 10 April 1975.

²³ See also the analysis of the Italian Council of State on the matter: Cons. di Stato, sez. I, Opinion of 23 June 2010, Affair no. 02387/2010; Cons. di Stato, sez. I, Opinion of 10 April 2013, Affair no. 00135/2013.

However, with Decision no. 24084 of 2017,²⁴ the Court of Cassation endorsed a *revirement* on the matter, declaring that wearing a *kirpan* in a public place should be regarded as a criminal offence in the Italian legal system, as the practice amounts to illegally carrying an article with a blade or point. The court found that freedom of religion can be limited ‘in order to protect other interests’, such as those ‘that fall under the formula of public order’ (Bernardi, 2017; Ruggeri, 2017).

The motivation behind the decision outlined a set of principles that clearly diverge from those enforced by the Italian judiciary in previous multicultural cases, as the court stated that ‘in a multiethnic society, coexistence between individuals of different ethnicities necessarily requires the identification of a shared core in which immigrants and host society must recognise themselves’. According to the court, this means that there is ‘a fundamental obligation for the immigrant to conform his values to those of the Western world, in which he freely chose to live’ and to ‘preliminarily assess the compatibility of his behaviour’ with the principles that regulate the host society. The court went on to state that

the decision to move into a society in which, as it is known, the founding values are different from those of the society of origin, demands the respect of said values and it is not tolerable that attachment to one’s values, even if based on the laws of the country of origin, results in a deliberate violation of the values of the host society.

The shift in the court’s approach (if compared to the previous jurisprudence of the Italian integration model) seems apparent and even more so if one considers that the court, while elaborating on the content of the alleged ‘core’ that constitutes the non-renounceable principles of the Italian legal system, states that this core is composed of the ‘values of the Western world’. The court failed to take into account the cultural meaning of the *kirpan* (which is a religious symbol and not a weapon) for the Sikh minority and equated the concept of ‘public order’ with the ethical values embraced by the cultural majority in Italy (Cavaggion, 2019). Moreover, it must be stressed that reference to the ‘values of the Western world’ in the specific case of the *kirpan* is almost paradoxical. In fact, it is quite difficult to believe that not carrying a weapon in a public space is a ‘value of the Western world’: as a matter of fact, openly carrying a weapon in the public space is regarded as an expression of a constitutional right in at least one of the most prominent Western legal systems, that of the United States of America. It must also be stressed that, contrary to what the court claimed, carrying a *kirpan* is regarded as a legal practice in the vast majority of Western constitutional systems (Cavaggion, 2017).

9.5.2 *The Face Veil (Again)*

Another case involved a 2015 resolution by the local government of the Region of Lombardy which prohibited access to the main regional governmental building to persons with their face covered, once again invoking Law no. 152/1975 as the legal

²⁴ See Cass. Civ., Sez. I, Sentence no. 24084 of 31 March 2017.

basis for the ban (see *supra*, Section 9.3.1), while specifying that ‘religious practices or traditions [...] cannot be regarded as a just cause due to the security needs of regional facilities’.²⁵

The case is relevant because, for the first time in Italy, a court chose to depart from the seemingly reasonable principles that the Council of State set out in 2008 regarding the face veil. In fact, the Tribunal of Milan upheld the above-mentioned regional resolution, as it found that the prohibition of the face veil in regional governmental facilities does not amount to a discriminatory measure against women belonging to the Muslim minority. More precisely, the tribunal conceded that the ban, despite being neutral in hypothesis, caused a ‘disadvantage’ for Muslim women in reality but found, nonetheless, that this ‘disadvantage’ is ‘objectively justified by a legitimate aim, which is the necessity to ensure identification and checks for public security reasons’.

However, the tribunal failed to note that what it dismisses as a simple ‘disadvantage’ amounts, in reality, to a severe compression of a number of fundamental constitutional rights, as the facilities included in the ban’s scope include, for example, hospitals, local clinics and local housing agencies, which are all tasked with the implementation of many different fundamental social rights. A woman belonging to the Muslim minority living in Lombardy is, therefore, forced to make a choice between two equally fundamental rights, in a situation in which exercising one of them (freedom of religion) leads to the violation of the other (for example, the right to health or the right to housing) and *vice versa*. This is even more worrying if one considers that, contrary to what the tribunal stated, the ban appears disproportionate and the suppression of the right to culture and freedom of religion for public security reasons is imposed in order to prevent a highly hypothetical and abstract danger. On the one hand, local clinics and housing agencies do not seem to be ‘sensitive targets’ in need of reinforced protection for public security reasons. On the other, the same aim (the protection of public security) could have been reached in a less damaging way, such as the mandatory identification at the entrance of facilities through the removal of the face veil for the time strictly necessary for the purpose.

The court’s decision, although as of now an isolated one, could nonetheless be regarded as expressive of a changing public sentiment, which is further confirmed by the case, reported by several media outlets, of a young Muslim trainee lawyer who was forced to leave an administrative courtroom due to her refusal to remove her veil (which, in fact, did not even cover her face), while the guidelines of the Italian Supreme Council of the judiciary clearly state that

in the exercise of the judge’s power of directing and organising the hearings, those conducts that do not interfere with the orderly celebration of the hearing and that represent a legitimate exercise of freedom of religion must be granted full protection. This includes the wearing of specific clothing or other external symbols.²⁶

²⁵ See Resolution of the Council of the Lombardy Region no. X/4553 of 10 December 2015.

²⁶ See Resolution of 22 February 2012.

9.6 Conclusions

The issues described above make one wonder whether it would not be appropriate, in the current situation, for the Italian legislator to finally take action, in order to ‘crystallise’ the best results of the multicultural jurisprudence of recent decades. This would also be to protect the reasonable balancing historically set out by the courts from the contingent logics of growing anxieties in a multicultural society and from the drives coming from the more-extreme and intolerant sectors of public opinion which might result in an assimilationist drift in the national model of integration.

From this perspective, scholars argued that taking action with *ad hoc* policies in order to regulate the issues of multiculturalism and integration in a constitutionally compatible manner has become, now more than ever, a precise and pressing duty of the state (Cerrina Feroni, 2017).

A structural legislation that regulates the issue of the cultural rights of new minorities should also be accompanied by additional proactive policies (Medda-Windischer & Carlà, 2021), in a far-sighted design that should look beyond the balancing performed by the judiciary on a case-by-case basis. These multicultural policies should not recognise cultural rights as a ‘graceful concession’ of the host society to the members of new minorities but, rather, should adjust the legal system in order to allow it to accept and welcome cultural diversity as an added value for society as a whole. A legal system that is not prepared to embrace multiculturalism as a structural factor of our societies (and which treats it as an emergency or contingency) is destined to face two possible alternatives that are equally bound for failure: assimilation or expulsion (Palermo, 2016). However, neither of these alternatives seems to be legally pursuable in the Italian constitutional system, as widespread expulsion and forced assimilation are contrary to the fundamental constitutional principles outlined in the Republican Constitution.

It is certainly true that integration models are shaped by political, social and economic contingencies and, as such, are highly volatile and can change (even drastically) over time and in light of new anxieties. However, from a legislative and jurisprudential perspective, a national ‘model’ can never diverge from the fundamental constitutional principles that found the legal system as a whole. In fact, the requirement of compatibility with fundamental constitutional principles, often invoked as a limit to minoritarian cultural practices and cultural diversity (Cerrina Feroni, 2017), should also be understood as a limit for the legislator and the judiciary, which are bound, in the exercise of their respective powers, by the fundamental principles of pluralism, equality and human dignity which demand that the Italian integration model is, at its core, a multicultural one (Ainis, 1991).

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Chapter 10

Covid-19 and the Politics of Migration Policy in Estonia



Leif Kalev

10.1 Introduction

Since 2020, the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has significantly impacted the governance of various areas of life across the world. It has clearly left its mark on international travel, movement and migration, but it is worth further examining the extent to which the influence is visible in migration policy. A recent article (Jakobson & Kalev, 2020) discussed the influence of the first Covid-19 wave on labour-migration policy in Estonia but, as several new trends have recently come to light, the issue merits further study. In this chapter I study a broader range of migration and mobility policy initiatives and management measures, especially from the perspective of the politics of migration policy.

Migration is one of the party-politically highly sensitive policy fields, possibly impeding policy evolution. This makes it interesting to study in terms of the Covid-19 policy response. The coronavirus outbreak was so widespread and explicit that it was not possible to rebrand it or talk it away. It necessitated a clear crisis response and intervention by the government but to what extent did this lead to actual or attempted policy changes?

Covid has also added to the cascading migration crisis and the related turbulent times and anxieties (see Chap. 1 by Jakobson et al. in this volume). Anxieties need not exist only at the level of migrants or host-society citizens – front-line bureaucrats, policymakers and implementers, politicians and media actors can also have anxieties and these are reflected in political and administrative processes and decisions concerning migration and integration. In this chapter I discuss the anxieties prevalent at the heart of policy politics – a political elite in policy contestation. The first waves of Covid provoked wide-ranging anxieties which affected the relative

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politicisation of the policy field. This then prompts the question of how these anxieties influenced political initiatives on policy content and their success.

Estonia is a good case for this study as it has had a relatively consistent migration policy evolving from its nationalist protectionist tradition towards the contemporary neoliberal setting. Migration has also been a highly politicised topic in Estonia (see Jakobson & Kalev, 2020). Furthermore, in January 2021 the national government changed from a conservative-leaning one to one based on a liberally oriented coalition. Thus we have a kind of natural experiment where the policy responses for the first and the subsequent Covid-19 waves evolved in a quite different political setting. This enables me to study the continuity and change of migration policy in different political contexts. I discuss both the extent of political influence over policy and the more- and less-influenced aspects in migration policy.

I start with a theoretical discussion where the concept of the politics of migration policy will be elaborated and operationalised for this study. Then the empirical approach will be developed and the Estonian case contextualised, studied and discussed, before the conclusions.

10.2 The Politics of Migration Policy

10.2.1 Conceptualisation

To study the politics of migration policy it is necessary to define and operationalise it. The political can be characterised as politics and policy in a polity (Sørensen & Torfing, 2017). *Polity* refers to the locus of politics, usually territorial and in the form of a nation state. This has only a contextual role in this chapter, while politics and policy are the main focus.

Politics is the political contestation over how public values and goals are defined, produced and allocated. This is based on the competition and collaboration, discussions, clashes and compromises between various political actors, such as government offices, political parties, interest organisations, social movements and citizen groups who seek to influence public priorities, regulations and activities. Politics is also the art of the possible, a person's partisan view of the public interest – in interaction with the others but also being active and using the power resources s/he has. People need to develop a convincing agenda and find allies, build majorities, aim for political power, gain and retain sufficient legitimacy and, if successful, also be competent and active enough to decide, regulate and implement policies.

Policy refers to the concrete problem-solving strategies that are produced through politics taking place within a particular polity. This is the key activity in the governing dimension of the political. Governing can be seen as a matter of both producing and renewing order. Renewal is about managing the process of change, constantly

innovating and dismantling the old solutions. Here, governing is the process of formulating and implementing public policy, in other words, the process of formulating, elaborating, implementing, evaluating and renewing regulation, policy programmes and measures on a political basis, based on agreements and legitimate power. Policy is thus the productive, innovative aspect of the functioning of public authorities.

We can study political activity based on several perspectives and premises (e.g. Hay, 2007). For this chapter a relevant distinction is made between the broad and narrow understandings of the political. In a narrow sense it takes place in formal public-governance institutions while, in a very broad sense, every human thought and activity can be seen as political. While the narrow definition is limited in omitting various political actors with political influence, the broad one is flawed in diverting attention away from key public decisions. Chatting about your personal hygiene to influence that of a friend can be seen as political but this is not a substitute for the politics of public-health policy.

Here, I pursue a middle course linking policy initiatives, decisions and implementation to public-governance institutions while seeing political contestation in broader terms: various societal, political and administrative actors seek to influence public policy and, while the political and administrative actors are focal, the others also have their opportunities. This is the key to the notion of the politics of a public policy: all kinds of political activity aimed at influencing the decisions and implementation in an area of public policy by public-governance institutions.

Migration policy is policy in the field of migration (Giugni & Passy, 2006). In this chapter, I understand migration in a relatively broad sense, encompassing both traditional international migration, cross-border commuting and mobility while leaving out internal movement. Thus the politics of migration policy encompasses various political activities designed to influence the decisions and implementation by public-governance institutions in traditional international migration, cross-border commuting and mobility – and the related administrative activities.

The politics of migration policy is both influenced by and, in turn, influences the migration regime (Eule et al., 2019; Pott et al., 2018). A migration regime forms the practical context in which the politics of migration policy is enacted, while the official version in force (i.e. legislation and regulation) provides the key content and foci of the migration regime.

There are various accounts of the politics of migration (e.g. Spencer, 2003), migration policy (e.g. Giugni & Passy, 2006) and governance (Carmel et al., 2021) and its relations to migrant participation (e.g. Odmalm, 2005) as well as migration governance (e.g. Betts, 2012) or the political aspects of administrative practices (e.g. Kretsedemas, 2012). At the same time, my understanding is that scholarly discussion in the field would benefit from a more elaborate utilisation of the literature on public policy – and especially the politics of public policy. Some perspectives relevant to this discussion I outline and operationalise below.

10.2.2 Operationalisation

The practice of political activity can be characterised at two levels. At the system level, it broadly follows the Baumgartner and Jones (2009) model of punctuated equilibrium, i.e. periods of incrementalism punctuated by periods of rapid change. Incremental adjustment has various sources such as negative feedback, i.e. the counter-reaction of others to some actors' success; policy monopolies or the hegemonic position of certain actor(s) in a field and the corresponding inertia – i.e. the tendency to maintain the existing situation. Rapid change is based, for example, by focusing events such as sudden external factors necessitating action and positive feedback – i.e. the realignment of other actors in support of change and encouraging further similar changes. Here, agenda-setting and control are of key importance, depending on the interactions of actors over policy images and structured by policy venues. Some actors seek to foster a policy agenda; others to oppose it.

This brings us to the agency perspective (e.g. Zittoun, 2014). Actors can be more idealist or pragmatically oriented but, whatever the considerations, they will act in support or against a policy or remain neutral. To foster or avoid change, a promoting actor needs to have a convincing message and a sufficient supporting (advocacy) coalition. There is a trade-off: to attract more actors into the coalition, the promoter of change needs to broaden its message; however, when the message becomes too broad, it will not persuade the general public. This is broadly similar for the opponents of change. As actors, both politicians, parties and public officials develop various contacts seeking to foster a policy line or meet personal ambitions. More ideologically oriented actors also have to find strategies for the cases where their policy images are not appealing enough.

The stakeholders in policy processes are not just participants. They are also target groups of public policy, positive and negative beneficiaries of policy initiatives and measures. Like this, the politicians are consciously or unconsciously building up the benevolently and negatively treated groups (Schneider & Ingram, 1997). We can distinguish between the groups perceived as strong or weak, deserving or undeserving. Politicians have the tendency to promote strong and deserving groups while punishing the weak and undeserving, creating spirals of (over)growth and marginalisation that are detrimental for democracy. The other groups are a mixed political target.

In migration policy, too, some groups can be seen as almost universally positive (e.g. rich and collaborating expatriate investors) while most are seen negatively. However, the temptation to restrict or ban immigration is further balanced by some powerful interest groups – e.g. entrepreneurs who are internationally active or need foreign labour. So, for most parties, migration is a mixed terrain, although extreme nationalist or globalist parties seek support based on their strong agenda in this domain.

This is taking place in the context of a wider shift in democratic politics and governance, which is affected by growing societal fragmentation, mediation and the divergence between front and back politics. The fragmentation of citizens'

preferences leads to more manipulative relations between political parties and their members and voters. This is amplified by mediation – i.e. the adaptation of politicians to the thirst for colourfulness of the commercialised mass media and their enhanced ability to manipulate it. Politicians specialising in spectacle politics and power relations do not have enough time to develop substantive policy and governance, so they engage in technocratising initiatives such as agencification, marketisation, juridisation and justicialisation (Papadopoulos, 2013).

As a result, frontstage politics aimed at voting deviates from backstage politics aimed at governing. A kind of double game develops, knit together by strategic communication management (Louw, 2010). This could explain some of the stability in various policy areas that are managed mainly via backstage politics. In other words, they are depoliticised, taken out from public political debate in various ways. This initiates the counter-reaction of anti-politics (Fawcett et al., 2017) and the rise of new populist movements and parties challenging the mediatised technocratic management (De Vries & Hobolt, 2020; Kaltwasser et al., 2017). The immigration issues are of particular importance for the new nationalist right (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018).

On the one hand, all this is just part of the contemporary dynamics of party politics. On the other, it much defines the political opportunity space for politically initiated migration policy change. As the nationalist conservatives have a strong interest in restricting immigration and the centrists are willing to compromise for power, the current playground generally favours political initiatives towards more restrictive immigration policies. This is, in turn, balanced by administrative inertia and the relatively strong economic interest groups seeking more affordable workers.

10.2.3 Covid-19 as a Focusing Event

Focusing events are situations that raise policy-makers' awareness of a problem. These might include disasters or crises, tragic incidents, terrorist attacks and disruptive changes in technology – or more routine events such as elections. Events do not directly result in policy change but present an opportunity for people or coalitions to exploit, and so could be the basis for policy change.

There are different approaches to the concept of focusing event (DeLeo et al., 2021). This chapter is based on a broad approach (Baumgartner & Jones, 2009; Kingdon, 2003) where focusing events are relatively sudden and external to the policy process but have an impact on it. As the originator of the concept, John Kingdon posited that: 'problems...need a little push to get the attention of people in and around government'. Pushes come in the form of a focusing event or a 'crisis or disaster that comes along to call attention to the problem, a powerful symbol that catches on, or the personal experience of a policy-maker' (Kingdon, 2003, 94–95). Focusing events are thus an important contributor to policy change, highlighting the salience of some policy issues.

Not all focusing events lead to policy change. It may be insufficient just to have an event – windows of opportunity open as experience accumulates with events over time (O’Donovan, 2017). However, they should also not be downplayed. In order to have more influence and open a window for policy change, a focusing event needs to have a significant effect – e.g. in terms of the number of people affected and the geographic extent of harm caused – or be recurring, thus accumulating attention (Birkland, 2006; Kingdon, 2003; O’Donovan, 2017). Suddenness and claims of unforeseeability enable the responsible policy actors to shift culpability from human frailty to chance occurrence (Stone, 2012). Framing and the institutional arrangements within a policy domain can also influence the power of the event (DeLeo et al., 2021). Focusing events tend to be easily dramatisable, attractive to the media and able to dissolve policy monopolies (Baumgartner & Jones, 2009).

Focusing events have long been related to migration. For example, the great depression of 1929, the oil crisis of 1973, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the financial crisis of 2008 and many others have been seen as focusing events followed by restrictions to labour immigration (Koser, 2010). While the Covid-19 crisis differs from these in many respects, there are at least two similarities which can be conducive to focusing events: the magnitude of the crisis and the high probability of long-term effects. Here, I focus more on the more immediate utilisation of this event by political actors. Covid-19 created a crisis and undoubtedly forced governments to respond and take measures. It was also an event of unexpected characteristics, scope and impact. In this sense it was clearly a potential focusing event that was also well dramatisable and usable as a basis for political initiative. So what happened more precisely and from the operationalised perspective of the politics of migration policy?

10.3 Empirical Approach

To answer this, I study the political processes in migration policy in Estonia that unfolded as Covid-19 spread. After discussing the development and main factors of Estonian migration policy as the contextual background, I focus on government-related policy initiatives and changes, either by the government or the coalition parties.

I mainly adopt a process-based view of the political dynamics, as the proposals and measures were hectic and of diverse content. I take the existing migration regulations, policy and measures as the basis and study the policy initiatives and changes in two periods: March 2020 to early January 2021 – the Ratas government, the first Covid wave and the beginning of the second wave – and January to July 2021 – the Kallas government and the main part of the second Covid wave. It is thus a single case-study with two timepoints (periods).

Based on considerations of clarity and scope, I focus on the government-initiated policies and measures and the related politics. Most of the regulations, political debate and dynamics are in labour immigration policy – which will also be at the

core of the analysis. This will be complemented with other areas where policy changes or government initiatives have occurred in recent years. In addition to the time-based view, I examine the key general characteristics of Covid-19 policies and measures – e.g. whether the situation of emergency was declared and compensations enacted and the ways in which movement was restricted. I pay special attention to regulatory changes and their sources, as well as the accompanying political debate.

For the first wave, I base my analysis on the empirical material gathered for the previous study (Jakobson & Kaley, 2020). A timeline of key events, policy changes and initiatives was constructed by studying the key web media channels (Postimees, Delfi/EPL and ERR), complementing this with government press releases and legislation. I include in the timeline and content the wider policy lines and measures of relevance for migration policy and some aspects of politics relevant for the framework.

I primarily base the second wave on studying government Covid-19 news websites (valitsus.ee, kriis.ee), looking at both the content and the timeline and complementing it with legislation if needed and some additional mass-media news on political contestation on the key events. My main method is to qualitatively analyse these web texts to establish the timeline of events relevant for the parameters of the politics of migration policy established in the theoretical part.

I study the above-mentioned questions focusing on selected aspects. This enables an in-depth view and insights into the practical dynamics of migration policy-making. My approach is abductive: being theoretically informed, I look at the development of events broadly inductively. On the one hand, the scope of explanation is limited by such choices; however, on the other, the resulting in-depth knowledge can be the basis for analysing other countries and contexts.

The selected aspects of study are the government regulatory initiatives on migration policy and the accompanying political debate. This demonstrates the stability of the dominant policy direction or the interest in changing it. I focus on the regulatory initiatives as presented in press releases and media content and on the related mass-media discussions of key political actors, including political parties and key interest groups, which all informs the main political lines and strategies of key actors.

One key interest is to see how the politics of policy plays out in a politically loaded policy field during a crisis. Here I examine the existence and success of the political initiatives to change migration policy, the relationship of frontstage and backstage politics, the difference between governments with a conservative and those with a liberal orientation, the possible relevance of a national populist party being in government, the significance of policy coalitions beyond political parties and the relative ease or difficulty of manipulating policy target groups for party-political profit.

The other key interest continues from our previous study (Jakobson & Kaley, 2020) which demonstrated that Covid-19 had the properties of a focusing event but, as migration-policy change was still unfolding, further research was necessary to establish whether it produced results. This chapter also elaborates on the

perspective of major policy changes and discusses them not only in migration policy but also in other relevant policy aspects.

10.4 Estonian Migration Policy and Politics: Background Context

The key influences on Estonian migration policy are Soviet-time traumas and post-independence international openness (e.g. Jakobson & Kalev, 2020). State-led resettlement measures from other parts of the Soviet Union produced fears of persisting as a nation backed by the fact that around 40 per cent of the population was Russian-speaking at the end of the Soviet era (it was less than 10 per cent before the Soviet arrivals). At the same time, Estonians embraced free international mobility after regaining independence in 1991 – and especially the free movement after joining the European Union in 2004.

Thus, on the one hand, Estonia introduced a strict annual immigration quota of 0.1 per cent of the resident population – 1314 permits in 2020. On the other, around 10 per cent of 1.3 million Estonian citizens resided permanently abroad (Statistics Estonia, 2020), while a similar proportion worked abroad but then returned: according to the European Social Survey, 10.5 per cent of Estonia's respondents had worked abroad for at least six months in the preceding 10 years, one of the highest shares in all of Europe according to the European Social Survey. This indicates that there is also notable return migration as well as constant labour-related commuting, particularly between Estonia and neighbouring Finland.

In migration policy, Estonia is relatively open to student migration: students accepted by accredited universities are allowed to live and work. Family migration is mostly outside the regulatory domain and the quota is not applied to them as it is considered a basic right for Estonian citizens and permanent residents. Estonia does not have an emigration policy but has a compatriots' policy and a general concern over demographic sustainability. Most of the regulations, political debate and dynamics are in labour immigration policy.

Over the years, Estonian immigration policy has become increasingly flexible and pragmatic as the structural labour-force shortages within the country have been alleviated by gradually increasing immigration and mobility. Although the number of residence permits for remunerated activities is still regulated by the quota and a wage criterion to avoid the usage of low-skilled immigrant labour (foreign workers have to be paid at least the national average salary), numerous exceptions have been made to the quota to foster labour immigration with higher added value, such as start-up entrepreneurs, IT specialists, engineers, researchers or other highly skilled specialists, who earn at least double the average salary and are exempt from the quota (Aliens' Act 2021, §115).

In addition to the residence permits issued for up to five years, labour migrants can also work in Estonia while holding a visa or being in Estonia based on a

visa-free regime, provided that they register their short-term employment with the Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB) and that they are paid at least the national average salary. Since 2018, third-country nationals can work in Estonia for up to one year in a 1.5-year timeframe (Aliens' Act §106) and the duration of the D-visa has been extended from six months to one year (Aliens Act §60).

After the transposition of the respective EU directives, labour migrants can, from 2017 onwards, also come to Estonia as seasonal workers in select sectors – agriculture, forestry, fishing, food and non-alcoholic-beverage production, hospitality and catering (Government Decree, 2017). While there is no average salary threshold for seasonal workers, their employers have greater obligations (e.g. providing housing or the obligation to pay a salary even if the contract is terminated prematurely) and the period of stay is shorter (nine months during one year).

The Estonian labour immigration system is relatively flexible and easy to administer. The system can be seen as beneficial for the host society and employers in sectors of higher financial added value as well as some special pockets that benefit from seasonal-work migration, most notably agriculture, while the migrants' situation is more precarious: only a limited number of labour migrants (mostly white-collar specialists) have access to a longer-term residence permit that also makes them eligible for greater social benefits. In practice the incoming mobility of third-country labourers has also picked up, along with the shrinking of Estonian emigration in recent years (Jakobson & Kalev, 2020).

Migration policy is politically highly loaded in Estonia, based on the already-mentioned trauma of the Soviet-time settlement and the fears of survival as a nation. Since regaining independence, the national cleavage has been one of the key factors in Estonia's party politics (Saarts, 2017) and the 'Russian card' is a resource in national election campaigns. The existential fears have, over the years, been rhetorically used and were later also extended to new immigrants. A notable case was the European Union resettlement and reallocation quotas in 2015, whereby the governing parties had to popularise a scheme which they had opposed in the elections some months earlier. This boosted the nationalist conservative populist party EKRE, where criticism of the new immigration flows gained ground along with the Russian card and demographic survival (e.g. Jakobson et al., 2020).

EKRE made a significant breakthrough in the March 2019 national elections, gaining 19 per cent of parliamentary seats and entering a coalition government led by Jüri Ratas of the social-liberal Centre Party while the other coalition partners were conservative – the EKRE and Pro Patria Party. Thus, the government marked a shift to the nationalist-conservative direction. Among other aspects, the neoliberal trend in migration issues lost political support. Such debates had already taken place under the previous government on the United Nations Organisation migration compact between Pro Patria and the Social Democrats, which had resulted in a crisis at the end of 2018. Now Pro Patria was reinforced by EKRE and more-restrictive migration policy gained momentum.

10.5 The First Wave

During the early stages of the Covid-19 outbreak, the government did not react strongly. While most of the rhetoric appealed for calm and for trusting the professionals and government, EKRE's leaders originally imitated a Trumpist downplaying rhetoric. As late as 27 February 2020, EKRE's then leader, Mart Helme, made a later much-ridiculed statement at a government press conference claiming that, in his youth, the virus would not have been diagnosed separately from the common cold and would have been successfully treated by warm socks, goose fat and blue-tongue patches (GPC 27.02.2020).

This was paralleled by the easy-going position of the public-health authorities which included controversial decisions such as allowing Northern Italian athletes to compete in a 2019–20 CEV Challenge Cup volleyball game on Saaremaa Island, where a major first wave of the virus in Estonia broke out (ERR 6.04.2020). As a result, Estonia became an early hotspot of Covid-19 with the first confirmed case on 27 February 2020, confirmed cases rising rapidly from mid-March to mid-April and a general uncertainty because of the relatively slow start and limited testing (most cases were probably not registered).

The government rapidly changed course and, on 12 March 2020, an emergency situation was declared nationally that lasted until 17 May 2020 (valitsus.ee eriulukord). A special Government Emergency Committee was set up, headed by the prime minister and making use of the additional powers of emergency legislation (Emergency Act). Restrictions included bans on public gatherings – including sports and cultural events – and on visitors to care homes, hospitals and detention facilities, and the closure of schools and universities (ERR 13.03.2020).

As EKRE opted for an emergency agenda, Covid sceptics had little political leverage. There was widespread political support for containing Covid across the political spectrum. This enabled the government to make major changes in economic and social policy, as large-scale public support measures were introduced as compensation for Covid damages for enterprises and people mostly funded by national debt (valitsus.ee toetused). Estonia's earlier crisis response had been neo-liberal austerity. The support measures helped various groups of people to alleviate Covid-related hardship and most weathered the crisis in economic terms.

With regards to the movement of people, the government originally restored its border control, with health checks at every crossing and entry point. Full border controls were set up from 17 March on, with only citizens of Estonia, permanent residents, their relatives and freight transport workers allowed to enter the country (ERR 15.03.2020). Thus, workers with temporary residence permits and visa-based workers could not enter Estonia but those who were already inside the country could continue working if allowed under the general restrictions. The stay of temporary workers was extended by various legal instruments up to 31 August 2020 (Aliens Act §309.12, order by the Minister of the Interior 1–3/59 from 18. May 2020).

The government decided to halt the issuing of visas to third-country nationals, reintroduce border controls and close the border to everyone except Estonian

citizens, permanent residents and transporters of essential goods, repairers of essential equipment and those providing essential services (Government Order, 2020). Subsequently, international air travel as well as the ferry traffic between Tallinn and Helsinki essentially stopped. From 16 March, the issuing of visas in Estonia's foreign embassies was halted (GPC 16.03.2020) and a 14-day self-isolation requirement was introduced (Order of 16.03.2020).

Those third-country nationals who were already in Estonia could apply to extend their visa or residence permit until 31 July 2020 (later extended to 31 August 2020). If they became unemployed or their period of short-term employment (365 days in the past 455 days) was exhausted, their visa was terminated prematurely (Aliens Act §52 (1)⁹) but they could remain in the country until 31 July 2020 (later, this was extended by a month), even though the Aliens' Act was amended so that the short-term employment period could be extended by two years in 2.5 years (Aliens Act §106 (1)⁶). The amendments were made in order to avoid having to deal with a considerable number of irregularly staying immigrants later.

As the farming season was starting, a further exception was made and the extension of the employment period was granted to those short-term labour migrants who were already working in agriculture or were willing to take up employment in this sector (European Commission, 2020). Yet, as only a few seasonal workers had arrived by March and many farmers already had prearranged contracts with their farmhands in Ukraine, the agricultural entrepreneurs became the most vocal critics of the restrictions. The farmers claimed to be short of at least 2000 seasonal workers and, while the unemployment rate in Estonia rose slightly (from 4.4 per cent in the last quarter of 2019 to 7.1 per cent in the second quarter of 2020), they were sceptical about whether the recently unemployed would be willing to work in agriculture before the autumn (EPKK, 2020a).

The Ministers of Rural Affairs and of the Interior – and other politicians from EKRE – opposed seasonal labour migration in principle and tried to reframe the argument in more structural terms by claiming that entrepreneurship models depending on cheap migrant labour were outdated and that the employment of 50,000 newly unemployed Estonians and returnees from Finland needed to be prioritised (Ivask & Matsalu, 2020). Practical steps were also taken with draft bills that would allow the recently unemployed to temporarily work in agriculture without losing their unemployment benefits (Aller, 2020). The farmers accused politicians of endangering the sustainability of domestic agriculture and gave the example of Finland, where seasonal workers were allowed into the country as essential workers despite travel restrictions (EPKK, 2020b).

There was no consensus in the governing coalition over migration policy. While EKRE and the Minister of the Interior, Mart Helme, in particular, were trying to enhance restrictions on immigration, the other partners did not approve of extensive restrictions, as they would negatively affect the Estonian economy: short-term labour migrants had already become a notable group of taxpayers and an indispensable workforce (Delfi 8.08.2019, ERR 9.04.2019, 20.01.2020, 7.10.2020). The proposals also drew criticism from societal actors – for example, employers' organisations were critical of changes (ERR 15.01.2020).

With regard to labour mobility and migration, the restrictions introduced by Finland were clearly the most painful, as it has for decades been the major host country for Estonians working abroad. Latvian restrictions were also a point of concern, especially for the border city of Valga-Valka (GPC 16.03.2020).

Finland declared a state of emergency and, on 19 March (becoming effective 22 March), the Finnish government halted entry for those workers whose permanent residence was in Estonia (cross-border labour migrants). Estonian workers registered to reside in Finland were allowed entry but subjected to 14 days' quarantine. There were some exceptions (e.g. for medical workers, family reasons etc.) but, for most people, the cross-border opportunities ceased (vm.ee soome). However, Estonian workers were given the opportunity to return to Finland if they wished and were able to continue working there during the pandemic lockdown, which many of them did. Apparently, many sectors in which Estonian commuters worked did not shrink but even grew during the pandemic – for instance, the construction sector began to receive even more orders, as many schools ordered renovation work during the period when in-class learning was halted (Kortelainen, 2020).

While the Estonian government made attempts to counter-persuade its Finnish colleagues (Pealinn 20.03.2020), this did not succeed. Reopening the Finnish border for labour migration was a continuing concern for the government (Good News 29.04.2020). The Finnish government lifted restrictions for labourers in Estonia from 14 May (Delfi 4.05.2020) and restrictions for everyone were fully lifted on 15 June (vm.ee).

As the spread of virus was fairly effectively stopped and confidence rose, Estonia started to gradually ease the restrictions as of spring 2020 and the emergency situation ended on 17 May. For travel, a major liberalisation took place from 1 June: Estonia allowed entry to individuals without symptoms arriving from a member state of the European Union, the Schengen area or the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This was later extended to other countries, based on government decisions and with a regularly updated list available from the web. The coronavirus emergency gave way to the usual politics and policy-making.

While EKRE tried to use the closed-borders situation to shift Estonia towards a more restrictive migration policy, the other coalition partners opposed the suggestion and were, instead, working towards opening borders. The government vetoed Helme's initial plans for enhanced restrictions on study and labour migration after the state of emergency had ended and, consequently, the borders were opened again for such migrants in July. For instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by a minister from Pro Patria party, coordinated the opening of the so-called Baltic bubble in late March, a free-movement region for the residents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and later also persuaded Finland to join.

At the same time, under the justification of fighting Covid-19, EKRE managed to utilise its political control over the Ministries of the Interior and of Finance to introduce some procedural blockages and create inconvenience in migration-related aspects – e.g. uncertainty about universities accepting students in the admissions period in order to apply pressure on their government coalition partners. Finally, in July, the government agreed to some enhanced regulations on study and labour

migration, such as the obligation for the receiving institution (e.g. the employer) to ensure the testing, transportation and a 14-day period of self-isolation of newly arrived immigrants before they can start work, as well as new restrictions on seasonal migration – i.e. the salary requirement for seasonal workers and the reduction of the time limit of seasonal work from nine to six months per year. The bill was drafted and sent to parliament (Draft Law 617).

10.6 The Second Wave

10.6.1 The Ratas Government

Covid cases increased somewhat in September and significantly in November 2021. In early autumn, measures were mostly related to the wave in many European countries – for example, a faster testing procedure was introduced in addition to the 14-day quarantine requirement (kriis.ee 18.10.2020, 13.01.2021). Testing opportunities were expanded at Tallinn airport and harbour (kriis.ee 31.08.2020) and the quarantine period shortened to 10 days from the end of October (kriis.ee 29.10.2020).

While the government urged people to behave responsibly (kriis.ee 22.09.2020) and introduced some domestic restrictions (kriis.ee 24.09.2020), it endeavoured to keep cross-border movement open, especially with Finland, Latvia and Lithuania (kriis.ee 25.09.2020), although introducing an exception for the Valga-Valka border town. Estonia also supported the European Union Council initiative on harmonising the basic framework for travel (kriis.ee 9.10.2020).

In November and December, several sets of Covid restrictions were introduced that were broadly similar to those in the spring (kriis.ee 12.11.2020, 3.12.2020, 4.12.2020, 9.12.2020, 29.12.2020, 7.01.2021). Additional support measures were also introduced (kriis.ee 18.12.2020, 23.12.2020).

In migration policy, too, the spring rationalities and measures were broadly followed with the exception that the extraordinary situation was not proclaimed and the practical restrictions were somewhat milder. The key to the government policy in the area, the reform package on students and seasonal migration agreed in spring, was slowly moving through the parliament and the agreement within the coalition held, so there was just the usual opposition and interest-group critique but limited debate. By the beginning of 2021, the package was close to adoption. There was no significant need for seasonal workers in winter and hence practically no debate.

10.6.2 The Kallas Government

In January 2021, the government changed. This was based on the tensions in other political issues, especially the referendum on defining marriage as only between a man and a woman in the national constitution and the fiery soundbites by EKRE, as

well as the corruption charges against the Centre Party and EKRE officials. On 13 January, Jüri Ratas resigned as Prime Minister. The new Prime Minister, Kaja Kallas and her government were sworn in on 26 January (valitsus.ee 26.01.2021). The new coalition was headed by the Reform Party and the Centre Party remained a coalition partner. The orientation of the new government was liberal, and the nationalist and conservative EKRE and Pro Patria ended up in the opposition.

The new government was initially somewhat optimistic about the Covid situation. The Reform Party had criticised the government for its too-extensive restrictions and now employed a liberalising rhetoric. Some restrictions were discontinued and children returned to schools. Such initial optimism drew criticism from a former health minister, Ossinovski, from the opposition (ERR 8.03.2021).

Cases of Covid surged swiftly and the second wave arrived in Estonia with unprecedented infection numbers. As a year earlier, the government swiftly changed course and imposed severe restrictions (kriis.ee 29.01.2021, 2.03.2021, 9.03.2021). Public compensation measures were continued (kriis.ee 4.03.2021), a remarkable difference from the former Reform Party agenda.

As the number of cases started to fall, the government gradually eased restrictions in May (kriis.ee 20.04.2021, 29.04.2021, 13.05.2021).

With the change in government the migration reform package fell off the legislative agenda, thus the political initiative and bargaining came to nothing. As the political initiative waned, several judicially and administratively oriented activities moved onto the agenda. For example, the National Court voided the paragraphs in the Aliens Act that prohibited complaints on the decisions to revoke the temporary right to stay (*Riigi Teataja* 20.04.2021). A ‘super-database’ of the personal data of inhabitants and travellers was legislated amid considerable public outcry (Postimees 29.06.2021) while the Covid super-database was delayed over the summer (EPL 29.06.2021).

EKRE aligned itself with public dissatisfaction, participating in the demonstrations and partly taking on the role of the promotor of the demonstrators’ agenda (Delfi 14.04.2021). However, the foci were domestic, so the migration agenda was also on the backburner for EKRE. The former battles over seasonal migrants and students faded from public debate.

In administrative practice, some changes were introduced to better account for the increasing number of vaccinated or cured persons moving across borders (kriis.ee 5.04.2021). The government supported similar European Union initiatives on the easier movement for fully vaccinated people and those who had fully recovered from Covid (kriis.ee 8.06.2021).

10.7 Discussion and Conclusions

The main contextual factors are summarised in Table 10.1. We can see a broad continuity in the policies and measures and a gradual decline in political initiative. The decline in initiative already started under the Ratas government and became clearly

Table 10.1 Main contextual factors

Measure\Period	First wave	Second wave	
	Ratas 2020 Spring	Ratas 2020 Autumn	Kallas 2021
Situation of emergency	Yes	No*	No*
Movement restrictions	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special attention to neighbouring countries concerning movement	Yes	Yes	Yes
Public compensation for Covid-19 restrictions funded by loans	Yes	Yes	Yes
Migration-related legislative initiatives	Yes	Yes	No
Political debates leading to or accompanying the legislative initiatives	Yes	No	No
Migration-related judicial and administrative changes	Yes	Yes	Yes

visible in the Kallas government. This may be related to a decline in the novelty of Covid or the resurfacing of the administrative agenda, but there are also political aspects. EKRE was unable to make significant policy changes over its term in government and, thus, when the Reform Party re-entered government, it was also satisfied with the migration policy that was legislated earlier, during its own long term in government. At the same time, these Covid-related new measures that were legislated or introduced – such as public compensation measures for crises damages – have also stayed, at least initially. This indicates the relative difficulty in making political change.

The Covid-19 outbreak had a clear impact on the operation of the government and administration in Estonia. With the first unexpected wave and still underprepared in the second wave, the government took various emergency measures, restrictions and compensation for these. This was also the case in governing migration, where travel was restricted, the issuing of visas stopped (during the first wave) and several other extraordinary or temporary measures were taken. In this sense, the Covid-19 crisis was not only a potential but also a practical focusing event in its first and second waves.¹

However, all this mostly concerned the administration. For migration policy, the situation is more ambivalent. We saw a clear political initiative to restrict migration throughout the first wave and Ratas' government. This was spearheaded by EKRE and supported by the coalition partners. However, it took time for EKRE to define the target groups that enabled it to continue with its rhetoric and that the other government coalition partners accepted as being restricted. In this process the

¹With later waves, the moderation of the virus, spread of vaccines and the increasing resilience of people to Covid, we notice an increasing normalisation of the disease and the crisis it caused. The practices and politics of normalisation could be a separate interesting topic of research. In this chapter the focus has been on the clearly more crisis-generating first and second waves of Covid that were accompanied by large-scale emergency measures.

emphasis shifted towards politically weaker groups: while seasonal workers remained a target group, students and their family members were seen to become an additional burden in the bill. We can note the tendency of restricting the weaker migrant categories while being cautious with the stronger ones, seen as more 'desirable'. We are thus reminded of the cautions posited by Schneider and Ingram (1997) on the potential dangers of the spiralling bias. However, the coalition partners' support for the initiative was quite modest and based on a broader compromise (Postimees 6.07.2020).

So, the political initiative only gradually found its feasible targets and measures as well as its supporting coalition. We see a Zittoun-style (2014) logic in the step-wise building up of the agenda and the supporting coalition. However, the counter-coalition involved many experts and powerful business actors besides opposition parties; thus the government's interest in change was quite weak. EKRE managed to use its position in government both to bargain with the coalition partners and to take some administrative emergency measures in line with its agenda.

However, the political agreement was not legally enacted by the time the national government changed; the migration reform bill was discontinued and the issue fell off the core political agenda. The new coalition was broadly satisfied with the existing regulations and its political emphases were elsewhere. Thus Covid-19 was sufficient as a basis for policy change but, as making the change depends on politics, it eventually did not happen. This is in line with the idea of focusing events as opening only potential windows of opportunity.

The conservatively and liberally oriented governments were broadly similar in their Covid-19 containment measures but had a clear difference in migration policy preferences. While EKRE and, more broadly, the conservatives, pursued migration-policy change, the liberal coalition was satisfied with the existing one and took policy initiatives off the table. However, the financially much-more-interventionist crisis-relief policy of the Ratas government endured during that of Kallas – it is much easier to stay with an existing policy than to change it.

Its government experience somewhat moderated EKRE, as it has toned down its political rhetoric and initiative, at least in the field of migration. Also, as EKRE was in government and adopted the idea of fighting the crisis, the possible Covid-19 sceptics lost their potential party-political promotor: even in its new opposition role, EKRE has not adopted a straightforwardly anti-Covid containment agenda. This is an encouraging signal that the contemporary new political forces seem to be at least somewhat reflective based on their practical government experience. While immigration is a traditional target for aspiring nationalist-populist political parties, keeping it politically profitable for these parties that aim to govern seems to require a nuanced restrictive approach.

Migration regulations and policy remained quite stable during the first waves of the pandemic. The extraordinary measures were mostly temporary and when they were discontinued the pre-pandemic situation returned. There were some changes based on judicial and administrative initiatives such as enacting super databases and voiding the regulation prohibiting complaints on the decisions to revoke the temporary right to stay. These support the idea of backstage politics and mostly emerged

during the second wave, when Covid-19 was seen as manageable. It also supports the idea of a top-down-driven technocratisation and the accompanying depoliticisation. The initiatives on ‘super-databases’ created a societal counter-coalition supported by EKRE from the opposition that can be seen as anti-politics.

As for turbulent times, too many anxieties do not necessarily support political policy initiatives. A policy field regularly entails anxieties due to the nature of political process – the first waves of Covid added a new crisis layer to the existing anxieties. Based on the case under analysis, these increased anxieties could build up momentum for policy initiatives for some interested actors but not necessarily generate broader support for political decisions on legislative changes. Anxieties could also lead to cautiousness among the political elites.

All in all, this study indicates that the heavy politicisation of a policy field does not necessarily support the success of politically driven policy change. Instead, policy remained quite stable and the successful changes were technocratic. Such backstage politics leads to popular counter-reactions but anti-politics achieves little. This is not the whole picture as, in 2012–2015, migration policy was significantly reformed based on a combined initiative of government politicians, business actors and administrators (Kalev, 2015). Nevertheless, it is clear that the politicisation of a policy field is not necessarily favourable for a politically driven policy change.

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Chapter 11

Immigrants as the ‘Antagonists’? Populism, Negative Emotions and Anti-immigrant Attitudes in Ecuador



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11.1 Introduction

As a result of the voluminous migration outflow of Venezuelans throughout Latin America in recent years, public opinion in countries such as Ecuador has shifted to perceptions of ‘insecurity’, ‘a lack of jobs’ and ‘increasing anxiety’ over the very presence of immigrants. Being a country with a well-recorded emigration trajectory in the early 2000s, Ecuador has recently opted for a more restrictive policy toward inter-regional immigrants and a considerable fraction of the Ecuadorian electorate seems to concur with this policy backlash towards human mobility (Malo, 2021).

At the beginning of 2019, the then Ecuadorian Vice-President, Otto Sonnenholzner, declared that an apostilled criminal record would be requested from Venezuelan citizens entering the country, to ‘differentiate them from Venezuelans fleeing the government of Nicolás Maduro and others who take advantage of this situation to commit a crime’ (*El Universo*, 2019). Considering that Sonnenholzner’s statement is not the only one which suggests a Manichean opposition between ‘us’ (native or resident citizens) and ‘them’ (immigrants or residing foreigners) – reproducing, if not generating, a negative emotional underpinning in public opinion – we aim to explore the nexus between emotions on the one hand and anti-immigrant and

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populist attitudes on the other. The latter is activated by crises of all sorts; thus, we ask, to what extent are voters' negative emotions and anti-immigrant attitudes prone to larger probabilities to support populist radical candidates in the upcoming election, and whether populist attitudes contribute to restrictive attitudes toward immigrants?

Although earlier literature has comprehensively addressed the link between populist attitudes and political behaviour (e.g. Akkerman et al., 2014; Müller, 2016; Schult et al., 2017; Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018), scholars overlook the relation between the electorate's emotional base, their attitudes toward immigrants¹ and populism. Exceptions have been successfully discussed in European cases (e.g. Mudde, 2017; Rico et al., 2017), where Islamophobia and overall anti-immigrant discourses have stirred a nativist-populist sentiment (see also the other chapters in this part of the book). Despite a visible turn to restrictive immigration policies in several Latin American countries (e.g. Acosta & Freier, 2015; Brumat et al., 2018; Finn & Umpierrez de Reguero, 2020), this nativist-populist sentiment is underestimated by public opinion assessments and can impact on electoral outcomes in the wake of the massive immigration of Venezuelans.

Understood as individual constructs that help us to perceive societal issues using a Manichean distinction – the 'pure people' versus the 'corrupt elite' – in which the people have unrestricted popular sovereignty (Mudde, 2004), populist attitudes may occasionally trigger anti-immigrant narratives. These attitudes can be conceptualised as latent variables and measured with a battery of items about subjective moods, beliefs, attitudes and positions toward immigrants (Hawkins et al., 2012).

This study draws on two surveys with non-probabilistic samples – one in 2019 (N = 1337) and the other in 2021 (N = 1289) – with individuals aged 16 and older in Ecuador. Despite our samples sharing several commonalities with the estimated population (INEC, 2019), they are non-generalisable given the nature of our field-work: online, promoted via Facebook Ads. Our scope is thus exploratory. Aiming to create a parsimonious model, we analyse the collected data using structural equation modelling (SEM), a method which enables us to incorporate both measurement analyses to work with latent variables and a structural assessment to address the correlations in our statistical model. As a complement, we also conduct a set of logistic regressions to correlate populist attitudes, emotions and prospective voting. By means of this methodological design, we expect to contribute to the open debates on populism studies in Latin America and focus on the nexus between negative emotional underpinning, populism and political behaviour – illustrating a salient context of anxiety over migration for the citizenry.

In what follows, we first briefly introduce the Ecuadorian migratory context. We then discuss populism, emotions and anti-immigrant attitudes, before outlining the data and method. Lastly, we present and discuss our results deriving from two SEMs and two logistic regressions.

¹We have chosen to use 'anti-immigrant' and not 'anti-immigration' attitudes to reflect political processes specifically toward immigrants and not towards future waves of immigration (Pedroza, 2020).

11.2 The Ecuadorian Migratory Context

Traditionally, Ecuador has been a sending country, characterised by having negative migratory net rates. This phenomenon can be divided in two stages: before 1998, and the emigration that followed the banking crisis (*Feriado Bancario*) in 1999–2000 (Acosta et al., 2005). Alongside these two migratory waves, the country has experienced an increase in migration outflows since 2015 (Hurtado, 2018).

Yet, even if a third wave of emigration is rising, the exodus of Venezuelans has changed the label of Ecuador from a sending to a receiving country (Ramírez et al., 2019). Prior to the migration inflows of Venezuelans, Colombians fleeing the armed conflict started to increase (Hurtado, 2018). During the 1990s, around 125,000 foreigners immigrated to Ecuador. By the year 2003, 241,000 foreigners entered the country, mainly from Colombia, Cuba, Peru and the United States. Since then, many Colombians and Cubans have obtained refugee status, making Ecuador an influential example in Latin America for its refugee and asylum-seeker policies (Verney, 2009).

Different factors have motivated foreigners to move to Ecuador. Among them are the value of the US dollar *vis-à-vis* other Latin American currencies, the expansive provisions for migrants’ electoral rights and the active presence of refugee organisations in the country (Jara-Alba, 2017; Ramírez & Umpierrez de Reguero, 2019). On average, incoming migrants hold university-level degrees and reside in provinces near the borders of Colombia and Peru, as well as in Cuenca, Guayaquil and Quito – the most populated cities in Ecuador (Hurtado, 2018).

Prior to the peak of migration inflows in Ecuador, around 60% of Ecuadorians perceived that immigrants take over their jobs (Ramírez & Zepeda, 2015). In 2015, the Ecuadorian authorities deported 121 Cuban citizens in military aeroplanes to allegedly halt undocumented migration to the United States (Valdés, 2017). Over the last decade, the mass media have broadcasted that specific crimes have been ‘imported’ from Colombia (e.g., *El Universo*, 2004). Some Colombian and Peruvian immigrants have declared that the local police would not receive their complaints given their nationalities (*El Correo*, 2003). In recent years, discontent with the presence of non-citizen residents keeps rising (Cuevas, 2018; Malo, 2021; Ramírez et al., 2019). These informal and official narratives are full of stereotypes and threats (Malo, 2021), factors which have been influential in the decision of many Venezuelan immigrants to return to their origin country or relocate to other nations in Latin America (Ramírez et al., 2019).

In short, there is an ongoing debate on how to ‘integrate’ inter-regional immigrants in Ecuador. As the country has shifted from being a sending country to a receiving one, there is a growing discomfort for Ecuadorians about certain immigrant groups on the national territory (Ramírez & Zepeda, 2015), hence rendering the phenomenon and its possible implications relevant to our study.

11.3 Theory and Hypotheses

11.3.1 *Populism and Elitism*

In this chapter, we use the ideational approach to conceptualise populism and to formulate our hypotheses. Mudde defines populism as an ‘ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite” and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* of the people’ (2004, 543). This conceptualisation outlines three essential elements. First, populism is conceived as a ‘thin-centered’ ideology, requiring a ‘host’ ideology, such as nativism or socialism, to ‘politicize grievances that are relevant in their own context’ (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018, 1670). Second, populism perceives politics as an opposition between good (‘the pure people’) and evil (‘the corrupt elites’) and can thus be qualified as Manichean (Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017); yet each political setting may have a unique set of the ‘people’ and the ‘elite’ (Canovan, 1999). Third, appealing to the general will is the method by which populism clusters a variety of different individual wills of common citizens, proclaiming popular sovereignty as the only source of political power (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).

To provide a clearer vision of populism, some scholars also conceptualise elitism and pluralism (Akkerman et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 2012; Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018). Like populism, elitism also consists in a Manichean distinction, with ‘the elites’ conceived to be on the virtuous side, whereas ‘the people’ are on the corrupt one (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). Conversely, pluralism underlines the existence of diverse perspectives within a society. In addition, the ‘general will’ comprises a complex dynamic without fixed limits, instead of a monolithic general will, as conceived in populism (Ochoa Espejo, 2011).

Populist leaders tend to channel the people’s unsatisfied demands against a specific group of society (e.g. immigrants and corrupt elites). In populism studies, these groups correspond to the ‘antagonists’ (Laclau, 2005). Ideational scholars use this notion to claim that the oppositional stance of populist rhetoric has ‘the pure people’ on one side and the ‘corrupt elite’ on the other. Given the haziness within the discourse, to identify these two groups, populist radical right-wing parties hoist the ‘natives’ as a representation of the pure people and ‘immigrants’ as the antagonist (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). Although antagonists and the elite can discursively become separated groups, antagonism is usually represented by those who oppose the populist leader and ‘the people’. This distinction contraposes morality versus immorality, instead of establishing two specific groups opposing each other (Müller, 2016), allowing the antagonist to take different shapes – such as immigrants (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018).

Considering this mechanism of both populism and elitism, we define populist and elitist attitudes as latent constructs containing an interrelated construct between the people, the elites and the general will (Hawkins et al., 2012). Even though

empirical evidence worldwide suggests that populist and elitist attitudes can correlate with a wide array of radical and non-radical alternatives, we hypothesise that:

(H_{1a}) the larger the populist attitudes that individuals display, the more likely it is that they intend to vote for populist radical left- and right-wing candidates, together with the expectation that

(H_{1b}) elitist attitudes reduce the likelihood of electoral support for a populist radical left-wing candidate or PRLWC.

11.3.2 Negative Emotions and Anti-immigrant and Populist Attitudes

Emotions are a substantive part of politics. Correspondingly, the theory of reasoned motivation comprises three key elements to comprehensively understand them. First, all political stimuli have an emotional underpinning. Second, individuals are constantly evaluating their emotions *vis-à-vis* these stimuli. Third, the emotions of each individual will affect the way in which he or she perceives reality (Lodge & Taber, 2000), affecting different aspects of his/her decision-making processes, such as voting. Extensive research in the field of political psychology has proved that emotions do affect an individual's political choices – for example, angry people could be more likely to support war or oppose liberal immigration policies (Vasilopoulos et al., 2018). Moreover, certain emotions may change individuals' behaviour, even mobilising those who are reluctant to engage in political acts (Lamprianou & Ellinas, 2019).

More precisely, research has found that emotions, especially negative ones (e.g. distrust, anger and fear), play a relevant role in activating populist attitudes (Rico et al., 2017). Emotions also have a function when it comes to relation-building between collectives and candidates, as well as the creation of a sense of community among supporters (Schurr, 2013). Given the usage of a moral language employed in populist rhetoric, these leaders also appeal to the emotions of the electorate to polarise the political arena (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014).

As negative emotions relate to populism, scholars have focused their studies on the search for the emotional roots of support for populist radical right-wing parties (Close & Van Haute, 2020; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). Earlier literature reported that resentment is an essential aspect that might transform fear or powerlessness into anger against other groups labelled as 'antagonists' by a political leader (e.g. immigrants, unemployed people and the elite). Concerning the performance of negative emotions in populism, Rico and his colleagues (2017) assert that an individual's anger generated as a response to a situation perceived as unfair could make him or her more likely to embrace populist attitudes. In this frame, we hypothesise that:

(H₂) having negative emotions toward immigrants increases the odds of depicting anti-immigrant attitudes, along with the expectation that

(H₃) individuals with higher levels of anti-immigrant attitudes will have a lower probability of voting for a PRLWC.

Negative emotions can be channelled against certain groups of individuals (e.g. immigrants and unemployed individuals), especially using populist rhetoric, in the wake of an antagonist, thus generating negative attitudes against them. Indeed, anti-immigrant attitudes can be present on the demand side of populism. This type of restrictive attitude tends to increase when the economic scenario seems positive and to decrease when there is an economic crisis (Rinken, 2015). This is because natives may believe that, apropos of the crisis, immigrants would return to their origin country. In other cases, countries whose citizens hold strong national identity may have higher levels of outgroup hostility towards immigrant groups (Hamidou-Schmidt & Mayer, 2020). Furthermore, perceiving a significant increase in the flow of specific immigrant groups can also fuel negative attitudes towards the phenomenon among natives (González-Paredes et al., 2022; Ramírez et al., 2019). Other studies have linked negative attitudes toward immigrants as a key element for supporting populist radical right-wing parties with a nativist component (Mudde, 2013; Rothmund et al., 2019).

Furthermore, there are theorists who have linked populist attitudes present in individuals with anti-immigrant attitudes. Hawkins and his colleagues (2020) argue that far-right populist attitudes can be ‘activated’ throughout anti-immigrant behaviour (e.g. Golden Dawn in Greece). Other contributions have shown that both populist left- and right-wing parties have performed better after mobilising concerns over immigration policies (Ivarsflaten, 2008). Additionally, Mudde (2017) establishes that populist radical right-wing parties need to activate the populist attitudes of their voters by appealing to anti-immigrant sentiments to capture their votes. Thus, we expect that:

(H₄) higher levels of elitist and populist attitudes lead to higher anti-immigrant attitudes.

11.4 Data and Method

For our data collection, we launched two online surveys – one 2 weeks after the intense social mobilisations of October 2019 (N = 1337) and another just prior to the 2021 general elections (N = 1289) in Ecuador – with national coverage (including both rural and urban areas), promoted via Facebook Ads. Our unit of analysis was composed solely of Ecuadorian-born resident citizens aged 16 and older. We considered the age to vote in Ecuador (CNE, 2009) as a filter through which to survey the respondents.

Although it is well-known that researchers must consider that the Internet may compromise sample proportionality and representativeness when collecting data, coupled with ethical considerations associated with social networking platforms,

Facebook has about 12 million users in Ecuador (Global Digital Report, 2019), a number that highly approximates the Ecuadorian electoral register of the 2017 presidential election (CNE, 2017), including the distribution between men and women. Consequently, we sought to keep similar standards of proportionality, heterogeneity and representativeness in the sample as compared to the population, when creating the online sample. In terms of the population, 49.9% of the voters were men and 50.1% women (CNE, 2017); of those who answered the survey, 51.9% were men and 48.1% women. Although there is a difference in these male–female ratios, they are not significant. Likewise, the number of Facebook users maintained a similar proportionality in the age and sex of those who answered the questionnaire, in relation to those registered to vote in 2017. Still, the pyramid of Facebook users has a notable variation in users between 16 and 19 years old. These are the largest group in the electoral register (CNE, 2017) and in the group of respondents. The modal data are between 20 and 23 years old – a plausible explanation for which may be the usage patterns of Facebook at these ages in Ecuador. Furthermore, the electoral register has voters in the age range 88–91 years as maximum values yet, among those who have an active account in the social network, it is only recorded as 65 years and older (Global Digital Report, 2019).

As we ran the data collection in 2019 after the wave of social mobilisations and 1 month prior to the 2021 general elections, this decision impacted on the quality of our data. Both events may have increased the (dis)interest and emotions around politics.

Our online fieldwork was successful, collecting about 2500 row responses. The attrition rate was no greater than 30%. We eliminated fewer than 3% of responses for not meeting the criteria for citizenship such as nationality or required age.

11.4.1 Estimation Strategies

As our baseline method, we analysed the collected data employing SEM, since this technique allowed us to measure latent and observable variables simultaneously (Hox & Berchger, 1998). SEM is useful for empirically testing theoretical constructs, as in the case of this chapter. This method adjusts to the nature of our variables. Previous contributions to the literature had already admitted that populist attitudes and anti-immigrant attitudes are effectively measured as latent variables (e.g. Akkerman et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 2020; Meléndez & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019; Rothmund et al., 2019). Yet, these pioneering studies failed to create a parsimonious model that comprises factor analyses in combination with regression analyses in the same statistical exercise. By creating a SEM, we methodologically contribute to the burgeoning literature on populist and anti-immigrant attitudes. Furthermore, we added two binary logistic regressions to unpack the nexus between different negative emotions, attitudes and prospective electoral behaviour.

11.4.2 Measures

The explanatory variables are populist and elitist attitudes, negative emotional underpinnings, attitudes toward immigrants and the intention to vote for populist candidates. As underscored, we measure populist and elitist attitudes following the ideational approach's guidelines. Accordingly, we employed a tested scale of items to measure the electorate's populist and elitist attitudes created by Hawkins and his colleagues (2012) and replicated by Akkerman et al. (2014). Assessing these items with a five-value Likert scale that oscillates from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), we incorporate populist and elitist attitudes. For populist attitudes, most responses range from 'strongly agree' to 'neither agree nor disagree' (mean $[\mu] = 4.07$; std. deviation $[\sigma] = 0.93$). Conversely, descriptive statistics for elitist attitudes report that most responses oscillate between 'agree' and 'disagree' ($\mu = 3.31$; $\sigma = 1.14$).

We rely on the contribution of Rico and his colleagues (2017) to operationalise negative emotions – they asked their respondents to indicate the extent to which the economic crisis in Spain generated negative emotions such as sadness, fear, anxiety and anger. We adapted a similar rationale to the Ecuadorian context and asked: 'Which of the following emotions (fear, distrust, hopelessness, anger, anxiety) best describes your perceptions in the wake of the presence of (1) Colombian, (2) Cuban, (3) Peruvian, (4) US and (5) Venezuelan nationals in Ecuador'. To clarify, we asked the same question for each immigrant group. These five groups of nationalities lead the ranking of immigrant residents in Ecuador as estimated in 2019. In particular, we inquire about Colombians, Cubans and Venezuelans, as there have been public episodes of xenophobia in Ecuador against them over the last two decades (*El Correo*, 2003; Ramírez et al., 2019; Valdés, 2017), as well as against Americans and Peruvians, given their demographic presence in both rural and urban areas in Ecuador. Bearing in mind this information, we coded this variable as '1' – meaning the highest value in terms of negative emotions towards the five groups mentioned – and '0' otherwise. Most common values fluctuate between 0.01 (no negative emotions) to 0.63 (negative emotions often towards specific groups such as Colombians and Venezuelans) ($\mu = 0.32$; $\sigma = 0.31$).

Attitudes toward immigrants are a set of questions that may represent subjective perceptions of societal issues regarding immigrants, which is why we use the term anti-immigrant attitudes or restrictive/negative attitudes towards immigrants throughout this chapter. In our model, we discarded the items phrased in a positive way such as 'Do immigrants improve Ecuadorian society by bringing new ideas and cultural attributes?' Like the scale measuring populist attitudes, we utilised a Likert scale that ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) to assess anti-immigrant attitudes. Most answers fluctuate between strongly agree and neither agree nor disagree ($\mu = 3.88$; $\sigma = 0.93$).

Like the pre-campaign national surveys in Ecuador, we asked respondents to what extent they intend to vote for pro-Correa² and pro-Social-Christian Party (PSC) candidates. This four-value variable, which captures prospective electoral behaviour towards populist choices, ranged from ‘yes, definitely’ to ‘no, definitely’. Overall, most responses ranged between ‘yes, definitively’ and ‘no, probably’ for PRLWC ($\mu = 1.28$; $\sigma = 1.20$) and ‘yes, probably’ to ‘no, definitively’ for a populist right-wing candidate (PRWC, $\mu = 1.18$; $\sigma = 1.09$). We considered the adjective ‘pro-Correa candidate’ as a proxy for ‘PRLWC’ and the label ‘pro-PSC candidate’ as a proxy for ‘PRWC’. We excluded ‘radical’ in the latter coding as, in Ecuador, there are no populist radical right-wing parties yet. The most similar classification to that in the right axis is the PSC (González-Paredes et al., 2022).³

Relying on cross-national survey items (e.g. Latinobarometer and World Values Survey), our first control is institutional trust. This variable can be a proxy of anti-establishment sentiments among the electorate. As anti-establishment is a prerequisite of populist identity (Meléndez & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019), we expect that it inversely correlates with both anti-immigrant and populist attitudes. We also assess the institutional trust variable using a Likert scale. Overall, most responses ranged between ‘distrust’ and ‘trust’.

We also control our SEM by incorporating socio-demographic variables, particularly age, education, self-reported economic situation and religion. We coded age as a continuous variable. Our respondents fluctuate from 16 to 78 years old, with the average at 32 years. As in the Ecuadorian National Census of 2010, more than 50% of our respondents held a high-school degree, with a 30% on average who self-identified as professionals with a university degree. We measured self-reported economic status as an ordinal value in which respondents could choose between low-income and high-income statuses, with most responses oscillating between the two. Finally, we coded religion by using dummies of whether respondents self-identify as Protestant/Evangelical or as Catholic.

11.5 Findings

We now present and discuss the results of our data analysis. We constructed two SEMs to avoid multicollinearity and statistical saturation. The first comprises the intention to vote for a PRLWC, while the second replaces it for a PRWC. Both models display good fit indices. The standardised coefficients are depicted in Figs. 11.1 and 11.2 (see Table 11.1 in the appendix for more details). Since all variance

²Former president Rafael Correa is the best representative of the radical left-leaning wave of populism, associated with twenty-first-century socialism, in Ecuador (De la Torre, 2017).

³Importantly, Ecuador has had a long-standing trajectory of populism from left- and right-wing, in government and/or opposition, since the 1930s (De la Torre, 1996; Ríos-Rivera & Umpierrez de Reguero, 2022; Ulloa-Tapia, 2021). Along with Argentina and Peru, Ecuador has overall been one of the most influential cases in Latin America in terms of populism.

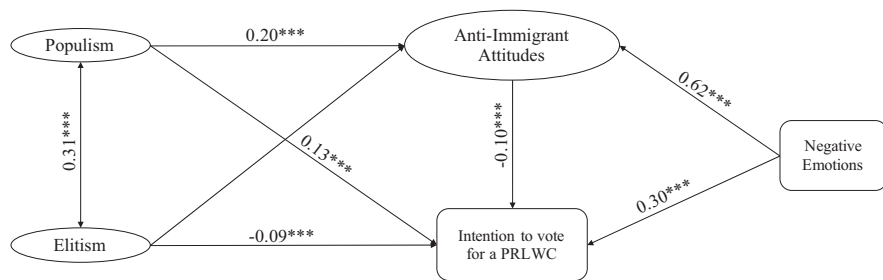


Fig. 11.1 SEM on populism, negative emotions, attitudes towards immigrants and intention to vote for a PRLWC

Note: N = 2494; CFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.05 (See Model 1 in Table 11.1). Coefficients are standardised estimates. $p = * < 0.05$, $** < 0.001$, $*** < 0.0001$

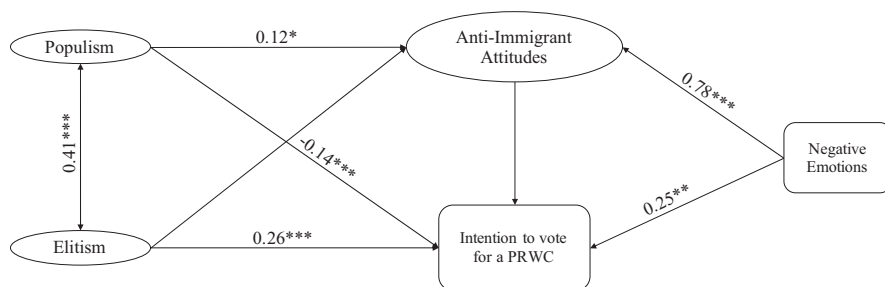


Fig. 11.2 SEM on populism, negative emotions, attitudes towards immigrants and intention to vote for a PRWC

Notes: N = 1288; CFI = 0.94; TLI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.06 (See Model 2 in Table 11.1). Coefficients are standardised estimates. $p = * < 0.05$, $** < 0.001$, $*** < 0.0001$

inflation factors in both SEMs are fairly low (all < 2), we report no multicollinearity prior to the interpretation of our findings.

Figure 11.1 shows that populist attitudes are positively associated with anti-immigrant attitudes (β [standardized] = 0.20, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, negative emotions among voters foster restrictive attitudes toward immigrants ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). Maintaining all other variables constant, anti-immigrant attitudes are inversely correlated with PRLWC ($\beta = -0.10$, $p < 0.001$). This is supported by the two significant relations observed between populist and elitist attitudes towards PRLWC. Unsurprisingly, the electorate’s populist attitudes fuel the likelihood of voting for a PRLWC ($\beta = 0.13$, $p < 0.001$), while the larger the elitist attitudes which voters embrace, the lower the odds are that their electoral choice would be in favour

of a PRLWC ($\beta = -0.09$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, negative emotions are positively correlated with the intention to vote for a PRLWC ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$). In this model, we find no relation between elitist attitudes and anti-immigrant attitudes, as a direct effect.

Figure 11.2 illustrates similar significant relations compared to the previous model. Again, the larger the populist attitudes, the greater the restrictive attitudes toward immigrants ($\beta = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$). Likewise, negative emotions boost anti-immigrant attitudes ($\beta = 0.78$, $p < 0.001$). Changing the variable capturing prospective electoral behaviour, anti-immigrant attitudes do not seem to influence electoral support for a PRWC. Although the party that we chose to represent the PRWC (i.e. a pro-PSC candidate) has demonstrated clear-cut signs of populist rhetoric, its electorate tends to be pro-elite ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$) and anti-populist ($\beta = -0.14$, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, negative emotions are directly associated with the intention to vote for a PRWC ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.01$). In this model, we find no relation between elitist attitudes and anti-immigrant attitudes, as well as the intention to vote for a PRWC and restrictive attitudes toward immigrants.

Unpacking the nexus between negative emotions and intention to vote for populist choices, we ran non-linear models (see Table 11.2 in the appendix). In so doing, fear is correlated with neither a PRLWC nor a PRWC. On the contrary, anger and distrust are directly related to populist candidates. Although the probabilities between anger/distrust and the intention to vote for a PRLWC are more robust and clearer than voting for a PRWC, Fig. 11.3 illustrates positive probabilities for all of them.

The relation between populism and elitism versus anti-immigrant attitudes can be explained by the notion of the Manichean discourse between ‘natives’ and ‘immigrants’ (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). While populist attitudes foster a confrontation with the ‘other’ to evocate the general will of the people over those who retain the power, elitism impulses the social values and principles provided by the *status quo*. All in all, both types of attitudes seek the same outcome: to exclude the ‘other’, the one who is ‘different’, the ‘antagonist’, whether to be blamed for prior actions or to depict that all the ways, customs and social practices other than those performed by the *status quo* are morally defective or at least undesirable (Müller, 2016).

Populist and elitist attitudes also oppose each other when they are conducive to the electoral arena. As highlighted, populism can be seen as a ‘thin’ set of ideas, or worldview, or ideology (Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018; Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018). PRLWC in Latin America has been accompanied by a Bolivarian variety of socialism: twenty-first-century socialism. Inspired by the combination of these two ideological adscriptions, leaders such as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador came to power as outsiders, mostly attacking mainstream parties and the ‘imperialism’ of the West, along with liberal-democratic institutions and the economic elites both within and outside their countries (Block, 2015; Collins, 2014). By framing, in their discourses, ‘new’ ideas associated with participatory democracy, citizen empowerment and active channels to bestow political power back to

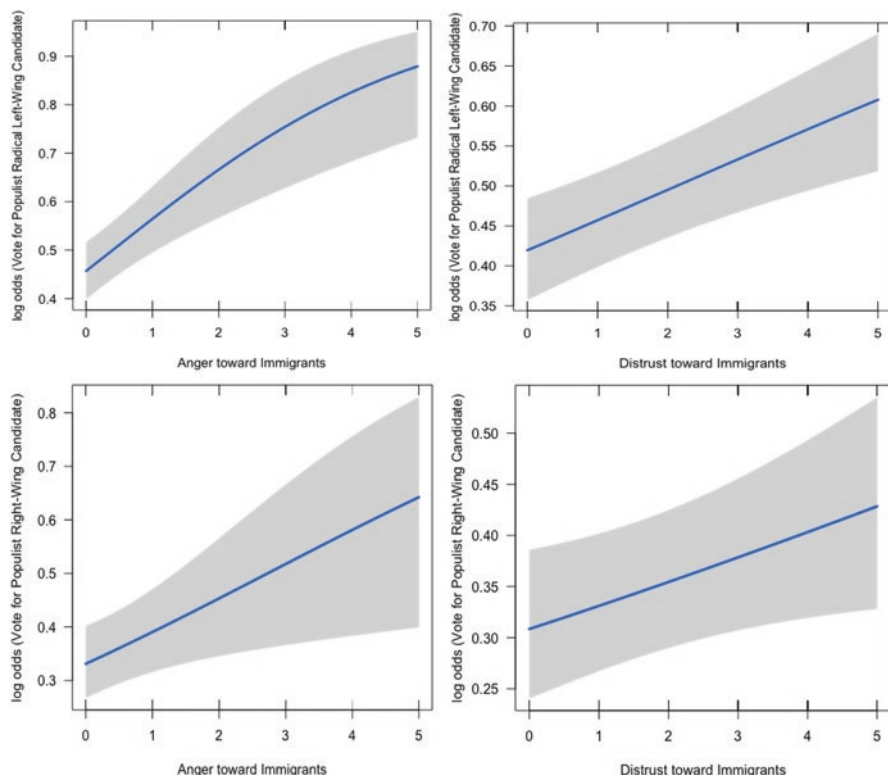


Fig. 11.3 Probabilities of negative emotions versus intention to vote for populist choices

the ‘pure’ people, they repealed the *status quo* in their countries (Barr, 2017; De la Torre, 2017). Consequently, those who display more-elitist attitudes are inversely correlated to supporting a PRLWC but aiming to electorally support a PRWC. This may be explained by previous political experiences since, after the public split between the former presidents Rafael Correa (2007–2017) and Lenín Moreno (2017–2021), Ecuadorian society seems to be polarised between pro- and anti-Correa identities (Castellanos et al., 2021).

Furthermore, our findings show that negative emotions fuel anti-immigrant attitudes in individuals as a direct effect. This coincides with existing contributions in both migration and populism studies. Individuals who feel anger tend to be opposed to ‘open borders’ policies (Vasilopoulos et al., 2018), thereafter expressing negative attitudes toward immigrants. Relatedly, negative emotions can trigger the sense of relative deprivation in individuals, which derives from both populist and anti-immigrant attitudes, often supporting populist radical right-wing options with nativist views (Rothmund et al., 2019). Yet, our empirical evidence is not conclusive enough to suggest a significant nexus between anti-immigrant attitudes and the intention to vote for a PRWC.

Our results show that anti-immigrant attitudes relate negatively to the intention to vote for a PRLWC. This is because radical left-wing leaders in Latin America, such as Rafael Correa and Evo Morales, have tended to depict more-liberal policies towards immigrants. More specifically, in the case of Ecuador, the government of former President Correa extended political and social rights to foreign residents in the country (Ramírez & Zepeda, 2015). Conversely, nativism is usually present in populist radical right-wing rhetoric and policies (Jakobson et al., 2020; Rothmund et al., 2019).

As leaders play a prominent role in directing the people’s feelings toward a specific group – for instance, the antagonist (Laclau, 2005; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017) – it is also important to clarify that, in Ecuador thus far, there is no ‘openly nativist’ radical political leader or party who can channel these anti-immigrant attitudes and negative emotions. Yet, the larger the presence of immigrants in Ecuador, the greater the salience of this topic on party and candidate manifestos (González-Paredes et al., 2022).

As indicated, we control our SEMs by incorporating institutional trust, age, education, income and religion. Institutional trust significantly correlates with elitism, populism and anti-immigrant attitudes, in one model or another. A positive variation in the levels of trust in public institutions has a negative effect on the probability of holding anti-immigrant (*Odds Ratios [OR]* = 0.15, $p < 0.001$ [Model 1]) and populist attitudes ($OR = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$ [Model 1]). To a great extent, those of the electorate who (strongly) trust Ecuadorian public institutions tend to have slightly more elitist attitudes ($OR = 0.06$, $p < 0.05$ [Model 2]). Since public institutions (and the elite), in the eyes of individuals who distrust them the most, are reluctant to regulate – even restrict – immigration, this functions as a direct effect in anti-immigrant attitudes.

Being evangelical and less-educated (i.e., primary and secondary level) directly triggers the likelihood of voting for a PRLWC ($OR = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$; $OR = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$), while constraining anti-immigrant attitudes ($OR = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$). This, of course, depends on the supply-side of a particular leader. In this case, the image of Rafael Correa as a populist radical left-wing leader is suggested in our model and the presidential candidate for the 2021 election, Andrés Arauz, was an unambiguous inspiration both for the design of our question but also for the way in which respondents answered it. In our online survey, we questioned the extent to which respondents would vote for a pro-Correa candidate, assuming that re-election rules prevent the return of Correa to the presidency; however, his approval rate is higher than any other candidate in the country for the 2021 presidential elections. Overall, controls have a moderate impact on populist and anti-immigrant attitudes.

11.6 Conclusion

As a result of increasing migration inflows in Ecuador in recent years, the demand side of Ecuadorian politics has paid close attention to the presence of immigrants as a salient issue. Both the ruling government and the opposition, as well as a

substantive share of public opinion, have expressed concerns about the ongoing wave of Venezuelan migration throughout Latin America and a wide majority of immigrants – particularly Colombians, Cubans and Venezuelans – have been perceived as the ‘antagonist’ by natives. Considering this context of rising anxiety for Ecuadorians over Venezuelan immigration, we focused in this chapter on emotions and the political psychology of the voter, in order to explore to what extent the emotional underpinning and anti-immigrant attitudes of Ecuadorian voters are associated with their populist and elitist attitudes. Bridging this chapter in the junction of the secondary and tertiary migration crisis types (see Jakobson et al., Chap. 1 in this book), we used individual-level data and created several models in which we combined latent and observable variables and unpacked the nexus between different negative emotions, attitudes and prospective electoral behaviour.

Our findings supported each of our hypotheses. First, we reported that populist attitudes significantly lead to higher immigrant attitudes. Second, populist attitudes were also positively correlated with the intention to vote for a PRLWC, while elitism was less likely to display a similar outcome. Third, having negative emotions – predominantly anger and distrust – towards the presence of Americans, Colombians, Cubans, Peruvians and Venezuelans in Ecuador increased the probability of depicting anti-immigrant attitudes and voting for populist choices. Fourth, this set of restrictive or negative attitudes towards immigrants was inversely correlated with the intention of voting for a PRLWC. Overall, our results showed that the nexus between negative emotions and anti-immigrant attitudes, as well as between populism and restrictive or negative attitudes toward immigrants, is the most powerful one in explaining the complex interaction of political attitudes with the political psychology of the voter.

Conscious of working with a non-probabilistic sample – a major limitation in generalising our findings – we encourage scholars and practitioners interested in the interaction between emotions, immigrant policies and political attitudes to use our SEMs, with their more sophisticated sample designs, as a springboard to prospective contributions on this topic. As a future research agenda, we also suggest better calibrating the ideological variable and maybe including the intention to vote for a populist radical right-wing option. Although this decision can saturate SEMs, it might bring together a more comprehensively significant relation between political attitudes and the intention to vote for populist candidates, as well as a more cohesive dialogue between Latin American and European contexts. Finally, with our results, we invite future contributions to make a clearer distinction between the supply- and demand-side of populism in the empirical component. This may reduce even more the methodological limitation related to a possible problem of endogeneity when it comes to test the connection of populist support with populist attitudes.

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Appendix

Table 11.1 SEM coefficients on populism, negative emotions and anti-immigrant attitudes

	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	Std. Err.	β	Std. Err.
Factor loadings				
<i>Populist attitudes</i>				
Pop1	0.77***	0.02	0.82***	0.02
Pop2	0.79***	0.02	0.82***	0.02
Pop3	0.78***	0.02	0.83***	0.02
<i>Elitist attitudes</i>				
Eli1	0.69***	0.03	0.80***	0.03
Eli2	0.93***	0.04	0.90***	0.03
<i>Anti-immigrant attitudes</i>				
Aim1	0.70***	0.02	0.76***	0.02
Aim2	0.70***	0.02	0.67***	0.02
Aim3	0.65***	0.02	0.63***	0.03
Aim4	0.60***	0.02	0.73***	0.02
<i>Institutional trust</i>				
Judicial system	0.84***	0.02	0.85***	0.02
National Electoral Council	0.87***	0.02	0.89***	0.02
National Taxation Agency	0.71***	0.02	0.68***	0.03
National Assembly	0.80***	0.02	0.91***	0.02
Regression slopes				
<i>Anti-immigrant attitudes</i>				
Negative emotions	0.62***	0.07	0.78***	0.09
Populist attitudes	0.20***	0.03	0.12**	0.04
Elitist attitudes	0.04	0.03	0.05	0.04
Institutional trust	-0.15***	0.03	-0.13***	0.03
Age	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Education (university = 1)	0.04	0.05	-0.06	0.07
Income	-0.03	0.03	0.00	0.04
Religion (Catholic = 1)			0.14*	0.07
Religion (Evangelic= 1)	-0.14*	0.06		
Survey (2021)	-0.26***	0.05		
<i>PRLWC</i>				
Negative emotions	0.30***	0.06		
Anti-immigrant attitudes	-0.10***	0.02		
Populist attitudes	0.13***	0.02		
Elitist attitudes	-0.09***	0.02		
Age	0.000	0.00		
Education (university = 1)	-0.26***	0.04		

(continued)

Table 11.1 (continued)

	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	Std. Err.	β	Std. Err.
Income	-0.12***	0.02		
Religion (Evangelic= 1)	0.23***	0.05		
Survey (2021)	0.07	0.04		
<i>PRWC</i>				
Negative emotions			0.25***	0.08
Anti-immigrant attitudes			0.03	0.03
Populist attitudes			-0.14***	0.03
Elitist attitudes			0.26***	0.03
Age			0.00	0.00
Education (university = 1)			0.10	0.06
Income			0.03	0.03
Religion (Catholic = 1)			0.12*	0.06
Latent covariates				
Populismo w/elitismo	0.31***	0.02	0.41***	0.03
Populismo w/confianza	-0.23***	0.02	-0.13***	0.03
Elitismo w/confianza	-0.03	0.02	0.06*	0.03
Fit indices				
χ ²	1263.00(141)***		585.63(129)***	
CFI	0.94		0.96	
TLI	0.93		0.95	
RMSEA	0.06		0.05	

Notes: Coefficients are standardised estimates. p = * < 0.05, ** < 0.001, *** < 0.0001. *Pop1* Ecuadorian politicians should follow the will of the people, *Pop2* the most important political decisions should be made by the people and not by politicians, *Pop3* politicians in the Ecuadorian National Assembly must follow the will of the people, *Eli1* our country would be better governed if important decisions relied on independent experts, *Eli2* our country would be better governed if important decisions relied on successful businesspersons, *Aim1* do immigrants or foreign residents take jobs away from people born in Ecuador?, *Aim2* should the Ecuadorian government take more drastic measures to restrict the entry of undocumented immigrants?, *Aim3* when there is a shortage of jobs, should companies prioritise Ecuadorians over foreigners?, *Aim4* do immigrants increase crime rates?

Table 11.2 Odds ratios (likelihood of voting for populist [radical] choices)

	Model 3	Model 4
	PRLWC	PRWC
Fear	-0.65	0.13
Anger	4.23***	2.49*
Distrust	3.82***	2.10*
Populist attitudes	4.82***	-2.19*
Elitist attitudes	-3.24**	5.15***
Anti-immigrant attitudes	-3.08**	0.03

(continued)

Table 11.2 (continued)

	Model 3	Model 4
	PRLWC	PRWC
	Controls	
Institutional trust	1.21	3.51***
Ideology (scale)	-1.28	5.20***
Age	-2.27*	0.70
Gender (women = 1)	-1.26	2.30*
Region (coastal = 1)	3.73***	1.64
Education (university = 1)	-1.67	-0.54
Income	-3.41***	-0.03
Religion (Catholic = 1)		0.50
Religion (Evangelical/Protestant = 1)	3.07**	
Survey 2021	2.41*	
	Goodness-of-fit	
Intercept	0.26	-4.47***
McFadden	0.07	0.11
Cox and Snell	0.10	0.14
Nagelkerke	0.13	0.19
X ₂ (df)	138.76(15)***	116.55(14)***
Classification	59.16%	64.40%
N	2494	1288

Note: $p = * < 0.05$; $** < 0.001$; $*** < 0.0001$

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Chapter 12

The Mediatisation of Migration Issues During the ‘Refugee Crisis’: A Comparative Case-Study of the UK, Denmark and Germany



Sevgi Temizisler

12.1 Introduction

Spurred on by civil war in Iraq, Libya and Syria and by instability in several African countries, more than 1.8 million migrants/refugees arrived in the EU in 2015 (Frontex, 2016). This massive pressure from immigrants and refugees led to a humanitarian crisis on a global scale while threatening the key instruments of border control in the EU and, at the same time, increasing uncertainty about the political, economic and societal implications for member states. The ‘crisis’ was highly politicised in domestic politics owing to the heightened salience in media coverage, the mobilisation of citizens holding exclusive nationalist identities by mostly right-wing populist parties (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2017) and exacerbated polarisation in public debates. In such circumstances, popular disapproval of the EU’s management of the crisis grew and provided a suitable platform for the growth of anti-EU and anti-refugee/immigrant discourses, in which the domestic mass media played a major role by reflecting these tendencies and shaping public opinion concerning the ‘crisis’.

This chapter investigates how migration issues were mediatised during the ‘refugee crisis’ in different countries and the implications thereof. Recently, a considerable literature has grown up around the role of the media in interpreting and conveying migration issues to the public (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Holzberg et al., 2018; Hutter & Kriesi, 2019; Krzyżanowski et al., 2018; Lawlor & Tolley, 2017; Rheindorf & Wodak, 2018; Szczepanik, 2016; Vezovnik, 2018). However, much of the research up to now has been restricted to single case-studies focusing on discursive shifts on migration issues with a limited scope. The importance and originality of this study are that it comparatively explores the

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mediatisation of migration issues in three countries (the UK, Denmark and Germany) and offers some crucial insights into the connection between Euroscepticism and anti-immigrant attitudes, since the case selection is representative of the different attitudes towards the EU and migration issues (see Sect. 12.3 for further details). Additionally, most studies in mediatisation have tended to conflate and analyse asylum and migration topics into one category, although the two issues have different meanings and the people concerned – asylum-seekers/refugees and migrants – have different legal statuses. Little is known about the various trends in migration and asylum issues in media discourse. This study fills this gap, analysing these issues individually and addressing the different framings of migrants and asylum-seekers/refugees. Hence, here, the phrase ‘migration issues’ is used in a broad sense to cover asylum, asylum-seekers, refugees, migration and migrants.

I begin by explaining the media framing of migration issues and its impact on public attitudes. From here, I analyse the media coverage on migration issues in the UK, Denmark and Germany in the context of the ‘refugee crisis’ between 2015 and 2018. This timeframe also comprises the Brexit referendum in the UK, the opt-in/opt-out referendum in Denmark and a general election in Germany. Through the claims-making analysis, I trace the migration-issues discourse via two newspapers from different alignments per country, particularly focusing on issue linkages with the EU. The findings reveal that the language used in reporting the news varied between the countries, contributing to the Brexit vote in the UK, the opt-out decision in Denmark and the loss of the votes of Chancellor Angela Merkel in Germany. Discursive variations in the media coverage in these countries also manifested themselves in referring to the distinction between the concepts of ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’.

12.2 Media, Migration and Public Opinion

It is now well-established that the media are critical for obtaining and exchanging information and opinions in democratic societies, not only as passive transmitters but also as active contributors to public debates (Bijmans, 2017). From this perspective, media reporting has a remarkable impact on shaping public attitudes through agenda-setting and framing. While the former tells people *what* to think about, the latter suggests *how* to think about them (Eberl et al., 2018). Thus, the role of the modern media is not limited to reporting and commenting on the news or informing the public but includes interacting with society, configuring public debates and expectations and influencing public attitudes and political systems.

Looking at the academic literature on the media coverage of immigration, there is a consensus among scholars that migration issues are generally presented in a negative manner and as a problem increasing the sense of panic and public anxieties (Krzyżanowski et al., 2018). Many studies have shown that migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers are framed in the media as invaders and a potential threat to the

well-being of receiving countries (e.g. Berry et al., 2015; Buonfino, 2004; Eberl et al., 2018; Esses et al., 2013; Pasetti & Garcés-Masareñas, 2018).

This trend could be explained by the fact that citizens are not sufficiently informed to evaluate political issues directly but take their cues from the media (Schuck & de Vreese, 2006). Thus, media reporting provides most citizens with a basic source of knowledge, serving as a link between 'cue-givers' and 'cue-recipients' (Maier & Rittberger, 2008, 262). Since '(h)umans have been shown to be more interested in and more reactive to negative information' (Eberl et al., 2018, 213), journalists apply selective and cognitive bias in the framings and interpretations of migration, which lean towards negativity, to be able to address the 'attention market' (Trenz, 2017). In this vicious circle, migration issues are often pictured as economic, cultural or criminal threats – a negativity which leads to an increase in the perception that migration is more problematic relative to other policy issues (Eberl et al., 2018; Farris & Mohamed, 2018).

The multidimensional characteristics of migration issues also contribute to this vicious circle. Migration is a transnational phenomenon but, at the same time, is a 'core state power' that is 'an emblem of national sovereignty' (Guiraudon, 2000, 251). The borders referring to national identity and protection of the public from external threats have always had symbolic importance for nations (Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002). For this reason, migration has often been constructed 'as the flow of foreigners – the other' (Buonfino, 2004, 48) – detrimental to both national identity and public order. Thus, it has great potential for contestation between 'us' and 'others' and is prone to domestic coalitions with nationality as a defining characteristic. Since they increase the sovereignty concerns of nation states and identity concerns of the public, migration issues are salient and open to contestation, which contributes to negative framings in the media.

As such, many studies have postulated a convergence between the media coverage of immigration and anti-immigration attitudes in public opinion (Eberl et al., 2018; Van Klinger et al., 2015), with the former also influencing the party preferences and voting behaviour of people. Several lines of evidence suggest that there is a positive correlation between the quantity of news media reports on immigration and the tendencies of people to vote for anti-immigrant political parties (Boomgaarden & Vliegthart, 2007; Burscher et al., 2015). The increasing popular support for far-right parties throughout Europe during and after the 'refugee crisis' verifies this correlation.

Many recent studies have indicated a correlation between the high visibility of the 'refugee crisis' in the media and Eurosceptic attitudes (Harteveld et al., 2018). There is a latent potential for migration-related problems to be linked to the EU (Dennison & Geddes, 2018; Hobolt, 2016; Hooghe & Marks, 2019), a linkage observed during the 'refugee crisis', which placed immigration and EU freedom of movement at the heart of media and political debates (Kuznik, 2018). Thus, the politicisation of migration issues increased, contributing to a connection between them and the EU. Eurobarometer surveys (2016, 2017, 2018) demonstrated that immigration was seen as the most crucial issue facing the EU. Since EU membership was taken to imply more immigration (Hurrelmann et al., 2015), the domestic

public was quite critical of the EU's handling of migration issues and wanted their national governments to be the ones making migration decisions (Pew Research Center, 2017, 2018). A combination of the high salience of the issue and public dissatisfaction with the management of the 'crisis' contributed to the growth of anti-EU tendencies (Webber, 2019), which manifested themselves in national referenda – e.g., Denmark's on opt-in/opt-out from the AFSJ¹ in 2015 and the UK's Brexit referendum in 2016, during which conflicts over immigration played a major role (Grande et al., 2019).

12.3 The Mediatisation of Migration Issues in the UK, Denmark and Germany: Case Selection

Having discussed the relationship between the media, migration and public opinion, I now address the media coverage on migration issues in the UK, Denmark and Germany during the 2015–2018 'refugee crisis' and analyse its implications.

These three countries were chosen for some similarities and differences in their contextual factors, which offer suitable platforms for examining the media discourse on migration issues within a comparative framework. First, they have established liberal democracies with consolidated political institutions and party systems. They are among the most economically prosperous countries in the world – their political stability and economic prosperity play an important role in attracting immigration. According to Eurostat (2019) data, the immigration rate in the UK is 10.8, in Denmark it is 10.56 and, in Germany, 10.6 per 1000 inhabitants. While these rates are very close, they are very high when compared with the EU-27 average (5.43 per 1000 inhabitants). These similarities in wealth and immigrant intake allow for parallel analyses on the different attitudes towards migration issues in the media discourse there.

Second, these countries share a common feature in that – particularly with the recent Eurozone, migration and Brexit crises – anti-EU, anti-immigrant, far-right parties gained popular public support and entered parliament, enhancing the politicisation of migration and European integration in the domestic sphere. In the UK, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) grew in influence in the years leading to the EU referendum in 2016. During this leave/remain campaign, UKIP used a particularly aggressive tone on migration issues (Tournier-Sol, 2017). Likewise, in Denmark, the Eurosceptic, anti-immigrant Danish People's Party (DPP) emerged as the second-biggest in the June 2015 elections. Like UKIP, DPP developed a hostile attitude towards the EU, migrants and refugees. In Germany, the far-right, Eurosceptic and anti-immigrant party, Alternative for Germany (AfD), entered federal parliament for the first time, becoming the biggest opposition party there in 2017 and enjoying a surge in popularity through pushing for strict

¹Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

anti-immigration policies on the ‘refugee crisis’ whereby Germany allowed in over a million undocumented migrants. In all three cases, these right-wing parties linked mass immigration to EU free-movement policies. The congruence in rising far-right parties and how they address migration issues and the EU helps us to compare their role in shaping public attitudes towards these issues through the media in case-studies.

Third, these countries epitomise the different attitudes towards migration issues in the UK (anti-immigrant), Germany (pro-immigrant), and Denmark (in-between). This categorisation is based on various studies and reports on migration (e.g. Berry et al., 2015; Eberl et al., 2018; Gorodzeisky & Semyonov, 2019; Heath et al., 2016; Migration Observatory, 2020; Pew Research, 2016) and on the data on the easiest countries to immigrate to in terms of a designated set of requirements authorising immigrants to become permanent residents (World Population Review, 2022). These cases characterise different levels of European integration and represent a range of attitudes towards the EU: UK (hard-Eurosceptic), Denmark (soft Eurosceptic) and Germany (pro-European), thus providing the framework for a comparative analysis on the link between Euroscepticism and anti-immigrant attitudes reflected in the media discourse there.

12.4 Data and Methods

The primary research method used in this study to obtain data is claims-making analysis (Koopmans & Statham, 1999). Statham and Trenz (2013, 970) define this as ‘a standard method for retrieving systematic and reliable data on the contents of public debates from newspaper sources’. However, this approach differs from conventional newspaper-content analyses in that it takes the ‘claims’ made by public actors – rather than the ‘articles’ – as the unit of analysis. Thus, claims-making provides an opportunity to examine the roles of actors in public debates, the relations between them and the positions they advocate regarding policy issues, in contrast to traditional content analytic methods which usually investigate how journalists frame the news. This approach is an *analytic descriptive* method, which delineates who and what is present in the public sphere. Thus, the data gathered through claims might respond to questions from a wide range of different theoretical and conceptual backgrounds. Through this method, we can obtain information on:

- who addresses or targets who/what;
- with which frequency (salience);
- in the name of whose interests; and
- in which way (positive, neutral or negative).

This study draws on a dataset built for my PhD thesis (Temizisler, 2021) on the politicisation of migration issues and their effects on European integration. It consists of 2129 newspaper articles and 4210 claims, representing public discourse on migration issues in British, Danish and German newspapers between 2015 and

2018. To avoid a possible selection and reporting bias, articles were sampled from two leading high-circulation newspapers in each country, taking both relative right/conservative/tabloid and left/liberal/broadsheet imprint – the most important quality and tabloid newspapers in terms of daily circulation – a selection which appeals to all sections of society. The newspapers chosen were *The Times* (liberal-broadsheet) and *The Sun* (right-conservative-tabloid) in the UK; *Politiken* (centre-left-liberal-broadsheet) and *Berlingske* (right-conservative-tabloid) in Denmark; *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (centre-left-liberal-broadsheet) and *Bild* (right-conservative-tabloid) in Germany.

All articles were downloaded from the databases of NexisUni and Factiva, applying a keyword search that included ‘(im)migration’, ‘(im)migrant’, ‘border check(s)’, ‘border control(s)’, ‘asylum (–seeker)’ and ‘refugee’. The time period – from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2017 – thus also allows the investigation of discursive shifts during different stages of the ‘refugee crisis’.

The analysis for this chapter is based on a qualitative interpretation of collected claims in the above-mentioned dataset. A constituent part of a broader research design, it includes both quantitative and qualitative approaches used for exploring politicisation levels and impacts in my thesis.

12.5 Analysis

Generally, the quantitative analysis of the claims in the media debates indicated that migration issues in Denmark and the UK received wider media coverage than in Germany during the ‘refugee crisis’. Considering earlier studies suggesting a correlation between the media coverage of migration issues and anti-immigrant attitudes due to negative tendencies in reporting them (Eberl et al., 2018; Van Klingeren et al., 2015), this finding implies higher anti-immigrant attitudes in public opinion in the UK and Denmark than in Germany during the ‘crisis’. Given the national narratives on European integration in the UK (hard-Eurosceptic), Denmark (soft-Eurosceptic) and Germany (pro-European), this result also supports evidence from previous observations linking high visibility of the ‘refugee crisis’ in the media to Euroscepticism (Harteveld et al., 2018).

I now analyse the context of ‘refugee crisis’ in terms of the role of political parties, attitudes towards migration issues and the most debated issue as reflected in the media coverage.

12.5.1 *The Role of Political Parties*

In the UK, the ‘refugee crisis’ was reflected as the ‘Calais Crisis’ in which thousands attempted to enter the UK by walking through the channel tunnel. The ‘crisis’ was elaborated in the media as a threat to the UK. Migration subsequently

dominated the 'Brexit' referendum campaigns in June 2016. The political parties and their representatives from the Brexit or 'Leave the EU' camp tended to associate migration issues with the EU (Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2017) and warned that Britain did not have control of its borders and migration policy while it remained in the EU. UKIP was criticised for deliberately stirring voters' fears, especially using the 'immigration' theme and linking it to the EU during the leave/remain campaign (Tournier-Sol, 2017). For example, in March 2016, Nigel Farage, UKIP's leader, warned people that '29 million people from Romania and Bulgaria would shortly be eligible to come to Britain as migration restrictions were lifted' (*The Times*, 13/03/2016). UKIP also claimed that the Paris attacks in November 2015 were a direct consequence of open borders (Bennett, 2018). This discourse, produced by UKIP and reflected in the media, contributed to strengthening Eurosceptic national narratives, which were already persistent and based on the idea that Britain is culturally detached from Europe (Spiering, 2015). Thus, the primary concern of the referendum moved from providing special status for the UK in the EU to the issue of freedom of movement and its impacts on immigration, jobs and security (Zappettini, 2019). Eventually, 52% voted to leave and 48% to remain in the EU. Prime Minister David Cameron interpreted the referendum result as being primarily about immigration and free movement (*The Times*, 30/06/2016). The opposition agreed – Arron Banks, the millionaire UKIP donor who founded the Leave-EU referendum campaign, declared that 'most people who voted for Brexit did so because of immigration and controlling our borders' (*The Times*, 22/02/2017). As Schimmelfennig (2018) summarised, Brexit resulted from a combination of immigration, the rise of a Eurosceptic party and the availability of referenda.

Similarly, the anti-immigrant, Eurosceptic Danish People's Party (DPP)² was very active during the 'refugee crisis' in Denmark. Party spokesman Martin Henriksen argued that '(t)he massive Muslim immigration has a spin-off that the costs of surveillance and security are exploding due to the risk of radicalisation' (*Berlingske*, 11/02/2015). He also said '...crime will also fall at home if we get fewer refugees' (*Berlingske*, 09/02/2015). During the referendum campaign, DPP had an important influence on public perceptions, combining the 'refugee crisis' with the EU. For example, it called the EU decision on the relocation of refugees a 'disaster' (*Berlingske*, 03/09/2015) and claimed that Denmark risked losing control over its immigration policy and could be forced to accept obligatory EU refugee quotas in the future. Although Denmark had a legal reservation regarding the Common European Asylum System and did not have to accept the refugee quotas, DPP did not refrain from using this 'false' argument. As a result, the primary concern of the referendum gradually moved from judicial cooperation to migration issues, despite the government's efforts to convince voters that the opt-in vote for the referendum did not mean that Denmark would be part of the EU common policy on refugees. At the beginning of the referendum campaigns, there was a public

²The DPP had 21% of the votes and became Denmark's second-largest political party in earlier elections.

tendency to vote in favour of the opt-in arrangement for EU justice legislation (YouGov, 2015). Having been supported by all segments of society, a ‘YES’ for opt-in was the common expectation (*Politiken*, 25/04/2015). However, 53.1% of Danes voted against adopting the opt-in arrangement, while 46.9% supported it – a very disappointing result for pro-Europeans and the Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen. In a speech, he said:

My impression is that the result was not so much related to what we voted on. This is about fear of losing control. I don’t see that this is a ‘No’ to Danish police cooperating with other EU police forces. This is about a general Euroscepticism (Euractiv, 2015a).

The Danish referendum on the EU was used by Eurosceptic parties to raise Eurosceptic sentiments in public opinion through the mediatisation and politicisation of EU migration policies (Oppermann, 2017). As a result, although the referendum asked whether Danes wanted to remain in the EU’s police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, people voted against the EU’s common asylum policy, contributing to the rejection of further integration.

The ‘crisis’ as an external shock affected Germany, as other member states. According to German officials, more than a million refugees went to the country, with over 476,000 claiming asylum in 2015 alone (BBC News, 2016). The far-right Eurosceptic party AfD, founded in 2013, made huge progress during the ‘refugee crisis’ through party politicians’ anti-immigrant discourse. Alexander Gauland, AfD’s Vice President, declared, addressing the refugees, that ‘Germany was comparable to the fall of the Roman Empire when the barbarians overran the Limes’ (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 09/11/2015). A former party leader, Frauke Petry, suggested that the police should use guns to stop refugees from crossing the border illegally. AfD official Jeanette Ihme suggested sinking the tugboats and the refugees in the sea, saying ‘(r)efugees behave like primates’ (*Bild*, 09/08/2017). During the 2017 election campaigns, opposition parties mostly criticised Angela Merkel for her approach to the refugees and the ‘crisis’. Her famous phrase ‘We can do it’, suspending the Dublin Regulation and accepting more than one million refugees to the country, were among her most criticised policies in this period. After the Cologne event on New Year’s Eve 2016, when (allegedly) Northern African refugee men assaulted women in and around Cologne’s main station, AfD’s xenophobic and anti-immigrant approach that associated refugees with terror and violence gained popular support. AfD also influenced public perceptions connecting Merkel and the EU with the ‘refugee crisis’. AfD went to the election, calling for the closure of the borders, mass deportation of refugees and abolition of family reunification for recognised refugees.

As a result, the Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) coalition, led by Chancellor Merkel, won the election with 33% – a loss of 8% compared to the previous election. AfD, which was previously unrepresented in the German parliament, had 13% of the vote – gaining more than 8 points on its 2013 result – and entered parliament as the third party. This result was a historic success for AfD – an openly nationalist party entering the Bundestag for the first time in almost six decades.

The 'refugee crisis' thus led to an increase in the salience of migration issues in the three case-study countries. The far-right political parties used this condition to expand their electoral bases with their speeches in the media, thus contributing to the negative presentation in the media of migration issues as a problem, increasing the sense of panic and public anxiety. They usually referred to security, sovereignty, identity and economic concerns and emphasised the 'us' and 'others' contestation. In particular, far-right parties in the UK and Denmark used Eurosceptic narratives, associating migration issues with the EU during their referendum campaigns. The increasing popular support for these parties during the 'refugee crisis' corroborates earlier studies indicating a correlation between increasing the salience of immigration issues in the media and the success of anti-immigrant parties (Boomgaarden & Vliegthart, 2007; Burscher et al., 2015; Eberl et al., 2018).

12.5.2 Attitudes Towards Migration Issues

The content of claims retrieved from the newspapers indicated that the three case-studies have very similar shares of polarisation – in all cases, more than 70% of the claims included a position (either positive or negative) concerning migration issues. Although the percentages are similar, the direction of the positions differs across the countries. While, in the UK and Denmark, more than half of the claimants took a negative attitude towards migration issues, in Germany, it was the other way around.³

The anti-immigrant approaches in the UK and Denmark could be attributed to the Eurosceptic narratives reflected in the media, which deem European free-movement policies responsible for the increasing immigration. Consistent with the literature, this result points to an association between Euroscepticism and anti-immigration attitudes (Krouwel & Kutiyski, 2017; Oppermann, 2017; Schimmelfennig, 2018). This connection was also verified through the number of claims linking migration to the EU. We observed that 33% of claims in the UK (hard-Eurosceptic) and 20% in Denmark (soft-Eurosceptic) made a connection between migration issues and the EU (membership, free movement, border checks, free market, etc.), while this proportion was only 8% in Germany (pro-European).

Another possible explanation for this finding might be the approaches and discourse of governments towards refugees and their reflections in the media. The UK and Danish governments were very reserved towards migrants and refugees from the beginning. For instance, they both rejected the European Commission (2015) proposal aimed at relocating refugees in a framework of a quota mechanism, while

³Although events like New Year's Eve 2015 in Cologne led to shifts from a humanitarian and empathetic framing towards a hostile and suspicious one (Pasetti & Garcés-Masareñas, 2018), in general the positive attitude towards migrants and refugees protected them in Germany. Vollmer and Karakayali (2018, 133) explain this situation, saying that a 'positive discourse toward refugees in Germany has been challenged, tumbled and eventually disintegrated, however, without having fully reversed'.

Chancellor Merkel declared that there were no limits to the number of refugees that Germany could receive in the hectic period of the ‘crisis’ (*Bild*, 01/09/2015). As a result, Germany opened its door to the refugees stranded in Hungary, so more than 12,000 refugees arrived in Germany during just one weekend (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 07/09/2015). In line with this, large segments of German society, including the press, companies, trade unions, associations, schools and universities, supported the efforts to welcome refugees (Vollmer & Karakayali, 2018). Additionally, in reaction to the drowning of many refugees in the Mediterranean Sea, the German government contributed to rescue operations by sending ships there. However, British Home Secretary Theresa May declared that they would not support future search-and-rescue operations because these would ‘provide new incentives for economic migrants’ (*The Times*, 13/05/2015). In the same period, the Danish government published advertisements in four Lebanese newspapers aimed at discouraging migrants from going there and warning that Denmark had reduced social benefits to migrants significantly, family reunification for those given asylum would not be allowed during the first year, a residence permit would only be given to those who spoke Danish and rejected asylum-seekers would be swiftly sent back to their home countries (Euractiv, 2015b).

In line with these government attitudes, we observe that the humanitarian problems that refugees/migrants confronted at the start of the ‘refugee crisis’ – such as the discovery of a truck on an Austrian motorway with the decomposing bodies of 71 people or the death of a Syrian baby, Aylan Kurdi, his brother and their mother in their attempt to reach Europe – were debated more intensely in Germany than in the UK and Denmark. The German mainstream press gave wide coverage of these tragedies, which ‘led to a huge wave of empathy and solidarity with the plight of Syrian refugees’ (Triandafyllidou, 2018, 202).

We observe that the governments’ approaches towards the migrants/refugees were manifested through different framings in the domestic media. In Germany, the discourse was based on how pitiful the situation was for these people – ‘The people who come to us are fleeing from IS terror, from the war against their families. Germany must not be a place for racism, hatred and agitation against Muslims’ (*Bild*, 06/01/2015). However, in the UK and Denmark, these people were framed in a negative way based on the argument that ‘the asylum seekers are not deserving of solidarity and protection because they are bogus refugees; in reality they are economic migrants’ (Triandafyllidou, 2018, 212) abusing social services.

12.5.3 The Most Debated Issue

Another important finding from the newspapers is the most-debated issue in the case-studies. As mentioned in the data and methods section, the issues analysed in this study comprise migration/migrant, asylum(-seeker)/refugee, border checks and the ‘refugee crisis’. Interestingly, while the most-debated issue was ‘migration/migrant’ in the UK, it was ‘asylum(-seeker)/refugee’ in Denmark and Germany. A

more qualitative analysis showed that the language used in reporting the news varied between the countries, contributing to the differences in the most-debated issue.

In the British media, the term 'migration' was used to cover 'asylum(-seeker)' and 'refugee' without differentiating their implications, resulting in 'migration/migrant' becoming the most-debated issue. This might be either because claimants have no idea about the differences in the meanings of those terms or because this is a deliberate action. Considering the majority of the claimants' professions – prime ministers, ministers, experts, academics, NGOs, etc. – the first option loses its force. Additionally, the content of the claims suggests that the claimants made a clear distinction between 'EU migrants' (177 claims) and migrants from outside the EU – i.e. 'non-EU or illegal migrants' (460 claims). The claimants usually used the phrase 'non-EU or illegal migrants' to refer to asylum-seekers and refugees, indicating that they were well aware of the difference between the terms 'migrant' and 'asylum-seeker/refugee'.

This takes us to the second explanation: the line between these terms seems deliberately not to be drawn. The reason for this might be twofold. First, the main concern in the UK was the high increase in EU immigration, particularly after the 'A8' East European countries⁴ joined the EU in 2004. Rather than the refugees, many British people were worried that EU immigrants reduce the pay and job opportunities of the UK-born due to greater competition for jobs (Wadsworth et al., 2016). Since the UK is not in the Schengen passport-free travel zone, refugees were not posing a big problem due to border checks. The UK government admitted that it would receive around 20,000 refugees in the 5 years from 2015 (BBC News, 2015) and it would take some years before they were allowed to apply for citizenship. Thus, the refugees were not frequently referred to in the media.

Second, this was a deliberate action to identify asylum-seekers/refugees with economic migrants and develop a negative attitude in the UK towards the EU's free-movement policies. A migrant implies a person moving from one country to another. (S)he may be fleeing dire poverty or may be well-off and merely seeking better opportunities (Somini, 2015). However, the term asylum-seeker or refugee denotes a person who has fled his or her country to escape war or persecution and can prove it. These people are protected under the Geneva Convention, Dublin Regulation and other international agreements and cannot be sent back to countries where their lives would be in danger. In light of this, public perceptions of asylum-seekers/refugees changed compared to those of migrants. People can easily comprehend the situation which asylum-seekers/refugees have to face and show empathy for them. However, regarding migrants, there is the potential for people to be biased against migrants' reasons for coming to their country. As Pasetti & Garcés-Masareñas (2018) concludes, public attitudes tend to be more positive towards asylum-seekers compared to economic migrants.

⁴The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Keeping this distinction in mind gives some clues as to the efforts to combine migration/migrant and asylum seeker/refugee in the UK. For example, in a claim, David Cameron – addressing EU migrants – says:

I will go to Brussels with a clear plan: no more benefits for EU jobseekers; if you haven't got a job after six months, you must leave; no in-work benefits or social housing unless you've been here for four years (*The Sun*, 01.03.2015).

As can be deduced from this claim, migrants are identified with jobseekers. In the same vein, regarding the refugees in Calais, the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee in the UK argued in a report that

Schengen assumed the external border of the EU would be secure but it is not, so free movement means free movement for illegal migrants within the EU. Some reach Calais before encountering any border controls (*The Times*, 23.03.2015).

It is striking that the claimants refrained from using the words 'refugee' or 'asylum-seeker' in their statements, preferring to portray these people as (illegal) 'migrants'. Such an attitude could be interpreted as an attempt to influence public perceptions regarding asylum-seekers/refugees in a negative way by linking them to migrants, freedom of movement and problems resulting from being an EU member state. This finding also accords with that of Eberl et al. (2018), who argue that to use the terms 'migrant/immigrant' is a deliberate action to delegitimise the dire political and personal circumstances of refugees or asylum-seekers.

Unlike the UK, in Denmark the claimants differentiated and used these terms correctly. From the content, we see that seminars highlighting the differences between 'migration/migrant' and 'asylum(-seeker)/refugee' were held by NGOs such as the Danish Refugee Council. The Prime Minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen (2015), usually drew attention to this semantic difference in his speeches, declaring, for example, when addressing the Danish parliament, that

Our borders are under a double pressure. Partly from migrants who are seeking to escape poverty. Partly from people who are fleeing from war and destruction... Denmark has a responsibility to help people who are fleeing... We must say openly that there is a difference between being a refugee and an economic migrant. We can never cope with mass migration that is borne by the desire for a better life.

Furthermore, in the British media, claimants almost always used the term 'migrant crisis', implying that the current 'crisis' was all about people coming to the EU to gain welfare benefits and economic interests rather than fleeing war and persecution. In Denmark, the claimants usually used the term 'refugee crisis', with an empathetic approach to refugees and asylum-seekers at the beginning of 2015: '(t)he current refugee crisis has prompted almost everyone to talk about the importance of fighting the root causes of poverty and war' (*Berlingske*, 27/05/2015). Nevertheless, it was observed that the claimants modified the term to 'refugee and migrant crisis', taking a critical position when the 'crisis' peaked in the autumn: '...the refugee and migration crisis has thrown the Schengen area into a survival struggle...' (*Berlingske*, 12/12/2015). The huge influx of refugees at the time could be a major, if not the only, factor causing this shift in discourse in the Danish media.

In Germany – like the Danish case – the claimants were well aware of the differences between the terms 'migration/migrant' and 'asylum/asylum-seeker/refugee' and used them correctly during the 'refugee crisis'. In contrast to the UK, claimants in Germany almost always chose the words 'refugee crisis' to define the problems stemming from the influx during 2015–2018. Additionally, unlike Denmark, they did not modify this discourse. This approach by German claimants was so distinct from the other cases that some politicians accused the government of equating migrants with asylum-seekers, thereby fuelling fears of immigration.⁵ We can see from the content of the claims that the claimants in Germany generally took a positive approach not only to refugees but also to migrants, unlike Britain and Denmark. The claim '(i)f we want to stay wealthy, we must continue to promote immigration, welcome refugees and see them as an opportunity' (*Bild*, 26/09/2016) was the dominant discourse repeated by most of the executives and non-executives in Germany.

Considering differences in approach, among the case-studies, to the terms 'migrant' and 'refugee' in media coverage, particularly during the Brexit vote in the UK, the findings on the most-debated issue are in line with previous studies referring to the role of the media in shaping public attitudes through agenda-setting and/or framing.

12.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the refugee crisis, as an external shock, affected all three countries. My analysis of newspaper content indicated that migration issues received wider media coverage in the UK and Denmark than in Germany during the refugee crisis. Also, it was observed that attitudes towards refugees and migrants were more positive in Germany than in the UK and Denmark. These results confirm the correlation between the media coverage of migration issues and anti-immigrant attitudes. Considering the national narratives on European integration in the UK (hard-Eurosceptic), Denmark (soft-Eurosceptic) and Germany (pro-European), these results also support the association between Euroscepticism and anti-immigration attitudes (Schimmelfennig, 2018; Startin, 2017).

Furthermore, far-right parties in all cases increased the mediatisation and politicisation of migration issues. UKIP in the UK and DPP in Denmark, in particular, linked migration issues with the EU, thus manipulating public opinion and moving the subject of referenda from one platform to another. The reflection of the discourse used by political parties and the tone of reporting of migration issues in the media contributed to the Brexit vote in the UK. Similarly, the mediatisation of these issues influenced public opinion on the opt-out decision in Denmark. The increasing popular support for anti-immigrant far-right parties in the three countries is also

⁵ 'Bavarian Greens accuse the state government of equating migrants with asylum-seekers in a position paper on EU policy and thereby fueling fear of immigration' (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 05/03/2015).

consistent with earlier studies indicating a link between increasing the salience of immigration issues in the media and the success of anti-immigrant parties.

One of the significant findings to emerge from this study is that the language used in reporting the news varied between the countries, particularly when referring to the terms ‘migration/migrant’ and ‘asylum-seeker/refugee’. These terms were correctly used, differentiating their meanings and legal status, in Denmark and Germany while, in the UK, the term ‘migration/migrant’ was used to cover ‘asylum-seeker/refugee’ in an attempt to link these people to economic or illegal migrants.

This study has also confirmed that the role of modern media is not limited to reporting and commenting on the news or informing the general public. It also includes configuring public debates and influencing public attitudes and political systems.

Furthermore, this work contributes to our existing knowledge of the mediatisation of migration issues by providing a comparative analysis in three countries. It also expands our understanding of the link between Euroscepticism and anti-immigrant attitudes and provides crucial insights into the different usages of the terms ‘migration/migrant’ and ‘asylum-seeker/refugee’ in media discourse.

A limitation of this study is the necessity to restrict the number of case-studies for practical reasons. Further research could be conducted in other member states – for example, Hungary (or Slovakia) and France (or the Netherlands) could be analysed on the mediatisation of migration issues and their attitudes towards the EU, before being compared with the findings of this study. In this way, further details and insights into the correlation between the mediatisation of migration issues and attitudes towards migrants, refugees and the EU could be produced.

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Chapter 13

Who Is the Worst Migrant? Migrant Hierarchies in Populist Radical-Right Rhetoric in Estonia



Katrina Koppel and Mari-Liis Jakobson

13.1 Introduction

Migrants are often an antagonised group in populist radical-right rhetoric and are even perceived quite negatively by mainstream publics. Immigrants' contributions (societal, economic, cultural etc.) are, on the whole, undervalued even by those who consider their own position to be neutral or positive toward migrants, while the negative effects (e.g. criminality or lowering property values) are overestimated (Marchlewska et al., 2019). Often, immigrants are associated with or blamed for the turbulent times that the host society is experiencing and are depicted using anxiety-inducing rhetoric. While populism tends towards simplifying and homogenising the good and morally virtuous people as well as the unworthy and/or morally corrupt antagonist groups (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013; Müller, 2016; Taggart, 2004), there is often more nuance to this. In fact, migrants are not always perceived as a completely homogeneous group even by the populist radical right, especially when contemplating migration policy. Such an approach becomes inevitable as soon as the populists begin to make policy proposals. Yet, these internal hierarchies that exist within primarily negative perceptions have thus far merited little attention.

This chapter aims to deconstruct the phenomenon of migrant hierarchies in populist radical-right rhetoric by looking at value statements of how the value and deservingness of different groups is denoted in political discourse. Understanding the logic of hierarchisation is important because it adds another layer to understanding how and around what such migration-related anxieties are constructed in host societies. The hierarchies also nuance the picture and help us to understand the nexus between anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy-making: why and how can radical anti-immigrant rhetoric still translate into quite measured (though restrictive)

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immigration-control proposals and why these do not cause opposition or cognitive dissonance among the supporters of the populist radical-right parties.

Methodologically, the paper draws on and also expands from the Essex School of Discourse Theory and their approach to populism (see, e.g., Laclau, 2005), the Critical Discourse Analysis School and their approach to the populist radical right (Wodak, 2017) and positioning theory (Van Langenhove, 2017). The discourse-theoretical approach claims that populist discourse relies primarily on creating chains of equivalence in order to articulate the antagonism between ‘the people’ and their antagonist(s) – the political elites or the establishment. The logic of equivalence is opposed to the logic of difference which we come across in more-measured debates, where issues are treated with more nuance and recognition of particularity. In this chapter, however, we look at how immigrants are differentiated in populist radical-right rhetoric and how the logic of difference occasionally coexists with the logic of equivalence in populist discourse in order to construct immigrant hierarchies. Critical-discourse analysis complements this by focusing on the nomination and attribution strategies used to construct the people and the antagonists and points out that, in the case of right-wing populism, various minority groups, including migrants, are also antagonised (Wodak, 2017). Positioning theory lends us the concept of moral concerns used for positioning various groups in the social hierarchy.

Empirically, we examine how migrants are constructed by the Estonian populist radical-right party *Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond* (Estonian Conservative People’s Party – EKRE) in their counterpublic, the webzine *Uued Uudised*. EKRE is a relatively typical European populist radical-right party riding the wave of neopopulism. It largely achieved its electoral success in the aftermath of the European migration crisis and the anti-immigrant stance is the defining rhetorical position of the party (Kasekamp et al., 2019), whether in opposition or in a coalition party. A counterpublic is chosen as the context for analysis, as these produce a fragmentary public where only speakers sharing the same subject position air their views; hence, it is expected to provide the purest context for analysing the populist radical-right’s immigration discourse.

Estonia is one of the smallest EU member states (population 1.3 million) with one of the largest shares of foreign-origin residents, the vast majority of whom are (descendants of) Russian-speaking immigrants from the period when Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union. Like most Central and Eastern European countries, Estonia has primarily been a net emigration country since it regained independence. Almost half of Estonians abroad reside in neighbouring Finland, which is mainly a destination for (lower-skilled) labour migration. In recent years, however, immigration rates have sped up notably and the foreign-born population has become much more diverse. While Ukraine, Russia and Belarus are still the main countries of immigration, communities of migrants from Nigeria, India and the MENA region have also begun to form in recent years. Immigration has stimulated a series of liberalising reforms, which exempted student migration and highly skilled specialists from the immigration quota, allowed short-term labour migration based on visas (which has in particular increased the number of Ukrainian labour migrants), and lowered the salary requirement for immigrant labour force to the average salary.

13.2 Immigrant Hierarchies

Social stratification and hierarchies are an organic and unavoidable phenomenon in social groups (Bunderson et al., 2016; Tilly, 2001). Hierarchies can perhaps be witnessed more frequently in the field of migration than in other walks of life, as the division into ‘us’ and ‘them’ is common, placing the in-group ahead of the out-groups. Hierarchies are manufactured on many different levels, from objective economic inequalities to individual perceptions and government policy. Hierarchies are a product not just of economic inequality but also of power inequalities.

For instance, Charles Tilly (2001) has observed that durable inequalities in societies are created and maintained as a result of two structural gate-keeping processes: exploitation (where the powerful in-group uses their resources to undercut others from the full rewards for their added value) and opportunity hoarding (where the same in-group does not allow others to gain access to value-producing resources). As a result, people from better socio-economic backgrounds have economic, educational, cultural and other advantages which help them to reproduce such an advantageous position in the higher strata of the social hierarchy.

However, hierarchies are also socially constructed and reproduced through cultural practices as well as the institutional order. Martin Reisigl (2008) has noted that hierarchies are a primarily discursive construction, as some groups are projected as superior to others mainly through the use of language. This can include both everyday exchanges as well as more elaborate cultural practices and, as such, can also affect the institutional order. Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram (1993) show how the social constructions of different societal groups affect both the choice of policy tools and the ways in which policies are legitimated in society. According to Ingram et al. (2019), policy target groups are constantly (though subconsciously) evaluated in society on two scales: (1) how powerful (or powerless) a group is and (2) how positively (or negatively) the group is perceived by society. As a result, groups positively regarded by society and with more power tend to be rewarded via public policies, while others with little power and a negative public perception tend to bear the burden. Groups with a negative public image but with access to power tend to be subject to ‘firing blanks’ with their policies, which appear as burdens but, in practice, do not put the group at a disadvantage. Powerless groups with a positive public image occasionally do receive rewards but are typically the first to lose them when cutbacks are necessary. In the field of welfare policy, the concept of ‘deservingness’ has become a central conditionality for support (Van Oorschot, 2000), which is practised both in policy design and in the phase of policy implementation. As a result, deservingness is decided not just by new laws that are written but also when the so-called street-level bureaucrats begin implementing these policies and making decisions on whether and to what kind of support a concrete person is entitled.

All these practices are also at play in the field of migration. Immigrants are often (though not always) at a relative disadvantage, both economically and symbolically, compared to the host population; various social policies, which regulate access for example to healthcare, housing or the labour market, can even worsen the situation

(Ratzmann & Sahraoui, 2021). Furthermore, public attitudes tend to regard migrants as less valuable than their actual societal contribution (Marchlewska et al., 2019) and, as a result, immigration and integration policies tend to be increasingly exclusive and to place additional demands and/or burdens on immigrants (Joppke, 2003; Moynihan et al., 2022). However, this does not apply equally to all immigrant groups: as a result of these above-mentioned processes, there are also notable hierarchies within the immigrant community. For instance, selective immigration policies are inherently an immigrant hierarchy-generating tool, defining select immigrant groups as deserving of the right to immigration and/or immigrant integration support, while non-prioritised would-be-immigrants are left to seek alternative entry opportunities – often including irregular ones. Immigration policies can also contribute towards constructivist as well as objective economic positions in the societal hierarchy, where some immigrant groups might even wield more power than some non-immigrant ones – for example, thanks to their good economic position (immigrant investors, so-called talent migrants), high level of perceived deservingness (such as those working in fields with significant labour shortages or having more ‘desirable’ ethnic backgrounds), high level of human capital (highly skilled specialists) or access to decision-makers (e.g. immigrant entrepreneurs), etc. Such hierarchies can be reproduced not just by the non-immigrant host population but also by immigrants themselves when trying to position themselves as relatively more deserving than some other immigrant groups. For instance, Jakobson et al. (2012) report how Estonians living in Finland depict themselves as more hardworking, better integrated and overall more deserving than some other immigrant groups such as the Somalis. Goerres et al. (2018) depict a similar narrative among the *Russlanddeutsch* (descendants of a historical minority of ethnic Germans in Russia who have ‘repatriated’ to Germany), while Nowicka (2018) outlines how Polish migrants position themselves ahead of other immigrant groups.

Yet, all the above-mentioned theories simply describe the *strategies* of hierarchy construction, not the *ontologies* of hierarchy. What, then, constitutes such hierarchies? Van Langenhove (2017, 4) has associated hierarchies with moral orders, defined as

a set of habits and prescriptions, both temporary and permanent ... these orders are indicative (and a central aspect) of a society’s culture ... what indicates ‘good and bad’ and thus indicates rights and responsibilities.

The moral orders defining immigrants’ deservingness and, thus, their position in the social hierarchies can also vary notably, depending, *inter alia*, on their reason for immigration, labour-market position, gender, ethnicity or race. Policies privileging high-skilled or high-income migrants or immigrants from specific countries and/or regions create and institutionalise the hierarchisation of migration, hardening both categories directly related to skills and income (e.g. formal education and skills) as well as the categories influencing them such as race or social class (Chung, 2009). It could also be argued that immigration policies based on the migrants’ economic status, skills, education etc. function discursively as a direct defining feature of the value of a migrant; the conditions given preference by migration policies (higher

education, high income, other qualifications) function as a political design of migration hierarchies. The time of immigration can also translate into hierarchies of immigrants' positionalities, where those who have immigrated in one period, for example, see themselves as better integrated or immigrating for nobler reasons than those who immigrated earlier or later and, thus, as belonging to a higher class (see e.g. Griffith, 2005).

'Whiteness' is also occasionally perceived as an indicator of an immigrant's position in the social hierarchy. It is constructed by the way it positions others as inferior. It thereby produces a system of racialised inequality wherein 'whiteness' is always seen as a universally positive category and, in representing the Western world, as a source of fantasy and repressed desires (Fanon, 1967; Saïd, 1978). For minority groups, however, it produces images of racialised otherness and lower positions in the social hierarchy which cannot be overcome. However, racism

is not just directed at those with darker skins, from the former colonial countries, but at the newer categories of the displaced and dispossessed whites, who are beating at western Europe's doors [...] It is a racism that is meted out to impoverished strangers even if they are white (Rzepnikowska, 2019, 63).

Yet, on other occasions, the 'whiteness' of immigrants might even position them higher in the social hierarchy, as with French immigrants in Morocco for example (Virkama et al., 2012).

Often, 'whiteness' gets combined with other features. As put by Colic-Peisker (2005, 622), 'whiteness is not just about skin colour, but also about class, status, language and other features of the individual that can be discerned in social interaction' (cf. McDowell, 2009, 29). To give a more historic example, the WW II female refugees from the Baltic States (the so-called Baltic Swans) were perceived by the UK authorities as desirable immigrants not just because of their skin colour but also their gender, physical characteristics and habits. In a memorandum from the Foreign Labour Committee after a visit to the camps in Germany, the advantages of Baltic women were spelt out in unambiguous terms:

The women are of good appearance; are scrupulously clean in their persons and habits.... There is little doubt that the specially selected women who come to this country will be an exceptionally healthy and fit body ... and would constitute a good and desirable element in our population (Kay & Miles, 1992, 50; cf. McDowell, 2009).

13.3 *Uued Uudised* as an Estonian Counterpublic

In this chapter, we focus on the construction of immigrant hierarchies within a newszine called *Uued Uudised* (UU). Operating since 2015, UU is the official news outlet of the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE), a populist radical-right party with a staunch anti-immigrant disposition (Jakobson et al., 2020; Kasekamp et al., 2019; Petsinis, 2019). Notably, UU states on their homepage, as well as some channel descriptions on other media, that positions represented in their

content may not be in line with those of EKRE. UU can be defined as a counterpublic, a space distinct from that of public opinion, where those in society – who do not feel that their opinions are (fairly) represented in the general public sphere – congregate (Warner, 2002). The purpose of counterpublics is not only to create a separate space with more favourable conditions for expressing certain opinions. The role is not only the production of separated enclaves but also communicating with the wider public with the purpose of breaking the consensus within that public (Asen, 2000; Warner, 2002). The space within a counterpublic becomes an environment for the legitimisation of arguments for those existing within it (Toepfl & Piwoni, 2015). The categories of this legitimisation can range from moral evaluation to authorisation (Van Leeuwen, 2007, 92).

Even though counterpublics overall are ideologically tilted towards one political opinion, the conversations within it can remain quite pluralistic, because disagreements exist even among like-minded individuals. Thus, a counterpublic functions as any other public sphere does, where positions are deliberated and thus also a certain level of opinion pluralism exists; however, this plurality is still articulated from a specific subject position. For instance, we can expect some debate in UU over what exactly the effects of immigration are; however, this difference of opinion still stems from the shared view that immigration in general is a negative, harmful tendency.

This tilted legitimacy becomes an issue when those within the counterpublic attempt to reuse the same arguments in the public sphere but encounter resistance to their base logics, which are seen as indisputable within counterpublics. The resulting cognitive dissonance can increase the perceived divide between those *within* the counterpublic and those outside. This can result in an increased distance between the constructed ‘people’ and ‘others’ in the political field, as well as an increased antagonism between those in disagreement. It can also result in conspiracy theorism (see e.g. Marchlewska et al., 2019) as a way of reasoning the division in opinions stemming from people from two clashing value systems.

As such, counterpublics are expected to be a good source of material for determining themed discourses of this specific societal sub-group. We can expect that the immigration-related rhetoric in UU is more orthodox (Bourdieu, 1984) and radical than in the mainstream public arena, where it might get toned down for political-correctness purposes.

The research sample ranges from 2015 to 2021 and includes 50 articles, including both news articles as well as opinion pieces and editorials. For most articles included in the sample, a single author cannot be determined; however the articles can be seen as reflecting the opinions of the editors. The sample encompasses a period during which EKRE had seats in parliament as an opposition party, was in a governing coalition and then returned to the status of an opposition party.

UU was chosen as the singular populist radical-right counterpublic as it is the largest of its kind in Estonia. The criteria for inclusion of an article within the sample are as follows:

- Relevance – all articles in the sample must be focused on migration and articles with only brief mentions were rejected.

- Presence of discourse – all articles reporting migration data without discourse were rejected.
- Balance in authorship – the sample includes articles from both identifiable authors as well as those published by the editor(s) with no identifiable single author, thus representing the view of the publication.

13.4 Discourse of Immigrant Hierarchies

In order to identify the immigrant hierarchies in the discourse utilised in UU, we employ the discursive approach of the Essex School, as developed originally by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001 [1985]) and since developed by many scholars. We also blend it with features of critical discourse analysis (Wodak, 2017) and positioning theory (Van Langenhove, 2017).

According to the discourse-theoretical approach, discursive articulations are an instrument of power, used in order to construct hegemony and build antagonisms. There are two foundational logics employed in the political process – namely, the logic of difference and the logic of equivalence. The logic of difference is an agonistic logic that articulates the societal realm as a diverse and complex context and acknowledges the resultant need for particular treatment. The logic of equivalence, on the other hand, is a tool for constructing antagonisms, where seemingly very different demands are listed in a chain of equivalence with the sole purpose of articulating an antagonism (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). We might come across the logic of difference in debates where the particular needs of different policy target groups are acknowledged and discussed: for instance, that migrants with different demographic, socio-economic or cultural backgrounds might require different types of integration support. The logic of equivalence, on the other hand, can be witnessed in, for example, political speeches which list seemingly unconnected claims to make the same point – for instance, that immigration ought to be restricted because immigrants are taking away locals' jobs, practice a foreign religion and might lie to immigration officials. There is nothing to suggest that there is a logical linkage between employment, religion and deception but all three claims articulate an antagonism between immigrants and the nation.

The Essex School has become notably influential in populism studies, where the articulation of chains of equivalence is seen as the central strategy in populist discourse. Chains of equivalence are used to build an antagonism between the 'people as underdog' and the elite/establishment (Laclau, 2005).

Of course, populism is not essentially anti-immigrant *per se*. Some forms of inclusionary populism might actually build their antagonism against the power elites onto the demands to relax immigration control (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). It is the populist radical right that builds on a nativist, nationalist conceptualisation of 'the people' and constructs various minority groups, including migrants as the proxies or protégés of the establishment. This is defined as the mechanism of 'scapegoating' in critical discourse analysis

(Wodak, 2017). Scapegoats are constructed in order to obscure the differences in the in-group of ‘the people’ and make them seem more unified. In order to deconstruct scapegoats, critical discourse analysis looks at the nomination and attribution strategies – in this case, what are immigrants called and which attributes are used to characterise them.

However, these attributions also have a deeper goal and meaning. According to Wodak (2015), these are used to generate a politics of fear: normalising racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic rhetoric and policy stances. In this chapter, however, we want to introduce more nuance to this division and, hence, bring in positioning theory and its core concept of moral concerns, as discussed in the previous section.

Drawing on these approaches, we might expect that, in the immigration discourse articulated on *Uued Uudised*, immigrants would frequently be constructed as scapegoats and that the logic of equivalence would frequently be used in order to raise moral concerns. Yet, we also want to demonstrate that occasionally, even in populist rhetoric, the logic of difference is used to some extent – at least on the level of acknowledging the diversity and complexity of immigration processes and distinguishing the positions of different groups in the extent to which these can be blamed for moral deviance.

We employ these approaches through three discursive analytical operations: first, we identify the nomination of immigrants – i.e. which concepts are used for immigrants in the articles on *Uued Uudised* and which immigrant categories these imply. As a result, we demonstrate the types of immigration process that are covered in this counterpublic. Secondly, we identify the attributes associated with these immigrant categories and analyse which moral concerns are raised regarding them. As the third step, we look at how the claims about the identified immigrant categories are related to one another – through chains either of equivalence or of difference. This allows us to pinpoint which immigrant groups are identified as scapegoats of specific moral concerns and which groups are placed higher in the social hierarchy regarding this specific concern.

13.5 Immigration-Related Moral Concerns and Chains of Equivalence

Throughout the UU coverage, immigrants are predominantly depicted as antagonistic to the ‘indigenous population’ or the ‘Estonian people’ – the group called ‘the people’ in populist parlance. Immigrants are often depicted as protégés of the elites, who are also part of the chains of equivalence constructed and who are the real culprits behind immigration. At times, the elites are named neutrally (e.g. ‘the government’); however, more-loaded euphemisms are often used – e.g. the ‘powermongers’ (*võimurid*), ‘liberals’, ‘multiculti-ites’ (*multikultilased*) or ‘experts’ (in quotation marks) – to articulate the ideological leanings and conspiratorial motives behind immigration.

The chains of equivalence articulated in UU are constructed in order to spark anxieties in the perceived in-group by articulating different moral concerns associated with certain attributes of these immigrant categories. The chains of equivalence depict immigrants as grotesquely different from ‘the people’ and, often, even malignant. In the nomination strategies, references are made to different sub-groups of migrants based on their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, family status, labour-market position and immigration status. Different categorisations are used to articulate the various moral concerns which legitimise the undesirability and lower position of migrants in the social hierarchy.

The above-mentioned categorisations can overlap – i.e. the same group of migrants is depicted through their religious and racial belonging as well as their labour-market and immigration status. Often, however, references are made to clearly different groups of immigrants, who are linked to one another through chains of equivalence to indicate their antagonistic relationship with ‘the people’ by using the concept of refugee and linking different moral concerns – e.g. about taking the jobs of Estonians who have had to leave for work in Finland (in popular parlance, called *Kalevipoeg*) – savaging academia and burdening the welfare system:

Our people have left for Finland to earn butter for their bread as *Kalevipoegs*. We would want those people to come and alleviate our labour shortages, not those highly educated IT specialists from some African jungle. We don’t need those people en masse here. [...] Tens of thousands of Ukrainians who have come to Estonia are also refugees. Those thousands of students, of whom a large proportion does not qualify to be a student – I can speak from experience, one of them physically assaulted their professor last week – these are refugees too, these are immigrants too, these too are the people we really don’t need here, who burden our social welfare system and cause problems (UU, 27.11.2018).

The categorisations by race, religion and ethnicity are used to raise moral concerns about crime, cultural conflicts and population replacement. The main target group depicted through these categorisations are immigrants from Africa or the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, who are referred to by their region of origin (‘Africans’), race (‘negroes’), complexion (‘tanned’) or religion (‘Muslim’) and only rarely by nationality (‘Syrian’, ‘Afghan’, ‘Nigerian’).

Cultural conflict is articulated as a moral concern, since cultural differences are depicted as fundamental. For instance, when talking about international students, the perils of cultural conflict in academia are primarily articulated via the ‘foreignness’ of Islam:

Cultures are different and misunderstandings come quickly. Who wouldn’t know that Muslims don’t care for our food, they find visiting a doctor of the opposite sex unacceptable and they don’t like our women’s broad freedoms (UU, 11.08.2020).

Here, religion is used as an epitome of otherness and yet to condone all kinds of student immigration. Similar articulations of moral concern about cultural conflict were also articulated – e.g. with reference to race and ethnicity.

The possibility of integration is ruled out on the grounds of immigrants not wanting to integrate. The trope about impossible integration is often also used to link the moral concern about cultural conflict with that about population replacement. In a

reaction article titled “‘Refugee experts’ Käsper and Žibās call for national suicide’, the UU contributor(s) link several moral concerns:

Actually Afghans and Syrians are the source of huge problems in Europe, and not because they are not being integrated [into societies], but because they do not want to [integrate]. These people come from another culture, from other customs, traditions, mentality and convictions and they want to live their former life in Europe, especially as gigantic migrant communities in Western Europe support it. They do not come to integrate or take over Western values, but to bring their own, with their problems. [...] their goal is to replace a nation state with a mixed population, give citizenship to strangers and make Estonia resemble Western Europe, where tensions are growing because of migrant communities. Finland started collecting Somali refugees in the 1990s and where have they ended up? The employment rate of strangers is low, they are sustained by government assistance and go on holiday to their ‘dangerous’ homeland (UU, 16.08.2020).

In this article, the concern about cultural conflict (‘they want to live their former life in Europe’) is linked via a chain of equivalence with concerns about population replacement (‘to replace a nation state with a mixed population’) and about misusing the welfare state (‘they are sustained by government assistance’). The foundation of these claims is that this is already happening in Western European countries – a very common trope used to depict the consequences of immigration. The concern about population replacement is aired both with reference to immigrants from the Global South as well as those originating from the former Eastern bloc: Ukraine, Russia, Belarus.

Another major moral concern links immigration to criminality. Immigrants are suspected of all kinds of criminal acts from deceiving the immigration authorities (e.g. smuggling in undeserving migrants as alleged family migrants) to rape and murder. While immigrants from the MENA region and Africa are associated with grave crimes like terrorism, murder or rape, those from Eastern Europe are associated with less-grave violations of the law, such as speeding:

In 1997–2013, immigrants raped at least 1,400 minors according to local authorities and, according to the BBC, group rape had become ‘a common phenomenon when growing up in Rotherham’. The city council avoided the subject all these years, because bringing criminals of primarily Pakistani origin to justice promised a lot of painful accusations of racism. Similar incidents of rape are common all over Europe, where the mass of immigrants has passed the critical limit (UU, 08.05.2015).

...a Ukraininan businessman who has settled in Estonia, who thought that Estonians are too law-abiding and admitted that he already has several penalties for speeding (UU, 23.07.2021).

Muslim immigrants are more often than others associated with the threat of terrorism. This trope emerges more frequently when a terrorist attack has occurred somewhere in Europe. Below is an example after the 2016 terrorist attack in Nice, France, where two Estonian citizens also died. Through a chain of equivalence, the threat of Islamic terrorism is associated with immigration and important national symbols like the Estonian song festival:

Estonians currently have reason to be concerned about their security. A prime minister who does not see a link between terrorism and Islam is incapable of defending his nation. As long as the government continues monthly imports of immigrants to Estonia and does not condemn the immigration policy of Western Europe, it is just a question of time before Islamic terrorism will demand new victims from Estonia. [...] We do not want Islamic soldiers armed with knives and machetes to begin to run around on our streets. We do not want to go to the song festival in fear of becoming a victim of a Muslim suicide terrorist (UU, 27.07.2016).

The labour-market position of immigrants is typically depicted as low. It is associated with three distinct moral concerns. Firstly, refugees and immigrants from the MENA region, in particular, are seen as a hazard to the Estonian welfare system, as they are depicted as unqualified and with poor work morals. In the following quote, a chain of equivalence is articulated between the cultural conflict and the labour-market crisis:

Most immigrants do not integrate into the European culture or lifestyle. The reason is lack of language skills, different perceptions, cultural background and low level of education. Today there are not that many jobs they could be offered. Times when Estonian refugees were lumberjacks with an axe and saw in Sweden, are over. Now even in Estonia, forestry work is done with expensive and complicated machinery [not by unqualified immigrants] (UU, 04.06.2015).

Ukrainian immigrants, on the other hand, are accused of being too eager on the labour market, thus endangering labour standards. In the following article, Ukrainian labour migrants are termed ‘neoslaves’ – who are exploited by the private sector in Estonia:

Europe is still suffering from the epidemic induced by the coronavirus. Estonia has narrowly overcome the virus and, in Ukraine, the virus is only starting to gain momentum. This is the situation when businessmen mad with greed want to bring Ukrainians to clear their strawberry fields! People’s lives don’t count for those greedy entrepreneurs; they only have profit numbers in front of their eyes. In Estonia, unemployment is growing, people are desperate, willing to do any job for a salary that would allow them to pay taxes and put food on their kids’ table despite Estonia’s growing retail prices. But a business, which has had the strawberries planted, shouts: ‘I want to use slave labour, I don’t want to pay taxes!’ Openly. It is a poorly disguised secret that Ukrainians who are imported as slaves are often kept in non-residential buildings by the herd, no taxes are paid on them or are taxes optimised to the minimum and they are forced to work seven days a week, 10–12 hours per day. [...] We have to think about Estonian people having jobs with decent pay in their homeland. Mass usage of cheap labour has not brought happiness to the citizenry in any country, only a small clique of entrepreneurs have profited – at the expense of the society’s cohesiveness (UU, 27.05.2020).

13.6 Chains of Difference

Yet, in some cases, different valences are ascribed to different migrant categories. While it is clear that there is virtually no immigrant group in EKRE’s rhetoric that would be viewed positively (Estonians as immigrants in other countries is perhaps

the only exception here), some immigrant groups are occasionally treated more value-neutrally. For instance, migrants ‘from the West’ or from EU member states are depicted as less undesirable than immigrants from non-EU countries such as Ukraine:

Also, Ukraine is not part of the European Union, so the neoslaves are brought to the union through gray schemes [...] European Union’s free movement of labour is intended for European citizens’ dignified labour migration over internal borders, to integrate the European citizenry. The free-movement principle is not for bringing slave labour from third countries outside the union – be they from ‘similar/close’ Ukraine or ‘distant’ Tanzania. Hence, businessmen importing slaves to Estonian strawberry fields or construction sites are paradoxically harming the European Union, connived by the Reform Party, while EKRE is, alongside our nation state, either intentionally or unintentionally, also protecting the cohesiveness of the European Union! (UU, 27.05.2020).

A clear chain of difference is constructed in a news piece summarising a study about Estonians in Finland, whom the researchers describe as hard-working but also racist. The author of the news piece challenges this impression by articulating a chain of difference which, instead, emphasises the double standards and varied work ethics demanded from other (and racially distinct) immigrant groups:

Finland has transitioned to the coddling of Third-World immigrants that is so common in the West, [Third-World immigrants] who are forgiven mistakes that Estonians [resident in Finland] are not forgiven; that these kinds of migrants are super-demanding on society without contributing themselves; that they are not comparably hardworking because in their homeland a work style with clear-cut working hours and short breaks is unknown (UU, 28.09.2018).

In another article, a chain of difference is constructed between desirable, highly skilled migrants and undesirable law offenders:

In Estonia it has always been thought that, if you declare the country open, only IT specialists, successful entrepreneurs, Africans who are keen to learn, refugees who deeply love Estonia and so forth will come; in practice, ‘openness’ attracts primarily con artists and criminals of greater calibre. The police just expelled a woman with Colombian citizenship who was working in Estonia as a prostitute. [...] A Ukrainian businessman who has settled in Estonia, who thought that Estonians are too law-abiding and admitted that he already has several penalties for speeding. [...] We also have a Brazilian coach-child molester and a Bangladeshi physiotherapist-rapist (UU, 23.07.2021).

This is actually a repeatedly used rhetorical strategy: a chain of difference is articulated between ‘theoretical migrants’ – i.e. groups which are prioritised in national immigration policy and also its political legitimisation – and ‘actual migrants’, i.e. people who might be beneficiaries of these rewarding policies but are still a reason for moral concern and thus undesirable. The reason for calling the latter group ‘theoretical migrants’ is that it is often claimed in UU that the desired migrants actually do not come to Estonia:

We are told about specialists but, for example in 2015, only a third of foreign workers had obtained a higher education. Mainly people who work in construction, industry and services for low wages come to Estonia, thus replacing our own people, who have gone abroad because of low wages (UU, 12.07.2018).

Furthermore, a hierarchy is constructed between immigrants of different cultural backgrounds and levels of integration. In the following quote, a chain of difference is constructed between Russians (who immigrated to Estonia primarily in Soviet times) and immigrants of a different religion or race. While the articulation of the Russian minority is obviously nothing positive and both are articulated as antagonists to ‘the people’ (‘crime against Estonian people’), the depiction of African and Muslim immigrants is clearly even more negative:

While the integrating of Russians was unsuccessful, Kopli and Lasnamäe [districts in Tallinn] are no-go zones for Estonians; the indigenous population does not really like to go to the *stromka* [beach] and the [Russian] old hags in Lasnamäe complain that the Estonian sales reps can’t speak Russian, then claim that people of colour and Muslims who are ten times more foreign in their way of thinking and customs – this is either utter naïvety or an obvious crime against the Estonian people (UU, 27.05.2018).

In the following quote, new immigrants with no desire to integrate are juxtaposed with previous arrivals who are placed above them in the hierarchy for not dressing in a visibly distinct way:

Many Tallinners noticed people in oriental clothing in the centre of town on Saturday, and were prompted to ask – from where did they come to Estonia during the corona crisis? Actually there should be no exotic tourists in Tallinn during pandemic times and, even among the ‘local’ migrants (who have already been let in), people dressing in such a foreign manner have not been seen – so it must be some kind of an opening of the migration door (UU, 19.07.2020).

Also gender tends to factor into the desirability. Frequently, male immigrants – especially refugees – are depicted as particularly undeserving, the more so when compared to women and children:

Why don’t they show us REFUGEES in the news, who need our help? Why do they only show those, richer than us, well dressed young men, with smartphones and internet connections, who are storming the European welfare assistance? [...] When there was war in Europe, women and children were EVACUATED from the war zone to neighbouring countries; it would be natural that men go to war for their country, and don’t flee to the other end of the world (UU, 15.12.2015).

Refugees tend to be the group with which the chain of difference is used the most often, distinguishing between those who deserve international protection and those who are trying to claim it fraudulently. In addition to gender, which is used as an indicator of vulnerability, the country of origin is also used as a differentiator, thus suggesting that some refugees might indeed be legitimate, while there are also illegitimate claimants:

Immigration supporters [...] mainly talk about war refugees, victims of persecution, civilians whose homes have been destroyed. But most immigrants who cross the Mediterranean from Tunisia and Algeria can in no way be termed refugees. In those countries the situation has stabilised and death does not threaten those moving to Europe from there (UU, 08.05.2015).

13.7 Conclusion

As this chapter attests, the portrayal of immigration in the populist radical-right counterpublic *Uued Uudised* uses the strategies both of creating chains of equivalence and chains of difference to articulate societal hierarchies. Through the use of populist discourse, immigration is associated with multiple moral concerns which distinguish the morally virtuous ‘people’ from the morally deviant immigrants, who are advocated for by the elites with equally flawed considerations. We can argue that antagonising immigrants is a method of maintaining the durable inequalities and the advantageous position of the in-group, denying benefits to the ‘undeserving’ and also keeping the malign elites in check. While this cannot be achieved through policy measures, it clearly can be done discursively, by constructing anxieties about immigration in the host society.

However, the chapter has also demonstrated that, while constructing chains of equivalence is broadly used in the populist radical-right counterpublics, occasionally chains of difference are also constructed to articulate a hierarchy between various groups. While no group of immigrants is depicted as good or ‘deserving’ in the UU discourse, occasionally distinctions between the ‘bad’ and ‘worse’ groups of immigrants emerge. This kind of differentiation is also a way, for example, that EKRE was able to mitigate immigration policy when in office (in 2019–2021). Already in their electoral manifesto for the 2019 general elections, EKRE proposed not just measures for forbidding immigration but also a kind of a positive programme which allowed labour migrants who are paid at least three times the average wage to enter the country outside of the immigration quota. The intentionally high salary requirement follows the same pattern as discovered in the analysis of UU discourses: hierarchies are constructed between categories of immigrants who are envisioned as merely theoretical (highly skilled specialists or eager-to-learn international students) and the ‘actual immigrants’ who are claimed to be arriving in Estonia. The chains of difference are also similar to the way in which EKRE mitigated proposing immigration legislation in office: through disadvantaging particular groups of migrants who were in parallel scapegoated by the UU public (see e.g. Jakobson & Kalev, 2020; Kalev, Chap. 6 in this volume).

While this analysis has focused on the discursive strategies used in the Estonian populist radical-right context, these strategies are also used in other empirical contexts. Remember Donald Trump’s much-cited speech on 17 June 2017:

When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.

Here, there is also a distinction made between ‘the best’ and ‘good’ Mexicans or people present at his campaign launch (‘They’re not sending you’) and the ‘people that have lots of problems’ and ‘rapists’. This rhetorical move also leaves a door open for permissive policies and exceptions to the rule of immigrants causing various moral concerns. Of course, the consequentiality between discourse and policy needs further exploration, as this was not the focus of this chapter.

Admittedly, immigrant hierarchies are nothing uniquely characteristic to populists – nor are the logic of equivalence nor the populist discourse more generally. According to the discursive approach, we should not treat particular movements or politicians as populist but as a type of discourse that can be utilised by political actors of various positionings (Stavrakakis, 2017). The fact that immigrant hierarchies are nothing particular to exclusively populist positionings is also underscored by an earlier chapter (Chap. 11 by Umpierrez et al., in this volume) which provides a brief overview of where and how immigrant hierarchies exist. Yet, the case of populist radical-right rhetoric provides us with a so-called extreme case (Seawright & Gerring, 2008) which demonstrates that, even in contexts where the logic of difference is least expected, immigrant hierarchies exist and are one reason why people who claim to have a positive attitude towards immigrants still ascribe to (some) immigrants' more negative traits than immigrants *in corpore* deserve by objective merit.

Thus, immigrant hierarchies constructed through the chains of equivalence and difference also merit analysis in mainstream society. This can be instructive in terms of understanding the causes of anxieties about migration and the resultant so-called migration crises in host societies more broadly.

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Chapter 14

Migration and (De)Securitisation

Dynamics at the Local Level: Discourses and Practices in South Tyrol



Andrea Carlà

14.1 Introduction

In this age of migration, the arrival, presence and inclusion of migrants remains an enduring test in many countries, as shown by the building of border walls and fences, the retreat from multiculturalism and the concerns regarding Muslim migrants and the risk of radicalisation. Often the topic is addressed through concerns and fears and is experienced as a burden rather than as an opportunity and a resource for the country in question. Particularly in light of international terrorist threats, economic slowdowns and increasing socio-demographic pressure on welfare systems, migration and the inclusion of migrants have often been considered in terms of security threats. The increase in the number of asylum-seekers in recent years and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in further complexities and anxieties. Whereas the pandemic has highlighted the inequalities facing many migrants, who might live in precarious conditions, it has, at the same time, confirmed the tendency of some politicians and political forces to securitise and scapegoat migrant communities for society's ills, as is the case of Viktor Orbán in Hungary. Such matters become more intricate when migration takes place in areas inhabited by so-called old minorities, like Catalonia, Quebec and Flanders, because, in these cases, the issue of migration intersects with the politics of substate nationalism and the relationship between the existing majorities and minorities and their

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anxieties (Banting & Soroka, 2012; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2011).¹ In this regard, what fears and security concerns about migration might arise in a regional context with potentially competing majority and minority cultures and identities?

Situated within the ‘local turn’ in migration studies, namely the focus on the involvement of local and regional governments in the development of policies surrounding migration issues (Caponio & Borkert, 2010; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017), this contribution explores the case-study of a region where the arrival of migrants meets the presence of old minorities and related tensions. In particular, combining the fields of migration and security studies, I analyse processes of securitisation *vis-à-vis* migration in South Tyrol, an Italian autonomous province with a German- and Ladin-speaking population and a sophisticated power-sharing system to protect their cultural features.

Securitisation has become a popular and recurrent concept used by researchers and practitioners to analyse migration issues. Several scholars have applied securitisation theory to show how various segments of the migrant population (from undocumented migrants to asylum-seekers to second or third generations) have been framed in political discourses, media or government practices as a threat to states’ cultural identity and/or their political, economic and welfare systems, at times speaking of a migration–security nexus (e.g. Bourbeau, 2017). Research has thus examined the why and the how of securitisation and its consequences to uncover which migrant populations have become the targets of exclusionary and restrictive policies, when this is likely to take place or whether alternative desecuritisating processes are in motion.

Though informative, previous work has tended to study the securitisation of migration at the national level, paying less attention to dynamics at the local and regional levels. Research has highlighted the different forms of securitisation and securitising actors in a variety of national contexts, for example: the role of the Canadian media in securitising the arrival of Chinese ‘boat people’ at the end of the 1990s (Ibrahim, 2005), the way political elites and bureaucrats presented migration as a threat in Greece (Swarts & Karakatsanis, 2012) and how the US government securitised Mexican migrants in the 1950s (Astor, 2009). Taken together, scholarship on the securitisation of migration has reproduced a ‘methodological nationalism’ bias that has traditionally characterised scholarship on migration and migrant integration and sees these types of issue as a prerogative of the nation state (Scholten & Penninx, 2016, 92; Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). Alternatively, other analyses of the securitisation of migration have considered the supra-national level – e.g. the EU (Pinyol-Jiménez, 2012). This approach dilutes complexities and overshadows important local dynamics and the role that local governments and politics play in shaping migration policies and policy for migrants, especially in federal, decentralised or regional states like Italy (Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero, 2014).

¹The term ‘old minorities’ refers to communities whose members have a language, culture and/or religion distinct from that of the rest of the population and who became minorities as a consequence of a redrawing of international borders or because their territory did not achieve statehood but came to be part of a larger country or several countries (Medda-Windischer, 2010).

I build on and expand this scholarship, focusing on processes of securitisation of migration at the local level, which have thus far been less studied. In particular, I explore the extent to which and under what terms securitisation dynamics have unfolded in discourses and practices in South Tyrol regarding the settlement of migrant communities in the province and the more recent refugee flows. In this way, I uncover the specific processes of securitisation of migration that can emerge in contexts like South Tyrol, which is characterised by the presence of old minorities and a local ethnic cleavage. This contribution thus enlarges the scope of the analysis in two ways. First, I highlight the features of securitisation dynamics in specific regions below the nation-state level. Second, I contribute to the literature on the interplay between ‘the “old” politics of sub-state nationalism and the “new” diversity of immigration’ (Barker, 2015, 2). Adding to this scholarship the frame of securitisation theory, I shed new light on old minorities’ attitudes and responses to migration and migrant integration. The study of South Tyrol reveals the anxieties and insecurities involved in dealing with the management of migration locally in a territory characterised by old diversity and substate nationalism in these times of perceived crises.

South Tyrol is usually considered an example of minority protection thanks to the consociational power-sharing system put in place in 1972, which ended a period of ethnic tensions by regulating relations between South Tyrol and the Italian state and between South Tyrolean linguistic groups. The system, which includes territorial autonomy, a coalition government, ethnic proportionality and separate schools, has fostered peaceful cohabitation among Italian-, German- and Ladin-speakers who, according to the last census in 2011, represent, respectively, 26.1, 69.4 and 4.5% of the South Tyrolean population.² At the same time, however, the consociational system has preserved some linguistic divisions for many aspects of social and political life, since each group has its own organisations – such as kindergartens, unions and political parties – and some political forces claiming the right to self-determination for South Tyrol persist. Yet, increasing interaction and cooperation between the linguistic groups has been observed in recent decades (Pallaver, 2014). Meanwhile, since the end of the 1990s, this picture of a South Tyrolean society composed of Italian-, German- and Ladin-speakers has become more complex following the arrival of many migrants from foreign (EU and non-EU) countries who, today, represent a structural feature of South Tyrolean society. The province is an extremely wealthy area with a low unemployment rate and numerous job

²As established in the second Statute of Autonomy, the system foresees extensive territorial political autonomy; the proportional representation of the linguistic groups in legislative and executive provincial government bodies; veto power for the linguistic groups in matters regarding their vital interests; the distribution of public employment and public resources among the linguistic groups in proportion to their numerical strength, calculated based on a declaration of linguistic belonging/aggregation (Italian-, German- or Ladin-speakers) (the so-called ethnic quota system); mandatory bilingualism (trilingualism in Ladin areas) for public signs, toponyms, public documents and public officials; education in students’ mother tongue, made possible through the creation of separate school systems: Italian-language schools, German-language schools and trilingual schools in the Ladin valleys.

opportunities for foreigners looking for a better life – both long-term and seasonal workers, the latter mostly employed in the agricultural and tourism sectors.³ At the end of 2018, there were 50,333 migrants in South Tyrol from more than 130 countries, amounting to 9.5% of the total population. One third of these migrants came from European Union countries, another 30% from other European countries, 19.3% from Asia and 14.1% from Africa.⁴ Moreover, in recent years South Tyrol, like many other European areas, has experienced an increase in the number of asylum-seekers, hosting in its reception structures between 1400 and 1650 people in 2017, mostly from countries in Central Africa as well as from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq and Pakistan. In this regard, South Tyrol is a transit area for many asylum-seekers hoping to reach Central and Northern European countries and it is estimated that, in 2016, hundreds of migrants transited every day through some South Tyrolean train stations such as that in Bolzano/Bozen, South Tyrol's main city (Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano and EURAC Research, 2017). Due to its cultural complexity and conflictual past and the multifaceted aspects of migration in the province, South Tyrol is a relevant case for an exploration of securitising processes related to migration at the regional level and the intersection with substate nationalism politics.

Developed within the field of security studies, securitisation refers to the process through which an issue is considered as an 'existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure' (Buzan et al., 1998, 23–24). Critically, as first theorised by the so-called Copenhagen School of Security Studies, it is a social construct, since an issue is securitised not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because it is presented as a threat. Furthermore, the process has an identity component and exclusionary effects. Indeed, as pointed out by Alvarez (2006), it delimits the group to be secured, the threatening group and what is not a threat, as well as who is an insider and who an outsider. Thus, there is a nexus between practices of security and practices of identity since securitisation fosters a friend–enemy distinction, shaping the boundaries of communities (Carlà, 2020) and, as Guillaume and Huysmans (2013, 20) wrote, 'transfiguring alterity into an otherness'. As the antithesis of securitisation, desecuritisation has a variety of understandings, from the unmaking of the institutionalised representation of an issue as threatening to transforming the friend–enemy logic and reframing narratives of groups' identities in less exclusionary terms (Hansen, 2012).

In this contribution, I define securitisation as a subjective process through which the presence of migrants and their cultural diversity come to be perceived in prevalently exclusionary forms centred on an 'us vs them' dichotomy, implying homogeneous entities in threatening opposition. Scholars have long shown the various ways in which securitisation might unfold as well as the context and conditions behind it. I combine the Copenhagen School approach, which considers securitisation as a

³In 2016, the provincial GDP *per capita* was €42,456, and the unemployment rate 3.7% (whereas in Italy they were respectively €27,719 and 11.7%).

⁴The main nationalities are Albanian (5767/11.4%), German (4500/8.8%) and Moroccan (3650/7.2%), followed by Pakistani (3550/7.0%) and Romanian (6.6%).

‘speech act’ developed in political discourses, accepted and endorsed by a public audience (Buzan et al., 1998), with a sociological variant that highlights the role of social, policy and legal practices (e.g., Olesker, 2014).⁵ Following Bilgic (2013), I understand (de)securitisation as a continuum, in the sense of the development of simultaneous processes of securitisation and desecuritisation (see also Jaroszewicz et al., 2020). Research on (de)securitisation tends to focus on a prevalent master narrative that targets a specific community. In this way, the research ‘does not reflect the pluralism of the politics of security’ and ignores alternative discourses, ideas and practices embedded in the polity (Bilgic, 2013, 6). Instead, this contribution looks at the discourses of multiple political actors and a variety of practices in order to highlight how (de)securitising moves emerge, evolve and dissolve and how different (de)securitisation processes develop simultaneously and overlap.

To conduct the analysis, I combine various methodologies and consider a variety of data. On the one hand, I look at speech acts – relying on the critical discourse analyses of political programmes and selected speeches by the main South Tyrolean political parties and on debates in the South Tyrolean Provincial Council surrounding the 2011 provincial law on integration; this in order to capture the various parties’ approach to the topic of migration and the extent to and forms in which migration has been (de)securitised in political discourses. I look at the political discourses of all the parties represented in the Provincial Council since the 2008 election. On the other hand, I look at practices, examining the laws and policies enacted in matters of migration by the South Tyrolean government. In addition, I present the results of existing public opinion surveys and elections of the Provincial Council, which I use as a proxy to measure the rate of acceptance by the South Tyrolean public of securitising acts. The analysis runs from 2006, when migration became a contested topic in the provincial political arena,⁶ to the beginning of 2021, in order to cover the refugee flows of the past few years and touch upon the unfolding of the Covid-19 pandemic. Within this time frame, I uncover the historical development of (de)securitisation discourses and practices in South Tyrol and how they intersect with more recent events.

The analysis is organised in three parts. I first consider South Tyrolean political discourses on migration of the main South Tyrolean political forces. Second, I look at how these discourses intersect with practices established by provincial policy and legal measures regulating the processes of migrant inclusion. Finally, I discuss the extent to which securitising acts are endorsed by the South Tyrolean public, presenting a few available public opinion surveys and electoral results for the Provincial Council.

⁵Furthermore, processes of securitisation have been analysed through the lens of biopolitics, focusing on everyday practices, rationalities of governance, methods of social control and surveillance technologies (the so-called Paris School – e.g. Bigo, 2002).

⁶The year 2006 is when a provincial law on the matter of migrant integration began to be drafted; in the following years, specific policy documents were elaborated. The law was enacted in 2011.

14.2 Political Discourses

This section builds on Carlà (2012, 2019). Since its appearance in the provincial political arena, the topic of migration and the inclusion of migrants in South Tyrolean society has often been securitised in some political discourses, being presented as a danger and as a spark for tensions. Such discourses coexist with alternative narratives that deal with migration issues in positive and non-threatening terms. It is possible to identify five different types of securitising move, often in an interplay with discourses surrounding South Tyrolean linguistic groups and their relationship, and the system put in place to protect them.

First, there are right-wing political forces in both the Italian and German political arena – as there are in many other European countries and regions – that link migration to anxiety about cultural alienation, as well as to issues of criminality. Migrants, especially those from Muslim-majority countries, are the new dangerous *other*, foreigners who must be made to adhere to local cultures and values. With their customs and religious practices, migrants are seen as challenging and threatening the culture and traditions of South Tyrol and its population. This fear is well represented in the claims ‘We don’t want over-alienation!’ (Süd-Tiroler Freiheit, 2018) and ‘Our land belongs to us, and whoever arrives here must remember the name on the doorbell’ (cited in Consiglio della Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, 2011a), proposals to select or prioritise European migrants over non-European ones (e.g. Pahl et al., 2007) and the association made between migration and crime (see Consiglio della Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, 2011d).

Second, there are references to welfare chauvinism and the fear that migrants will monopolise socio-economic resources. Thus, various political forces have made calls to limit migrants’ access to social benefits and at times to give priority to the local population. The most extreme versions of such discourses have presented public assistance for migrants as a form of discrimination against local residents (Carlà, 2012). It should be noted that this theme intersects with the fact that South Tyrol, thanks to its political autonomy and economic prosperity, has a generous welfare system which, at times, has been thought to attract unwanted migrants who take advantage of social benefits. This concern was clearly stated by Luis Durnwalder (2008), former president of the province, who pointed out the need for South Tyrol to ‘avoid becoming a magnet for all those who benefit from social services but are not willing to make any contribution’.

Third, in the past – though to a lesser extent today – German-speaking political parties have expressed a demographic fear whereby migrants alter the balance and demographic equilibrium between the Italian- and German-speaking groups.⁷

⁷In this regard, it should be noted that the demographic balance among the linguistic groups has historically been a contested topic due the notable increase of Italian-speakers during the Fascist regime and up to the enactment of the second Statute of Autonomy in 1972 and their decrease in the years following the Statute. Although, in the past 20 years, the proportion of the linguistic groups has stabilised, their size still raised concerns, not least because the proportions are relevant for some of the South Tyrolean consociational measures.

Indeed, migrants were seen as integrating mainly with the Italian-speaking group, because they mostly live in predominantly Italian areas. According to this perspective,

many migrants do not think that they live in South Tyrol but in Italy, so their children attend Italian schools; what will the consequences be when they grow up and can vote? (Sven Knoll, cited in Consiglio della Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, 2008).

Thus emerged the fear manifested by Sven Knoll, one of the leaders of the nationalist party *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit*, that migrants 'will become tomorrow's Italians', endangering the German character of South Tyrol (Knoll, 2011). Therefore, as stated in the 2018 programme of *Die Freiheitlichen*, another German-speaking nationalist political force, migration 'must thereby be compatible with the special ethnic structure of the country, the cultural characteristics of South Tyrol' (*Die Freiheitlichen*, 2018).

Fourth, migration is at times seen as putting into question the South Tyrolean consociational power-sharing system and the peaceful cohabitation among the linguistic groups. Indeed, on the one hand, the presence of migrants has been considered as undermining the effectiveness of some of the measures to protect the South Tyrol groups, creating tensions between them (see Carlà, 2012). On the other, some political forces have used migration as a symbol for the fact that South Tyrolean society has evolved beyond the ethnolinguistic divisions maintained by South Tyrol's consociational institutions, which should thus be updated and modified. As explained by a leader of the Green Party, migrants are 'the main indicators that our society is very different from the rough schematisation imposed by the ethnic proportions' (Foppa, n.d.). These tensions are summarised in the 2018 party programme of the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP), the party that has historically represented the German-speaking population and governed the province, according to which 'the migration movements of recent years have posed great challenges to th[e] orderly coexistence' of the three South Tyrolean linguistic groups (SVP, 2018).

Finally, some discourses have claimed that migration has caused conflict between the provincial government and the Italian state regarding political competencies and policies to manage the influx of migrants and the process of migrant integration. In the Italian national system, the South Tyrolean government is responsible for policies concerning the integration of migrants (though within a general framework provided by Rome), whereas the Italian government is in charge of migration control policies. In this context, there have been discussions on the need to increase provincial power in matters of migration or to adapt national integration policies to the specific cultural features of South Tyrol. Furthermore, German-speaking nationalist parties have connected this discussion with their claim for self-determination. In this view, political autonomy could not prevent migrants from integrating mainly within the Italian-speaking group and, thus, it is necessary to pursue an alternative – namely independence (Carlà, 2016).

These securitising discourses have intersected with two developments that have often catalysed public and political attention in recent years: the increase in the number of asylum-seekers and refugees, which started in 2014 and, more recently,

the Covid-19 pandemic. The former has further reinforced existing securitising moves. Indeed, in South Tyrolean political discourses, the concept of asylum-seekers has been combined with other categories of people – from refugees to undocumented migrants to economic migrants – as part of a group of people who are perceived as a threat. In this regard, Engl and Wisthaler (2020, 478) show that discussions on refugees and asylum-seekers in the South Tyrolean parliament in 2015–2016 concentrated on measures to prevent their settlement in the province or to limit the movement of people, including restricting access to social benefits. Similarly, in the party programmes for the last 2018 provincial election, discourses focused on how to control the border, the need to ‘actively manage migration and, above all, stop illegal immigration’ (SVP, 2018) or the fact that, in general, ‘migration needs to be controlled’ (Die Freiheitlichen, 2018). Furthermore, migrants have been linked – even more than previously – to crime and pressure on the South Tyrolean welfare system and public services. For instance, according to the Lega (n.d., 3, 4), the presence of migrant students in schools ‘hinders the education of our children!’ who ‘feel like foreigners in their own home’. At the same time, the arrival of asylum-seekers has reignited debates concerning the provincial power to manage migration and claim-seeking around a further shift in competencies from the state to the province (Engl & Wisthaler, 2020, 479).

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a mixed effect on existing securitising discourses. On the one hand, the pandemic and related issues have dominated public attention and political debates. In this way, discussions surrounding migration and asylum-seekers have been side-lined. On the other hand, a few politicians in South Tyrol, as in other parts of Europe, have securitised the migrant population in terms of the pandemic, blaming migrants for bringing in the virus and stressing the pandemic situation at reception centres, where the need for more controls is highlighted (see *Alto Adige*, 2020; Andros, 2021).

It should be noted, however, that the securitising moves presented thus far face a variety of non-securitising and desecuritising discourses developed by various political forces. These range from the SVP’s consideration of migration as an economic necessity and the rejection of xenophobia (SVP, 2008), to a view of migration as an inevitable process that will change South Tyrolean society and that should be faced without fear (see Consiglio della Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, 2011b, c), to a rejection of the use of ‘emergency tones’ while arguing that migration is a problem that requires control (Team Köllensperger, n.d.). In the most radical view, the Partito Democratico (n.d., 2, 4) defines migrants as ‘new citizens’, ‘an integral part of South Tyrol’s present and future’ and the ‘strength of the new multicultural social texture’, whereas the Green Party considers them as an economic, social and cultural enrichment for South Tyrolean society that should be welcomed (see Verdi-Grüne-Vërc, n.d.-a). According to the Green Party’s 2018 electoral manifesto,

Plurilingualism and multiculturalism are important assets for South Tyrol, enriched every day by persons coming from all over the world ... an opportunity for change, enrichment and renewal (Verdi-Grüne-Vërc, n.d.-b, 3–4).

14.3 Policy and Legal Practices

This ambivalence between securitising and desecuritising discourses is mirrored in the policy practices and legal instruments adopted by the South Tyrolean government in matters of migration. Indeed, the current provincial approach to migration is based on the principle of *'fordern und fördern/sostegno a fronte di impegno'* (promoting and demanding), which inspired the 2011 local law on the integration of foreign citizens⁸ and more recently the 2016 policy document *'Zusammenleben in Südtirol. Wir vereinbaren Integration/Convivere in Alto Adige. Un patto per l'integrazione'* (Cohabitation in South Tyrol: A Pact on Integration), which specifies how to pursue integration in the province (Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano Alto Adige, 2016, 3). In the framework of the 'promoting and demanding' principle as presented in the Pact, integration is recognised, on the one hand, as a dual process: cultural diversity is seen as a form of enrichment and there are references to the concepts of tolerance, mutual respect and dialogue. On the other hand, integration is understood as a *quid pro quo*, where provisions of support and services for migrants are linked to individuals' commitment to learn the local languages and to respect local values, traditional cultures and rules (Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano Alto Adige, 2016).

In this framework, securitising moves are revealed in three main developments: (1) the South Tyrolean government's focus on the need to limit the socio-economic and socio-cultural effects of migration on South Tyrolean society and the relations between South Tyrolean linguistic groups, (2) the adoption of measures of welfare chauvinism and (3) clashes between the South Tyrolean and Italian governments. For example, attention is paid to encouraging migrants to learn not only Italian but also German. In this context, in 2009, Italian laws required that migrants pass an Italian-language test in order to obtain a long-term residence permit and introduced the *accordo di integrazione* (integration agreement), which consists of a points system in which migrants declare their commitment to learning the Italian language (among other things). The South Tyrolean government considered these measures problematic and requested a German test and classes as alternatives but Rome only agreed to add optional German classes in the criteria for the integration agreement (Carlà & Medda-Windischer, 2018). Furthermore, mirroring the fear that migrants will put pressure on the welfare system, the 2011 provincial law on integration included measures that limited migrants' access to some socio-economic benefits by requiring several years of residency in order to receive them. The Italian Constitutional Court considered such measures to be unconstitutional.⁹ Similarly, the European Court of Justice ruled against a provincial practice of treating

⁸See Provincial Law on Integration (*Integrazione delle cittadine e dei cittadini stranieri*), 2011, No. 12, 28 October, Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen.

⁹Italian Constitutional Court, Judgment 2, 14 January 2013.

non-EU-national long-term residents differently from EU nationals in the allocation of housing benefits (Carlà & Medda-Windischer, 2018). Along these lines, in 2018 the province adopted measures that follow a civic-integration approach, according to which migrants are required to conform to society by meeting certain integration requirements, such as taking classes and training through which they learn the country's language, values and specific features. Specifically, access to some economic benefits in South Tyrol was linked to the provision of proof by migrants of their willingness to integrate and of their participation in programmes to promote integration – for instance, attending courses on civic education and learning Italian or German.

With the increase in the number of refugees and asylum-seekers, securitising discourses are reflected in policy practices that have addressed the issue in terms of an unwelcome emergency and that are aimed at containing it rather than developing comprehensive solutions (Carlà et al., 2021). Indeed, for years, South Tyrol did not take proper measures to manage the arrival of asylum-seekers, thus not adhering to the national system for the reception of asylum-seekers and refugees, called until 2018 SPRAR system (*Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati*). The system, which is managed by local entities and based on diffused reception in small-sized accommodation, guarantees the provision of legal, linguistic and information services, among others. Instead, the province relied at first on large reception structures, mostly in Bolzano/Bozen, where most asylum-seekers were concentrated (Rabini, 2018). Within these structures, many services, such as psychological support and proper accommodation, were not always provided and problems of public order sometimes arose. Moreover, many people (about 330 in 2015–2016) remained outside of the structures, sleeping in parks and under bridges (Dalla Pria, 2018; Rabini, 2018). In this regard, in September 2016 the province enacted a rule – the so-called *circolare Critelli* (Critelli memo) – which excluded some vulnerable people (those who were previously present in other EU countries and Italian regions) from access to reception services (see Fondazione Alexander Langer et al., 2017). In the second stage, smaller reception arrangements were made in some towns and, in 2018, some South Tyrolean municipalities and local entities subscribed to the SPRAR system.¹⁰ Instead, in Bolzano/Bozen, procedures continued to rely on large reception structures and a sense of emergency. Observers considered such policies a model of reception based on precarity and dissuasion so that people would not want to settle in South Tyrol (Fondazione Alexander Langer et al., 2017, 13; Saltarelli, 2017).

¹⁰Meanwhile, in 2018, Rome modified the criteria for accessing the SPRAR system (renamed SIPROIMI), limiting it to those who had acquired refugee status and excluding asylum-seekers. In 2020, the system (and the criteria of admission) changed again and was renamed SAI (*Sistema di accoglienza e integrazione*).

14.4 Public Endorsement

These securitising discourses and practices do not happen in a vacuum of public opinion. Indeed, they seem to be endorsed by part of the South Tyrolean population, as shown in the few available surveys that address the issue as well as the political vicissitudes of those parties that endorse the most securitising moves. In fact, in a 2007 survey, almost half of South Tyroleans considered migration from non-EU countries to be among the country's three main problems (ASTAT, 2008, 1). In addition, according to a 2016 survey (see Table 14.1), almost half of the South Tyrolean population agreed or very much agreed that increasing migration had led to the spread of terrorism and crime while a little less than a third disagreed or very much disagreed with the statement that migrants' presence was positive because it allowed a comparison with other cultures (ASTAT, 2018).

Another hint of the public endorsement of securitising moves comes from looking at the electoral results of South Tyrolean political parties since the turn of the century. Indeed, most of these parties that have pursued this type of discourse have experienced good electoral results. In the German-speaking political arena, for example, we have witnessed the growth of right-wing nationalist parties with some of the aforementioned securitising stances on the topic of migration, specifically *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* and especially *Die Freiheitlichen*, which (the latter), in the 2013 provincial election, became the second-strongest political force, obtaining 17.9% of the vote (up from 5% in 2003) – though, in the 2018 election, the party experienced a remarkable setback, receiving only 6.2% of the vote.¹¹

More surprisingly, in the Italian-speaking political arena, is the recent electoral success of the *Lega*, with its clear anti-migrant stances. The *Lega* has traditionally been weak in the province, overshadowed by other Italian nationalist right-wing parties, which have traditionally run on issues surrounding relations between Italian- and German-speaking groups. In the 2018 provincial election, the *Lega* was

Table 14.1 Agreement with statements concerning migrants – 2016 (in %)

	Agree/very much agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/very much disagreed
The increase of immigrants favours the spread of terrorism and crime	48.9	28.4	22.8
The presence of immigrants is positive because it allows a comparison with other cultures	35.5	34.6	29.9

Source: Data elaborated by the author based on ASTAT (2018, 86)

¹¹The debacle of *Die Freiheitlichen* might be due to various factors, including a political scandal involving its leadership and the fact that the SVP has moved to the right of the political spectrum, as well as in regard to the topic of migration, thus limiting the appeal of *Die Freiheitlichen*. It could also be that part of the electoral success of *Die Freiheitlichen* was due to a protest vote against the predominant political class – a vote that, in 2018, might have gone to a newly formed party, *Team Köllensperger*, which obtained 15.2% of the vote.

the main party chosen by Italian-speakers, receiving more than 11% of the vote. Thanks to this electoral success, it entered a government coalition with the SVP (as mandated by South Tyrol's consociational system), which thus far had traditionally allied itself with Italian-speaking centre-left/left parties (e.g. Partito Democratico), known for their non-securitising and desecuritising speeches on the topic of migration. Although people did not vote for these parties exclusively for their anti-migrant positions, their electoral results might reflect a certain level of acceptance of their securitising discourses surrounding migration.

14.5 Conclusions

Pioneering works on the relationships between old minorities and new migrant communities have often sustained the so-called 'threat hypothesis', namely the belief that the former frequently consider large-scale migration as a danger and manifest assimilationist and exclusionary attitudes towards migrants because of their ethnocentric understanding of identities or the fear that migrants will integrate into the majority nation (Jeram & Adam, 2015, 241). Though subsequent research (e.g., Jeram et al., 2016) has pointed out the variety and complexity of relations between old minorities and migration from foreign countries, and the several variables at play, my contribution corroborates and expands this preliminary observation. In particular, I position the threat hypothesis in the framework of securitisation theory and highlight the several facets that processes of securitisation might take in local contexts where old minorities and new communities from recent migratory flows meet.

In South Tyrol, we have witnessed the development of a variety of overlapping and simultaneous securitising acts *vis-à-vis* the topic of migration and the arrival and settlement in the province of foreign migrants, considered as an *other* that threatens or causes problems for South Tyrolean society. In addition to the political discourses that we find in many other European countries and regions, which link migration to crimes and civic insecurities and present migrants as a burden for the welfare system and a cultural threat, South Tyrol presents several narratives that treat migration in threatening terms in regard to the peculiar cultural and institutional features of the province – that is, the relationship between the Italian- and German-speaking (and Ladin-speaking) groups and between South Tyrol and the Italian state. Furthermore, some policy and legal practices implemented by the provincial government reflect these types of discourse – discourses that seem to find support among part of the South Tyrolean population, which has expressed concerns about migration and has rewarded the political parties responsible for securitising speeches. Security concerns have intersected with apprehensions sparked by the increase in the arrival of asylum-seekers and the recent Covid-19 pandemic. These specific events did not initiate the process of securitisation of migration but

encouraged politicians to further pursue existing securitising moves.¹² However, there are also alternative non-securitising and desecuritising moves that present migration in positive terms and address migrants as an integral resource for South Tyrolean society. Yet, the perception of migration as a threat has left an imprint in South Tyrolean discourses and practices on migration.

Overall, as scholars of the local turn in migration studies argue for the importance of considering how the substate level intersects with the national configuration in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of migration management and migrant integration (Scholten & Penninx, 2016), I similarly highlight the importance of adding a substate level of analysis to nation-state-bounded perspectives on processes involved in the securitisation of migration. Indeed, many migrant policies unfold at the substate level. At the same time, local features, like South Tyrolean politics of substate nationalism, might shape and interact with securitising discourses and practices on migration in a unique way. Thus, this approach is paramount for a thorough account of today's anxieties sparked by migration and the integration of the migrant population in these times of crises.

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