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MIGRANT INTEGRATION IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

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Social relations, individual attitudes and migrant integration experiences in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas in Germany

Country Reports on policy outcomes

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REPORT

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Executive summary

This report looks at social relations, individual attitudes and migrant integration experiences in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas (SMsTRA) in Germany. Drawing on participant observations, interviews with post-2014 migrants, and focus group discussions with long-term residents in six case study localities, integration of post-20014 migrants is analysed as a whole of community process along four dimensions: (i) spatial, (ii) social, (iii) ideational and political as well as (iv) governance-related factors.

The report finds that a **considerable share of the interviewed post-2014 migrants see SMsTRAs as good places to live**, in case private housing and work can be found. SMsTRAs are **valued for their dense civil society network of support**, calm atmosphere after exhausting years of flight, and, for families, as safe places for children to grow up.

The report identifies the following decisive factors for community-making: Firstly, **spatial structures** of small and medium-sized towns and rural areas matter: On a greater scale in terms of residential segregation and accessibility of services as well as on the micro-scale regarding the availability and quality of places of encounter in neighbourhoods. Findings suggest, secondly, that **social encounter and contact** between adult locals and post-2014 migrants rarely happen by accident in public spaces but require moderated places of encounter or places embedded in social structures, such as volunteering or the workplace. Thus, it remains a challenge how to establish contact with "the silent majority of the population" who neither openly oppose migrants nor engage in pro-migrant activities. Thirdly, the research shows that **granting a certain legal status** and thereto related (hindered) access to rights such as language classes or access to the labour market as well as the possibility to build up a future or live on hold, significantly impacts if post-2014 migrants feel part of the local community or not. Fourth, the report shows that the **COVID-pandemic** was a backlash for local community building as people were drawing back in their private sphere. The pandemic has resulted in a **loss of social contact** between post-2014 migrants and long-term residents.

Lastly, the report considers how the **arrival of refugees from Ukraine** is perceived by long-term residents and post-2014 migrants and how this impacts local community-making processes.

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1. Introduction

In the wake of the 2015 so-called "refugee crisis" small and medium-sized towns and rural areas (SMsTRAs) have been playing an increasing role in accommodating humanitarian migrants. The arrival of asylum-seeking migrants in the EU peaked after 2014 and EU countries have struggled to re-organise and manage the reception of humanitarian migrants. The lack of immediately available reception facilities in larger cities, coupled with the dispersion policies implemented by states to ensure an "equal" distribution of asylum seekers across their national territories, has led to the increased involvement of Small and Medium-sized Towns and Rural Areas in the reception of people seeking refuge (Flamant et. al 2020). Even though immigrant integration in cities has been in the focus of research for decades now, we know relatively little about smaller towns and rural areas, localities that often have no or little prior experience with migration (Caponio & Pettrachin, 2021). Research has shown, that "the experiences that new arrivals face in the first phase of their reception and accommodation, and the relationships they build in their neighbourhoods and host cities have a long-term effect on their later lives and play a significant role in the way their impressions, aspirations and motivations develop along the way of their integration trajectories" (Seethaler-Wari, 2018, p. 152).

We need to understand better which factors facilitate, and which hinder positive experiences when migrants (mainly arrived after 2014) settle in these Small and Medium-sized Towns and Rural Areas. The objective of this country report for Germany is thus to understand which role specific local contexts (or "local refugee integration opportunity structures"), within the same country, can play in shaping individual attitudes, social relations, and consequently migrant integration experiences in SMsTRAs. We define local (refugee) integration opportunity structures, as "sets of resources, arrangements and pathways that can facilitate or block integration" (Phillimore, 2020). Among the contextual factors that determine the local opportunity structure we identify, follow and adapt Phillimore (2020), four dimensions:

a) the social dimension, highlighting the individual (e.g., age, gender, country of origin, class, religion) and the group level factors (e.g., presence or absence of support networks, civil society organisations);
b) the ideational-political dimension, which includes a set of factors connected to discourse, such as media information, the political ideology of leaders and the local community, and political mobilizations, both pro- and anti-migrants;
c) the factors connected to governance including the impact of housing, the labour market, and specific immigrant integration policies and practices, and their implementation at the local level;
d) the spatial dimension, focusing on the specificity of SMsTRAs compared to cities but also on local socio-economic determinants and on spatial proximity/segregation.

This report aims to identify in the localities analysed in Germany which factors are relevant in shaping attitudes, interactions between long-term residents and post-2014 migrants, and migrants' experiences of inclusion and exclusion.

Currently, the Russian aggression against Ukraine has led to a new flow of forced migration of refugees from Ukraine. Even though the focus of the Whole-COMM project is on post-2014 migrants' integration in SMsTRAs, the arrival of refugees from Ukraine begs several questions: What can we learn from experiences of inclusion/exclusion in SMsTRAs of refugees who arrived in a different "crisis" period? Are SMsTRAs involved in the reception of refugees from Ukraine? Moreover, how is the arrival of refugees from Ukraine reshaping social interactions, individual attitudes, and post-2014 migrants' experiences? In this country report, we also address those questions to capitalise on the research conducted during yet another critical juncture (see chapter 4).

1.1 Introduction to the national context and the six German case studies

During the so-called refugee crisis of 2014/15, Germany took an active role in refugee reception initiated by chancellor Angela Merkel's suspension of the Dublin-III regulation for refugees from Syria (BAMF, 2015). This initiative provoked consent on different governance levels and in civil society, best summed up by the often-cited slogan of the chancellor "*Wir schaffen das*!" (We can make it!). In 2015, the **prevailing narrative was one of an open-minded country** framed by the media under the so-called "Welcome-culture". However, **resentments against immigrants have always been present** in parts of the population and prejudices and reservation prevail. They are reflected by the electoral success of right-wing parties, such as the Alternative für Deutschland / Alternative for Germany (AfD), and enduring **local right-wing protests of** the anti-immigrant and anti-muslim movement PEGIDA. Since the onset of the COVID-Pandemic, these protests have merged into a hard-to-grasp movement of protest which includes anti-vaccination activists, right-wing extremists, and people generally criticizing the political and social system (Frei et al., 2021, see Box 1).

Despite a general societal politicization, the **integration climate index shows that acceptance for migrants has been stable** for several years and that positive attitudes have slightly increased. In the current challenge of a pandemic situation, the reception of refugees is not as much of a polarizing issue as before (SVR, 2020). This is especially true in what concerns the Russian aggression war in Ukraine, where the overwhelming majority of the population favored support for and reception of refugees (Mayer et al., 2022).

Box 1. Walking protests ("Spaziergänge") on COVID-19 and the War in Ukraine as driver for anti-immigrant sentiments

The **so-called "Spaziergänge"** (lit. "walks") are recurring social protest movements that are fundamentally opposed to state action and political structures. What unites them is to protest against the existing system, clear political goals are not communicated. Choosing Monday evenings as the usual date, organizers refer back to the historical Monday demonstrations (Montagsdemonstrationen) that took place as peaceful protests aiming at a regime change in 1989 in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Participants also reuse the chants of "We are the people" ("Wir sind das Volk"). The idea of the walks is strongly connected to the PEGIDA demonstrations ("Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamification of the Occident") starting in 2014 with their weekly protest gatherings on Mondays followed by more general **anti-migration demonstrations in 2015/2016**. Since 2020, the measures to contain the COVID pandemic have been the focus of many protesters who had united under the label of the **movement "Querdenken"** (lit. 'lateral thinkers') which started in Baden-Württemberg (south of Germany). In the beginning, researcher identified ideological roots of the movements in esoteric anti-vaccination and anthroposophical milieus (Frei et al. 2021). Most of the nationwide protest walks started in an informal way as an evening stroll showing disagreement with social distancing measures. With increasing participation and somewhat institutionalization of the protests, participant groups became more diverse, and more and more far-right groups joined the movement. In 2022, the Russian war in Ukraine enforced new protests as a new discursive "window of opportunity" (Kiess, Wetzel 2022: 2) for the far-right to polarize and mobilize citizens on the streets. The protests gather a **heterogeneous group** of opponents of sanctions against Russia or citizens declaring themselves as apolitical, who are concerned about the inflation of prices. But there is also a high number of nationalists and far-right groups and presence of right-wing parties such as AfD (Heinze, Weisskircher 2022). Furthermore, there are many links to conspiracy theories and state opponent groups aiming to turn against a perceived dictatorship eitherat the demonstrations or in the mobilizing messenger service *Telegram* (Grande et al. 2021, Kiess, Wetzel 2022). Migration, or the reception of refugees, is not the main topic but a **side-issue at some demonstrations** (e.g., demanding "remigration" for Ukrainians). These mixed protests appear in all regions of Germany but have considerably more participants in east Germany. The close ties to right-wing groups but also the persistence and rootedness in the middle of society make the protests an important issue for social cohesion, especially in small localities where demonstrations occupy the available central places, and it is difficult to evade the demonstrations.

To understand the local context of the German cases, two general points have to be considered: First, Germany is governed as a **federa**l political and administrative system. Responsibilities for reception and integration lie at the federal (*Länder*) level that (partly) delegates this task to the municipalities. The 16 *Länder* offer specific funding programs and in some areas (e.g., housing for refugees, education, health care) differing legal frameworks which in fact means that **16 different frames with differing structural conditions for integration exist**. Second, due to the **division of Germany into a Western and Eastern** part from 1949-1990, **different histories of migration** as well as varied structural and societal preconditions for the reception of migrants can be found. In localities in the Eastern part of Germany, that have been part of the German Democratic Republic (GDR, October 1949 – October 3 1990), there has not been many experiences with migration-related diversity before the arrival of post-2014 migrants. Although refugee protection was part of the GDR's constitution (see Article 10 of the GDR Constitution 1949 and Article 23 of the GDR constitution 1968), asylum was granted only to a small number of migrants who fit ideological criteria (e.g., communists from Greece and Spain, or Chileans who were persecuted by the Pinochet-System (Maurin, 2005, p. 349). Labour migration followed strict bilateral agreements with socialist "brother countries", such as Vietnam, Cuba or Mozambique. The Western parts of Germany are generally more experienced with diversity because of labour migrants' presence from southern Europe, the Western Balkans, Morocco and Turkey since the late 1960s (Luft, 2011). Still, smaller localities with no or only little industry were not affected by this type of migration and thus not used to immigration before 2015 (for example case G2). All parts of Western Germany received migrants with German roots from the (former) Soviet Union after World War II with increasing numbers since the 1980s (Panagiotidis, 2017). These migrants were granted German citizenship on arrival and received integration support, such as language classes. Still, societal inclusion has not been without problems, and stereotypes of segregation exist until today (ibid.).

1.2 Introduction to the six case study localities

Empirical research was conducted in six case study localities. Three of them are located in the Eastern parts of Germany and three in the Western parts, covering one rural area, one small town and one medium-sized town in each of the greater regions. As figure 1 shows, the chosen localities are located in the *Lände*r of Saxony-Anhalt (G1), Lower Saxony (G2 and G3), North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW, G4), Mecklenburg Wester-Pomerania (MV, G5) and Saxony (G6).

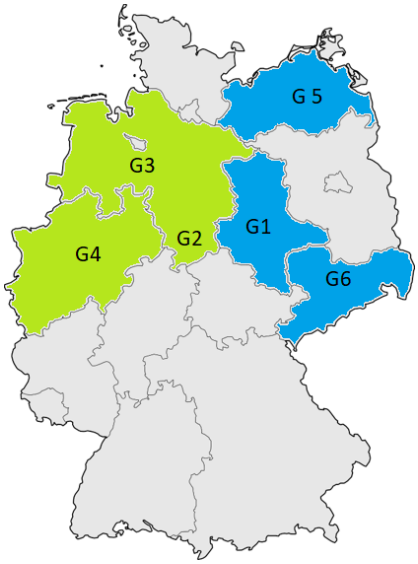


Figure 1: Location of the six cases in Germany (green: West, blue: East)

As case selection was based on a set of variables (see 1.2), the **six selected cases differ** in their size, structural conditions, demographic profile, experience with diversity, and political tradition (see table 1). The German cases comprise three localities with a rather poor economic situation (unemployment and public household) (G1 – G3), two localities with a stable economic situation (G5, G6) and one small town with a prospering economy (G4). Previous research of this project has shown that in a thriving economy, local companies are likely to engage in post-2014 migrants' access to the labour market due to a need of work force. Two cases (G1, G2) have an aging and shrinking population, with the small town of G1 being a case of severe demographic decline. Locality G3, G4 and G5 have observed population growth since the last years, which has led to housing shortages in these localities. Our preliminary research has shown that in small towns and rural areas (G2, G4, G6), locals' openness towards migrants is decisive for access to the housing market because most of the housing stock is owned by single private landlords (see Whole-COMM Country report WP4 for Germany).

Previous research of this project also shows that **experience with migration-related diversity** affects local policy makers' and non-profit service providers' and civil society's approaches and competences regarding the topic of integration. In the medium-sized town G3 and in the small town of G4 migrant workers have been present since the 1920s and intensively since the 1960s. On the contrary, the rural area G2 has had no relevant experience with migrants from abroad, however, there has been internal migration of left-wing activists to G2 since the 1970s due to wide ecological protest in the region, which was chosen as national deposit site for nuclear waste in the 1970s. All three case studies that are located in the Eastern part of Germany (G1, G5 and G6) have limited experiences with migration-related diversity. Still, this report shows that **across all cases, prejudices against (seemingly) "foreigners" can be found in the majority of the local population**, but there are also examples of individuals in every case study, who extraordinarily engage in refugee support. Section 3 of this report describes the

specific local conditions for migrant integration. For a summary of the characteristics, see table 2.

Key findings of the report

This report finds firstly that although choice of labour opportunities, housing, education and leisure activities are limited, a considerable share of the interviewed post-2014 migrants see **SMsTRAs as good places to live**, in case private housing and work could be found. SMsTRAs are **valued for their dense network of support**, calm atmosphere after exhausting years of flight and, for families, as a safe place for their children to grow up. The findings show secondly, that **encounter and contact** between adult locals and post-2014 migrants hardly happen by accident in public spaces but **require moderated places** of encounter or places embedded in social structures, such as the workplace. However, it remains a **challenge how to win "the silent majority"** who does neither openly oppose migrants nor engages in favour of migrants for social engagement. Third, the report shows that the **COVID-pandemic as well as the arrival of refugees** from Ukraine changed and **challenged processes of community-making** and creates uncertainty for development that have started before 2020.

Consequently, there are several issues for local actors of politics and civil society with regards to integration as a whole-of-community process: Reactivating people who have retreated into the private sphere since the onset of the pandemic; navigating the hostile social climate and protests that ongoing anti-COVID-measures provoke; and also taking up feelings of unequal treatment by post-2014 migrants compared to refugees from Ukraine.

Characteristics of the localities					
Inhabitants (approx.)	Administrative function	Spatial structure	Economic situation (public household)	Demographic situation	Previous Experience with migration
G1 (small town, East)					
~ 80,000	District-free city	incorporation of two small towns	poor	Ageing and shrinking	Very limited experience
G2 (rural area, West)					
~ 49,000 (county)	Small villages in one county	one of the most sparsely populated counties in Germany	poor	Ageing and shrinking, very recent influx of urbanites (2nd home)	Very limited experience
G3 (medium-sized town, West)					
~ 170,000	District-free city	widespread town (covering over 220 km², 7 smaller towns and 31 villages)	poor	growing	experienced
G4 (small town, West)					
~ 51,000	Small town within a county	Small town	prospering	growing	Some experience
G5 (medium-sized town, East)					
~ 200,000	District-free city	Small city centre, large outskirts	Stable to prospering	growing	Limited experience
G6 (rural area, East)					
~ 18,500	Small town within a rural county	Small town	Stable to prospering	Stable to growing	Limited experience

Table 1: Overview of the case study localities' characteristics

1.3 Methodology

In each locality, primary data was collected through participant observation in a minimum of two selected sites of interaction between post-2014 migrants and long-term residents, in-depth interviews with post-2014 migrants and focus group discussions with long-term resi-

dents (minimum 15 years in the locality). Participant observation sites were selected to observe whether and how post-2014 and long-term migrants interact, and what the barriers or facilitating factors for this interaction are, also considering that Covid-19 might have played a role in changing patterns of interaction. Interviews with post-2014 migrants aimed at understanding migrants' experiences of inclusion/exclusion in SMsTRAs and at further analyzing the type of interactions observed through participant observation. Finally, focus group discussions aimed at further exploring the local relevance of variables in shaping positive/negative social relations and individual attitudes.

The cases for the research project were selected based on a set of the following variables:

Population size	Medium town: 100,000 – 250.000 Small town: 50,000 – 100,000 Rural area: 5,000 - 50,000 and low population density
Presence of a reception center AND/OR Reception facilities	Time period: 2014-2017
Number of currently residing migrants	Time period: arrived after 2014
Share of Foreign Residents	Time period: in 2005 (SF2005)
Variation of Unemployment level	Time period: 2005-2014 (VARUN)
AND/OR Unemployment Levels	Time period: 2005 and 2014
Variation of number of inhabitants	Time period: 2005-2014 (VARNI)
Regional variation	For example: East / West or North / South, choosing localities from different regions
Local politics	Parties in government and local political tradition, choosing localities with different political traditions (conservative / progressive)

Table 2: Set of variables for case selection

The variables 'SF2005', 'VARUN' and 'VARNI' were used to identify **four** types of localities:

Type A	Characterized by a recovering local economy and an improving demographic profile and migrants' settlement before 2014
Type B	Characterized by an improving economic and demographic situation and no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014
Type C	Characterized by demographic and economic decline and migrants' settlement before 2014
Type D	Characterized by economic and demographic decline and no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014

Table 3: Types of localities

In the six German case study localities, we conducted interviews with 54 post-2014 migrants, focus groups with in total 36 participants and participant observation at 16 sites.[1] **Post-2014 migrant interviews** were conducted in pro-migrant groups' premises, participants' homes, or public spaces, such as cafés or parks. When interviews were conducted in participants' homes, family members often joined the conversation and shared their perspectives. This is reflected in the different numbers of interviews and interviewees. Interviewees were invited through a brief letter (in German and English), describing the goals and purpose of the research and the content of the interview. Before the interview, all interviewees were asked to consent to participate in the research project and the interview to be audio recorded. Except for one interview, all interviewees agreed to be audio-recorded, so that the conversations could be transcribed afterwards. On average, interviews lasted one hour (minimum 40 minutes, maximum 2,5 hours) and meetings were held in person, except for two online-interviews. Three interviews were conducted in English, one in Arabic with translation, and the remaining 51 interviews were conducted in German.[2]

We conducted **one focus group in each locality** inviting interested long-term residents through snowball sampling of our contacts in field trip I, newspaper advertisements, and local blogs. The focus groups were held in adult education centers (G1, G2, G3), non-profit service providers' facilities (G4), the premises of a local university (G5) and a community center (G6).

[1] We are very thankful to our student assistants, Edgar Zschoche and Luisa Grätz who supported field work by conducting observation, participating in and conducting migrant interviews and supported the focus group discussions.

[2] We always offered to our facilitators (NGOs, pro-migrant groups, neighbourhood centers) to provide translation, but this was only made use of by one interviewee.

Based on our experiences in field phase I, we decided prior to the fieldwork to conduct the focus groups **with long-term residents (more than 15 years in the locality) only** because of two reasons: First, we encountered several post-2014 migrants in the first phase of the field-work who had been working as regular employees in mainstream institutions (e.g., welfare organizations, university), but still being predominantly considered "the refugees". We observed this as an exhausting situation for the people as they would always be responsible to explain why "the refugees are behaving the way *they* do". We did not want to intentionally put people in this stereotyped position. Second, and related to the first point, we observed a strong tendency of Germans without migrant background, even among volunteers working in pro-migrant groups, to "alienize" migrants and refugees and reproduce group-related stereotypes. As our first ratio of conducting this research was the principle "Do no harm", we restrained from putting post-2014 migrants in situations that would most likely be unpleasant to them. Besides, the **focus groups were conducted in German** (and not in English) to avoid excluding people with a limited level of education, so we were worried to create a power imbalance during the focus groups because of different abilities to follow the discussion by non-fluent speakers. Still, to capture migrants' experiences in the locality, we paid attention to include migrants in the discussions who had been in the locality for more than 15 years. In addition, we tried to ensure gender balance and age variation in the focus groups. However, this was not easy to control as people did not necessary register for the focus group or did not show up. The focus groups were structured along the following questions:

1. How does a good community look like?
2. Looking at your locality: How do people talk about migration? Is migration an important topic in the locality?
3. Where do locals meet with migrants? (using a map of the locality as visualization tool)
4. What fosters and what hinders a good community life in your locality?
5. Could you propose one measure for your locality that would improve relationships between migrants and locals?

The discussions took between 1,5 and two hours. Participants comprised ordinary citizens, volunteers and professionals working with migration.

Participant observation was conducted at sites that were selected based on desk research, on interviews that were conducted in field phase I as well as through extensive walks during the first field work phase. In each locality, one location where post-2014 migrants and locals are likely to meet and one place that was deemed as a place where mostly locals gather were selected. In G3 and G6, observations were conducted at three/four places to get a full picture of the local situation, because only a limited number of migrant interviews could be conducted (see below). Using participating observation as a method to explore the encounter of locals and post-2014 migrants is limited by the fact that it is not possible by observation to distinguish the place of birth of a person. Observations thus serve to understand how *white* locals react to the presence of BIPoCs in their locality but cannot tell us much about the relation

between post-2014 migrants and locals in general as *white* migrants could not be distinguished and *non-white* people could well be born in the locality.

Data Analysis

Empirical data that was collected through participant observation, migrant interviews and focus group discussions was analyzed in three steps: First, memos on most striking findings were written during fieldwork and directly after field trips and discussed within the team of researchers. Second, empirical data (observation memos, interview notes and notes/audio recordings of focus groups) was condensed into a documentation of the focus group in each locality and the summary of the most important points raised by migrants per locality. The analysis to develop these documents was guided by the research question of WP5 about factors that facilitate or hinder positive experiences when migrants (mainly arrived after 2014) settle in SMsTRAs. Third, once the transcripts of migrant interviews were available, a close (re-)reading of the transcripts and all memos and field notes was conducted to validate previous analyses, identify missing points, and enrich findings with the lived experiences of research participants through quotes. Given the tight time frame of this work package and amount of case study localities, it was necessary to build the analysis on the first two steps (memos in the field and documentation/summary). This efficient structuring of data helped us to keep clear the impressions from each case study locality. The third step ensured validation of the first steps of an immediate analysis.

Barriers to conduct fieldwork and facilitators

One main challenge of the fieldwork was to win participants for migrant interviews and focus group discussions. The interest and openness of both, locals and migrants, differed considerably between localities. Reflecting on the research process in the six localities, it becomes apparent that easy access to migrants for interviews was only possible because of local pro-migrant groups' intense support. In our impression, some migrants participated mainly in the research to give something back to the local volunteer team. Some told us directly that they would give the interview because a volunteer asked them to participate. This created ethical and methodological issues: First, it was difficult to generally estimate how much the interviewees themselves wanted to participate in the project or if they wanted to do a favor to their supporters. Second, relying on pro-migrant groups also meant that we were mainly talking to migrants who successfully accessed local support structures. We also tried to work with snowball sampling by asking interviewees to give our number and invitation to friends and family, but this did not lead to a single interview.

In localities with a less organized volunteer support structure (G3) or a very small number of remaining post-2014 migrants (G6), we encountered problems finding interviewees. The number of migrant interviews in these two localities is below expectations. We tried to compensate for this by conducting additional background interviews with a well-connected person with migrant background in G3 and did additional participant observations in both localities.

In G6 we found several possible interviewees, who were contacted by the local volunteers, but could not participate due to serious health issues of themselves or their family members.

As we contacted possible **participants of the focus groups** through contacts from field phase I, a considerable share of participants was involved with the topic of migration in their professional life or as dedicated pro-migrant volunteers. The number of "ordinary citizens" were the minority in all focus groups. Still, we consider this a minor problem or even an asset, because focus group discussions were conducted in a way that stimulated people to talk about their personal experience as a citizen, and the (lay) professional background helped the discussion to go beyond banalities. In some localities (esp. G2 and G3) it was difficult to reach enough participants. This was also caused by the fact that field work was conducted from April to July 2022 – a period where many people possibly interested in a discussion about migration in their locality were busy supporting refugees from Ukraine and not able or willing to spend their time on discussions. Although we framed the discussion as "learning from the past for the challenges of today", we often heard that people considered helping more important than talking (informal conversations, written replies to our invitation to the focus group).

As the six German case studies are located in a considerable distance from working and living locations (between 4 and 8 hours by train), **field trips had to be clustered over one-week periods**. This had the advantage that impressions from the field were clustered, and we could clearly communicate our presence in the field to locals. However, this also meant that it was impossible to travel back for a single interview or second focus group afterwards. **Online interviews** were offered to participants, but only two interviewees agreed to do this.

Ethical considerations arose with migrant interviewees who **set hopes on the interview**, for example regarding support in their recognition of professional qualification or asylum procedure. We tried to minimize expectations by **explaining our role** and the research project before the interview. To give at least something back to the community, we decided to create anonymized summaries of the main points of local challenges in migrants' interviews and send them to pro-migrant groups, volunteers and local integration coordinators. Likewise, we produced summaries of the focus groups and sent them to the participants and other interested persons. For more details on methods and ethical considerations, see Annex I.

2. Main findings per locality

This section presents and discusses the main findings from the six German case study localities on factors that facilitate or hinder positive experiences of settlement and arrival of post-2014 migrants in SMsTRAs in Germany. To understand the role of specific local contexts, or local refugee integration opportunity structures, each subsection on a case study starts with a detailed description of the local setting, e.g., the availability or lack of relevant infrastructures, organizations, and spatial structure of the locality. The section gives a first insight into how local contexts can shape individual attitudes, social relations, and consequently migrant integration experiences in SMsTRAs.

2.1 General information on the relevant national and regional contexts

When researching local integration opportunity structures and migrants' willingness to stay in SMsTRAs in Germany, at least three factors should be taken into account to understand the German context: First, there is a **national integration strategy** that promotes **language acquisition** and **cultural knowledge** as key factors for integration. So-called "Integration courses" that comprise German language classes and cultural orientation courses are offered for refugees with protection state and for asylum seekers with so-called 'good perspectives to stay'[3]. Integration courses paid and conceptually planned by the national level (participants have to pay 2,20€/lesson if they earn money), but their implementation happens on the local level by local education providers who apply as operators.

Second, it is important to know that the field of **integration is a voluntary task of the municipalities**. This means that no budget or staff is set aside for integration per se, but it is up to the municipalities to actively decide to spend resources on this task. In all cases, programs and funding schemes on the *Länder* scale exist, but municipalities are not obliged to take part in the programs or apply for funding. So basically, every Euro that is fundraised and spent for integration is related to some engagement in the local political system and administration. Third, the current legal system **binds refugees to the place where they filed for asylum for at least three years** after status determination (§12 AufenthG). However, the scale of this restriction is defined at the policy implementation level, meaning that the *Länder* decide if residence restriction applies to the *Länder* scale (e.g., Lower Saxony), the county (e.g., North Rhine Westphalia) or a single locality (e.g., Saxony-Anhalt). Also, after three years, refugees are only allowed to move if they can make their living on their own or for severe reasons (e.g., close family members in another locality, health-related reasons). So, the presence of post-2014

[3] The rationale of "good (or bad) perspectives to stay" has been introduced by the Ministry of Interior in 2015 to deal with high numbers of refugees and speed up the asylum procedures. The "perspective to stay" is bound to the country of origin and the median protection rate for asylum seekers from the respective country. Refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Somalia for instance fall under the category of good perspectives to stay.

migrants in a locality does not necessarily relate to their willingness to stay there but can also be a product of legal constraints.

2.2 Locality G1, Saxony-Anhalt, small town, type D locality

The small town is located in the region of Saxony-Anhalt (East-Germany). Since the German Reunification in the 1990s, Saxony-Anhalt is confronted with structural and social transformation. While the bigger agglomerations experience an increase in the number of inhabitants since the 2000s, small towns and rural areas struggle with the effects of structural changes and have seen a dramatic decrease in inhabitants and increasing population ageing. In the regional integration plan, migration is thus portrayed as an important contribution to stabilize the number of inhabitants, and face demographic ageing and ensure supply with work force (MS Sachsen-Anhalt, 2021, p. 2). The small town G1 in Saxony-Anhalt reflects the demographic processes of population ageing and shrinkage mentioned above. The locality lost over 10,000 inhabitants in the last 15 years even though the municipality incorporated a neighboring municipality in 2007. Today, the locality has around 80,000 inhabitants. In 2014, unemployment level was at almost 13 % which is close to East German average, and a considerable improvement of the situation compared to the unemployment level of 20 % in 2005. The labor market offers mostly jobs for skilled workers.

The case study region had only a little experience with cultural diversity before 2014, even though it hosted labor migrants from socialist countries such as Vietnam, Cuba or Mozambique during the time of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). However, labor migration was strictly regulated, and migrants lived segregated. Individual contacts between migrants and locals outside of the workplace were not foreseen. Today, migrants, especially refugees, tend to remain in the locality only for the compulsory three years after status determination (Wohnsitzauflage according to §12ª, AufenthG). G1 is a transit station for migrants, with over 65 % staying less than 5 years in the locality (statistical report on migrants in G1, 2021). 8 % of the inhabitants have a migrant background, and Syrian citizens are the largest migrant group (20 % of the migrants in G1, statistical report on migrants in G1, 2021). The housing situation in G1 is favorable, as the prior population decline has created vacancies in the large municipal housing stock. Thus, the locality was able to offer decentral accommodation for post-2014 migrants from the moment of arrival. The political tradition of the locality is conservative with the CDU being almost always the strongest party. Conservative tendencies have been reinforced since the right-wing party of AFD entered the local council in 2014 with 5 % of the votes, which increased to over 16 % in the local elections in 2019.

Infrastructural condition

The small town offers a rich infrastructure. Education facilities can be found from kindergarten to university, there are several museums, a cinema and a theatre in the locality. Sports clubs, art associations and a music school exist in the place, as well as a community-organized local TV and radio channel. Several parks and playgrounds, a zoo as well as indoor and outdoor

swimming pools offer a varied scope of leisure facilities. There are offers for children and youth in G1, also in public spaces like in the local park, however, due to the ageing of the population, activities for youth are limited. The locality has all the necessary shopping facilities for daily needs, and there are also Arabic and Asian stores.

As a county-free city, the locality is equipped with all relevant administrative services, such as the immigration office, *Jobcenter,* and a separate administrative department on integration. Several education providers and the local adult education center (VHS) offer German language classes. There are several churches, a synagogue and a mosque in the locality. The small town has a train station and various buses connecting the parts of the city and the surrounding region. A clustering of migrants can be found in the inner city where over 60% of migrants live (statistical report on migrants in G1, 2021). This can be explained by the decentral accommodation policy where post-2014 migrants were placed in the inner city public housing stock.

Figure 2: Inner city housing in G1

Figure 3: Arabic store in G1

Associative structure and mobilization patterns

The associative structure in G1 is twofold: On the one hand, there is a dense network between the administrative and public actors (department for integration, local Jobcenter, higher education institutions) and non-profit service providers and NGOs who try to publicly promote diversity as a part of the locality (since 2018). On the other hand, there are migrant-led organizations, such as an intercultural center (founded in the 1990s), the local mosque, a local branch of the regional association of migrant organizations (since 2008) and various small cultural associations (Afghan, Vietnamese, Iranian and Kurdish). These two structures do not always work coherently and there exist conflicts over the recognition and value of each other's work. The intercultural center offers support for migrants, especially for Arabic speaking persons due to the migrant background of the center's key personnel. They are the most important go-to persons for interviewed migrants with limited German knowledge (G1-M1; G-M1a; G1-M2; G1-M4; G1-M5). There is also a small group of volunteers who offer German classes in the adult education center (VHS).

Strong right-wing tendencies exist in the region and the locality, also before 2015. Anti-migrant protests have happened weekly in the locality to prevent the opening of a shared accommodation for unaccompanied minors, right-wing actions as graffities or single attacks happen regularly. A local actor recalls that in 2015/16, they regularly asked for police protection when organizing an event that involved migrants. Still, migrant organizations and left-wing civil society actors are standing up against right-wing tendencies, organizing counter-demonstrations and events such as intercultural days or a memorial event of racist murders that occurred in the locality. However, between these poles, the majority of the population remains indifferent to the situation and does not engage in anti- or pro-migrant mobilization (member of the local administration, Focus Group Discussion 1 in G1, 13.07.2022).

Conducting field work in G1

Participant observation was conducted in G1 in three places: (i) a square with a fountain at the entrance of the park in the city centre, (ii) a square close to the local university and a famous tourist attraction and (iii) the weekly market at the marketplace.

The first observation at the square in the park was conducted on a weekday from 12 am - 2 pm. The weather was cloudy, slightly windy, and occasionally sunny. There were few, mostly elderly people sitting on the benches around the fountain. From time to time, individual tourists came by and took pictures of the fountain. Most people were staying for only a short time and talked a little. Near a few trees, interactions could be observed between people consuming alcohol. Among them were *white* people as well as People of Color. Reggae music was played on a Bluetooth box. One person was dancing between the trees. All the people who passed by the group looked at it and observed the people there briefly. The place seemed to be known to the inhabitants of G1 as a place for drinkers: One *white* man commented to his companion "they again" and pointed to the group. Within the group, the mood seemed to be good. People were drinking, discussing, listening to music and exchanging cigarettes and money.

Figure 4: Fountain on the square at the entrance of the park

Observation at the square close to the university was conducted on a weekday from 11:30 am to 1 pm. It was a quiet, pleasant, and tidy place with a student canteen including a café and seating in a small park with trees. The observation was done from one of the seating areas outside the café, where music was also playing in the background. Mainly students, faculty, and other staff of the university could be observed during the lunch break. Those were at least sitting in groups and conversing while eating. People were greeting each other and engaging in conversation. Topics of conversation included upcoming exams, lectures, different orientations of a course of study, and fears about professional life or job prospects after graduation. Some of the conversations were held in English, but for the most part no (visible) migrants could be observed, only few BiPoC students. Overall, relatively few interactions were observed.

Observation of the weekly market took place on a weekday between 10 am and 12 pm, as it was suspected that a relatively high number of customers might go shopping there during lunch time. The weather was summer sunny. The market provided mainly food, such as bread, cheese, fish, meat, vegetables, and fruits from the region. A sales van with a Polish license plate was also there. Most of the people were (visibly) middle-aged to older locals, mostly women. Several people used walking aids, such as crutches or walkers. Participant observation was conducted from a seat by the fountain in the marketplace. About 15 people were doing their shopping, talking briefly with other customers or the vendors. Their eyes often wandered around the square. People were talking about the prices of products, the Ukraine war and related, rising energy costs. A middle-aged man loudly stated that the refugees are the reason for the increased costs and that the people in G1 are generally against refugees but politicians imposed them on the population ("They brought them to us"). Still, the quiet atmosphere was not interrupted by this as no one interrupted or reacted to his statements. The impression

was that the same vendors and shoppers meet here every week and yet have relatively little to say to each other, shop for a short time and leave. Visible post-2014 migrants could not be identified.

Nine in-depth interviews with eleven post-2014 migrants were conducted. Interviewees had backgrounds in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Afghanistan, and were aged between 17 to mid-fifties. Five women and six men were included in the sample. Except for one interviewee who had family in G1 before, all people came to the small town because of distribution policies. Four interviewees were searching for a job, four interviewees were working in (high)skilled jobs and three interviewees were pursuing their education (school or university). All interviews were facilitated by local actors, either by the intercultural center, the local volunteer group or the local university. It was not possible to reach migrants beyond personal contacts of facilitators from field phase I. Invitations to other institutions or via email and facebook did not lead to further interviews. Interviews were held in the premises of the intercultural center, of the adult education center or in a local café. One interview was conducted in English, one in Arabic with translation, the remaining seven interviews were conducted in German.

One focus group discussion was conducted on a weekday in the late afternoon in the premises of the local adult education center (Volkshochschule). The focus group was announced on the local department for integration's webpage, posters were displayed in the adult education center and contacts from field phase I was asked to distribute the invitation in their networks. Five persons (three women and two men) participated in the focus group discussion. Participants had backgrounds in refugee support, local migrant associations, the local mosque and the locality's administration. Two persons had a migrant background. Key topics of the discussion were (i) a general lack of experience with diversity in G1 and consequently too little visibility of migrant's contribution to the local community, (ii) locals' reservation against newcomers and a lack of meaningful encounter and (iii)a lack of political representation of migrants, e.g. a migrant's council or migrant's deputy. The focus group discussion was held in a constructive manner, still, people with migrant background felt annoyed by being confronted with assimilationist perceptions or participated only little in the discussion.

Social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences

The following part analyzes and discusses the local social interactions, reciprocal individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences of inclusion/exclusion drawing on the empirical insights that were gained from observation, migrant interviews and focus group discussions with long-term residents. The analysis is structured along the four dimensions of (i) spatial factors, (ii) social factors, (iii) ideational/political factors, and (iv) governance factors.

Space and spatial factors

With an average population age of 50 years, locality G1 is characterized by an ageing and shrinking population and ranks among the oldest municipalities in Germany. This is in contrast

to most post-2014 migrants who are significantly younger and many of them arrived as families with children or single individuals. Due to the demographic development, housing stock is not fully occupied, and, in some cases, migrants moved to blocks where only one flat was occupied before (G1-M1). For locals, the moving in of migrants was thus not only related to having new neighbors, but sometimes also to have neighbors where flats had been empty before. This resulted in conflicts between new neighbors and older residents over noise and behavior of the new tenants. Migrant families and migrant children are always seen to be too loud (G1-M5) and migrant renters as too little caring about the tidiness of the house (G1-M2). Conflicts between tenants are quickly culturalized as problems between (Arabic) migrants and Germans instead of acknowledging that conflicts might well be connected to age and generational differences (FGD). For younger interviewees, the demographic situation is also seen as the reason for a lack of offers for youth in the locality, such as bars, clubs or other activities (G1-M4; G1-M6).

Migrants tend to live in the inner-city parts of G1 where they have become part of the everyday picture (observation I). Other parts, especially the part of the city that was incorporated in 2007, are predominantly *white* (G1-M4, observation). The administrative incorporation without spatial affiliation appears as a challenge to create a common sense of community.

Focus group discussants as well as migrants stress the lack of previous cohorts of migrants as decisive factor in the locality. Migrants report the lack of existing migrant communities as a key reason to leave because there is no migrant infrastructure as e.g., Shisha-Bars, religious groups, and ethnic communities (G1-M1; G1-M5). Locals struggle to deal with non-Germans, be it in the education system (G1-M1b; G1-M6; G1-M10), at the workplace (G1-M3; G1-M8) and in the neighborhood (G1-M2; G1-M5). Focus group discussants further describe a general neglect of migrants' contributions to the community because people are not used to think about migrants as part of the locality. Participants also point to a lack of differentiation between migrants as all people with migrant background would be portrayed as refugees despite the presence of international students and professionals in the locality (FGD1, G1, 13.07.2022).

Social factors

As outlined above, the associative structure of the locality seems divided between public actors, one migrant organization and a larger, indifferent share of the population. If migrants receive support depends on whether they arrive in one of the mentioned support structures. Migrants who managed to enter the local university, for instance, could profit from the existing network of support, establish contact with Germans and find adequate housing and jobs (G1-M4; G1-M8; G1-M9). Other migrants rely on the support of the intercultural center mostly offering peer-to-peer support (G1-M2; G1-M4; G1-M5). In this case, contacts to non-migrants are very rare and the gap to long-term residents cannot be bridged easily. The local mosque is an important point of contact for Muslim migrants (G1-M5; G1-M10) and religious leaders,

as the head of the local mosque or the local synagogue are involved in the local network for diversity. Still, their acceptance by and impact on the wider public remains unclear (FGD).

Migrant interviews show a mixed picture of relations between migrants and long-term residents. Migrants who have been included in social contexts, such as school, university or work and learned German there, are in touch with Germans as colleagues, friends, or "adopted family" (G1-M3; G1-M6; G1-M7; G1-M8; G1-M9). A young woman recalls how changing from the "welcome class" of a local school where migrant children were mainly learning German to a private school helped her to establish contacts with locals without migrant background (G1-M6). People who are more isolated due to an unclear legal status, which keeps them away from the labor market or language classes, have hardly any contact to non-migrant locals (G1-M1). This is similar for people who are unable to meet the "integration goals" of learning the language and finding a job, due to their concern for family members who could not flee (G1-M5). For people with limited German knowledge, the intercultural center is key in providing a space of contact, information, and activities (G1-M1; G1-M2; G1-M4; G1-M5). Other interviewees describe the center as a closed community that does not help to arrive in the locality, which they attribute to the presence of a strong leader there (G1-M8; G1-M9).

In general, it seems that migrants in G1 have to make some efforts to get to know locals who would be willing to engage with them. People have developed different strategies to do so, e.g., engaging in left-wing organizations (G1-M3) or recently, engaging in support for refugees from Ukraine to meet Germans "who are open for foreigners" (G1-M2).

Ideational and political factors

Most interviewees found ways and spaces how to participate in public life in G1. For some, this is the workplace with friendly relations to their colleagues (G1-M3, G1-M8; G1-M9) or school and university (G1-M1a; G1-M6; G1-M7). Other spaces are the intercultural center (G1-M2; G1-M4; G1-M6), political parties and activist groups (G1-M3; G1-M6) or gardening associations (G1-M5; G1-M10). Still, participation in shared spaces is not free of conflict. In the case of gardening associations, for example, these involve different ideas for the use of the allotment garden (gardening vs. barbecue) and conflicts over noise (G1-M5; G1-M10). A young mother also distributes information on events for children in G1 in her *WhatsApp* group for Persian-speaking mothers (G1-M2). Parents participate in kindergarten and school events (G1-M2; G1-M7; G1-M8; G1-M10).

Yet, all interviewees report discrimination, insulting comments and racism on a daily basis. Incidents happen in public spaces, public transport, between neighbors, at the workplace and in educational institutions, even in state-funded integration courses (G1-M8; G1-M9; G1-M10). Comments regard accusations of migration into the welfare system (G1-M2), too much noise of migrant children (G2-M5), looking different (G1-M3) and are often connected to islamophobic attitudes, especially in the case of women (G1-M2; G1-M5; G1M8; G1-M10). Racist behavior and prejudices against migrants are communicated openly and without shame in public space. While observing the weekly market, we listened to the conversation between a

customer and the shop keeper about how to get rid of the migrants. The conversation finds it sad climax in the customer's statement that the only way to get "them" out would be to throw a bomb. His wife seems uncomfortable and reminds him "But you should not say that in public", but the statement itself is not commented by her nor by the shop keeper. Since 2020, G1 has seen regular protests against COVID-measures that can be clearly related to extremist right-wing actors. A local organization for victims of right-wing violence finds that since the beginning of these protests, G1 registered the highest number of right-wing violence (mainly racist) in Saxony-Anhalt. According to the organization, a considerable share of these attacks can be associated with anti-COVID demonstrations in the localities.

Migrants have different strategies how to cope with everyday racist behavior. Some try to ignore it (G1-M5), others meet hostile gazes with a smile and unfriendly comments with arguments (G1-M2), others engage in anti-racist protest (G1-M3) or try to fight discrimination in their work (G1-M10). What concerns them more, it the silent rejection and disinterest of ordinary citizens.

> "*What I wish from G1? That people smile at me on the street. That people treat foreigners as ordinary citizens*." (G1-M2, migrant from Afghanistan, female, 25-35 years)

However, interviewees underline that the discrimination experiences in G1 are rather negligible compared to what they experienced in their home country as for example Palestinians in Lebanon or Hazara in Afghanistan (G1-M2; G1-M3; G1-M10). One interviewee puts it that way:

> "*I am very happy here. Here, we don't say "Are you Hazara? Are you Pashto?" If you do something, you will get it. If you don't do it, you don't get it. That is why I am happy here, I can learn and achieve things*." (G1-M2, migrant from Afghanistan, female, 25-35 years)

Some interviewees have the impression that locals without migrant background got used to migrants' presence over time. Starring at headscarves and comments on the street have become less often (G1-M2; G1-M3; G1-M10). One couple recalls how their moving into a housing block was accompanied by a social worker to cope with prejudices and hostility, and today they are on good terms with most of their neighbors (G1-M8; G1-M9).

Governance factors

Interviewees experience G1 as a restrictive environment, regarding for example decision-making in the immigration authority and access to language classes and labor market for people with tolerated stay or unclear status (G1-M1; G1-M5; G1-M10). This view is mirrored in the focus group discussion where attitudes of single members of the local administration are seen to "block integration processes". On the contrary, members of the local immigration authority and the local job centers are experienced as friendly persons (G1-M2; G1-M3; G1-M5; G1-M8; G1-M9), and compared to the other case study localities, little problems with the naturalization process are reported (G1-M3; G1-M6; G1-M7; G1-M8; G1-M9; G1-M10). But there are

also public institutions that are struggling to respond to migration-related diversity, which becomes obvious for example in the lack of any translation service (which is then done by peers without renumeration) (G1-M2), or in the fact that parents feel that the education system is not prepared to adequately include children without German knowledge due to a lack of German language classes in school on one hand and a general deficit-oriented view on migrant children on the other hand (G1-M1; G1-M10). It seems that the lack of experience with diversity is a decisive factor here: While one interviewee reports that her written request to pray at the working place in the local administration was rejected (G1-M8), the local hospital where her husband works offers a praying room for all Muslim employees (G1-M9). They explain this by the fact that she is the only Muslim member of the local administration while in the local hospital many employees have a migrant background. Still, the local department for integration has started a training series on interculturality and diversity for all public employees starting with the members of the local administration itself.

The lack of experience with diversity is also visible on the labor market. While there is a lack of (skilled) workers on the labor market due to the aging of the population, migrants struggle to find jobs. One interviewee explains this by companies' general reluctance to trust foreign certificates:

> *„ I got my Bachelor's degree recognized. Then I tried to find work as an electrical engineer somewhere in Germany. Anywhere. I did not care where. After more than 120 applications, I was not invited to a single job interview. Then I thought, maybe that is because of my certificate, because I studied in Iran and the Germans do not want someone who does not know their system, who has no German certificate. So I asked the head of the international office of the local university if there would be a chance. And he was so helpful, we got opportunities that you cannot find in other places. I finished my studies four month ago and started to work two months after*." (G1-M3, migrant from Iran, male, 30-35 years)

His perception is shared by two further interviewees who stress the importance of a German certificate on the local labour market and recall a similar experience with the local university (G1-M8; G1-M9). The institution is seen as especially caring and welcoming which the head of the international office explains by low numbers of local students, so that migrants, as well as refugees, are target groups of the university to keep student numbers stable (interview with head of international office from local university, field trip I). Besides skilled labour with German certificates, the labour market in G1 is deemed too narrow and with a very limited offer (G1-M3; G1-M5; G1-M10).

The attitude of the local community is experienced as twofold, containing both open-minded people, but also hostile attitudes. One interviewee reflects the local community as follows:

> "*G1 has two faces. It is a culturally rich, very open city. But then, there is also racism. When I arrived here, I was confronted with racism. But one month after, I was at a demonstration remembering a racist murder here, and I saw the other face: A very open, attractive city standing up against racism*." (G1-M3, migrant from Iran, male, 25-35 years)

This view is also reflected in the focus group discussion where participants relate to single, engaged institutions and civil society organizations, but also stress right-wing tendencies and general disinterest of "ordinary people". This division continues in the local administration and there is no consent if G1 is an open society that welcomes migrants or if homogeneity is preferred (interview with a member of local department for integration, field phase I). Migrants feel that there is no welcome culture in the locality:

> "*It is difficult until today. There is no welcome culture in G1. […] I learned that in other places, newcomers receive a small welcome thing. This could be a letter, a visit, different forms that show that you are welcome. This is missing here*." (G1-M3, migrant from Iran, male, 30-35 years, p. 2-3).

Summary of main insight from G 1

The opportunity structures for integration in G1 show a **mixed picture with great support on the one hand and rejection on the other hand**. Regarding the **spatial dimension**, there is a certain **clustering** of migrants in the inner parts of the city which concerns both, housing and presence in public space. In other quarters, migrants are not present at all, reducing possibilities for everyday encounter. The demographic situation of the locality, ageing and shrinking, also affects locals' attitudes as **cultural and age-related conflicts intersect**. **Social relations** between post-2014 migrants and locals are mixed. It depends on **migrants' social environment**, their degree of integration into the **educational system or the labor market** and coincidental factors such as the characteristics of the immediate neighborhood, whether migrants are supported of if they are rather exposed to the hostile climate in G1. The **majority** of the local population is described as **silent and indifferent**. Local institutions, namely the local university and the intercultural center, are important **anchor points** to access parts of the local community. Concerning the **ideational dimension**, there is considerable pro-migrant engagement by single public actors, NGOs, and single persons, however strong right-wing tendencies, as well as disinterest by the wider public exist as well. Open **rejection of migrants** and **racist comments** are part of migrants' daily life in G1. Relations within the field of migrant support are not free of conflict and are characterized by a certain seclusion, which further complicates integration structures. In terms of the **governance dimension,** there is a difference between open policies, as shown for example in the progressive local integration plan and the local network for diversity on the one hand, and members of administrations and local institutions that block integration processes because they mistrust migrants and the change of their locality on the other hand. **Decisive factors beyond the four dimensions** are a **lack of experience with diversity** and the lack of migrant communities which are mentioned several times in migrant interviews. Still, major **reasons to move** are rather **mismatches** between migrants' skills

and the local labor market and the **overaged population** in G1 that results in a lack of offers as well as contacts for young people. **Reasons to stay** are a stable job, children and their social environment, but also legal constraints that prohibit a movement.

2.3 Locality G2, Lower Saxony, rural area, type D locality

Case study G2 is located in a sparsely populated rural area in Lower-Saxony (West-Germany) with a population density of only 40/km². Before 2014, the share of foreign residents was 2.5%, which is significantly lower compared to other municipalities in Germany and in Lower Saxony. In 2014, unemployment in the region was much higher than the average in West Germany. The rural region hosts mainly small and medium-sized companies looking for skilled workers. Unskilled as well as high-skilled jobs are rare. The economic situation of the municipality is very tensed leaving hardly any resources for integration which is a voluntary task of the municipalities in Germany. Since the 1970s, the locality has been the center of ecological protests and attracted (urban) people with left-alternative lifestyles to the locality. Only recently, middle-class urbanites are moving to the region because of its beautiful nature, housing opportunities and modest distances to the agglomerations of Berlin and Hamburg. This contributes to a tensed situation on the housing market. The political tradition of the locality is conservative (CDU), however, due to the settlement of environmentalists and the moving-in of urbanites, newly founded progressive parties are increasingly gaining votes. The right-wing party AfD is only marginally present. In the regional election of 2022, no candidate of this party ran for a mandate of the locality.

Infrastructural condition

The rural area consists of various villages and two small towns. As there are only few migrants in the area and supporting infrastructures are scattered over the county, the whole county was included in the research. In 2015/16, three reception centers operated by the *Länder*-scale were located in G2. Refugees in these centers were not in the responsibility of the locality, but of the *Land* Lower Saxony. Other refugees, who were directly distributed to the locality, were placed in decentral accommodation. The reception centers were closed down in 2016/17 as the numbers of arriving people decreased. It is discussed to reopen one of the reception centers for unaccompanied minors from Ukraine (local newspaper, 2022). Education facilities from kindergarten to *Gymnasium* (high school leading to university education) are present in the two small towns, as well as schools for vocational training. Grocery and shopping stores are available in small towns and bigger villages, and two stores are selling “oriental goods” in each of the towns since 2015 and 2020 respectively. There is one hospital in the rural area. Distances can be over 40 km to reach it depending on the place of residence. Several churches can be found in the area and one mosque exists in one of the small towns. Various soccer associations are active across the county, and allotment gardens can be rented in the small towns. There are youth centers in several villages and the small towns, and a cultural center in an old station building.

Associative structure and mobilization patterns

Due to the environmental movement since the 1970s, people with left-alternative lifestyles entered the locality. They are the key actors of refugee support since 2015/16: There is one pro-migrant group that mainly engages in political advocacy for refugees demanding to accommodate 10.001 refugees in the region in the next years. There is a second pro-migrant group in one of the small villages in the northern part working on practical support as well as a migrant counselling funded by the *Länder*-scale that operates in three places in the region. Due to a lack of housing, there is also a grassroots building project in the region for refugees and locals, mostly focusing on the housing project itself. There are community centers in the locality that offered support for refugees in the first years of arrival, and now took up these services due to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees. There is one mosque in one of the small towns which was organized formally after 2015 and moved to a bigger building due to a higher number of members. Two adult education centers offer German classes for migrants (Volkshochschule and rural school for adult education. The locality has not witnessed any anti-migrant protests since 2015. On the opposite, the rural area has been portrayed in the national media as an outstanding example of welcome culture. Still, local pro-migrant groups and migrants agreed that willingness to support has decreased over time, and especially the COVID pandemic has left serious gaps in the support structure.

Fieldwork in G2

Participant observation was conducted in a local street and at the weekly market. The street was recommended during interviews as „**the Arabic street of the rural area**“. Observation was conducted over lunch time (11 am-2 pm). The „Arabic street“ consists of three institutions: a barber shop, the pro-migrant group's office, and their counselling as well as a Mediterranean Fast food restaurant. Due to this “migrant infrastructure” the presence of post-2014 migrants in this street is considerably higher than in other places. The place is diverse and lively but not very appealing. Most part of the street is occupied by parking cars, buses are driving through the street and the buildings from the 1960s are is in stark contrast to the timbered houses in the main street. “Migrant infrastructures” are also used by long-term residents. Various customers visit the Barber Shop and locals come by car to fetch lunch form the Mediterranean Fast-food restaurant. Interactions between locals and migrants seem friendly. People great each other or stop for a short talk.

Figure 5: Observation site 1: "Arabic Street"

The **second site of observation was the weekly market** on the market square. It was selected as a place where mostly long-term residents gather, because products are rather costly, and the place was identified as mainly *white* in the previous research phase. The observation was conducted during market hours from 9-12 am. The weekly market reflects well the rural character of the place: Products come from the surrounding area and many costumers buy plants for their gardens. People know each other and stop for little chats. Still, the quality of stay on the square is limited by a busy street which limits the square on one site (see figure 4). Migrants are only present as they pass through the street. They look at products from a distance and greet some of the costumers and shop keepers.

Seven in-depth interviews with eleven post-2014 migrants from Iran, Syria and Iraq were conducted. All interviewees were contacted with the help of three pro-migrant groups who first shared the invitation in their networks. As this strategy did not lead to any answers, facilitators personally addressed possible interviewees. Four interviews were conducted with married couples (25-50 years), three of them with and one without children. One family-father was interviewed without his family. Two interviewees were young adults (18-22 years) in the course of finishing their school, six were working, one man was searching for a job and two women were at home looking after the children. Interviews were held at people's homes, in a café close to the working place, or the researcher's rented apartment.

Figure 6: Observation site 2: Weekly market

Invitations to **focus group discussions** were distributed in networks established in field phase I and through local media. The discussion was held in the local adult education institution (VHS) to provide a neutral space that could attract "ordinary citizens" and not only activists. The focus group discussion was scheduled on a weekday in the late afternoon (5-7 pm). Although five people registered for the discussion in advance, four of them did not attend because they received urgent requests to support Ukrainian refugees on the date. Lastly, two younger women (25-35) and one older woman (70-80 years) attended the discussion. All participants were active in refugee support, one as a volunteer and two work-related. Despite the small group, the discussion was rich because of the different (life) experiences and long-term insights. The atmosphere was friendly, and after some irritation on the small number of participants, the discussion went smoothly. Key topics of the discussion were (i) the lack of financial and personal resources for integration in the locality, (ii) a division between administration and volunteers that has increased during the COVID-pandemic with the shutdown of administrative units, (iii) the lack of visibility of migrants in the locality and (iv) concerns about the unequal treatment of Ukrainian refugees in regard to other refugee groups by both civil society and the legal-administrative system.

Social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences

Based on the empirical insights that were gathered in May 2022 in G2, this section discusses social interactions, individual attitudes and migrant experiences in the rural area along with the four key factors of analysis of this report.

Space and spatial factors

The locality is a rural, almost remote place in Lower Saxony. Except for one family who had relatives in the place, all interviewed migrants came to G2 because of distribution policies. Still, rurality is not always perceived negatively. One family, for example, bought a house in a very small village with a huge garden where they breed chicken and grow vegetables. Coming from a rural area in Syria, they value the place as being similar to their home (G2-M1a/b).

As the area is sparsely populated, migrants spend a lot of time commuting to work, school, childcare facilities or places of encounter and counselling (G2-M1; G2-M2; G2-M5; G2-M7). People who have no German driving license rely on scarce public transport. Important places are spaces of everyday activities (work, school, home) as well as migrant-related institutions such as the intercultural café. The locality is rural and there are not many public parks, playgrounds, restaurants and no shopping center. Focus group discussants refer to the infrastructural situation as a main barrier for migrants to participate in community life. Observations showed that young people hang out at the bus stops, and adults spend their day at the working place, at home or in the nature. Playgrounds are rare and not used by many people. Focus group participants named plenty of spaces of encounter in the rural area, such as cultural institutions, international cafés, or church-led meeting places. However, participants critically

remark that most of these places are led by left-wing initiatives and reflect that the places cannot count as places "for all".

There is no clustering of migrants in a certain neighborhood, but across interviews there was a tendency to move to the small towns for children's education. In 2015/16, the rural area hosted over 1000 migrants. Today, most of them have left because of the region's rurality and a lack of jobs for unskilled as well as high-skilled people. High-skilled migrants send their children to greater towns to study and hope to leave the place for a more educated surrounding to find work in their professional field (G2-M4). However, migrants without university degrees hope to keep their children in the region and lower their children's educational aspirations (G2-M1, G2-M3):

> "*In our culture, the family is the most important. […] our children will not leave us. I don't think so. They can do a vocational training here. They can decide, of course, but if they want to study, I will lose my children, because there are no jobs for them here. I'd like them to learn a decent job that they can earn their money, and find a job near to us, that is enough*." (G2-M1, migrant from Syria, female, 30-40 years).

Parents and older siblings perceive the rural area as safe compared to urban areas, as young people would not get in touch with drugs or crime here (G2-M1; G2-M2; G2-M8):

> *"In my opinion, this is the best village in Germany. There is no better place. In big cities, where my parents would like to move, I'm worried because of my brothers. They would only cause trouble, because you cannot trust big cities. But here, they can study. It is small, but there is some choice here*." (G2-M8, migrant from Syria, male, 18 years)

Social factors

Both, migrant interviews and focus group discussions recall a difference in the social relations between locals and migrants in 2015 and today. As there have hardly been any migrants in the region before 2015, the interest was high in the beginning and the whole village engaged in support (G2-M1, G2-M4). Most social contacts that post-2014 migrants in the locality have, stem from the first months where plenty of meeting opportunities were organized and volunteers gathered there (focus group discussions, G2-M1, G2-M4, G2-M6). This also led to friendships between migrants and locals. One interviewed family for instance cooks once a week with a German family since over seven years (G2-M4). People who later moved to other places in the rural area, have problems establishing new contacts (G2-M1, G2-M2, G2-M4). In all cases, contacts to neighbors remain very loose. Still, migrant interviews show that children and youth are socially well-embedded compared to their parents. The two young adult interviewees talk about their friends in the locality, activities in youth and sports clubs as well as positive experiences in school (G2-M6, G2-M7). This is similar to parents' narration of their children's experience in G2.

In the rural area, the role of single engaged persons cannot be underestimated. These are single volunteers who are available for all kinds of questions, single teachers who try to mitigate the shortages of the general education system, especially the lack of language classes, and single engaged bosses at the workplace. Migrants value the stable network of volunteers and for some migrants, these contacts are decisive to stay in the locality (G2-M5; G2-M4). However, contacts have decreased over time, especially since the COVID-pandemic, and it is very hard to establish new contacts (G2-M1, G2-M4, G2-M7). Still, observation shows that migrants are recognized in the locality. People with and without migrant background greet each other and exchange some words, in both settings, the "Arabic street" and the weekly market.

Focus group discussants relate decreasing social relations to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in the region. According to the focus group participants, locals see less "cultural distance" to *white*, Christian Ukrainians than to *non-white* people with Muslim or other beliefs. This is especially apparent on the housing market, where it is much easier for Ukrainians than for Syrians or Afghans to access the housing stock of private landlords (Focus Group Discussion 1 in G2 on the 12.05.2022). For post-2014 migrants, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees has decreased the already scarce housing offer in G2.

Ideational/political factors

Focus group discussants describe a difference between engaged, mostly left-wing activists on the one hand, and an indifferent majority society as well as political leaders and administration on the other hand who do not see migration and integration as important topics in the locality. Most members of pro-migrant groups were also part of the prior environmental movement. Having reached some important political goals until the 1990s, civil society organizations and individual volunteers from the eco-scene were open to find new fields of action and implemented their competencies of networking and engagement on the topic of refugee reception. This resulted in a large, but fuzzy landscape of support, which even active volunteers find hard to grasp (FGD). Thus, local activists share a history of conflict with the local administration since the 1980s, which can complicate communication processes. Still, due to the presence of a strong left-wing civil society, G2 has seen only single anti-COVID measure demonstrations with predominantly left-alternative actors opposing social distancing and vaccinations.

Locals who have been living in the place for long are portrayed as reluctant to open up to newcomers by both, focus group participants and migrants. All interviewees perceive locals are reserved; one interviewee puts it that way: "*The Germans are afraid. They don't like contact with us*." (G2-M2a) Incidents of daily racism mostly concern Muslim belief, either for women wearing a headscarf (G2-M1a; G2-M2a) or for men who do not eat pork and don't drink alcohol (G2-M1b). Open insulting rarely happens, yet all interviewees report situations where they felt not welcome, for example when the application for membership in the allotment gardens was not answered at all (G2-M2).

Still, migrants, especially children and youth, actively participate in the society. Children are part of the music school, sports clubs, youth clubs and religious activities, both Christian and Muslim (children of G2-M1, G2-M2, G2-M4; G2-M6, G2-M7). Adults engage in the local church (G2-M4, G2-M5), the local mosque (G2-M1, G2-M2), a local party (G2-M4) and work as volunteers in a local charity store (G2-M5) or the voluntary fire brigade (G2-M2; G2-M5). Adult migrants engage in activities to improve their language knowledge and to get to know Germans.

Governance factors

Facilities for migrant integration by the local administration are limited in the rural area. According to the focus group participants, this is due to a lack of staff, financial resources, and knowledge in the local administration. There is a lack of language classes in the rural area, especially for an advanced language level because of low numbers of participants and a lack of teachers (G2-M4a, G2-M7). The housing market in the locality is scarce as there is hardly any public housing available. People thus rely on the goodwill of private owners to "take in" refugees. The situation is further complicated as most villages do not qualify for migrants as places to stay, because due to the lack of public transport, it is difficult to reach the working place or school from there.

The administration in the locality works slowly. Migrants remark this about the immigration office who postpones working on their naturalization since one to three years. Local bureaucrats explain this situation by the scarcity of employees and work overload, notably due to the management of the COVID pandemic, and later due to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees (G2-M2; G2-M4; G2-M6). Holding back the German passport although people would be eligible, is frustrating and creates a feeling of not being welcome (G2-M2; G2-M4; G2-M6, and FGD).

Summary of main insights from Locality G2

The rural region of G2 has been a spot of arrival in 2015/16, where refugees were welcomed by an open and engaged public. Today, the interest in migrants has decreased and migration in not discussed as an important topic in the locality. Also, most migrants have left to larger agglomerations. Concerning the four guiding dimensions, **spatial factors** relate in the first place to the rurality of G2. This regards **a lack of transport** between the villages to **access meeting places**, but also the **lack (and/or use) of public spaces for encounter**, such as playgrounds. Still, as the place is very small, post-2014 migrants are **recognized and greeted on the streets** as inhabitants of the place. The **social dimension** shows that **contacts between migrants and locals exist**, but in the first place, they **stem from the time of arrival and involve volunteers** and members of pro-migrant groups. Beyond, it is hard to establish contacts, especially for adults. **Children and youth report good social integration** in schools and associations (sports, youth activities). As there have not been many migrants in the place before, contacts are established to non-migrant Germans or to other post-2014 migrants. Regarding the **ideational/political dimension,** migration has not been an important issue since 2015/16 and local policy makers have not much engaged in this issue. There have **not been any anti-**

migrant mobilizations in the locality. There is an **active pro-migrant segment in the civil society** that has its roots in the environmental movement and transferred its networks and engagement to the issue of migration in 2015. It is possible that the situation will change with the recent arrival of refugees from the Ukraine that forces local authorities to deal with migration again. The **governance dimension** reveals that there is a general lack of staff, knowledge, and financial resources in the rural region. This results in slow processes and a lack of offers that go beyond the obligatory tasks of the local administration.

2.4 Locality G3, Lower Saxony, medium-sized town, type C locality

Case study G3 is a widespread town in the region of Lower-Saxony (West-Germany). The locality covers an area of over 220 km² and consists of seven smaller towns and 31 villages. In the 1940s, the locality was created from scratch to provide a common administrative district for the development of a huge steel plant and further industries, such as the arms industry of the NS regime. In this scattered structure, neighborhoods in the locality fundamentally differ in their spatial and social composition, ranging from villages with wealthy single-family houses to run-down rental housing blocks in the two main towns. The economic situation of the municipality is tense which leaves only limited resources for integration activities. The locality's labor market is dominated by five large companies that offer well-paid jobs for both, skilled and unskilled workers. Still, the unemployment rate of approx. 9% is higher than the West German average. Since the 1960ies, so-called „guest-workers" – temporally contracted labor migrants from Turkey, Greece, Italy and former Yugoslavia – have moved to the locality. Furthermore, the locality also saw an increased inflow of EU-migrants from Romania and Bulgaria, often from precarious background, which further increased the pressure on integration infrastructures. Still, previous cohorts of migrants give the place a certain experience with diversity, mirrored for example in migrants' membership in political parties or labor market actors' experience to "integrate" migrants into the work routine. There is also a migrant labor market, especially in gastronomy sector and other service sectors, that is open to persons without or very limited German language knowledge. The political tradition of the locality is socio-democratic/progressive. Strongest parties in the new right-wing party AfD gained over 10% in the latest local elections in autumn 2021, and 18% of the population voted for the AfD's local candidate and the party in the regional elections in 2022.

Infrastructural condition

Due to its widespread structure, infrastructural conditions differ between the different parts of the medium-sized town. The two towns have most relevant infrastructures, such as grocery stores, a main shopping street, education facilities from kindergarten to Gymnasium, various possibilities for vocational training and language classes, a public library, sports facilities, parks and a lake. In some of the smaller villages, however, only housing stock can be found. Public transport between the single parts of the locality is poor; a bus ride from one of the small towns to the other takes between 30 and 45 minutes. Patterns of segregation exist between

single-family house neighborhoods owned by locals without migrant background (primarily in the villages) and the housing stock of the accommodation of former migrant workers on the other hand in the small towns. In one of the towns, there is a quarter where 2014-migrants cluster because of low rents due to a low quality of the housing stock. This housing stock is owned by a foreign private company that does not invest much in the locality. Various shops, restaurants and services for migrants from the Mediterranean region can be found there. There is also a neighborhood center in the quarter that receives funding from the local government to create and sustain social cohesion. The city center can be reached by walking from this quarter.

Associative structure and mobilization patterns

The associative structure of post-2014 migrants' support in G3 is difficult to grasp. There are active institutions, such as neighborhood centers, supporting centers for families and women, or church-related initiatives that dedicate parts of their work to support post-2014 migrants. Compared to the other five cases, there is no structured pro-migrant group where volunteers would provide support for refugees or political advocacy. Refugee support has happened moreover on an individual or informal level – either in existing migrant communities and their cultural and religious associations or through the municipal's coordinator of volunteers who served as a matching platform for single volunteers and migrants. Local actors describe the support as "hands-on rather than organized" (member of the local administration). This also showed in the focus group discussion when collecting spaces of encounter: While in other localities, migrant initiatives' or pro-migrant groups' premises were mentioned as the relevant spaces where people with different backgrounds meet, participants in G3 related to public space, non-profit service providers and sports or education institutions (FGD).

Existing migrant communities made G3 an attractive anchor point for refugees in 2015, leading to the arrival of over 5,000 people within two years (2015-2017). The increasing numbers changed local attitudes toward migrants. Consent emerged that the locality could not accommodate more migrants. Local actors from schools and kindergartens, the local *jobcenter*, health care providers and social counselling called the local government for action as they could not handle the numbers of incoming migrants anymore. The regional government issued a prohibition of further movements of refugees in the asylum procedure and with protection status to the locality (according to 12a, 4§ AufenthG.). This regulation came into force in October 2017, and was widely supported in the locality, also by members of opposition parties and post-2014 migrants who arrived earlier (member of left party in G3; FGD; G3-M1). Even though it initially helped to not further increase the number of refugees in the city, the regulation can only be implemented during the first three years after receiving the protection status. After that, beneficiaries of humanitarian protection can no longer be hindered from moving to the case study locality.

Field work in G3

Conducting field work in G3 was connected to different challenges. In the first place, it was very difficult to find post-2014 migrants for interviews. As in other places, all contacts from field phase I were asked to distribute the invitations in their professional and private networks and called up several times. There was also a notice on the research project in the local newspaper. No participants for the interviews could be found through this strategy, although two of the contacts were post-2014 migrants themselves and tried to find interviewees in their networks. According to them, the reasons for no-response were a lack of incentive, a lack of understanding of why one should participate in a research project at all and a general mistrust towards German institutions or people outside the community of post-2014 migrants in the locality (informal conversations with stakeholders). In the end, **four interviews with post-2014** were conducted, two of them had already been included as professionals in field phase I (G3-M1; G3-M4). The other two interviews were held online after the research phase and were facilitated by a neighborhood center and a volunteer who read about the project in the newspaper. The interviewees were two men and two women, aged between 25 and 40 years. Three interviewees were from Syria and one man was from Afghanistan. Except for the person from Afghanistan who lives in a small village, all were living in the part of G3 where post-2014 migrants are said to cluster.

To balance the lack of post-2014 migrant interviews, **participant observation was intensively conducted at five sites** in G3. The **first site was the main shopping street** of G3 on Saturday morning and early afternoon. The street and the cafés were visited by people from different backgrounds. Various languages could be heard: German, Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Arabic, Turkish, Farsi, and many more. It became clear that in this locality, it is impossible to distinguish post-2014 migrants from other migrants during observation because migrant communities exist in the place since the 1960s. Inhabitants seemed to be used to the multicultural setting, interacting with each other in ways that reversed the stereotyped notions of insiders and outsiders. A scene from a Turkish café demonstrated this: A waitress with (seemingly) Turkish roots was leading an old, frail German-born man, probably suffering from dementia to his place where he always sits on Saturdays (as I learned) while his wife goes shopping. The waitress greeted him: “Ah, here comes my darling!” and took care of him for the next 45 minutes.

Figure 7: Playground in the main shopping street of G3

The **second site of observation was the local lake**, where people meet for leisure activities as quoted in the migrant interviews. I could see many families and persons with and without migrant background spending a relaxing late Saturday afternoon. On the playground, interactions between children with different backgrounds were the norm, and their parents also engaged in small chats.

Figure 8: Saturday afternoon at the lake in G3

The third spot of observation was the **main street of the quarter where most post-2014 migrants** live. The street was characterized by migrant economies, such as barber shops, restaurants, Arabic grocery stores with signs in Arabic and Farsi. Besides the economic structure, the number of (publicly funded) supporting institutions for children and parents in the street was striking. Walking the street up and down, I was the only person without a visible migrant background, and one of few women. I finished the observation after walking the street one time up and down as being in the street felt inappropriate, like gazing into the very private sphere of other people. The **fourth spot of observation was the marketplace of the other town of locality G3** on Sunday morning. The place was very silent, and streets were empty compared to the scene in the part of G3 where most migrants have settled. Some bicycle tourists were

having coffee in the sun, other people present were older inhabitants without migrant background taking a walk. The observation of emptiness resonates well with narratives from the first research phase that experienced the arrival of (post-2014) as making the locality full again – but mostly in the other small town. The **fifth observation site was the annual feast of the local museum** on a Sunday afternoon. The museum is based in a castle in one of the villages in G3. Its exhibition deals with the history of the locality since the Stone Age. It was striking that the history of G3 stops in the 1960s, which means that the arrival of so-called guest workers since then is left out of the local history. Similarly, all visitors of the museums feast, which was lively and friendly with music, children's activities and lots of food, were *white*, except for the young people working at the parking lot or the entrance who had (seemingly) a Turkish and Arabic background.

Figure 9: Annual feast of the local museum in G3

The **focus group discussion** was held at the municipal adult education institution (VHS) on the late afternoon of a weekday (5-7 pm). Invitations were distributed through the local media, contacts of field phase I and the municipal's volunteer coordinator. Five people participated, of which three women were from the same neighborhood center having a migrant background from Turkey (2) and Russia (1). The two other participants were a member of the local health department and one older man, both without migrant background. Before the discussion started, participants expressed dissatisfaction about the low number of participants. During the discussion, the situation became tense because of the stereotyping and ignorant comments of the older man, such as "*Our problem here are the Turkish people."* The situation was further complicated as two of the three women from the neighborhood center did not speak German fluently, so it was hard for them to follow and engage meaningfully in the discussion. As moderators, it was a challenge to navigate this group, and it became the rationale to avoid more insulting situations rather than deepen the conversation. Thus, it was decided to schedule an interview after the discussion with one of the participants with Turkish background who took a strong role to oppose the stereotyping comments during the focus group discussion, to reflect on the insults and discussion from her experience as migrant and social worker in the community since over 20 years (code G3-L3).

Social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences

Based on observations, migrant and post-2014 migrant interviews and the focus group discussion, social interactions, reciprocal individual attitudes and migrants' experiences of inclusion/exclusion are analyzed. Because of the presence of previous groups of migrants, especially from Turkey, in the locality and in local discourses, their perspective on locals' attitudes towards migration-related differences will be taken into account.

Space and spatial factors

Locality G3 is fundamentally characterized by the scattered spatial structure of the place. Different parts of the locality do not have much in common with each other, and inhabitants experienced the arrival of post-2014 migrants differently. While the two small towns received overwhelming numbers of post-2014 migrants, some of the villages did not receive a single person. This reflects in one focus group participant's perception that "*there were not so many migrants coming in 2015*" (Focus group participant male, 80-90 years, no migrant background, FGD 1 in G3, 16.05.2022), which is in stark contrast to the locality's decision to implement an immigration stop in 2017 due to unmanageable numbers of refugees. The situation that migrants and non-migrants can live parallel lives in G3 is confirmed in migrant interviews (G3-M1, G3-M3; G3-M4; G3-L3). Segregation does not only exist between migrants and non-migrants, but also between groups of migrants. One interviewee puts it that way:

> "*Well, you can say that in this quarter [he names it], only Russians and Kurdish people live. Here, in this part, we have only Syrians or people from Lebanon. [Interviewer: So you would not move to this place?] I would, but for others who I know, that would be impossible*." (G3-M1, migrant from Syria, male, 25-35)

The clustering of migrant groups does not go without stereotyping and specific images of the respective places. Two of my interview partners stress that they do not visit the "Arabic street" because of too many criminal activities there (G3-M1) or even try to minimize contact with the Afghan community as this would hinder integration (G3-M2). Still, the presence of migrants in the locality since the 1960s made it possible for post-2014 migrants to find social anchor points and become part of the locality in existing migrant communities (G3-M3; G3-M4).

Interviews and observation show further that parts of the locality where people don't live are not visited either, be it due to the lack of public transport between the parts of the locality or the lack of attraction or things to do there (G3-M1; G3-M2; G3-M3). This is also reflected in the observation where places were either very diverse (city center of main part of the locality, local lake) or used by migrants or locals only ("Arabic street" vs. local museum).

Social factors

Compared to other cases, especially the rural areas and small towns, it is hard to define what or who makes up the local community. As there has been immigration to the place for over 70 years from different migrant groups, diversity is clearly part of the community, but discussions about what this means for the locality are far from being complete. One interviewee sees these discussions as ongoing integration. In her view, conflict between groups means that migrants are visible and are responding to each other while navigating differences and negotiating to live together (G3-M4). Still, there are different perspectives on what integration into the local community means. The focus group discussion showed for the case of migrants from Turkey who have been in the locality for decades that locals without migrant history stick to culturizing stereotypes about "the Turkish" without reflecting on changes in the society and thus denying migrants their place in the local community or devaluating their role for the locality (FGD). One Turkish-born member of the focus group describes how the Turkish community was relieved for the first time by the arrival of post-2014 migrants:

> "*We have also been topic of discussion. But then the refugees came. And finally, there was a different topic, not only about Turkish people, but the refugees from Syria and so on. I told myself "Thanks god, we are out of the focus" It was not anymore about the Turkish who don't integrate, but about how to win the new refugees for integration. But this did not last for long, and then it was again our community that was topic of discussion*." (long-term resident with Turkish background, female, 45-55 years, FGD 1 in G3 on 16.05.2022).

Relating experiences with post-2014 migrants to previous and parallel migration movements are also reflected in interviews with local actors of the first field phase. Social workers, companies, non-profit service providers made a comparison between post-2014 migrants and former 'guest workers' (with the 'guest workers' serving as the negative example), labour migrants, mostly for the slaughterhouses from Bulgaria and Romania or migrants from the former USSR. In these comparisons, post-2014 migrants are often seen as being an "easy group" (labour market actor) more eager to learn the language, find a job and make fewer problems than other migrant groups. Obviously, many of those observed differences in the integration paths can be explained by external factors, such as existence of and eligibility for language classes or circular migration schemes. Still, if the community is acknowledged in its diversity, post-2014 are part of the local community in G3. This was apparent when focus group discussants were asked about places of encounter for locals and migrants. Mostly generic institutions such as cinemas, sports clubs, allotment gardens, or theatres were named. Post-2014 migrants are thus noted at the same places where long-term residents would gather in their free time, leading to the paradox situation of people obviously using the same places but still referring to separated lives. However, the strict segregation between the different parts of the locality is an overarching frame for those observations.

Political factors and governance

As mentioned above, the locality has a rich landscape of cultural and religious migrant organizations as well as sports clubs, music schools and so on. Interviewed post-2014 migrants (or their children) take part in groups and activities offered by the locality and their ethnic community. Still, they also report about other people in the community who do not have much contact outside their own community, which has reinforced during the COVID-pandemic (all interviewees). However, due to the longer history of migration in G3, migrants are part of political parties, or plan to become a member (G3-M1) and are also employees of the administration and non-profit service providers (G3-M4).

In 2015/16, the arrival of post-2014 migrants in G3 happened in large numbers and into already existing migrant communities. Although the locality is perceived as a diverse immigrant city by long-term residents (FGD) and policymakers (member of administration and political party, Field phase I) the local community without migrant background is not free from xenophobic attitudes, nor are migrant groups towards each other (FGD 1 in G3 on 16.05.2022). From 2016, anti-migrant mobilization happened in readers' letters in the local newspapers, graffiti, and racist attacks on people and of one accommodation for refugees (documentation of right-wing violence in Germany). The acceptance of post-2014 migrants decreased in the population as the number of arriving persons increased (G3-M4). Still, this anti-migrant mobilization should be differentiated from the decision to introduce an immigration stop to the locality which was more induced by a general overload of the locality's infrastructures than a concession to right-wing protests. Since the COVID-pandemic, the locality observes protests against COVID-measures and the political system, also with violent attacks against the police.

What integration means and who is "performing" well and why, continues to be part of discussion in the medium-sized town with disappointments at both sides (FGD 1 in G3 on 16.05.2022). As one interviewee puts it:

> "*In 2015, there was a lot of support. But then, the situation changed. We realized that the Germans were disappointed that people did not learn the language faster and that integration had not happened. But they did not understand that migrants had no possibility to learn the languages as there were no places in the classes. Germans saw the migrants on the street, speaking Arabic, and they were disappointed. The others were also disappointed because they were kept at home and there was no way to build up your life*" (migrant from Syria, social worker, female, 25-35 years).

Misunderstandings and mutual disappointment also exist between migrant groups who have been present in the locality for decades and non-migrants (G3-L3). The COVID-pandemic has reinforced divisions between groups and has hampered social cohesion in the community, as lockdowns resulted in drawbacks of communities (G3-M4; G3-L3). In discussion about low vaccination rates, migrants were accused of not taking part in vaccination programs without asking for evidence or possible reasons behind this (G3-L3). During our observation, we came

across a vaccination campaign in a neighbourhood center of a very diverse neighbourhood, and we saw many people with apparent migrant background queuing for the vaccination.

The limited exchange between ethnic groups in G3 also impacts post-2014 migrants' access to the labor market. In the other localities, it is mostly due to the support of volunteers without migrant background that post-2014 migrants find a flat or a job. One interviewee recalls that most of his friends are not able to find a job, because they don't know how to search for a job in Germany and how to write an application. While in the other cases, this would be a core task of the pro-migrant groups, this structure is less developed in G3, leaving him to support his friends (G3-M1). Still, there is a relevant migrant community in G3 that facilitates access to (often unskilled) jobs and housing within the migrant communities.

Summary of main insights for Locality G3

The medium-sized town of G3 is a town with migrant presence since the 1960s. On the one hand, this has helped post-2014 migrants to feel part of the locality and there is a relevant migrant presence in social and political structures. On the other hand, it is still contested where migrants have their place in G3 and what role they (should) play for the local community and who the local community actually is. A decisive factor for this dissension lies in the scattered **spatial structure** of the place, which fosters the clustering of groups in different quarters, creates differing experiences with diversity and makes it a challenge to establish a feeling of belonging across the locality. **Social relations** between post-2014 migrant and locals mainly develop to locals with migrant background. The presence of previous cohorts of migrants has made it easier for post-2014 migrants to connect to the local migrant community. Still, as non-migrants and migrants live largely in separate parts of the town, interactions between non-migrant locals and post-2014 migrants are poorly developed. The **ideational/political climate** is fragmented and has changed over time. The high numbers of migrants in 2015 have worsened the attitudes towards migrants and the right-wing party AfD gains more votes. Still, the **official narrative is that of an open and tolerant city** that values diversity which clearly guides the **governance dimension** of G3. However, single persons working in the administration do not always adhere to this progressive idea and hinder processes of integration. With the highest numbers and clearest presence of migrants in the locality of the six German cases, the medium-sized town G3 shows that integration and diversity is a contested long-term task that requires effort, commitment, and the willingness for change from community members at different scales and roles.

2.5 Locality G4, North Rhine-Westphalia, small town, type A locality

Introduction to the local case

Case study G4 is located in NRW (West Germany) and surrounded by other small and medium-sized towns, offering a local economic, political and social network within the larger region. The economic situation of the location is advantageous with an unemployment level of only

2.3%. This is significantly lower compared to the rest of the country and renders the labor market very receptive. The number of inhabitants decreased slower than the average in Germany from 2005 to 2014 and is rising since 2020. NRW has a long history of migration, notably 'guest workers' from Turkey, Greece, Italy and former Yugoslavia. The region recently introduced a regional law on integration and participation that acknowledges the "tradition of NRW being a "diverse and cosmopolitan *Land of immigration"* (preamble of integration law of Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022) Still, in G4, the share of foreign residents was only 5% before 2014 which is significantly lower than the West German average (approx. 9%). The small town is part of a larger county and some of the administrative tasks (e.g., local immigration office, integration coordinators) exist only in the county capital, which is around 40 km away. The housing market in the locality is tense, especially the market for rental houses. The locality owns one municipal housing company that engages at present in the construction of new residential units. Finding a flat is highly dependent on personal contacts and social networks (all migrant interviews in G4).

Infrastructural condition

The locality is a well-equipped small town with shopping facilities (among them one Arabic grocery store), all types of schools (from primary school to vocational schools) and various possibilities for leisure activities, such as sport associations, several playgrounds, a big lake with a swimming pool located in a park, as well as a cinema. There is an adult education center that also offers German classes. There are several catholic and protestant churches and four mosques in the locality. A train station ensures connection to other towns within the greater region, and several buses provide connection to the surrounding villages and small towns. Still, public transport is deemed insufficient to meet the needs of locals, especially regarding commuting for shift work (G4-M2, G4-M14).

In the context of the arrival of asylum seekers, policy makers in the small town decided 2016 to settle a Central accommodation Unit (ZUE) in the locality. The ZUE hosts people with "bad perspectives to stay" during their asylum process.[4] After (the mostly negative) status determination, people are deported from the ZUE or, in the case people obtain a legal status allowing to stay in Germany, are transferred to other counties. The ZUE is run by the *Länder*-level and managed by a non-profit service provider removing all responsibility for refugees in the ZUE from the locality. The locality saw a considerable decrease of post-2014 migrants' numbers in the responsibility of the locality since the decision to open the ZUE. Since 2022, the ZUE has hosted refugees from Ukraine only, and former residents have been moved to other places.

[4] The rationale of "good/bad perspectives to stay" has been introduced by the Ministry of Interior in 2015 to deal with high numbers of refugees and speed up the asylum procedures. The "perspective to stay" is bound to the country of origin and the median protection rate for asylum seekers from the respective country. Refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Somalia for instance fall under the category of good perspectives.

Actors from pro-migrant groups criticize that this decision and action was taken without information to either migrants or support groups (informal talk with volunteers).

All refugees who were assigned directly to the locality were decentrally accommodated. There is no special area where most of the post-2014 migrants live, because "*the locality is too small for segregation*" as one local explains this (focus group participant (FGP), female, 70-80 years, no migrant background).

Figure 10: Different types of housing in the small town G4

Associative structure and pro-migrant mobilization

Pro-migrant activities are mainly supported by a group of volunteers in the locality, a community center run by a non-profit service provider, a catholic association and a free church. The volunteer group works in close cooperation with the Protestant church. They offer a clothing store, conversation classes, support with administrative documents as well as a meeting café. The community center offers migrant counselling, language classes and different courses for refugees, also specifically aiming at children, youth and women. One staff position in the catholic association is funded by the local government for the coordination of volunteers in refugee support. It offers further activities, such a cooking or conversation classes. There are several cultural associations and a mosque in the locality that engaged in refugee support of their target group.

Labor migration has been part of the locality due to its long history as a mining city. Compared to the surrounding villages and small towns, the place is considered open and diverse by its inhabitants (FGD). Since 2014, no anti-migrant protests have been organized (focus group discussion). Still, integration and migration have not been considered major issues in the locality, which is highly criticized by civil society actors and members of the Green party in the local council. After campaigning for two years, the local council has decided in 2019 to draft a local integration plan and set aside a specific budget for this (Drucksache 306/2019 of G4). Local actors also refer to matters outside their locality. The Green party, for instance, organized a

campaign for the city to become member of the network of safe harbors, and since the beginning of the Ukrainian War, demonstrations and events for peace have been held in the locality. Members of the Green Party, a group of volunteers, the local center for encounter and the churches of the locality are key actors in these activities.

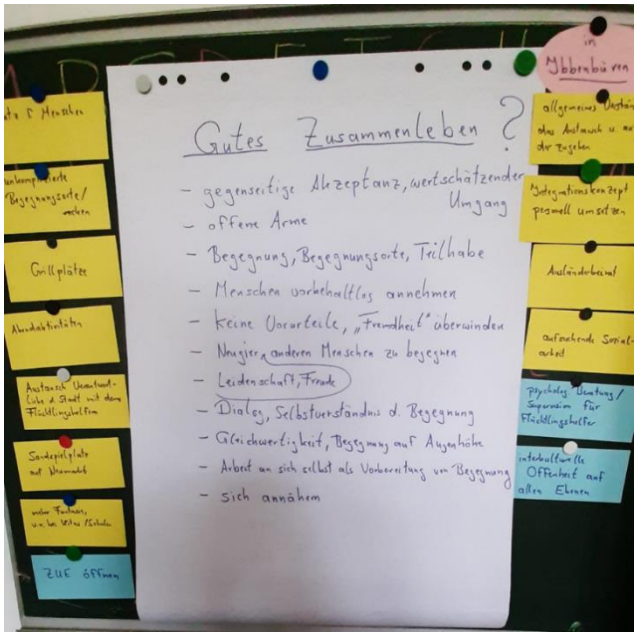
Fieldwork in G4

Participant observation in G4 was conducted in two sites, the weekly market in the city center and at a lake close to the city center. Observation at the **weekly market** was done Wednesday morning from 9-12 am, because these are the main working hours of the market. It was a sunny morning in spring and people were sitting in cafés outside to get the first sunrays of the year. Observation was done from one of the cafés. The weekly market was chosen as a site where possibly all inhabitants could gather, but customers were mainly long-term residents. Due to COVID restrictions, the market is scattered around the inner city's pedestrian area and covers the marketplace and the neighboring streets. The market offers fruits and vegetables, but also clothes. Customers did not only go there to do shopping, but also to meet each other. People were greeting each other on the street and stopping for conversation. Most of the conversations happened between people without a (visible) migrant background. Mixed groups of post-2014 migrants and long-term residents could not be observed.

The second site for observation was a **lake** close to the city center. It was chosen because most migrant interviewees as well as focus group participants mentioned it as a popular leisure place for all inhabitants. The observation was conducted in the late afternoon from 4 pm. Due to still low temperature in April, most people were cycling, walking or skating around the lake, so observation was also done while walking around the lake. People from different backgrounds were present at the lake: all ages, (seemingly) migrants and non-migrants, families, singles, people with dogs. People greeted each other and stopped from time to time for a little chat. Accidental encounters happened as well, for example as a girl who apparently just learned how to cycle drove in the way of another cyclist and urged him to stop and get off his cycle. Her mother, wearing a headscarf and pushing a stroller, apologized politely with a noticeable accent. The man friendly nodded his head, smiled and continued his way. The atmosphere at the lake seemed friendly and relaxed.

Figure 11: Weekly market in G4 & Figure 12: Walking around the lake

Interviews with post-2014 migrants were conducted in the facilities of a local pro-migrant group. All 19 persons interviewed were contacted with the help of the pro-migrant group who had been part of the first research phase of the project. This creates a bias of reaching only persons who are included to some extent in the local community. Still, given the extremely tensed time frame of this research, the support by the volunteers was crucial to gain access to post-2014 migrants and to create trust in both, the research project and the interview situation. Among the interviewees were nine men and ten women from six different countries of origin. Most of the interviewees had been in the locality since more than six years. The age range was from 19 years to mid-fifties and interviewees were in different family situations, such as single, married with children, divorced, separated or widowed. Interviewees had different educational background and success in entering the local labor market. None of the interviewees chose G4 as a place of residence but were allocated to the town on the basis of the distribution quota. For a detailed description of the sample, see Annex II.



Focus group discussion was conducted in the facilities of a local organization for encounter in the early evening during a weekday (5-7 pm). Although the invitation for the discussion was widely distributed, all participants were active in refugee support and some way connected to a local pro-migrant group. The participants knew each other, which impacted the flow of the discussion, regulating the flow of discussion in a positive manner and creating a friendly atmosphere. Ten people participated in the discussion, seven women and three men, two with migrant background, and three

Figure 13: Discussing concrete measures to improve places of encounter in G4

with their own refugee experiences during World War II. Eight of the participants were older than 65 years, which reflects well

the volunteer structure of G4. Key topics in the focus group discussion were (i) the perceived lack of value that is given to integration by politicians and members of the administration, (ii) social conflicts stemming from racism and prejudices against "foreigners", but also from prejudices between different migrant groups, (iii) how to make "ordinary" people engage in encounter and overcome feelings of foreignness, and (iv) how to establish more places of encounter.

Social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences

The following part analyzes local social interactions, reciprocal attitudes and migrants' experiences of inclusion/exclusion drawing on the empirical insights that were gathered in April 2022 in G4.

Space and spatial factors

It is important to note that all 19 interviewees were distributed to G4 by reception policies of the *Länder* scale. No one chose the place, still, people have stayed, and the overall picture of the locality is positive. Positive impressions of G4 relate to the calmness of the place, the small-town character which makes it easy to meet people and reach places (G4-M4), the possibility to visit scenic places in nature and rich possibilities for recreation that are used by all citizens, for example, the lake, park, skating park or swimming pool (majority of interviewees):

> "*I like this place a lot. Of course, some things you cannot find, such as Iranian food, but apart from this, I like it. It is calm, not too crowded, and I like the nature. There is this lake, that is very good. If the weather is nice, we always go there with the children. We take a walk, meet friends, I really enjoy it*." (G4-M4, migrant from Iran, female, 30-35 years).

These places qualify as spaces of encounter (Valentine 2008), because there is only one park/lake, so people necessarily meet (FGD; G4-M4; G4-M8, G4-M10). Families with children experience the small town as rather safe for their children as they would not get in touch with bad persons easily. The city center also offers various places with good quality of stay, for example playgrounds or benches at water fountains. The large reception facility in the locality is hardly mentioned in the interviews, as all interviewees were directly assigned to the locality and not to this first distribution center[5]. Still, long-term residents in the focus group describe

[5] Interviews were conducted only with refugees assigned to G4, because people in the ZUE are most often referred to other places (or deported). In April 2022, Ukrainians were the majority group in the Central Accommodation Unit (ZUE).

a difference between refugees in the ZUE and the small town's "own" refugees, as those in the ZUE are especially neglected by local policies. Still, civil society actors try to reach them. Interviewees who want to leave the locality refer to more possibilities to work in bigger cities, as well as more open-minded people elsewhere, especially students (G4-M16).

Social factors

It has to be said that most of the interviewees have busy lives filled with work, often in shifts, childcare and organizational tasks, and there is only limited time to engage in activities or meet people:

> "*Opposite of our house, there is a German family, but we do not have a lot of contact. Because everyone is working, so we have to be calm, relax. I am working every day, only on Sundays I have time to meet people, say hello and everything*." (G4-M12, migrant from Syria, male, 40-50 years)

The small town has a small but active structure of social support. Two professional organizations are offering counselling and spaces of encounter as well as three volunteer groups. Volunteer groups are church-related and mostly supported by (female) older people. As the locality is small, actors often overlap, for example members of the church-related refugee support are also member of the Green party in the local council. Volunteers provide support in every possible way: They conduct individual German classes, offer their social networks to find flats, jobs and internship, accompany people to the doctor and assist with paperwork. The ten to twelve older volunteers are referred to by all interviewees by name, and with a lot of respect and appreciation: "*They care about us like parents*." (G4-M1, migrant from Eritrea, male, 20-25 years). Beyond volunteers, the local community does not seem very interested in migrants or silently opposes their presence. Focus group participants refer to a lack of openness, prevailing prejudices, and a general reservation against everything that is perceived as new or foreign. Migrants experience this in a similar way, and apart from established volunteer groups, contacts are not easily made:

> "*With other Germans [apart from volunteers], I did not get in touch. Well, you cannot get to know people fast here. No. But I think, this is the same all over Germany."* (G4-M13, migrant from Eritrea, male, 25-30 years)

This also resonated with observation where no chats or greetings between (seemingly) migrants and (seemingly) non-migrants could be observed. Still, persons who go unconventional ways or who are very open and engaged manage to make friends with long-term residents, for example a young mother from Iraq, who successfully searched for a running partner via eBay who has become her best friend (G4-M10). She also made friends through schools and kindergarten of her children, which is recounted similarly by some mothers (G4-M8), while others report rejection by non-migrant parents (G4-M3; G4-M17).

Contacts with other migrants are established over religious places, such as mosques (G4-M18) and friends or family. One interviewee has initiated a WhatsApp group for Persian-

speaking women where she informs about news in the locality, such as sports activities, community celebrations, sale of children's cloth, etc. (G4-M4). Still, some interviewees reported that they prefer to keep contact with other migrants to a minimum to better integrate and prevent being involved in criminal activities (G4-M14). To focus group discussion adds to this argument as conflicts and prejudices between migrant groups were mentioned as an important issue.

Ideational/political factors

The political climate in G4 is rather calm. No anti-migrant protests have happened, and migration/integration is no political issue in the locality (focus group discussion, document analysis). Thus, G4 is the only locality in the sample where the right-wing party AfD is not part of the local council. There are some pro-migrant groups who organize demonstrations against the European border regime or war in Ukraine, or silent walks for peace (observation, leaflets). Some interviewees take part in these demonstrations as they are members of the pro-migrant group (G4-M17; G4-M2; G4-M8, G4-M9). Other migrants engage in churches (G4-M6; G4-M7), the association of the local mosque (G4-M18), or in the parents' board of the local school (G4-M8). Public offers, such as the public library (G4-M1) or children's activities (sports clubs, music school) are used by many.

Within this calm atmosphere of a small city, both migrant interviews and the focus group discussion with long-term residents report a hostile climate against migrants that is not spelled out openly in demonstrations or protests, but rather in personal communication and behavior. A young mother from Afghanistan, for example, reports massive discrimination on the housing market because of her headscarf (G4-M9, phone call three months after interview). Discrimination at the working place is reported repeatedly (G4-M4; G4-M9; G4-M17). Everyday hostility against migrants has existed also before 2014, as one migrant who has been in the locality for over 20 years shared stories about stigmatizing situations in educational institutions and a neighborhood celebration in the focus group.

Governance factors

There is a very limited public housing stock in G4, so the local housing market is dominated by single private owners. People with small incomes and migrants are confronted with private house owners' prejudices and have severe trouble finding a flat. Most interviewees could find their flats only through the help of volunteers there is a general shortage of housing in the locality.

The labor market is generally open, because there is a high need of workforce in the economically thriving region. There is a network of support to foster integration into the labor market including education providers, companies, and a local business organization, which closely cooperates with volunteers as facilitators. The climate at working place is mostly friendly, but there are also stories of insulting comments, not only from Germans but also

from previous migrant groups e.g., Russian-speaking migrants or people with Turkish background (G4-M4; G4-M19 and focus group discussions).

Several interviewees refer to the local immigration office as very restrictive. Permissions to work are not easily granted, naturalization processes take years, and people with tolerated stay are kept in this insecure state for years, including the obligation to renew this legal state every three months. This is especially problematic as the immigration office is in the county's capital, which is 40 km away. One interviewee with tolerated stay is fearing deportation although he has a permanent labor contract and his employer strongly advocated for his case. Stories about migrants who moved to other places to be under a more attentive legal practice are recounted (G4-M13).

Summary of insights from the small town G4

Locality G4 is a small town with a stable economy and a rather calm political climate. Against this background, many post-2014 migrants could build their life, and for example complete language classes, find work, move into a flat or buy a house, and get settled. The majority of people plan to stay in the locality and experience the **spatial situation** of a compact small town with a clear city center and the small radius as security, connectedness and closeness rather than a limitation. Close **social relations** mainly evolve with members of pro-migrant groups and other post-2014 migrants. Contacts or friendships with people beyond the small circle of volunteers are hard to establish. This also shows in the **ideational/political dimension** where migrant interviewees report the experience of silent prejudices and open rejection in their daily lives. The focus group participants understand the calm political climate as a downgrading of the topic migration/integration: There are no open anti-migrant mobilizations, but there is also no sincere concern to approach existing prejudice, evaluate disadvantages of migrants on a different scale and reflect on local politicians' and members of the administration's role in integration processes. Regarding the **governance dimension**, there is a raising concern to engage with migration/integration as a local issue as shown in the drafting of a local integration plan in 2022. But as outlined in other localities, this will not necessarily alter the practices of the administration. This is especially true for the local immigration office as it is assigned to the county level and the influence of the locality on decision-making is very limited.

2.6 Locality G5, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, medium-sized town, type B locality

Case study G5 is located in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (East Germany) on the coast of the Baltic Sea. While the economic situation was harsh in the early 2000s with an unemployment rate of over 21% in 2005, the situation has improved, and the share of unemployed inhabitants decreased to approximately 10% in 2014. Besides the service sectors of a medium-sized town (education, administration, etc.), tourism is an important economic sector that offers (unskilled) jobs. The population is considerably growing with an increase of over 11,000

inhabitants from 2000 to 2019. Housing is scarce in G5, and affordable flats can only be found in the larger housing estates from the GDR in the periphery of the locality. In 2019, around 10% of the inhabitants in G5 had a migrant background. During GDR times, the locality was a place where contracted labor migrants lived, most prominently from Vietnam, Cuba, and Mozambique. In the early 1990s, the locality witnessed massive right-wing protests and a violent riot against asylum seekers and labor migrants. These incidents serve as a reference point for both civil society organizations' and policy actors' narratives on the arrival of refugees in 2014/15. Migration and integration remain contested issues in G5 (FGD in G5, June 2022). Due to its location at the Baltic Sea, G5 was a relevant transit town for post-2014 refugee migrants on their way to Norway and Sweden.

Infrastructural condition

The medium-sized town is a center for the surrounding smaller towns and villages. Education facilities from kindergarten to university are in the locality and there is a rich cultural offer, such as museums, theatre or cinemas. Due to a strong presence of left-wing groups, some of these offers are characterized by a left-alternative focus and particularly invite people with (forced) migration background to participate. Different associations provide leisure activities, such as sports clubs, music schools, theatre groups or art classes. Public transport is well equipped with buses, trams and city trains, also long-distance transport is ensured by a train station as well as a harbor. There are several churches as well as a mosque and a synagogue in the locality.

There is a separation between housing in the central area (older buildings and tenements from the 1920s) and neighborhoods of larger housing estates of-prefabricated buildings, which were erected during the time of the GDR in the periphery. Affordable housing can only be found in quarters with larger housing estates which results in a clustering of social problems in these areas and, in some places, hostile attitudes towards migrants in general making these neighborhoods non-welcoming spaces. Still, these are the places where most post-2014 migrants were able to access a flat - if they managed to do so at all. The provision of adequate housing for post-2014 migrants is a serious issue and refugees often stay in shared accommodation although they would be eligible to move out because of a lack of housing.

There are two shared accommodation centers for refugees in the locality and both centers do still host post-2014 migrants. This is also because residence regulations in MV are strict. People with tolerated stay are most often obliged to stay in the shared accommodation for years (e.g., family G5-M6).

Figure 14: Shared accommodation for refugees behind tidy front yards

Associative structure and anti-/pro-migrant mobilization

There are several migrant associations in the locality, most of them sharing the building of the intercultural center. Migrant associations comprise a German-Russian and German-Hungarian association, a center for Latin American Culture, a Togolese association, a Vietnamese association as well as the association of all migrant associations in MV and the migrant council of the medium-sized town. The Vietnamese association as well as the migrant council were already founded in the early 1990s, as a response to the racist riots that took place in the locality. They play an active role by engaging in bridging projects between migrant and non-migrant residents. There is a further association in G5 (founded in 2007) that seeks to enhance social and political participation of migrants, by offering e.g., counselling on access to the labor market and language courses. There is also an association of young refugees in G5 that promotes peer-to-peer support through seminars and workshops (interviewee G5-M7).

There is one bigger, active pro-migrant group in the center of the medium-sized town that also hosts a meeting point for (forced) migrants to the locality. This group is partly sustained by the local church. There are also smaller neighborhood initiatives by long-term residents in the outer parts of the locality that offer spaces of encounter and conversation classes, mostly since 2014 (FGD; G5-M3; G5-M6). The local administration's office for integration establishes cooperation with the existing cultural associations and pro-migrant groups.

As mentioned above, migration and integration are contested issues in G5. There have been various anti-migrant/anti-muslim protests in the locality, most often supported by the right-wing party AfD. As moderate and left-wing parts of the population are sensitive to right-wing violence since the riot against migrants in the 1990s, anti-migrant demonstrations have most often been responded to by counterdemonstrations. Police has been involved in most of the

demonstrations to “secure freedom of speech” and prevent violent incidents between the groups. There have also been demonstrations in favor of migrants since 2015, also at the beginning of the COVID-pandemic to point to violation of human rights and health risks by the practice to isolate shared accommodation facilities for months. Pro-migrant demonstrations have been initiated by civil society actors, often church-related or with support from left-wing organizations. G5 is also a place where demonstrations against COVID-measures have been merged with a general criticism of “the political system”, most often having a right-wing dimension (see box 1).

Fieldwork in G5

Participant observation was conducted at two locations: A fountain in the city centre on the main shopping street and in an inner-city neighborhood at the crossings between two schools and a sports hall.

Observation at the fountain was conducted from 12-2 pm. As the place is in the middle of the main shopping street, people from all backgrounds were expected to meet there. The weather was summer warm, and the sky was blue with no clouds which provided a summer vacation atmosphere. The place was very busy with people spending their lunch break here, students from the nearby university, people visiting the place with their children and many tourists taking some rest. Children from various backgrounds were playing at the fountain. On the benches around the fountain, *white* people were resting, mostly alone or in pairs. Older people were watching the children and chatting about them. Next to the fountain, there was a writing in big letters with pink chalk saying “Every day eight dead persons in the Mediterranean Sea. Europe, is this really necessary?” and #No one is illegal”. The signs were recognized by some people, but not commented on as something remarkable or new.

Figure 15: "Everyday eight dead persons in the Mediterranean Sea"

The second observation took place from 12-2 pm on a crossroads between two schools in an inner-city neighbourhood. As hardly any post-2014 migrants live in inner-city neighbourhoods, this place was observed as a site where mostly long-term residents interact. The time was

chosen as it was expected that at lunchtime, classes would be over for a majority of the pupils, and they would be picked up by their parents, standing at the bus stop, or engaged in other afternoon activities in the schoolyard. Punctually, after the ringing of a bell, lots of children left the schools. Most of them came by foot, some on a bicycle or scooter. Some children were waiting for their parents right in front of the schools. Some parents were also waiting for their children in their cars. Some children were playing table tennis at three tables in the school yard. Boys and girls were strictly separated from each other. A few children were playing with a ball on the sidewalk, others with their cell phones. They talked about sweets and their prices, further plans in the afternoon, Pokémon, lessons and plans for the weekend. Three Russian-speaking boys could also be observed. Otherwise, no post-2014 migrants were visible and the quarter seemed to be largely *white*.

Six interviews with nine post-2014 migrants were conducted. Interviewees were found with the help of the local university, a neighbourhood café and the local pro-migrant group. As in the other examples, invitations via email or Facebook groups did not lead to any interview and it was a challenge to find interviewees. The interviews took place in people's homes (private flat or shared accommodation), at the working place or in an open-air café of a left-alternative cultural center. They took around 1.5 hours. Six men and three women were included in the sample. Interviewees were aged between 17 and 55 years and had migrated from Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran and Venezuela. All interviewees in G5 had a university degree, two out of the nine interviewees were employed. Five of the interviewed persons had intentionally come to G5, as it is possible for refugees with protection state to move within the *Land* of MV and G5 is deemed a comparably open and friendly city.

One focus group discussion was organized on a weekday from 5-7 pm in the local university. Eight people participated in the discussion with background in the education system, pro-migrant groups and migrant organizations. Three men and five women participated; two participants had a migrant background. Participants were aged between 25 and 60 years. Some of the participants did know each other from the working context. The atmosphere was productive, and discussions focused on the topics. Most important points were (i) different legal practices with regards to Ukrainian refugees and other refugees, (ii) the polarization of the local community regarding migration/integration (ii) the restrictive attitude of the local immigration authority and the general attitude of administrative units with regards to migrant integration, as well as (ii) the lack of housing in the place.

Social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences in G5

The following section analyzes integration opportunity structures in the medium-sized town G5 drawing on observation in two sites, interviews with ten migrants and a focus group discussion. As in the previous cases, the analysis is structured along four key factors for migrant integration opportunity structures: space, social relations, ideational factors and governance.

Space and spatial factors

As the city is located in the Northern Part of Germany, seasons and weather are decisive factors when thinking about space. In February, when the first field phase was conducted, the locality felt empty, cold and quite secluded. However, in June during the second field trip, the atmosphere was completely different: Cafés and restaurants had tables outside, there was music in the streets and plenty of tourists were visiting the place. Still, from extensive walks and bus rides in the locality, it becomes apparent that the liveliness and tourist interest concentrates mostly on the city center. The larger housing blocks in the outer parts of the city are not much visited by outsiders.

These larger housing blocks are the neighborhoods where most post-2014 migrants live because of affordable rents. However, as these are large areas and segregation is mainly based on socio-economic reasons (social segregation index G5, 2018), it does not seem appropriate to speak of migrant/non-migrant or ethnic segregation. Interviewees had neighbors from various countries (Kosovo, Montenegro, Turkey, Vietnam and others), but most often Germans.

Figure 16: Housing in the outer parts of G5

Due to the presence of a university and various cultural and arts associations, G5 is deemed an attractive place within the greater region. The number of inhabitants is growing since years, which mitigates the effects of demographic aging that are also apparent in the locality. Although the locality has seen previous cohorts of migrants, particularly so-called “guest workers” from Vietnam, Cuba and Mozambique, both migrants and focus group discussions describe migration as a new phenomenon for the medium-sized town. Especially the presence

of Muslim persons is said to be new. For some interviewees, the low numbers of migrants in G5 were deemed an asset, because it makes it easier to learn German:

> *"I think that I could not learn proper German in Berlin or Hamburg. Because many people speak Turkish there and then I do not hear a lot of German. But if you listen to a language a lot, you learn it. In my school, all my friends speak German, I listen nine or ten hours a day to German, so I learn fast. That was an advantage for us here."* (G5-M3a, Migrant from Turkey, female, 17 years).

Social factors

The perception that migration is a new phenomenon in G5 repeatedly appears in migrant interviews when asked about social relations in their daily lives. The lack of social contact with Germans and the effort to establish friendships was a prominent topic in all migrant interviews. One interviewee even searched for scientific explanations why Germans are that reserved (G5-M3). Difficulties in this regard were often explained by locals' lack of experience with diversity and most visible migrants being from the first generation:

> *" If I compare Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania with other Länder, such as NRW or Berlin, this is a young migrant country. If we think migration globally, it started in 2015 only. Before, it was people with German roots from Russia or so. Few migrants were there, sure, but not as today. The big share is from 2015. […]. It starts slowly, but we don't have the second generation that speaks German very well and understands everything. Most migrants here still struggle with the language. I think this makes contact so complicated. Plus – I don't judge, don't get me wrong – but people from the North are generally colder."* (G5-M7, migrant from Afghanistan, male, 25-35 years)

Focus group discussants agree with this assessment. They stress that there is little interest in migrants beyond people that are active in migrant-support structures. One focus group discussant links this with lacking visibility of diversity in G5 as well as too few opportunities to engage in moderated encounter with each other. Merely using the same places would not be enough to create mutual interest, but rather create a side-by-side attitude (FGD 1 in G5 on 22.06.2022).

Due to the difficulty of getting in touch with people by accident, inclusion in social structures appears as decisive factor. This can be the workplace (G5-M1; G5-M7), school or university (G5-M4; children of G5-M6), neighbourhood conversation classes (G5-M3; G-M5; G3-M6) or volunteer work (G5-M7). None of the interviewees reported close relations with their neighbours which aligns with the general reserved attitude of locals described before.

Ideational and political factors

All interviewees participate in social or public life in one or the other way. This includes conversation classes in a neighborhood café or by a local church (G5-M3; G5-M5; G5-M6), volunteer work (G5-M7), sports activities (G5-M1; G5-M4), activities of local pro-migrant groups (all

interviewees), allotment gardens (G5-M6) and refugee self-organizations (G5-M7). The young men who founded the local refugee organization engages beyond the local level in policy advising processes on the *Länder* level. In his view, this is an asset of the "young migrant history" of MV. As there are not many migrants in MV, one can become involved in processes that could make a difference (G5-M7).

Politically, migration and integration in G5 are always linked by both, the local government as well as pro-migrant groups, to the racist riots that happened in the 1990s in the locality. Focus group discussants stress the fact that integration today crucially needs an honest revision of what has happened in the 1990s. The importance of integration as local governance issue is reflected in the positioning of the municipal integration department, which is directly attached to the major's office, as well as in a progressive local integration plan. In the course of the 30 years' memorial of the racist riots in 2022, the inclusion of "racism" and "How to deal with right-wing thinking" in the school curriculum was brought forward. Still, progressive attitudes are not shared by all members of the community. Focus group discussants critically remark that some members of the local administration constantly work against the goal of the integration concept, for example regarding the restrictive practices of the local immigration authority for migrants with tolerated stay or unclear status.

Compared to the other case study localities, (forced) migration is visible as contested issue in public spaces with left-wing stickers and posters, but also the presence of persons wearing typical right-wing labels and engaging in anti-COVID measures/anti-system demonstrations (observation) is striking. Focus group participants share the view that the locality is split between engaged pro-migrant groups, right-wing activists and a large share of the population that does not engage in political discussions. The rise of anti-COVID-measures demonstrations further complicates the political climate as their protest remains without clear demands but creates feelings of discomfort in public space.

Governance factors

With regards to governance factors, restrictive decisions of the local immigration authorities were mentioned by interview partners (G1-M2; G1-M6; G1-M7). Persons with tolerated stay or unclear status don't get permission to work (G1-M2; G1-M6) or to move out of the shared accommodation for years (G1-M6). Thus, residence permits for tolerated stay are commonly issued on a three months basis which makes it impossible for migrants to plan ahead, which not only has negative practical consequences but which massively affects migrants' mental health (G5-M2; G5-M6). Still, the local integration plan seeks to improve the intercultural opening of the local administration and offers translation services for administrative services and health.

Members of the focus group were sincerely concerned about the impact of differences between migrants from the Ukraine and other forced migrants. In their view, there was unequal treatment by both, local administration and civil society support in favor of Ukrainian refugees which could lead to sincere unrests between the groups.

Interviews with migrants also showed that in the venue of arrival strongly impacted the reception processes. One interviewee came to G5 on a scholarship for persecuted scientists. He had been living in German accommodation centers before, but as soon as he was admitted at the local university, he was able to access different, and often far better-equipped support structures. This included for example the local *Welcome Center* for high skilled workers which supported him to find a flat and get paperwork done. Regarding access to labor market, acknowledgment of certificates was seen as a major problem by the interviewees. Although they received support for this task by a local non-profit service provider, perspectives to work in one's profession in Germany were disappointing. This can also be linked to the highly skilled sample, where all interviewees had a university degree and professions like teachers, lawyers and psychologists that are hard to transfer in another national context. For most interviewees, it was difficult to cope with this situation as they experienced a lack of capacity recognition by the German society and felt unable to contribute to society adequately:

> "*Sometimes I see an older woman or man, 60,70 years old. And they work and pay taxes. Why do I receive money from the state? I feel so embarrassed, really. I could work now! Why is it forbidden for me?"* (G5-M2, migrant from Iran, male, 35-40 years old).

Summary of main insights for locality G5

As a thriving and culturally active locality in the region, G5 is a popular place to live, also for post-2014 migrants. It is the only place of the six German case studies, where most interviewees chose to live instead of being distributed to. Drawing on the four guiding dimensions, this case study locality shows that **spatial factors** matter a lot. The urban structure of the old town with rather exclusive neighborhoods and various large housing estates with modest housing prices at the outskirts of the locality results in a socio-economic segregation in G5. This reduces possibilities for everyday encounter with "others". This is especially true for people without clear legal status or tolerated stay, who are obliged to live in a shared accommodation at the outskirts of the locality. **Social contacts** mainly happen with volunteers. Social relations between post-2014 migrants and long-term residents have not been developed to a great extent. By migrant interviewees, this is reasoned by a lack of experience with migrant-related diversity in G5 and a general reservation of "people from the North". From the perspective of the **ideational/political dimension**, migration is a contested issue in the locality which dates back to racist riots in the 1990s. However, this also resulted in a strong engagement of pro-migrant groups, non-profit service providers and left-wing organizations that support refugees. The **governance dimension** unfolds in contradictory dimensions with a progressive local integration plan on the one hand restrictive practices by local members of the administration, especially the local immigration authority.

2.7 Locality G6, Saxony, rural area, type B locality

Introduction to the local case

The rural case study G6 is located in Saxony (former East Germany). It is a small town of 18,500 inhabitants and located in the western part of a larger county (Landkreis) which is a rather rural area. The region's population development is stable, observing modest growth of 1.8 % within the last five years. The share of unemployed inhabitants decreased from 16 % in 2005 to approximately 7 % in 2014, pointing to positive developments on the region's labor market. The unemployment rate lies at around 6 % and increased during 2021. Still, there are labor market vacancies, targeting especially high-skilled and skilled personnel in manufacturing industries, information technology and health care. Due to the well-developed public transport infrastructure, many inhabitants of the locality commute to the nearby agglomeration. In the context of the increasing housing shortage in a nearby big city, the small town is an attractive place for young families to live. This applies in particular for returnees (member of local administration)[6].

Figure 17 – Market square with town hall

The case study location had only a little experience with cultural diversity before 2014, as the share of foreign residents was only 1.6 % in 2005. Now, the countywide share of foreigners is 2.5 % (destatis 2022), which is significantly below the national average. Since 2017, there is

[6] "When the children come to school, families come back. So, it's returnees who were here. Or just people who can't find decent housing in [the city nearby]. Or can no longer find affordable housing. Or can no longer find affordable building land. In this respect, we have a growing population." (G6-2)

no reception center so most of the post-2014 migrants come to the town when they are allowed to live in their own flats (mostly after the determination of status). Many of those migrants live in neighborhoods outside the old town center.

Infrastructural condition

For a small town, G6 has a well-developed infrastructure for everyday needs, but little specific infrastructure for migrants. There are primary and secondary schools, as well as various sports clubs, doctors, and several Christian churches, but no mosque. Furthermore, there is a meeting center (*Bürgerzentru*m) with rooms for association activities. G6 also has a well-equipped municipal outdoor swimming pool. There are several larger supermarkets and some small stores near the marketplace, but no specific grocery stores for migrants, such as Arab supermarkets. Similarly, there are no specific educational services, such as integration language courses for refugees. However, those can be accessed in the neighboring agglomeration which is very well connected by train (about 30 min travel time), while the connection to other cities in the district is not always equally good.

Associative structure and anti-/pro-migrant mobilization

Since the large-scale arrival of refugees in 2015, there has been a pro-migrant group in the city that has been working to support refugees. It was founded to counter public protests against the admission of refugees by right-wing groups when a central reception facility was established in G6. The pro-migrant group organizes many offers, such as a meeting café (in the meantime especially for Ukrainians) as well as a clothing store and a weekly kickbox training, led by a refugee. The group also helps with everyday issues and the housing search. All work is done voluntarily. Since the COVID-pandemic, the group also organizes neighborhood support for all residents of the small town who need help. There are no full-time contact persons for migrants in the small town. The group is also involved in exchanges with the city and former mayor (until July 2022); some members are part of the city council. There are further associative structures within the county (as most of the integration measures and counseling takes place there). For any professional counseling (e.g., for asylum law), the migrants have to go to another town (approx. 45 min by train). What is noteworthy is the existence of a network of migrants in the county that links various migrant organizations and aims to serve as a political voice.

Like everywhere in the region, migration is a highly politicized issue, and there are numerous anti-migrant protests in G6. In 2015, these protests generally concerned the issue of migration and admission policies; since the COVID-pandemic, the issue of migration has also surfaced from time to time in protests against the pandemic measures, which were largely supported by right-wing groups. The first protests against the COVID-pandemic measures occurred in May 2020. Interviewees report that it is largely the same people who organized the protests against refugees ("They are basically the same people. Who are also either organized or at least tolerated from the same political circles." Member of local administration).

Fieldwork in G6

The **focus group** took part in a community center with participants engaged in activities there (e.g., the sports club). Five participants of the groups of different age groups took part in the focus group, based on their experiences with refugee immigration of 2015 in the town.

The **migrant interviews** represented a major challenge. Even though the pro-migrant group made several efforts to find interview partners, only two interviews could be carried out. We see different reasons for this:

(1) There are few public contact points where post-2014 migrants could be found and contacted by the research team.
(2) Possible interviewees suggested by the support group had either arrived only very recently (e.g., mainly Ukrainians) or were very busy with challenges such as mental health or commuting to jobs. Also, many of the volunteers no longer have contact with former refugees who arrived post-2014, or they do not live anymore in G6.
(3) All responsible contact persons, also in the entire county, were overloaded by the strong influx of Ukrainian refugees, so that little support for our research could be provided.

To balance this lack of information, we took part in other activities for Ukrainian migrants, such as the weekly coffee meetings at a church organized by volunteers.

An all-embracing topic during the field research at the beginning of July was the mayoral election there, which kept the town's society very busy. In addition, the unusually hot summer weather has been a practical challenge since it contributed to the rapid exhaustion of focus group and interview participants. Also, the reception of many Ukrainian refugees since March 2022 impacted the field work.

The **Participant observation** was conducted in G6 in several places: (1) Residential neighbourhood (an area of social housing), (2) the market square during the walking protests (3) the market square. Additionally, there has been a participatory observation at a meeting place for Ukrainians and Volunteers since there were too few migrant interviews. The findings were included in the following section 4.

The first observation in the residential neighborhoods was on a very warm summer day (Monday noon). This area is the largest municipal social housing estate of G6, therefore, most of the refugees are supposed to live here. The neighborhood lies outside the old town center. It consists of five-story apartment blocks built in GDR times which have been redeveloped since then. The observation was done outside at a kebab snack bar in the central square of this neighborhood. This snack bar was the only migrant business that we noticed there. There were several older people/pensioners doing their errands, like shopping, in the supermarket located at the square. Some of them were greeting each other and having short conversations. Otherwise, there was little communication and few people in the public space. The kebab

snack bar is apparently run by an Arabic-speaking family with children. One consumer sits down at one of the tables and speaks with the bar owner in Arabic, so this might be in fact a migrant meeting place. The area is very green, including lots of trees and lawns, there are many five-story apartment buildings, most quite newly renovated and with balconies.

Figure 19 - Residential blocks in the outer parts (neighborhood with social housing)

Figure 18 - Kebap bar in the neighborhood with social housing

Most of these apartments are rented by the public housing company. However, the residential neighborhood contrasts with the beautiful downtown, as well as the adjacent residential neighborhoods with single-family homes. The presence of migrants is not visible in the neighborhood (no specific stores, no ethnic infrastructure). On a few balconies people can be seen from time to time, many pensioners, several people could be refugees. However, the history of migrant presence dates back until the 1960s: There is a memorial plaque of the local brewery, for former Hungarian contract workers between 1967 and 1987 living in one of the apartment blocks.

The **second observation** was carried out on a Monday evening (6.30 to 8.00 pm) at the market square. These so-called "Spaziergänge" (= walking protests) have been taking place in G6 repeatedly for several months. The walking protests, however, started in 2015 during the reception of refugees and aimed at stopping the admission of refugees (see Box "Monday demonstrations"). In 2022, the protests were directed against the COVID-19 measures but gathered various protest movements, especially of the right-wing and far-right spectrum against political actors, the German handling of the war in Ukraine. The observation was done sitting in a close by pizzeria.

Around 80 to 100 people were gathering at the market square and later started their march through the town center accompanied by police cars.

Participants were mainly people aged 40-60 years, but also several families with children and some pensioners joined. There was no clearly defined protest aim: Some protest chants demanded the end of any COVID-19 measures and different demands against any established

political groups. Most of the banners and flags were related to the war in Ukraine. There were two Russian flags, as well as several flags of the "Free Saxons", a political group classified as extremists. At the pizzeria all tables were occupied; people watched the protests walking by and were not showing much interest in the political statements. At a table of six, the people discussed the demand of some protesters to leave the EU, which the guests at the table found to be unrealistic. The protest march passed next to the restaurant noticed by all the guests but seemed to be no news or very interesting to them. When the demonstration ended around half past seven, some demonstrators sat down at the tables with acquaintances and friends or walked by greeting them. The protests seem to be anchored in the middle of the town society. At the same time, discussions were also taking place in the Telegram channels of this protest group, making the internal discussions more visible to us as researchers: for example, the role of the new mayor (elected the day before) was discussed and whether he would join the protests. Furthermore, there were many conspiracy theories published in messages on this Telegram channel. For example, some participant questioned the validity of the German state. Due to safety reasons, we did not take pictures at the scene, but it is well documented on the Internet (see Figure 19)

The **third observation was done at the fresh market at noon** on Tuesday 11.30 am and 1 pm. It was a very warm and sunny day. The market consists of a few fruit and vegetable stalls, a baker, a butcher, and a typical stall with cheap clothes (typically run by people who immigrated from Vietnam in GDR times). During the observation time, we watch about a dozen people shopping, many of them were probably retired. Overall, there are not many people shopping at the fresh market. The shoppers are friendly to the sellers but did not seem to have lengthy conversations with other townspeople, as expected in advance. Some shoppers came by car and drove away again after shopping. Two pensioners are talking next to us on a bench, but no one seems to feel observed. The most frequented shop was a stall with grilled chicken. A few people walk by, not stopping at the market stalls. During the observation there were no customers visually recognized as migrants, all seemed to be *white*. As an exception, there were sellers at the clothing stalls and one vegetable stall who might have Vietnamese migrant roots (typical migrant business after the end of the GDR). However, the fresh market does not seem to be a migrant meeting place as there were no (visually recognizable) post-2014 migrants.

Social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences in G6

The following section analyzes integration opportunity structures in the small town G6 drawing on fieldwork in July 2022: three observations plus one participatory observation, interviews with two migrants and a focus group discussion. As in the previous cases, the analysis is structured along four key factors for migrant integration opportunity structures: space, social relations, ideational factors, and governance.

Space, architecture and spatial factors

The town is based in the western part of a "rather rural county" (see Küpper, 2016) in Saxony, East Germany. Even though the small town is closer to a larger district-free city, its administrative center is located in 40 km distance in the county capital. With its 56 municipalities, the district is very large, which also influences the provision of integration-relevant infrastructure.

The municipality owns a considerable housing stock, and some rental units are granted to asylum seekers and refugees (almost 60 of 1700 flats). As municipal housing provides affordable housing, one can observe a certain clustering of refugees in this housing stock and in specific quarters or streets. Asylum seekers and refugees only exceptionally live in privately owned rental units. For G6 the residence regulation for refugees (*Wohnsitzauflage,* see 2.1*)* applies at county level. Thus, refugees after status determination tend to move to G6 because public transport there allows the easiest access to the nearby greater agglomeration. This is not only important for accessing native food stores or being close to migrant networks, but also to get access to medical care(G6-M2).

The locality's housing market is not yet too tense, but available rental units are getting less as the small town attracts families from the nearby agglomeration. The situation for migrants, however, changed during 2022 since the locality hosts now many Ukrainian refugees which led to a conflicting situation in the rental market for all migrant groups (G6-M1, G6-M2). One Afghan migrant states:

> *" […] we have an apartment with 66 square meters, we have waited a long time, but larger apartments no longer available, because of the arrival of the Ukrainians. […] That's why I had to prefer this apartment." (G6-M2, migrant from Afghanistan, 25-30 years old]*

Although there is still available municipal housing, the typical size of the apartments is too small for many local families. This problem has also been discussed by city councilors in the summer of 2022 (local newspaper 10.08.2022). Many post-2014 migrants live in a residential neighborhood in the south of the town (see observation I) as most of the social housing is located there. The neighborhood is not as well connected to the old town as other neighborhoods so that there is more segregated cohabitation despite the small town setting (see Kreichauf 2015).

There are several 'places of encounter' identified within the focus group discussion, especially in formalized settings: There are several available and free rooms in different buildings for group meetings, clubs and sports events. Also, the playgrounds and especially the swimming pool during summer months were identified as informal places of encounter. However, the market square in the old town has been identified as a "no-go-area" due to the weekly protest march.

Figure 20 -Block of flats with social housing at the town center

Social factors

As described above, the societal structure shows on the one hand a lot of potential for the support of migrants by an active volunteer group and other civil society groups (such as sports clubs), at the same time there are challenges for society. During the fieldwork, there was very limited access to post-2014 migrants since the volunteers lost contact with most of them. It remains unclear whether many of them left the city after their residence obligation expired. Also, the pro-migrant-group is now mainly engaged in supporting Ukrainians. Especially retired women, some of them having basic Russian language knowledge, organize German language classes for the Ukrainians (50-60 people) three times a week. The importance of German language knowledge, and also the difficult-to-understand Saxon dialect (G6-M1), has been highlighted in the migrant interviews and informal talks with volunteers.

Since the arrival of Ukrainians, there is a weekly meeting time for migrants and locals in the premises of a church. When visiting this meeting during fieldwork, there were around 20 refugees from Ukraine, and 4-5 volunteers (locals). The volunteers helped, for example, with letters to the authorities, applications for social benefits or translations. The actual purpose of this meeting, a "meeting cafe" for locals and migrants, can thus hardly be achieved.

Both interviewed migrants described their social contacts to locals as shaped by strong individual commitment of the head of the volunteer group and neighbors (G6-M1, G6-M2). One of the migrants is now strongly committed to organize a sports club for interested locals and migrants. This group makes up a large part of his circle of friends:

> *“ I got to know everybody in the kickboxing group. And yes, wow we also meet to have barbecue or somewhere here swimming or climbing. We already do really many things. So it's a really good friendship*.” (G6-M1, migrant from Iran, male, 25-30 years)

In the focus group, the topic of "encounters between locals and migrants" was discussed very emotionally: All participants have an interest in more intercultural exchange in G6 but see the city as having little willingness to change and actual spaces for exchange.

Overall, the participants feel that the increased migration flows to G6 have changed less than they expected and would wish for. Participants of the group used the term "lotus effect”: The migrant reception did not impact the society a lot, also due to the transit function as a short-term home for many post-2014 migrants. According to the participants, the municipality does not exploit the huge potential of immigration to the town. Many post-2014 migrants would only have come to G6 because of the district ties but would have preferred to live in the close-by city in the long term. Reasons for this were also seen in the town society:

> *“It is always rather a transit [of migrants]. They [the migrants] are here, but probably already look out to leave to the next city or they remain stuck as a family in this southern neighborhood (...) and then you do not get in touch with them anymore, at most when they go shopping here [in the old town].” (G6- Focus Group P3)*

As an example, the group discussed about the annual town festival where the participants of the focus group did not noticed “any migrants at all” (G6-F-P1) taking part in the festivities. According to the participants, the festival is simply too expensive for most migrant families.

Ideational, political and governmental factors:

As described before, the political climate has been challenging over the last years, especially because of political protests against the government. The solid municipal finances, labor market and good infrastructure certainly contribute to a basic satisfaction that is not visible in all municipalities in eastern Germany. Moreover, the previous mayor was a person in office who had set basic democratic values and a certain openness in society as guiding principles in the town’s society which is in an important asset as Hasselbacher and Segara (2021) show.

However, the AfD (right-wing party), for the first time, entered the town council in 2019 with moderate electoral success (21 %). This impacts the political climate and structure within the local political majorities. The election of the new mayor (non-party candidate) after more than 25 years has been a highly politicized issue since his political position concerning the right-wing movement remained unclear. Both developments constitute an uncertainty for local societal developments.

Figure 21 - Bike trail sign with two political stickers ("Free Saxons" - right-wing group

Due to the lack of migrant interviewees, their perception of the overall social conditions and political climate is not quite clear.

Nevertheless, both interviewed migrants and also the focus group participants describe experiences with racist or hostile attitudes on an individual level. One example is the narration of G6-M1, a young refugee, who describes his experiences with rejection as an employee in a doctor's office as normality:

> "*And it's never that easy to work with a foreigner. It's really nice that my colleagues treat me decently. I am really satisfied with my colleagues, with my boss and also with the patients. They are very nice. Maybe there were only ten people or so, who were really negative or racists. But there's really a lot of people*." (G6-M1, migrant from Iran, male, 25-30 years)

Another important structural condition for governmental factors is the strong dependency of the county's authorities (as described in WP4 Report of this project pp. 10ff.): The related county developed a rather centralized structure of professional integration measures and service providers so there is only volunteer support in G6. To a certain extent, this is not necessary, as access to counseling services in the close-by city is sufficient.

Similar to the discourses within the municipality G6, the reception of migrants remains strongly politicized and a majority of the population shares hostile attitudes (see also Schneider et al. 2021). The reason for this can be found among others in regional and local specifics such as "limited diversity and widespread stereotypes" (Rees et. al. 2021). Despite these attitudinal characteristics, there is a surprisingly large network of migrant organizations of different origins starting to engage in local politics (especially Arabic-speaking, Russian-speaking clubs) and support newly-arrived refugees.

Summary of main insights for locality G6

The small town G6 shows a dialectical picture of social coexistence between migrants and locals: The **social factors** seem to be highly interlinked with the **political and ideational factors** in this locality. On the one hand, there is no public perception as a multi-cultural place and migration is a contested issue. However, migration is no longer primarily the focus of public debate and there is no long-term vision of societal developments. Social contacts are mostly

established through private networks or individual engagement. The case study is characterized by few professionalized structures or institutionalized counseling, but by a high level of individual commitment of volunteers. This also shows the strong dependence of the municipality on services at the county level as integration measures are not perceived to be a municipal responsibility. What is remarkable, is the high level of self-organization of migrants in the county and also in the town's volunteer group, which is not necessarily found in other rural regions in Germany.

Compared to other places in the county, G6 seems to be a preferred location within the county. Here, the **spatial factors** play a major role: Since 2015 many migrants moved to G6 due to decent infrastructure, housing vacancies, and the accessibility of educational and medical infrastructure in the next larger city. The arrival of Ukrainian refugees challenged those capacities and remains a possible risk in the future e.g., for more exclusionary housing practices due to a lack of vacancies.

Very concisely, G6 shows that **political and governmental factors** in rural areas strongly depend on the regional level (county) as most of the decision-making and integration measures are carried out by the county. However, the positioning of the newly elected mayor remains an uncertainty in the local approached to integration as his position on the extreme right-wing protest movements remains unclear.

3. Main findings in comparative perspective

This chapter seeks to connect and compare the findings from the six case studies presented above. It reflects on the most relevant factors that facilitate or hinder a whole of community integration process (Caponio & Pettrachin, 2021) in SMsTRAs in Germany. The analysis focuses first on common patterns and divergences between different (types of) localities and reflects on the temporal dimension of integration processes (3.1). The second part examines which factors explain how integration processes work in SMsTRAs of different size, governance approaches, and social patterns in Germany. It also looks into the role of individual characteristics of migrants and their agency in integration processes (3.2).

3.1 Reciprocal interactions and attitudes, and migrants' experiences of integration

This subsection compares findings on reciprocal interaction, individual attitudes and migrants' experiences of integration from the six case studies. As the research project investigates integration of post-2014 migrants from a whole-of-community perspective, it does so by integrating perspectives from local policymakers and administration, non-profit service providers, housing and labor market, NGOs and migrants. The whole-of-community approach understands integration as a process of community-making that is shaped by specific local contexts, involves various actors and their interactions and is open-ended, thus possibly leading to more cohesive or more fragmented communities. When discussing common patterns and differences between the six German cases, local contexts as well as the involved actors and their interrelations will be a key reference to investigate different outcomes and steps of community-making over time.

Common patterns

Across localities, all involved actors and interviewed migrants agree that **learning the language** is a key factor for successful integration into the local community. This mirrors the national integration strategy that sees language acquisition as one key goal of integration, thus offering so-called *integration courses* (language courses and cultural classes) free of costs to migrants with perspectives for long-term stay in Germany (see 2.1). Non-migrant locals across localities perceive learning German as the willingness of migrants to become part of the community. Disappointment arises if migrants don't learn the language or take years to do so. It is hardly acknowledged by receiving communities that language classes are not always available on all language levels in smaller communities and that eligibility for integration courses also depends on migrants' legal status (see below, 3.2). Furthermore, forced migrants often suffer from flight-related psychological burdens that make it hard to concentrate (migrant interviews in all localities).

On the local level, **German language skills turn out as a prerequisite to establish contacts** with non-migrants, because it cannot be taken for granted that locals (and migrants) speak English. This is especially true in the localities of the Eastern part of Germany with a high average age, as people learned Russian (not English) in school if any foreign language at all (G1, G5, G6). For quite some migrant interviewees, the lack of a mediator language was considered an asset in SMsTRAs as they were forced to learn German fast (G1, G2, G4, G5). Still, i**n localities with considerable previous cohorts of migrants,** contacts can be established within the own linguistic community. This possibly involves access to housing and labor with limited or without German knowledge (G3).

In all localities, **reservations against migrants exist**, and they seem to be especially harsh **against Muslim migrants**. All interviewed women who wear a **headscarf**, report hostile gazes, racists comments and discrimination on the housing and labor market and in everyday life, e.g., while shopping or in childcare facilities. In their perception, this is caused by wearing a headscarf. Besides, racist comments and xenophobic behavior are often coupled with discussion about the **exploitation of the social transfer system by migrants and their "deservingness"**. People of color are then automatically classified as refugees (G1, G5) and negatively stereotyped as "*not working people who chat up "our" women, who are involved in criminal activities and cause problems*" (G1-M7). This attitude also shows on the **housing market**, where migrants experience discrimination because of their migrant background or as recipients of social welfare.

Beyond stereotypes and discrimination, interviewees report a **general reservation** of locals against migrants, and experience it challenging to establish contacts. This is the case in all localities, still, in Eastern localities, migrants refer more frequently to a silent distance which they reason by less experience with migration. **Encounter in public space does generally not lead to contact beyond the actual co-presence.** According to focus groups, there is a **need of special spaces and a certain level of moderation** to get in touch with each other (all FGD). Thus, some interviewees stress that reluctance to engage with each other is also caused by different social behavior and different cultures of social interaction. One interviewee describes it that way:

> *"So, someone says: I feel bad today". And I learned to not ask directly, why this is so. I learned to ask: „Would you like to talk about it?" You know, such things, I learned from the Germans (Laughs). It is so different in my country. […] We say: „Why do you feel bad, I am so sorry, my friend." And then he will talk. But in Germany, no. We have to ask „Do you want to talk or is that difficult for you?" We have to be more sensitive. I learned that*." (G1-M7, migrant from Syria, male, 25-35 years old,)

On the opposite, it is remarkable that **across all localities, there are active pro-migrant groups and single-engaged volunteers** who care and put a lot of effort into refugee support. Their engagement is sincerely valued by interviewees as well as local actors. They serve as a kind of bridge between post-2014 migrants and local institutions, local associations and different

groups of the local community. In small towns and rural areas, they mitigate the lack of infrastructures, such as insufficient language classes or lack of migrant counseling (G2, G4, G6) and take action to facilitate post-2014 migrants' access to housing, education and labour. There are also active single persons in the local administration, institutions and the private sector who encourage post-2014 migrants to become part of the community. One interviewee talks enthusiastically about her experience with the local *Jobcente*r:

> *"My responsible person is so good. He is so friendly, whenever I go there, he gives me hope and new energy. He always asks me "What are your problems? How can I help" Whenever I call, he is ready to help me."* (G1-M2, migrant from Afghanistan, female, 25-35 years).

Across localities, these people function as social bridges, they help to build up the community and mitigate shortcomings caused by restrictive political decisions, slow administrations and hostile attitudes in the society. It is key for integration as a whole-of-community concept to highlight and value their work, be it as volunteer, as member of the administration, as non-profit service providers or in the private sectors. Equally important is the work of migrants who serve as a bridge between segments of the local community, for example as translators or in their daily work. For social inclusion and community-making, it would be crucial to highlight their engagement and show recognition.

Differences between localities

Comparing the six cases it becomes apparent that differences exist related to the size of the locality, the region (East/West), the demographic profile (esp. societal aging) and the level of involvement of the local government in the issues of migration and integration.

The **size of the locality matters** in various regards. In the first place, size impacts the **general availability of infrastructures**, such as the availability of language classes, of a local immigration office, choices on the job market and in education facilities. Interviewees in small communities **spent considerable time in public transport to reach** language classes or important administrative units at all. For parents, mostly mothers, this can be reason why language classes are postponed for years, because day-care service and language class, plus transport times, do not match or don't exist at all (G1, G2). Still, small localities offer a **feeling of community and safety** for some interviewees. Post-2014 migrant parents in small localities report that they experience rural areas and small towns as safer for their children, because they would not get in touch with crimes and it was easier to keep an eye on them (G1, G2, G4). Thus, in rural regions and small towns, **greetings on the street** could be observed, and as the same people meet again and again this includes also post-2014 migrants. This small gesture is explicitly mentioned as a feeling of being part of the community by migrants in G2 and G4. In field phase I and focus group discussions in rural areas (G2) and small towns (G4) it was obvious how **"strangers" have become "our migrants**" for some locals. However, in medium-sized towns, general mutual greetings in public space could not be observed (G3, G5).

Regional differences between the Eastern part and the Western part of Germany can be observed. This mostly concerns attitudes towards migrants, especially **how anti-migrant attitudes are spelled out**. While we could find reservations against migrants in general in all cases, also in G3 where migrants are part of the local community for more than 50 years, the **social acceptance of racist behaviour** and statements seems **greater in the Eastern cases**. Interviewees reported more open insulting and direct attacks. Also, during observation, racist statements could be heard in public space, and were spelled out without an understanding that this could be problematic (observation in G1, G5, G6). Local actors as well as migrants explain this by a lack of experience with migration. It is a sincere limitation of this study that members of the "silent layer of the community" (member of integration unit in G1) who do not support migrants, nor do they engage in anti-migrant movement but exist as majority in all six case studies, could not be reached for participation.

The **demographic profile** of a locality has a certain impact on integration as a whole-of-community process. On the one hand, in shrinking and fast-aging communities, it seems that **generational and migration-related conflicts overlap**. Neighborhood conflicts between single older retirees and new neighbours, especially migrant families, in G1 and outer quarters of G5 over children's noise and resting times show this well. While the disagreement could well be rooted in diverging expectations of different age groups, they are primarily framed as cultural conflicts. On the other hand, **demographic change also shows in the age profile of pro-migrant groups** and single volunteers. Especially in rural areas and small towns, it is almost **exclusively (female) retirees who engage** in refugee support. Young people have often left the locality for studies or vocational training, and middle-aged persons are too occupied with their own life (FGD, G4). While their support is valued a lot, living situations appear as incompatible because of the age difference by locals and migrants, so the relations remain most often on the level of practical support, but don't lead to a friendship (G1, G2, G4). This is different in places that have universities or higher education institutions where young persons are also among the supporters (G3, G5).

Finally, the **level of involvement of the local government** regarding migration and integration makes a difference. It is visible that in localities with progressive **local integration plans** (G1, G5) or strong public networks for diversity (G1), their efforts positively affect migrants' situation. In G5, for example, translation services for administrative tasks are paid for by the locality and in G1, members of the local administration are experienced as explicitly friendly (regardless of decision-making practice) which could be caused by the involvement of the local *jobcenter* in the diversity network and intercultural training modules for public employees. The level of involvement is also linked to the administrative role of a locality as municipalities within a county do not have the same power and responsibility in the field of migration as county-free municipalities have. Still, the implementation of progressive integration plans is challenged by members of the administration who oppose the plan's goals in their daily practice. This becomes obvious for example in the reluctance of immigration offices to grant naturalization to eligible migrants (G2, G4, G5).

Temporal dimension

The findings of this report suggest that the temporal dimension of integration processes should be considered from the individual perspective of migrants as well as from reciprocal relationships. **Individuals estimate their achievement in the new place in relation to the time passed**. People who received a legal status with limited waiting time and could thus start the integration course and find a job, feel that their life has become better. Many have found a flat, learned where and how to solve issues, where they like to spend time, and with whom. They look back at the last seven years and are quite satisfied that they could build up a life in Germany. However, for people who are denied these resources because of their asylum state, most often tolerated stay, feel trapped, because time has passed but their situation has not changed. This is also true for people who hope to bring their family to Germany or for young, single man who wish to find a partner or to bring their girlfriend here. **On a community level**, relations have evolved **twofold** over time: On the one hand, people have **adjusted to the "new diversity**" in their locality and migrants are less often confronted with gazes and comments (G1, G2, G5). On the other hand, the topic **has lost importance and excitement** over time for local policymakers and many volunteers terminated their work. Besides feelings of overworking, many volunteers stopped their engagement due to the COVID pandemic.

Generally, it can be said that **the COVID pandemic** has been a serious **backlash** for the community-building process in all localities that was experienced as a kind of "**void**". Language courses, internships, working contracts and community meetings were terminated due to the pandemic. Likely, people **went back to their communities and lost contact** with everyone who is different from themselves. Migrants in all localities remember the lockdowns as a time of loneliness and loss, as one interviewee puts it:

> *"Because of the pandemic, we lost so many friends. There are people that I have not met since two years, I never saw them again." (G4-M13, migrant from Eritrea, male, 25-35 years).*

Also, **prejudices against migrants have been reinforced** when searching for a scapegoat. One migrant-local from G3 reports:

> *"When we had this vaccination campaign, oh my god. Horrible! I always heard, yes, these migrants they don't go for the vaccination. But everyone I knew was vaccinated. Of course, there are some that are hesitant, they are everywhere. But prejudices came back so fast."* (social worker in G3, migrant background, female, 40-50 years).

Although survey data suggest that attitudes towards migrants have in general not been reinforced during the pandemic (SVR, 2020), interviewed migrants expressed the feeling that social distance has increased. This might also be related to the rise of weekly demonstrations against the anti-COVID policy of the national government that is sustained by a wide

front of anti-government actors. Right-wing actors prominently participate there and promote their racist views in this arena.

3.2 Value of social, ideational-political, governance and spatial dimensions to understand local (refugee) integration opportunity structures

The following section discusses the spatial, social, ideational/political and governance dimensions as explaining factors for post-2014 migrants' experiences of in- or exclusion as well as interactions with locals. The section also investigated the value of the Whole-COMM Typology of localities to explain local integration opportunities and integration as a whole-of-community process. Finally, the section turns to migrants' individual characteristics and their agency and outlines how they relate to local integration opportunities and contact with locals.

3.2.1 Explaining local integration opportunities by spatial, social, ideational/political and governance factors

This section brings together the findings in the six German case study localities on the impact of spatial, social, ideational/political and governance factors of local integration opportunities.

Spatial factors

Looking at the six German cases, it becomes clear that the **spatiality of a place** significantly matters in how the entire community can be reached and involved in integration processes. The scattered structure of the medium-sized town G3 in seven towns and over 30 village, for example, renders it a challenge to establish a feeling of community. Similarly, the incorporation of a neighboring municipality in the small town G1 continues to be in progress after 15 years as this part of G1 feels often neglected by local policies and the division into two parts makes it hard to work as one community. The same is true for the medium-sized town G5, which sees a clear division in terms of atmosphere, social structure and social issues between the city center and the housing block quarters on the outskirts of the city. The rural area G6 has good traffic connections to a greater agglomeration, so this greater city is an important anchor point for migrants as well as locals' everyday life. **Social fractions and divisions in a locality are often reflected in the spatial structure**, and they provoke the question of what part of the fragmented local community it is that newcomers should engage with.

By looking closer into the single localities, space also impacts the possibilities of encounter. This concerns the **availability of attractive public spaces**, as for example the lakes in G3 and G4. They are named as leisure places by both, post-2014 migrants and locals, and observations confirm a common use by people with various backgrounds. In the rural area of G2, attractive public spaces in the locality are scarce, which could be caused by the surrounding nature that renders designed outdoor places unnecessary in some regard. Still, meeting places with good quality of stay where people could meet are lacking (see observation G2). Thus, migrant interviewees and focus group participants stress that friends are hardly ever made in public space,

but **special places are needed for a meaningful encounter** (Valentine, 2008). **Reaching these places can be a challenge** in widespread towns (G3) and rural regions (G2, G6).

Social factors

Across the six case study localities, social ties in terms of **networks of support, social contact and friendships** or at least friendly relations are **relevant reasons** for post-2014 migrants **to stay** in a locality. It is striking that **for many adults, social relations with non-migrants are limited to the circle of pro-migrant groups and volunteers.** Migrant interviewees across localities repeatedly described their inability to get in touch with locals or turn to lose contact into a more reliable relationship. For children and youth who are included in social environments of schools and leisure activities, contacts seem closer. Their contacts again, impact their parents' decision to stay. When talking about social inclusion, it must be considered that it is not only non-migrant locals that offer social networks. Although this is often neglected in public discourses, **existing migrant communities** and their institutions (associations, religious places) but also **relations and friendships with other post-2014 migrants** in a locality constitute a social environment that supports feelings of inclusion. **Also, weak ties or small performative actions, such as greeting on the street**, support people's positive experience of a place. Still, it has to be considered that many interviewees have a very busy life, leaving only limited time to search for contact and build up new social relations.

Ideational-political factors

Regarding locals' attitudes towards migrants and the level of politicization, the picture is **complex.** In all localities, there are people who support migrants and people who criticize migration in general. Interestingly, **anti-migrant demonstrations and mobilization were hardly mentioned** in any migrant interview as important events. It is rather **everyday racism** and discrimination **that worry migrants across all localities** and impact their daily lives. At the same time, migrants see and acknowledge the support of pro-migrant groups and single people. One interviewee reflects on the complex situation as follows:

> *"So, in 2013, we had only 20-25 families from Middle East [in G1], very few. But in 2015, numbers exploded. And together with this, people here changed. They became very supportive with the newcomers on the one hand, but there were also complications. I think that racist behavior has increased as well. But then again people were helping more than before. It is complicated*." (G1-M3, migrant from Iraq, male, 30-40 years)

Ambivalent situations are true for both, non-migrant and migrant locals. Various **resentments and conflicts between previous migrants from Russia, but also from Turkey and Arabic countries and post-2014 migrants,** were reported in focus group discussions and migrant interviews. Still, associations of local mosques and private migrant initiatives are important supporters of local social inclusion but are rare in rural case study sites. Additionally, **ideational-political conflicts within the group of post-2014 migrants** cannot be ignored, as shown for

example the case of G3 where most Christian families from Syria left because of a strong presence of other groups from Syria. When researching integration from a whole-of-community perspective it remains a challenge to go **beyond simplifying categories** such as locals, migrant-locals, post-2014 migrants, public institutions and private sectors, and account for manifold existing fractures and groups while, at the same time, remaining able to capture and represent the local situation.

Governance factors

In terms of local **governance approaches** to refugee integration, the **mode of accommodation** is decisive for integration as a whole-of-community process. Shared accommodations are often located outside the localities (almost all examples in this study) and they appear as closed spaces to locals (FGD in G4 and G5). Decentral accommodation offers the possibility to get in touch with locals. Still, it cannot be taken for granted that neighbors are interested in the newcomers. In G1, the allocation of post-2014 migrants in public housing was thus accompanied by social workers.

Decision practices of the local immigration authority differed between localities. Examples are the decision-making on who is eligible for integration courses and is allowed to access the labor market. Interestingly, the extent of restrictiveness **could not be linked to the political tradition of a locality** (restrictive practices in G4 and G5 despite progressive governments). It might rather be explained by the power of street-level bureaucrats. In G1, which has a conservative political tradition, naturalization processes were reported to go smoothly by migrant interviewees which could be linked to the regional strategy of immigration because of societal aging. **Denying people access to language classes and the labor market is a serious barrier** for encounter, because there is no common language, and the social dimension of the workplace remains unexploited (G5-M6; G1-M1). In some places, **public institutions take action** to include post-2014 migrants, for example in G1 and G3, where local *jobcenters* promoted **internships with integrated childcare** for women among their clients. As they have access to most people because they distribute social welfare, this can count as an effective instrument to reach interested people.

3.2.2 Explaining differences by the Whole-COMM Typology

As outlined in chapter 2, the *Whole-COMM* works with a typology of localities (Type A, type B, type C and type D, see table 3) that is mainly based on three variables: (1) share of foreign residents in the locality in 2005, (2) variation of the number of inhabitants from 2005-2014 (VARNI) and (3) variation of unemployment level from 2005-2014 (VARUN).

The typology contributes importantly to cross-country comparison, yet **three things** should be considered that **impact the typology's explanatory power** for the German cases. First, the **share of foreign residents has to be treated with caution** as, it does **not include people with so-called "migrant background**" that have German citizenship or double citizenship and make

up an important share of migrants, especially in localities with a long history of migration in the Western parts of Germany. Second, regarding the variation of inhabitants from 2005-2014, it must be considered that most decisive event regarding the movement of the population has been the **German reunification in 1990 that led to severe loss of population in the eastern parts** of Germany. The variable VARNI thus shows only the development from 2005-2014 and is not able to account for the development of inhabitants in general. Third, it must be said that currently, the **dominant issue** in the economy is not unemployment but the **lack of (skilled) workforce**. The unemployment level in Germany lies at 5.3% only[7]and the crucial point is not a lack of jobs, but a lack of fit between available positions and migrants' skills, legal constraints or practical problems, such as reaching working place without a car.

It is against this backdrop that the following section investigates the Whole-COMM typology as explanatory framework for the findings of this country report. Overall, the **types as such do not explain differences** in local integration opportunity structures. Barriers, as well as supportive elements for local integration, personal experiences and attitudes, be found in type A, B, C and D localities in Germany and it is not possible to generally attribute a more inclusive situation to one of the types. Still, the single variables that were used to create the types have a certain explanatory power, especially when considering processes and effects that accompany the situation that a variable depicts.

Share of foreign residents in 2005

This variable refers to migrants' presence in a locality before 2014 and thus might carry information about the local experience with diversity. Locality G3 (type C) and G4 (type A) had a higher share of foreign residents in 2005 compared to the federal situation. In these localities, where there is more experience with diversity, parts of the society are more open to migrant newcomers, especially on the labour market as local companies have been used to integrate migrant workers since the arrival of so-called 'guest workers' since the 1970s. Thus, in G3 (type C), a considerable presence of previous cohorts of migrants makes it easier for post-2014 migrants to establish relations and find connections to the local community. This regards social relations and the existence of a rich migrant infrastructure, such as mosques or shops with Arab goods, but also a local administration being attentive to migration as an issue in the locality.

Variation of number of inhabitants from 2005 to 2014

G1 (type D), G2 (type D) and G3 (type C) are localities with a decreasing population from 2005-2014 (VARNI). Still, this tendency has changed in G2 and G3 who observe a stable number of inhabitants since 2015 (caused by moving in of older wealthy urbanites in G2) or a growth (caused by the arrival of post-2014 migrants and later family reunions in G3). Still, the research

[7]Official statistics from Federal Employment office: https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/news/arbeitsmarkt-2022

shows that **demographic aging and/or shrinking leads to interest in newcomers** to sustain local structures, especially for young people. This shows for example in the effort of a local school in G2 (type D) to establish a special class for refugees to gain students (interview with local teachers, field phase I) and the engagement of a higher education institution in G1 (type D) to win refugees through special language classes and one-to-one counseling (interview with member of a university, field phase 1, G1-M3; G1-M8). However, the research shows that the **ageing of the population** affects the local situation to a similar extent. Where the average age is especially high (G1, G2), post-2014 migrants miss activities for children and youth as well as higher education facilities (G2, G4) which is repeatedly mentioned as a reason to move.

Variation of unemployment level from 2005 to 2014

As mentioned above, the German cases are less characterised by high unemployment, but rather by a lack of workforce. This is especially true in the **economically thriving region** of G4 (type A) where a lack of workforce renders the local chamber of craftsmen very open to bring migrants in vocational training. Besides, labor market inclusion can be better explained by the **level of fit** between migrants' skills, the acknowledgement of their qualifications (see below) and the structure of the labour market. In the rural region of G2 (type D) and G6 (type A), jobs in the high skilled sector are widely missing. In G2, this results in a movement of high skilled migrants to other places (if possible due to legal constraints, see below). In G6 (type A), it is possible for high skilled migrants to commute to a greater agglomeration due to good public transport. Thus, the job market in the locality is not decisive to stay or leave the locality.

Overall, the **Whole-COMM typology has only limited explanatory power** for the German cases with regard to social relations, migrants' experiences and individual attitudes. The research shows that it is rather the complete context of a locality (structural factors, the local history, spatiality of a place, narratives and the coming together of people and their relations with each other), that shape local integration opportunity structures. **The four guiding dimensions for this report** (spatial dimension, social dimension, ideational/political dimension and governance) allow more for accounting for the entire context and **nuanced perspective** on local integration opportunities.

3.2.3 Individual characteristics and migrants' agency

Besides external factors, migrants' individual characteristics decisively impact the experience and accessibility of local integration structures. In general, it must be acknowledged that all interviewees survived a **hard, often traumatizing flight**. Six to seven years after arrival, this **experience has not faded** and reoccurs when talking about arriving in Germany. One interviewee also reports that he would like to leave Germany, because he cannot overcome the traumatizing and violent experiences, he had with German FRONTEX soldiers.

Individual characteristics

In the first place, **the type of asylum** granted (if any) impacts migrants' experiences as this regulates refugees' access to rights, such as moving out of a shared accommodation, attending integration courses and accessing the labor market. Being eligible to join integration courses that most prominently include language classes is a key factor for social contact as it enables people to communicate in German (see Brückner et al. 2019). Thus, learning the local language signals a 'willingness to integrate' (Hopkins 2015). The same is true for prohibitions to participate in the labor market for some migrants with a tolerated stay. In social discourses and media, (post-2014) migrants who participate in the labor market are portrayed as contributing to society and thus having the right to be in Germany compared to those who don't. Legal obstacles of attending language classes are named less often in these debates. What kind of asylum is granted and how fast the process goes, depends also on the country of origin. While all interviewees from Syria received their protection status within months, many interviewees from Iran and Afghanistan are still in their asylum process even years after their arrival or received a tolerated stay. Unsecure legal status and long waiting times sincerely impact peoples' mental health. One interviewee from Afghanistan says:

> *"I received a letter that I got deportation ban, so no one can send me back to Afghanistan. But then, they also wrote that this can always change, and I know that people have been deported to Afghanistan. So, basically this deportation ban means nothing. I am very afraid what will happen. (G3-M2, Migrant from Afghanistan, male, 25-35 years)*

Across the sample, many **people with unclear status reported psychological problems** because of the hopelessness of their future and panic to be deported. In such a difficult mental condition, it can be a challenge to establish contact with others, especially with non-migrant locals as contact requires German language and openness to deal with cultural differences.

In the research, **gender differences** could also be observed. We frequently met the pattern of migration that the father or oldest son of a family arrives first. This places an extraordinary burden on them to get things in order and then apply for a family reunion. Long asylum procedures, difficulties in learning the language, in finding a job and a flat makes it hard for them to apply for family reunion, which is experienced as tremendous pressure, and failure. Also, founding a family abroad is a pressing issue for young men and is hardly discussed by supporting institutions (G5-M7, FGD in G4), and the loss or change of male social roles in the family is an important topic (G5-M1). Not knowing how to approach female members of the community or how to find a girlfriend/wife can hinder social contact between male migrants and female members of the local community (G5-M7). In comparison, women interviewees reported more inclusion in social (female) networks, both migrant and non-migrant. This appears as a logical consequence of many pro-migrant groups and non-profit service providers to primarily offering meeting points for women and children. Still, women struggle with different expectations towards women and the mothers that they have to serve. It is an issue of how to combine care work and paid work and how to position oneself to the idea of an "emancipated

woman" in Germany. Thus, **Muslim women** experience discrimination because of their headscarf. Reports range from critical gazes to the denial of a job, housing, childcare and hostile comments. Muslim belief appears as key factor that provokes reservation and prejudice against post-2014 migrants, which is in line with previous findings in Europe (Albada et al. 2021).

The **family status** further shapes migrants' experiences. **Parents** who live in the same place with their children generally **have more points of contact with the local community** as compared to people without children, through for example kindergarten, school or sports clubs. Across the sample, having left behind one's parents is a heavy psychological burden. This is especially hard if immigration offices slow down the naturalization, so people fear to be unable to visit their parents back in their home country or another third country before they die.

The **age** of migrants decisively impacts how forced migrants are able and willing to (re)built a new life. While middle-aged to older interviewees reported problems learning German because of their age and felt exhausted to build up a life again – and often worse than it was in their home country – children and youth quickly adjust to the new situation. This can also be linked to children's and youths' inclusion in education systems where they necessarily engage in daily contacts with peers from the local community. Interviewees below the age of 20 years and the children of interviewees reported in the overwhelming majority to have friends and to participate in social activities. Several young post-2014 migrants in the sample just finished their final exams and waited to be admitted at the university, having ambitious plans for their future.

The **level of education** proved to be a fundamental factor in coping with the flight and the process of arrival. People with a high education seem more able to develop coping strategies and relate their experiences in localities to developments on the national and international level as well as to the local history and context. **Highly educated interviewees seemed to feel less often wronged and searched for the positive**. Still, a general down-grading of migrants' educational background can be observed as the acknowledgement of their certificates or structural barriers don't allow them to enter the labor market on the same level. For migrants, this raises questions about lacking recognition of their capacities by the German society as well as about their inability to contribute to the society in their best way possible. There is a lawyer who opened an Arabic grocery store, a food engineer working as social assistant or a university teacher in the kindergarten. Often, people with university degrees are advised by local institutions to start a vocational training rather than trying to reenter the previous profession or a similar path. However, this means lesser earnings, less responsibility, and less influence. Access to the high skilled labor market also depends on the kind of profession. More technical jobs, such as engineers, architects and IT seem easier accessible than jobs that are strongly connected to communication and framed by national laws, such as psychologist, teacher or lawyer.

Personal motivation and Migrants' agency

When reflecting on post-2014 migrants' motivation to stay or leave SMsTRAs, it has to be taken into account that **free movement is not possible for everyone.** People during the asylum procedure and three years after the decision over their asylum status must stay in the *Land* where they filed for asylum (§12 AufenthG). If this regulation applies to the whole *Land* or a municipality, differs between the *Länder* (see introduction to Chapter 2). Also, after that period, it is difficult for people who depend on social welfare to move, because recipients of social welfare (citizens and migrants) are generally bound to the municipality where they are registered. Reasons for eligibility to move are a job offer or serious personal reasons, like moving to legal spouse or minor children.

Reasons to stay in a locality are manifold and involve foremost **access to the labor market.** Having a job, ideally in a person's regular profession, is a strong factor that keeps people in a locality. For migrants with **children, their inclusion into social networks** is another strong reason to stay, because parents want them to arrive somewhere after the flight. This is mirrored by some adults as well who finally want to arrive in a place. Additionally, many parents experience smaller localities as safe places for their children to grow up. There is also the feeling that smaller localities, especially rural areas and small towns, provide a dense network of support that could not be found in bigger cities. This applies to both, the support of volunteers, but also of public institutions, such as schools and universities. Also, some migrants stay in the region, because they simply like the place. This applies mainly to rural regions (G2) and smaller towns (G4) in the West. Some people also stress that they want to participate locally and positively contribute to the place, be it as members of the local council (G1-M3; G1-M6; G3-M1), in regional refugee-led organizations (G5-M6) or as access to specialized medical care (such as psychological experts) in a rural region (G2-M6).

Reasons to leave are often related to a **lack of jobs that fit a person's profile**. This is reported across the cases, also in medium-sized cities. Places of reference were the big cities in the Western part of the country or the capital Berlin, where job markets are deemed more flexible. Similarly, the **lack of activities** in smaller, especially aging localities, is a reason why migrants leave localities. Also, a **lack of experience with diversity and the absence of a migrant community** are named as reasons. Further, in case of migrants are assigned to local immigration authorities with especially restrictive legal practices, migrants try to move to *Länder* and localities that they perceive as less restrictive (G4, G5).

4. Impact of Ukrainian refugee reception on social interactions, attitudes and integration experiences in SMsTRAs

Research on the reception and integration of post-2014 migrants in SMsTRAs in Germany was thwarted by the Ukrainian War and the arrival of refugees from Ukraine since March 2022. Until the end of August 2022, over 967,000 refugees from Ukraine arrived in Germany, among them 74 % women and 36 % children and youth below 18 years (Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat, 2022). Many refugees from Ukraine arrived by private transport and sought refuge at family or friends who had been living in Germany before (150 000 Ukrainians in 02/2022, destatis, 2022), or they were taken in by private hosts. Ukrainians can enter and stay in Germany without a residence permit for up to 90 days, so immigration happened in a partially unordered manner. People who arrived in shelters or applied for asylum on arrival are distributed to the *Länder* according to the national distribution system (Königsteiner Schlüssel). Due to personal contacts and the distribution system, refugees from Ukraine also arrived in small towns and rural areas.

As the first research phase was already over when the Russian war started, and the project focused on integration as a long-term process, the arrival of refugees from Ukraine could not be included in the entire project. Still, as the project aims at understanding integration as a whole-of-community process, the arrival of "new" refugees could not be left out completely and was partially included in the second field phase: The arrival of refugees from Ukraine was explicitly mentioned in the invitation to focus group discussions,[8] it was brought up as a topic in informal talks with field contacts from the first field phase, and it came up in migrant interviews, as many interviewees explicitly referred to this group, comparing their reception with their own experiences.

In the following, we describe from field experiences how the arrival of refugees from Ukraine created feelings of unequal treatment between groups of migrants in all localities but can also appear as a chance to enhance social participation if moderated with caution.

4.1 Concerns about two classes of refugees

Across localities, **local actors and volunteers stressed the differences** between the arrival of post-2014 migrants and refugees from Ukraine. According to local volunteers, the **support**

[8] Invitations were framed as discussion on "Living together in locality xy" and it asked what lessons could be learned from the arrival of refugees in 2015 for future flows of forced migration, such as refugees from the Ukraine at the moment.

structure was different, as people engaged more privately, and support was importantly carried by **Ukrainians and Russian-speaking people who lived in Germany before**. Also, it is less clear if and for how long Ukrainians will remain in the country. In 2015, local actors were sure that all refugees would stay in Germany on a long-term basis. In 2022, however, **refugees seem to move back and forth (whenever possible) or were even seen as temporary guests by the locals** ("I also had guest from Ukraine at home") told one volunteer at the weekly coffee meeting with refugees in G6. Thus, as refugees from Ukraine **can enter without visa**, those who did not officially register are not subject of residence regulations and can freely move across the country and between countries. Refugees from Ukraine who apply for residence permit are granted residence for temporary protection (§24 AufenthG, Absatz 1), but they also could stay in Germany up to 90 days without a permit. Those). They are then, just as all people depending on social welfare, bound to the place where they registered or where they were distributed afterward.

Generally speaking, the arrival of Ukrainians showed **infrastructural and societal challenges in terms of migrant integration like under a magnifying glass** in all localities similar to 2015. For example, if there is missing professional infrastructure for counseling or language classes, often volunteers took over also these tasks at short notice (G6). In informal talks with pro-migrant groups and non-profit service providers as well as in focus group discussants, or participation in group discussions, people were worried about the **unequal treatment** of Ukrainian migrants compared to other refugees. Focus groups discussants reported for example that locals were donating goods and money to be used for Ukrainians only. Post-2014 migrants as well as pro-migrant groups are concerned about a **lack of transparency** regarding decision-making and treatment. In G4, for example, volunteers in the central primary reception centre had the feeling that earlier residents had been "kicked out" as Ukrainians arrived, and pro-migrant groups were not informed where the people they had cared for were transferred to. In the medium-sized town G5, one migrant interviewee from Iran recalls how a group of Ukrainian women were placed in their shared accommodation for ten days but transferred to a hotel as they considered the place too dirty. As she had been living in the shelter for over four years and all her requests to move into a flat were turned down, she feels insulted:

> *"I've lived here for over four years. I was pregnant in this place, I had so many health problems and infections, I was really not well. And it was not accepted by authorities that I can search for a proper flat. But now, for the Ukrainians, this place is dirty and not appropriate to stay. This is injustice!"* (G5-M6, migrant from Iran, female, 35-45 years).

Unequal treatment on the housing market was reported in different cases. Especially private owners were more open to rent their apartments or rooms to Ukrainian refugees than to refugees with other backgrounds (FGD 1 in G2 on 12.05.2022, FGD 1 in G5 on 22.06.2022; G6-M2*).* This was explained by the image of Ukrainian refugees as being predominantly *white*

women with children. Notions of cultural closeness (or distance) were used as an explanation for this. One pro-migrant group in G2 actively opposes this image and supports mainly refugees from Ukraine that have no Ukrainian passport through special counseling and a report on their website. In G6, the volunteers set up language classes and other support for more than 80 Ukrainians benefiting from their language skills from GDR times.

Further, pro-migrant groups feel that **what they were fighting for in the case of other refugees, is immediately granted to Ukrainians**, such as access to language classes and the labour market or the translation of all information on local webpages in Ukrainian (while many localities don't even have their services translated to English). Also, offers to welcome refugees from Ukraine were creating inequalities and social division in localities. One member of the department for integration in G1 puts it that way:

> *"If I compare the situation today to 2015, I would say, that most of the people feel that the white European is simply closer to them. Things are working here that were impossible in 2015, for example to hire social workers for refugees."*

Besides questions of social or cultural closeness, the preference of Ukrainians is also related to **limited capacities in SMsTRAs**. It is single persons who sustain pro-migrant groups or work in the administrative units, and it is also the simple response to the so-called "Ukrainian refugee crisis" that people turn to the group which seems more in need. While post-2014 migrants are seen as having their life in order, newly arriving Ukrainian refugees are seen as **most in need of immediate support**.

It is striking that **all interviewed post-2014 migrants** who bring up the topic first **stress their empathy with refugees from Ukraine** because they share their experience and Ukrainians are not responsible for the unequal treatment. Still, they find it **hard to cope with the injustice**, especially for refugees who are waiting to be eligible for a language class or get permission to access the labour market since years. Also, refugees trying to find a flat experience Ukrainians as more successful competitors on the housing market, which limits their own chances for affordable housing in the dense housing market. For post-2014 migrants waiting for their **naturalization, it was hard to hear that their application could not be processed because the local immigration offices were occupied with Ukrainians**. For people who needed a legal document to enter university or a German passport to visit their old, sick parents, this caused sincere problems and dissatisfaction.

4.2 A chance to improve social interactions?

Besides the problems mentioned above, the arrival of refugees from Ukraine had also positive effects on **community building** in the six case studies. In the first place, this concerns **post-**

2014 migrants' engagement and support of Ukrainians which on the one hand made the engaged interviewees feel part of the local community and proved to be a good opportunity to get in touch with other locals who are open to migrants. Several migrants reported that they became active to support the locality where they had been received openly in 2015. In G6, some elderly people got engaged as volunteers or hosts for Ukrainians, as they know the Russian language. At best, this could raise the awareness for life situations of refugees on a long-term.

Non-profit service providers and pro-migrant groups across localities reported that they could **draw on their experience from 2015** to offer language classes, counseling, and meeting opportunities. One member of a local neighbourhood initiative recalls how it took them months to put a language class in place in 2015, but that a cooperation contract with the local administration was signed in a few days in 2022. On the contrary, **other municipalities had not established stable systems of knowledge transfer** so they had to start from scratch again. Things **worked especially smoothly where programs and initiatives were still in place** (e.g., offers of pro-migrant group in G6). The example underlines how **crucial long-term integration structures and permanent positions** in the field of integration are. Still, almost all pro-migrant groups asked about the issue raised concern that their offers are either visited by Ukrainians or by other refugees. Bridging the groups remains a linguistic and social challenge.

The overall welcoming climate for Ukrainians also builds on initiatives that were started in 2015, such as free entry to museums, zoos or theatres or free use of public transport. Still, this is at risk of creating a bad social climate because most offers in 2022 target at Ukrainians only. One member of the department for integration in G1 recalls:

> *"In the course of the refugee reception from Ukraine, there was massive unequal treatment: Suddenly there was free entry to the museum, the zoo, the theatre - but only for Ukrainian refugees. Passports were supposed to be checked at the entrance. But then I took action and asked what legitimacy they actually had to carry out a passport check. The zoo is not the police! If there are concessions, then they must apply to all people with small income. Otherwise, we will create new divisions, among migrants, but also among Germans. But it all should be about strengthening social cohesion!"*

The interviewee's last sentence, that **it should all be about social cohesion**, should be taken seriously. Looking at the arrival from a whole-of-community perspective especially recalls offering support to all community members in need, regardless of their background. Cautious handling of the situation, such as in G1 where the local immigration authority opened on two extra days for the refugees from Ukraine to avoid cancellations of other appointments is one example how local communities can counteract disadvantages and promote understanding.

5. Concluding remarks and final considerations on the Ukrainian refugee reception

This report looked into social relations, individual attitudes, and migrant integration experiences in six small and medium-sized towns and rural areas in Germany. The findings are based on observations at 16 sites, 6 focus group discussions and interviews with 54 post-2014 migrants in six case study localities.

Factors shaping local (refugee) integration opportunity structures

The report finds that differences in local integration opportunity structures exist between case study sites that can be explained by the four guiding factors (spatial, social, ideational/political, governance) as well as the effects of the COVID-pandemic.

Spatial factors

For the German case studies, it is the **size of a locality that matters**, as small localities (G1, G2, G4, G6) offer less choice in terms of job opportunities, housing, language class provision or leisure activities. At the same time, smaller localities are seen to offer a dense network of support that is mentioned by many interviewees as a reason to stay. Also, the evaluation is conditional and relational, as the example of G6 shows: It is a small town with good infrastructure and good access to the next city compared to other places within the county. Second, if smaller localities are affected by **demographic ageing and shrinking** this can make single local institutions more welcoming for migrants in order to sustain the existing infrastructure of childcare, school or housing (G1, G2). In G1 and G5, migration is also referred to as a chance for the locality in the local integration plan, but it is questionable if all actors in the community agree on this goal. For municipalities within a county, the scope of political action is small as decision-making happens mostly on a county scale. Third, **tendencies of residential segregation** are apparent across case studies and regardless of their size: in rural areas (G6) as well as small towns (G1) and medium-sized towns (G3, G5). In the six observed cases, **segregation is related to the material environment of (social) housing blocks**. The two cases where residential segregation is less apparent, there is hardly any social housing, so post-2014 migrants live anywhere in the locality where private owners were open to rent their flat to refugees. Fourth, **space matters as distance or connectedness between places**. The division of G1 into a main town and an attached second part since the incorporation, the distances between villages in the rural area G2, the scattered structure of G3, the segregation between the city center and the outskirts in G5 or the closeness of G6 to a greater agglomeration – these spatial structures make it difficult to reach inclusive spaces and a shared sense of the place. In how far distances can be bridged and points of contact, counseling, education, labour and leisure are reachable, has a serious impact on how connected or disconnected post-2014 migrants feel to (parts of) the local community.

Social factors

Regarding the social dimension of integration, the research shows that **meaningful encounter cannot be taken for granted**. In the six observed cases, encounter that would diminish prejudice and improve social relations does not accidentally happen in public space but **needs special places** that are welcoming and offer a kind of moderation. All focus group discussions stressed the need for more spaces of encounter. **These places often lack attraction for "ordinary citizens"**, so the social relations of adult post-2014 migrants almost exclusively evolve with volunteers. The argument is supported by the fact that children and youth, seem more likely to be part of the local community through their inclusion in social environments such as kindergarten and schools and sports or community activities. For adults, this can be the working place, but again not per se, but with careful moderation and people who feel responsible to bridge differences. Further, the research shows that in the rural areas and small towns included in this research, support structures are mostly sustained by **single persons** who often have responsibilities in different spheres, such as local council, NGOs, church. It is unclear how the community could cope with termination of these key person's engagement (in G6, for example, it is basically one volunteer, in G2, there is one older lady in the northern part of the rural region), but this will evolve as a question in the next years due to the high age of these persons. Against this backdrop, it seems crucial to build social relations between post-2014 migrants and locals beyond volunteers, in order to **sustain support structures** but also to **tackle silent reservation and indifference against migrants**. In all localities, the majority of the population does not feel responsible for engaging with migrants and prejudices prevail. They mostly concern the suspected exploitation of social welfare systems, anti-Muslimism and general discomfort with things that are different. Still, the knowledge of this research regarding the reservation of locals is based on the perception of post-2014 migrants and engaged citizens. Getting the perspective of "the silent majority" would clearly add to the findings.

Ideational/political factors

Regarding the local climate towards migration, the research shows that **local experience with migration-related diversity** impacts local integration opportunity structures in complex, contradictory regards. On the one hand, experience with previous cohorts of migrants renders the labour market, the education system and administrative structures more used and open to persons with migrant backgrounds. The **presence of migrants has become an ordinary phenomenon** in the locality – at least in many fields. On the other hand, the example of G3 shows that **stereotypes against migrants exist over decades**, although they are included in the local community. This implies that prejudices and stereotypes do not disappear by themselves but need active critical engagement and the will to change. The presence of previous cohorts of migrants can serve as social anchor point and support local integration. Still, it must be acknowledged that dissatisfaction or conflicts may arise **between different groups of migrants**. Thus, the research shows that reservation and prejudices against post-2014 migrants exist in all case studies, they are spelled out more openly in the Eastern regions pointing to

differences between the two observed regions. The understanding that xenophobic comments are problematic, or at least socially unacceptable, cannot be taken for granted in G1, G5 and G6.

Governance factors

Regarding the local governance of integration, this report shows that **local political affiliation and local political tradition are not sufficient to explain** how integration works locally and what importance is attributed to the topic. **Different scales** must be taken into account: The *Länder*-scale that sets a frame for local integration with the availability of programs and funding, the composition of the local political sphere where the major and the majority in the local or/and county council can have different political traditions, and the local administration where street level-bureaucrats have considerable decision-making power, as for example in local immigration authorities (e.g., granting tolerated stay for 3 months only over years, delaying naturalization processes). Thus, for municipalities within a county, the political orientation can differ between county and local level which makes it hard to take local action and implement policies (see G6). The biggest difference seems to lie in the **local policymakers' perception of integration as an ongoing task or an ad-hoc response** to the arrival of migrants.

COVID as serious obstacle to local integration

The fourth finding regards the effects of the **COVID-pandemic** on integration processes which was experienced as a **serious backlash for the community-building process**. Language classes were stopped, meeting places were closed, older volunteers have terminated their engagement because they were fearing an infection (and in some rural places, they are the only people engaging), and working contracts were terminated. The administration closed down and, in most places, it continues to be impossible to go there without an appointment, and all processes are delayed. Three lockdowns resulted in locals' as well as migrants' drawbacks into their communities and inequalities in the field of education reinforced as non-German speaking parents had difficulties supporting their children. Building up what was lost proves to be a challenge for all involved actors. This is especially true against the backdrop of ongoing **demonstrations against anti-COVID measures**. It is hard to understand their political goals as the single element that all involved actors share is a critique of the current political system. However, the protests don't offer alternatives, they simply act as a destructive element in public spaces with unsettling effects on other community members.

Impacts of the arrival of refuges from Ukraine

The arrival of refugees from Ukraine was a highly debated topic in all six cases. Pro-migrant groups, members of the local administration as well as migrant interviewees were referring to **inequalities** in favor of white Ukrainian refugees compared to refugees from other parts of the world. Points raised concerned the immediate granting of a protection state, fast access to language classes, the labour market and preferential treatment on the housing market and

by private donors. On the other hand, post-2014 migrants who engaged in support for refugees from Ukraine saw this as an **opportunity to be part of the local community**, give something back to the place and establish contact with open-minded locals. The arrival of refugees from Ukraine also revealed that programs and initiatives that continued their work since 2015, were fast in organizing and implementing support. This shows **the importance of sustainable integration structures with qualified staff** to be able to respond to unforeseen migration flows, but even more to continuously work on integration as a community-building process that involves all members of a locality.

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ANNEX

Annex I: A discussion on methods

The following section discusses the methods that were used for collecting empirical material on social relations, individual attitudes and migrant integration experiences in six case study localities in Germany. It discusses each method used and its added value in the research process and reflects about the outcomes of each method and considers possible biases and ethical issues. Overall, using a set of three methods was very useful to get a full picture of the local situation and to minimize blind spots by combining and comparing insights from each of the methods.

Participant observation

Participant observation was conducted to understand how spatial, socio-economic, ideational/political and governance factors shape social interactions and attitudes, and how, in turn, these interactions shape the (public) space. In the German case, participant observation was complemented by the geographical method of «*Geographische Begehungen* » (geographical on-site walks) such as walking from the city center to the quarters where most 2014-migrants live, by using public transport or a bicycle instead of a car to get a better feeling of distances in the place and how migrants experience the place. Especially in places where the number of migrant interviews could not be met (G3; G6), we conducted structured observations at three to five sites to get a fuller picture of the place.

As post-2014 migrants could not be distinguished from other People of Color in localities, the method was used to get a broader feeling of social relations in the local community: Do (which) people great each other on the street? Who uses public transport? Do people exchange small gestures of conviviality (holding doors, make place for someone to sit on a bench, look at each other or on the ground)? How do (what kind of) people use and appropriate spaces in their locality? By conducting participant observation, by being present in the place observed, we could also feel ourselves in how far outsiders were noticed by locals and/or migrants (in the case of G3).

By reflecting on these questions, it was possible to get a feeling on how diversity and (seemingly) foreignness was negotiated in the localities. Participant observation proved as suitable mirror for personal experiences about migration/integration in localities that were described in migrant-interviews and discussed in focus group. Still, it must be acknowledged that what is noticed and written down during observation is inseparably tied to a person's positionality. It was striking, how observation revealed our own stereotyping gaze and blind spots caused by our positionality as non-migrant *white* women and mothers with high educational background and stable socio-economic situation and as non-migrant *white* male student with high education background stable socio-economic situation. Constant reflections about presuppositions and the situation observed were needed to work with these biases.

In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews with migrants were conducted to better understand post-2014 migrants' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in the locality and factors that shape their experiences of integration. Following the conceptual framework of the research, these factors mainly focused on spatial factors, social factors, ideational/political factors and governance factors and how this in turn influences migrants' willingness to stay in a locality. Thus, migrant interviews aimed at understanding how individual factors (gender, age, ethnicity, skills, etc.) shape migrants' experiences of inclusion/exclusion.

The interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide that was flexible adjusted to the interview situation by the interviewers. In most cases, the conversation started with an opening question like "Would you like to tell me a bit about yourself? When did you arrive in locality XY?" which interviewees took this as starting point for an (long) introduction to themselves. The openness of the interview guide proved to be helpful as topics could be deepened or shorted according to the interviewees' experiences and interest. Most interviews were conducted in German. This was due to the lack of a permanent staff position for translation (and then is would have been difficult to decide for one language only), but also because most interviewees wished to have the conversation in German. However, in some interview situations, limited language knowledge limited the deepness of the interview, because thoughts beyond everyday topics were hard to convey.

Depending on the interview participant, conversations had different effects. For some, it remained a question-answer interview where information was shared. For other participants, especially those who also told us the story of their flight, the conversation could also have some relieving effect. Several interview partners stressed after the interview that they enjoyed the talk and that it was helpful to express one's feelings and that someone was listening to their story. As interviewers, it was not always easy to take up strong emotions and how to deal with people breaking into tears or asking fundamental question about injustices in the legal system in Germany or the hostile local community. As persons without migrant background, it felt as if it was up to us to explain and excuse the situation.

Overall, the biggest challenge regarding migrant interviews was to win participants and to make sure that all participants were aware of the purpose of the interview. Quite some interviewees asked us after the interview what we needed this for, and many participated in the first place, because volunteers proposed them to do so. We tried to mitigate all ethical issues resulting from that, by conducting the interview very cautiously, so people could decide themselves how much personal information they would like to reveal to us. Due to the tight and the distances to reach localities (4-7 hours by train), it was not possible to establish relationships with migrant communities before the field trip. As the distribution of a general invitation to the interview did not work out in any locality, we were fully dependent on volunteers and non-profit service providers to support us in finding interviewees. Given the load of work, most people in these positions have, especially during the arrival of refugees from the Ukraine,

it was an ethically difficult situation to ask gatekeepers again and again for contact to migrants although they were busy with different things.

Focus group discussions

In the research design of WP5, focus group discussions aimed at understanding which variables are relevant in that specific locality to shape social relations, the quality of interactions and individual attitudes between long-term residents and post-2014 migrants. Although it was foreseen in the research design to conduct focus groups with post-2014 migrants and long-term residents in places where relations seemed well, we decided to conduct focus group discussion with long-term residents (more than 15 years in the locality) only. This decision was based on our experiences in field phase I taken for two main reasons: First, we encountered several post-2014 migrants in the first phase of the field work who had been working as regular employees in mainstream institutions (e.g., migrant counseling, university), but still being considered "the refugees". We observed this as exhausting situation for the people as they would always be responsible to explain why "the refugees are behaving the way they to". We did not want to intentionally put people in this stereotyped position. Second, and related to the first point, we observed a strong tendency of Germans without migrant background to talk about "the refugees" as alien group, also among volunteers working in pro-migrant groups. Considering the experiences from G3 (See part 3.4) this was the right decision in the German context.

Although invitations for focus groups were widely distributed in localities (e.g., local newspaper and mailing lists), almost all participants were involved in integration on the locality, either as volunteers or as professionals. This gives a certain bias to the discussion as neither critics of migration nor "normal citizens" were noteworthy involved in the discussion. Both, post-2014 migrants as well as critics of migration were talked about, but not heard themselves in the discussion. We acknowledge this limitation, still, given the experience in G3, we find that discussions had more content and went deeper if people were familiar with the topic of integration in their locality. In G3, a large share of the moderators' attention was needed to prevent the situation from escalating, but the discussion remained at the surface. Still, given the lack of inclusion of ordinary citizens in the research, we would like to develop our quasi-experiment in that direction to, hopefully, get some more insights here.

Annex II List of Interviews with migrants

Person's code	Gender	County of Origin	Age
G1-M1	male	Iraq	40-45
G1-M1a	male	Iraq	15-20
G1-M1b	female	Lebanon	40-45
G1-M2	female	Afghanistan (Hazara)	35-40
G1-M3	male	Iraq (Kurd)	40-45
G1-M4	male	Syria	20-25
G1-M5	female	Syria	50-55
G1-M6	female	Lebanon	20-25
G1-M7	male	Syria	30-35
G1-M7	female	Syria	30-35
G1-M7a	male	Syria	35-40
G2-M1	female	Syria	35-40
G2-M1a	male	Syria	35-40
G2-M2	female	Syria	40-45
G2-M2a	male	Syria	40-45
G2-M4	female	Syria	50-55
G2-M4a	male	Syria	55-60
G2-M5	male	Iran	40
G2-M5a	female	Iran	35-40
G2-M6	female	Syria	20
G2-M7	male	Syria	30-35
G2-M8	male	Iraq	15-20
G3-M1	male	Syria	20-25
G3-M2	male	Afghanistan	30-35
G3-M3	female	Syria	40-45
G4-M1	male	Eritrea	18-25
G4-M2	male	Iraq (Yazidi)	40-45
G4-M3	female	Tajikistan	45-50
G4-M4	female	Iran	30-35
G4-M6	male	Iran	25-30
G4-M6a	female	Iran	25-30
G4-M7	male	Iran	35-40
G4-M8	female	Syria	35-40
G4-M9	female	Afghanistan	30-35
G4-M10	female	Iraq (Yazidi)	30-35
G4-M11	male	Iran	35-40

G4-M12	male	Syria	45-50
G4-M13	male	Eritrea	25-30
G4-M14	male	Iraq (Yazidi)	45-50
G4-M15	male	Syria	35-40
G4-M16	female	Syria	50-55
G4-M17	female	Afghanistan	35-40
G4-M18	male	Syria	30-35
G5-M1	male	Venezuela	35-40
G5-M2	male	Iran	35-40
G5-M3	male	Turkey	40-45
G5-M3a	female	Turkey	15-20
G5-M5	male	Turkey	40-45
G5-M6	female	Iran	35-40
G6-M6a	male	Iran	35-40
G5-M7	male	Afghanistan	30-35
G6-M1	male	Iran	25-30
G6-M2	male	Afghanistan	25-30