Asylum Migration of Afghans and Syrians to Germany: Opportunities and Challenges during Transit and Integration

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Refugee migration continues to receive considerable attention in the literature, primarily due to its escalating importance. According to the United Nations (UN), forced displacements in 2021 are the highest ever recorded. Since 2015, Afghans and Syrians have been the two largest internationally displaced populations, not only globally, but also within the European Union (EU). In the last seven years, the number of Afghans applying for asylum in Europe has continued to rise despite the EU's efforts to discourage them. There are major knowledge gaps in the literature with regard to the experiences of migration from the perspective of the refugees themselves and about the driving factors and actors behind fragmented migration journeys. There is also limited literature on Afghan refugees, even though they constitute the second-largest nationality in asylum migration to Europe. Moreover, there are knowledge gaps on the role that different actors, particularly private companies, play for refugees' integration in the receiving societies.

Addressing these knowledge gaps, the research objectives of this thesis were (1) to explore the trajectories of fragmented migration undertaken by Afghan and Syrian refugees to Germany; (2) to better understand the opportunities and challenges of their adaptation to new societies; and (3) to explore the role of private companies in integrating refugees into the labour market.

In this thesis, the concepts of asylum and refugee migration refer to people migrating to seek protection. The concept of fragmented journeys describes movements through several regions in separate stages without a clearly defined destination. For the term integration, the definition of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is applied, which covers the preparedness of refugees to adapt to the lifestyle of the receiving societies; the willingness of communities in the destination countries to be welcoming and responsive; and the capacity of public institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population.

This dissertation uses a qualitative case study design, with individual in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions with newly arrived Afghans and Syrians, experts from the public sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social workers, volunteers, translators/interpreters and private companies. In total, 91 refugees and 69 respondents from the public and private sector and civil society organizations participated in this research.

The findings on the first objective showed that three-quarters of Afghan respondents did not plan to travel to Germany before their departure; in contrast, the majority of Syrian respondents did have Germany as a destination in mind when departing from their origin or a transit country. There were different factors behind origin migration (i.e. direct migration from the country of origin to the country of destination) and transit migration (i.e. migration with extended stays in other countries before reaching the destination country). The majority of the respondents migrating directly from Afghanistan and Syria left their countries of origin mainly due to political prosecution, violent conflict, personal security, and socio-economic pressure. The major reasons that led to the departure from transit countries were lack of prospects, lack of legal residence permits, fear of deportation, barriers to education and employment, exploitation of their labour, explicit racism, and ethnic and racial discrimination. Moreover, there were some temporary factors such as the so-called opening of borders to Europe in 2015 and expectations for the protection of Syrians in Germany that were seen as an opportunity for both transit and origin migration to Europe. Smugglers, other asylum seekers in transit, and social media contacts were the most influential actors and played very important roles at the beginning, transit, and endpoints of refugees' journeys. To address the root causes of migration, European countries including Germany could facilitate regular migration pathways. Moreover, with regard to transit migration, Germany and other European countries could support improving the conditions of refugees in the first countries of refuge, e.g., by creating more favourable reception and living conditions there, improving access to residence and work permits as well as opportunities for employment and education. The findings of the interviews suggest that this may change the decisions of many about undergoing the risky onward migration to Europe.

The findings with regard to the second research objective show interesting differences in the integration of the two nationalities included in the study. Syrians were found to be better integrated into their communities as compared to Afghans. The study showed that the shorter the asylum application process is and the more secure the residency status is (which is typically the case for Syrians), the faster refugees gained access to language and integration courses, which gave them a better opportunity to get integrated into the labour market, to find housing and to make better connections to the receiving society. Among the challenges faced by Afghan refugees were the lengthy asylum application process, the difficulty in securing housing, and the long-term residence in reception centres, which caused considerable stress and hardship for the refugees. The

opportunities for refugees' adaptation into the new societies were facilitated by diverse volunteer services, social and cultural events, and labour market integration services besides the government-provided German language integration courses. Although Stuttgart was found to be a pioneering city in terms of integration facilities for refugees, there is still room for improvements, such as timely accommodation of refugees outside of refuge centres, better coordination of integration offers, and systematic employment of volunteer services for social and labour market integration purposes.

Regarding the third objective, the study showed that the engagement of private companies in the labour market integration of refugees increased with the larger arrival of refugees during 2015/2016. This was due to several factors, including the following: the discursive environment; the government call to private sector participation; corporate social responsibility of large-scale international companies; and shortages of skilled workers for small and medium-sized businesses, specifically in the care and service sector. However, the findings indicate that bureaucratic administrative employment procedures, challenges related to cooperation with the public sector, and lack of secure work permits have not only discouraged companies from engagement but also decreased the effectiveness of their engagement. As a recommendation, sustainable long-term collaboration between private companies and the public sector and NGOs is encouraged, which helps to improve the labour market integration of refugees. Furthermore, given the aforementioned factors that drive companies to engage in refugee labour market integration, the simplification of bureaucratic procedures and the continuation of policies such as tolerated work permits would further facilitate this engagement.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die zunehmende Fluchtmigration findet in der wissenschaftlichen Literatur weiterhin große Aufmerksamkeit. Die Vereinten Nationen wiesen 2021 die höchste jemals in der Welt registrierte Zahl an Zwangsvertreibungen aus. Afghan*innen und Syrer*innen sind die beiden größten internationalen Flüchtlingsgruppen, nicht nur weltweit, sondern auch in der Europäischen Union. In den letzten sieben Jahren ist die Zahl der Afghan*innen, die in Europa Asyl beantragen, weiter angestiegen, trotz der Bemühungen der EU sie davon abzuhalten. In der Literatur bestehen Forschungslücken bezüglich der Migrationserfahrung der Flüchtenden sowie der Triebkräfte für „fragmentierte Fluchtmigration“, d.h. Fluchtmigration durch mehrere Länder/Regionen in separaten Phasen ohne ein klar definiertes Ziel. Forschungslücken bestehen auch im Hinblick auf afghanische Geflüchtete, obwohl sie die zweitgrößte Gruppe der Geflüchteten darstellen. Zudem gibt es nur eine begrenzte Literatur zur Rolle der Privatwirtschaft für die Integration von Geflüchteten.

Vor diesem Hintergrund verfolgt die vorliegende Dissertation die folgenden drei Forschungsziele: (1) den Verlauf der fragmentierten Migration von afghanischen und syrischen Geflüchteten nach Deutschland zu untersuchen; (2) die Chancen und Herausforderungen ihrer Integration in die neue Gesellschaft zu verstehen; und (3) die Rolle privater Unternehmen bei der Arbeitsmarktintegration von Geflüchteten zu untersuchen.

Diese Dissertation basiert auf einem konzeptionellen Rahmen der die Konzepte Asyl- und Fluchtmigration, fragmentierte Reisen und Integration hervorhebt. Dabei bezieht sich der Begriff Asyl- und Fluchtmigration sich auf Menschen, die migrieren, um Schutz zu suchen. Der Begriff Integration wird entsprechend der Definition des UN-Flüchtlingskommissariats (UNHCR) verwendet, die die Anpassungsbereitschaft der Geflüchteten an die neue Lebenswelt einerseits und die Aufnahmebereitschaft der Gesellschaft und ihrer Institutionen andererseits berücksichtigt.

Die Dissertation verwendet einen qualitativen Fallstudienansatz. Als wesentliche Datenerhebungsmethoden wurden Einzelinterviews und Fokusgruppendiskussionen durchgeführt. Insgesamt wurden 91 neu angekommene Afghan*innen und Syrer*innen befragt. Zusätzlich wurden 69 Personen befragt, darunter Expert*innen aus dem öffentlichen Sektor, Vertreter*innen

von Nicht-Regierungsorganisationen (NGOs), Sozialarbeiter*innen, Ehrenamtliche, Übersetzer*innen/Dolmetscher*innen und Vertreter*innen von privaten Unternehmen.

Die Ergebnisse zum ersten Forschungsziel zeigen, dass drei Viertel der befragten Afghan*innen vor ihrer Abreise nicht geplant hatten, nach Deutschland zu reisen, während die Mehrheit der befragten Syrer*innen bei ihrer Abreise aus dem Herkunfts- oder Transitland Deutschland als Ziel ins Auge fasste. Für die Herkunfts- und Transitmigration wurden verschiedene Gründe genannt. Diejenigen, die direkt aus Afghanistan und Syrien zugewandert sind, sind häufig aufgrund politischer Verfolgung, gewaltsamen Konflikten, wegen mangelnder persönlicher Sicherheit und unter sozioökonomischem Druck geflohen. Die wichtigsten Faktoren für die Transitmigration waren Perspektivlosigkeit, fehlende legale Aufenthaltsgenehmigungen, Angst vor Abschiebung, Hindernisse für Bildung und Beschäftigung, Ausbeutung ihrer Arbeitskraft, offener Rassismus sowie ethnische und rassistische Diskriminierung. Darüber hinaus gab es einige temporäre Faktoren: Die sogenannte "Öffnung der Grenzen zu Europa" im Jahr 2015 und die Erwartung von Syrer*innen, in Deutschland Schutz bekommen, wurden zeitweise als Chance für die Migration nach Europa gesehen. Schmuggler, andere Asylsuchende im Transit, Kontakte bei Sozialen Medien und Helfer*innen haben eine wichtige Rolle bei Beginn, Transit und Endpunkt der Reise gespielt. Die Studie legt nahe, dass Aufnahmeländer wie Deutschland die Bedingungen für reguläre Migration verbessern könnten und insbesondere auch zur Verbesserung der Lebensbedingungen in den Erstzufluchtsländern beitragen könnten. Dabei wäre es hilfreich, die Ankommenden im Erstzufluchtsland besser zu unterstützen, dort günstigere Aufnahmebedingungen zu schaffen und den Zugang zu Aufenthalts- und Arbeitserlaubnissen sowie zu Beschäftigungs- und Bildungsmöglichkeiten zu erleichtern. Dies könnte die Entscheidung vieler Geflüchteter beeinflussen, das Erstzufluchtsland zu verlassen und die riskante Weiterreise nach Europa anzutreten.

Die Ergebnisse zum zweiten Forschungsziel, die Chancen und Herausforderungen der Integration in vergleichender Perspektive zu analysieren, zeigen wesentliche Unterschiede bei der Integration der beiden untersuchten Nationalitäten. Die Analyse zeigte, dass Syrer*innen im Vergleich zu Afghan*innen aus verschiedenen Gründen besser integriert sind. Je kürzer das Asylantragsverfahren und je sicherer der Aufenthaltsstatus, desto schneller hatten die Geflüchteten Zugang zu Sprach- und Integrationskursen, die sie besser auf die Integration in den Arbeitsmarkt und die Unterbringung vorbereiteten und bessere Verbindungen zur Aufnahmegesellschaft

ermöglichten. Zu den Herausforderungen der afghanischen Geflüchteten zählten das langwierige Asylantragsverfahren, der fehlende Zugang zu Wohnraum und der langfristige Aufenthalt in Aufnahmeeinrichtungen, der zu einer staken Belastung der Geflüchteten führte. Als förderlich für die Integration wurden neben den von der Regierung angebotenen Deutsch-Integrationskursen folgende Faktoren ermittelt: ehrenamtliche Dienste, soziale und kulturelle Veranstaltungen und Arbeitsmarktintegrationsdienste. Obwohl Stuttgart eine Pionierstadt in Bezug auf Integrationseinrichtungen ist, gibt es noch Verbesserungsmöglichkeiten, insbesondere eine rechtzeitige Unterbringung von Geflüchteten außerhalb von Flüchtlingsunterkünften und der systematische Einsatz von Freiwilligendiensten zur gesellschaftlichen und Arbeitsmarktintegration.

In Bezug auf das dritte Forschungsziel, die Rolle des Privatsektors für die Integration zu untersuchen, zeigte sich, dass sich das Engagement privater Unternehmen mit dem Anstieg der Geflüchteten in den Jahren 2015/2016 verstärkte. Dies wurde durch folgende Faktoren begünstigt: das diskursive Umfeld, der Regierungsaufruf zur Mitwirkung der Privatwirtschaft, die soziale Verantwortung (*Corporate Social Responsibility*) von großen internationalen Unternehmen und der Fachkräftemangel bei kleinen und mittleren Unternehmen, insbesondere im Pflege- und Dienstleistungssektor. Die bürokratischen Verwaltungsverfahren für die Beschäftigung von Geflüchteten, die Herausforderungen bei der Zusammenarbeit mit dem öffentlichen Sektor und das Fehlen einer sicheren Arbeitserlaubnis haben jedoch nicht nur Unternehmen von einem Engagement abgehalten, sondern auch die Wirksamkeit des Engagements von Unternehmen verringert. Aus der Untersuchung wurden folgende Empfehlungen abgeleitet: Eine langfristige Zusammenarbeit des öffentlichen Sektors mit NGOs und privaten Unternehmen könnte die Arbeitsmarktintegration von Geflüchteten verbessern. Auch die Vereinfachung der bürokratischen Verfahren und die Beibehaltung von Maßnahmen wie geduldeten Arbeitsgenehmigungen könnte das Engagement privater Unternehmen erleichtern.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFD	Alternative for Germany
AFG	Afghanistan
AZR	Central Register of Foreigners
BAMF	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
BW	Baden-Württemberg
CF	Community Foundation
CoC	Chamber of Commerce
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DE	Germany
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EQ	Entry-level Qualification
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JWFA	Joint Way Forward for Afghanistan
JDMC	Joint Declaration on Migration Cooperation
MS	Member States
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NM	Net-Maps

PNM	Process-Net Maps
SPI	Stuttgart Pact for Integration
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States

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1 INTRODUCTION

The number of internal and international displaced persons has significantly increased in volume during the last decade and particularly since 2015/2016. The displacements are happening due to a range of different reasons and circumstances that are increasingly discussed in recent media and academic literature. This increase in the number of people recorded on the move across the world makes it increasingly important for researchers and policymakers to not only know the central causes of migration but also the reasons and motivations behind the migration of people from and to specific countries. There are major knowledge gaps in the literature with regard to asylum migration from the perspective of refugees themselves, the driving factors and actors behind fragmented migration journeys and the destination. Furthermore, there is very limited literature on the case of Afghans as the second-highest nationality in asylum migration to Europe, and the role of different actors, particularly the role of private companies in refugees' integration in the receiving societies.

This thesis aimed to contribute to a better understanding of refugee migration movements from and to specific countries; to explore the opportunities and challenges refugees might face after their arrival, and to identify strategies to help overcome some of the challenges that refugees, and the countries involved are facing. Taking the case of Afghans and Syrians and their asylum migration to Germany, this research aims to i) explore the trajectories of fragmented migration and identify the influential actors and factors behind the origin and transit migration of people from Afghanistan and Syria to Germany, ii) explore these refugees' integration challenges and opportunities at the local level in the destination, and iii) zoom in on the role of the private companies in their labour market integration.

Afghans and Syrians have been the two largest groups of refugees not only in Germany but also in the European Union (EU) (Eurostat 2021) (see Figure 1). The statistics from the German Federal Government Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) show that Afghan and Syrian refugees combined accounted for 41% all 1.52 million asylum seekers from the beginning of 2015 to the end of 2018. In 2016, when the highest number of refugees entered Europe and subsequently Germany, Afghan and Syrian asylum seekers and refugees accounted for 55% of the more than 700,000 newcomers in Germany (BAMF, 2018). Furthermore, Afghan and Syrian

nationals are suitable for the comparative case study since they both have histories of armed conflict, and both are partially in the condition of ongoing armed conflicts at the moment.

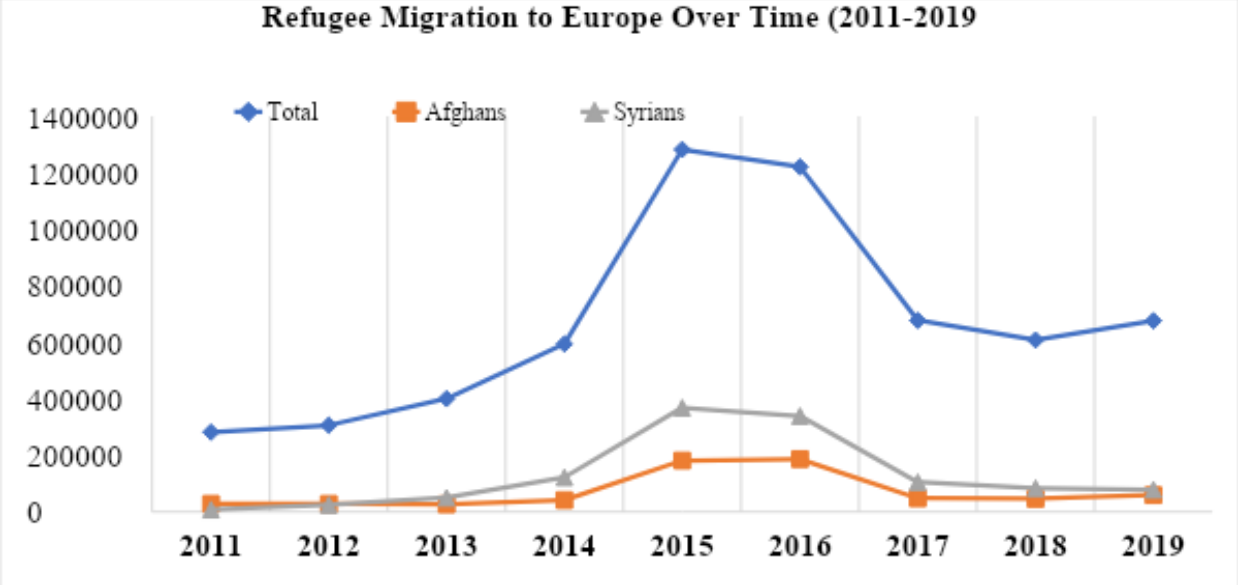


Figure 1.1 Refugee migration to Europe over time (2011-2019)

Source: Eurostat (2020)

1.1 Conceptual Framework

This research uses the terms “asylum migration” and “refugee migration” interchangeably to refer to the migration of people for the purpose of seeking protection. The term “asylum seeker” refers to those whose asylum applications are still under review and, “refugee” is used as a general term for persons with different types of protection status.

“Origin and transit migration” in this study refers to the migration of people either beginning from their countries of birth/origin, or from a second country where they had moved to prior to their migration to Europe. The dynamic nature of migration and the movements of people across different regions and in different stages, times, and in different forms often lead to the use of new terms in describing migration. Collyer & De Haas (2012 p.469) state that the emergence of new terms such as “transit migration”, “secondary movements” and “mixed flows” occurred for different reasons, including frustration and dissatisfaction with the existing categories of migration. The researchers believe that transit migration is a relatively new term that refers to

an old phenomenon. Transit migration refers to *"…traveling through other countries, without staying there for long, without integrating into the countries' social systems and with the intention of immigration to a different country"* (Düvell, 2012 p. 424). The term "transit migration" does not help understand the process of migration. Therefore, the term fragmented journey is suggested as a broader term to be used for understanding this phenomenon (Collyer & De Haas, 2012).

An important aspect of the study are fragmented journeys which refer to migrating through several spaces in separate stages without having a clearly defined destination (Collyer, 2010; Dankwah & Valenta, 2018). The study explores the fragmented journeys of Afghans to Europe after a long period of stay in the first country of migration and the challenges and opportunities for refugees and the receiving countries. The clear information on actors and factors behind irregular migration and fragmented journeys allows the authorities to make well-informed decisions for managing irregular arrivals and setting legal frameworks for integration. Moreover, the findings on integration will be of interest to the states (Länder), city municipalities, and local actors such as Employment Agencies (Job Centers), and other private and non-governmental organizations who are ultimately in charge of administrative procedures and practical implementation of the integration policies in their localities.

Moreover, "refugee integration" has been a central topic in the EU Member States' political agenda and public debates due to the increasing number of refugees since 2015, besides the cited time and resources consumed in the integration process. Nearly every study on integration points out the complexity of the terminology and the lack of a generally accepted definition for integration. Some have even pointed to it as a "controversial," "chaotic," "misunderstood," and "debated" term (Şimşek, 2018; Castles, 2002). In this research, we refer to "integration" as an adaptation to the lifestyle of the receiving societies which is based on the definition of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) because it considers both the prospects of refugees as well as receiving societies.

> *"Integration is a mutual, dynamic, multifaceted, and on-going process. From a refugee perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one's own cultural identity. From the point of view of the host society, it requires a willingness*

> *for communities to be welcoming and responsive to refugees and for public institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population"* (UNHCR, 2002 p.12).

Networks, social ties, and institutions often play important roles in the day to day lives of people. Castles (2003) emphasized the social dynamics of a migration process with a focus on the role of family, community, social networks, social and cultural capital as the main factors. Furthermore, evidence from ethnographic research conducted on minor Hazara ethnic refugees in Australia shows that they mostly use informal networks and social contacts, such as their language tutors and refugee supporting volunteers, to get engaged in the society, to include themselves as Australian citizens, and establish membership in the Australian citizen's associations and communities (Lange et al., 2007).

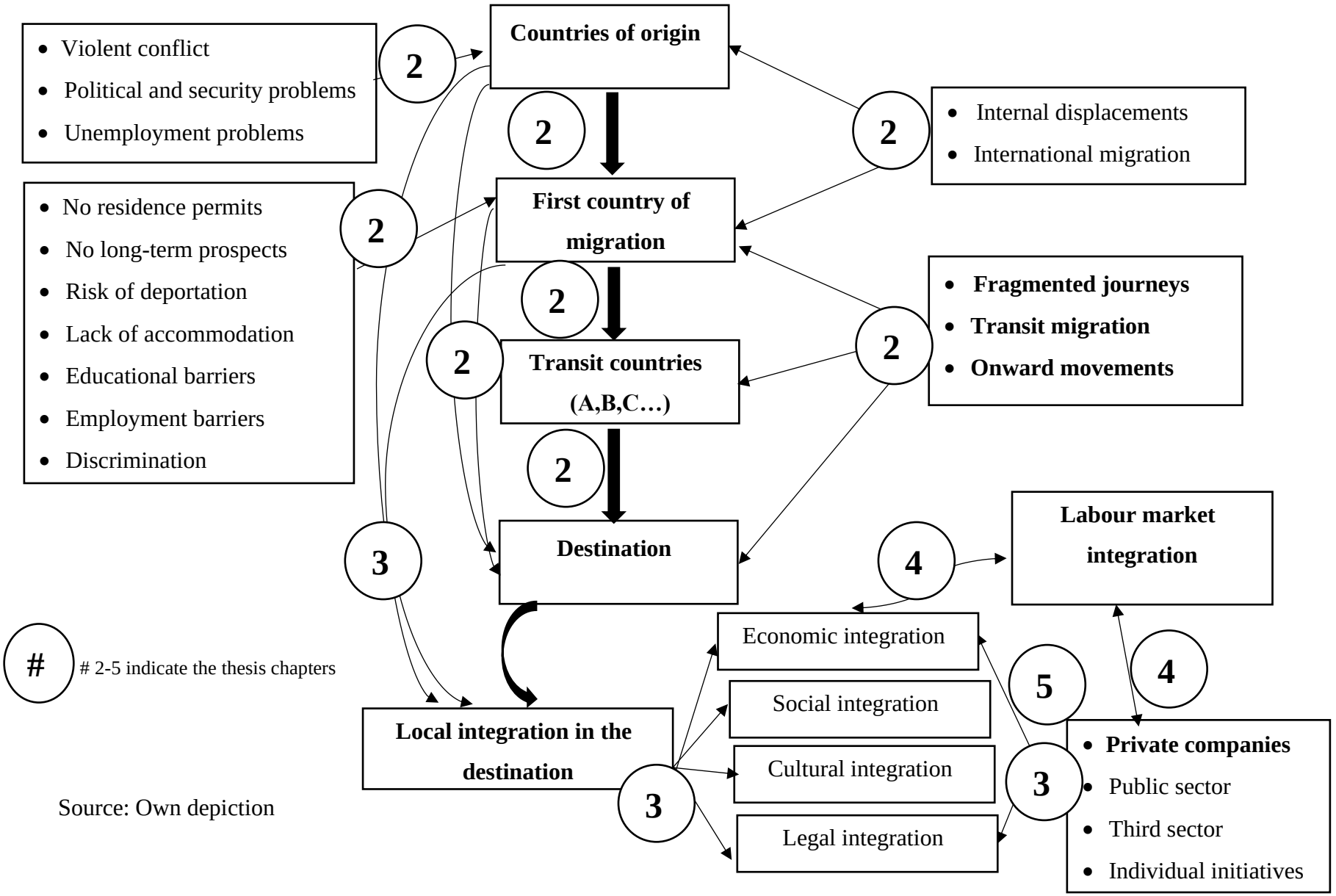
Furthermore, the importance of refugee's labour market integration and the role of private companies in this process in Germany, as well as this sectors' engagement in policy advocacy, access to work permits, and generous legal rights are highlighted by many recent studies (Brücker, Kosyakova, & Vallizadeh, 2020; Neis, Meier, & Furukawazono, 2018). Some have pointed to the influential role of the business sector on refugees' lives beyond the labour market (Müller, 2021a). In this research, we explored how the discursive environment that shapes people's opinions and influences policy making, and the actual practices by, for example, street-level bureaucrats, affect the engagement of private companies in the labour market integration of refugees. The German Immigration Commissions' 2001 debate on the benefits of labour migration "had important ramifications for Germany's self-perception as a country of immigration", which was evident in the developments of migration policies in 2007 and the liberalization of immigration policies in the following years (Boswell & Hampshire, 2017 p.147).

The major concepts and their relations to each other are depicted in Figure 1.2 in the following: Figure 1.2 relates findings from the literature and from this research on the asylum migration of people from the countries of origin to first country of migration, transit countries and destination.

Note:

The numbers **2-5** indicate the thesis chapters where these themes and their relations are analysed in detail. The influential factors behind the internal displacements, international migration, fragmented journeys, transit-and onward migration are shown through these movements which are mainly analysed in chapter 2. Local integration in the destination and the role of private companies in the labour market integration are studied in chapter 3 and 4. The roles of public and third sectors as well as individual initiatives are analysed in chapter 5.

Figure 1.2 Conceptual framework of asylum migration, fragmented journeys, and integration



Source: Own depiction

1.2 Research rationale and objectives

The main rationale for this research is to study the refugee migration matter from three different aspects. First, keeping in mind the large scale of refugee migration to Europe from Afghanistan and Syria, we study the origin and transit migration of Afghans and Syrians to analyze the major determinants of asylum-related migration and identify the actors and the factors that influenced their decisions to migrate either from their origin countries or transit. The comparative case study of the two nationalities allows us to understand the differences and similarities in their migration process, influential actors, and factors in origin and transit countries. Moreover, studying this phenomenon from the destination country perspective will allow us to cover the whole migration process from the beginning to the end, including experiences during transit and between transit and the final destinations.

We further accompany the two nationalities to their communities in the country of destination to study their integration experiences, challenges, and opportunities, and the influential actors and factors that have played a role in supporting their settlement in their new societies. This aspect is of importance to us because it attempts to answer the rather abstract question of integration from the refugees' perspective and based on their experiences. We explore the Afghan and Syrian refugee's integration experiences from social, economic, legal, and cultural aspects in Germany while many other studies have mostly focused on either employment or social integration (Senthanar et al., 2020; Gericke et al., 2018; Kearns & Whitley, 2015; Müller, 2021).

While researching the local integration of refugees, we found out that *"the private companies were among the most important actors in the labour market integration of refugees"*. Given the participation of private companies in in many integration initiatives in the city of Stuttgart and the little that is known about the practical experiences of the private companies with regards to refugee employment, we decided to delve deeper into this topic and find out the private company's experiences, their motivation for engagement, the challenges, and opportunities they are facing in these processes.

In summary, this thesis had three objectives, which are covered by the following three studies:

1. The first study aimed i) to map and explore the trajectories of fragmented migration of Afghan and Syrian refugees; ii) to identify the influential factors and actors involved directly or indirectly in their migration decisions from their country of origin or transit to the destination, and iii) to recognize the strategic causes behind their secondary movements and the motives for a specific destination country choice in Europe.
2. The second article attempted to i) find out how well these Afghan and Syrian refugees have adapted to the lifestyle of the receiving communities in the city of Stuttgart, and ii) explore the key opportunities and challenges either facilitating or hindering the integration of refugees with these two nationalities.
3. The third study focused on i) the motivations behind the engagement of private companies in refugee integration; ii) the major challenges and opportunities for private companies in refugee integration, and iii) the lessons learned regarding the inclusion of refugees and collaborations between companies and other stakeholders in the labour market integration of refugees.

1.3 A brief overview of the case studies and methods

This study applies a qualitative case study approach with Afghan and Syrian refugees in the city of Stuttgart, Germany.

1.3.1 Case study of Afghan and Syrian refugees

1.3.1.1 Background information on Afghan refugees

Afghans have migrated to different geographical locations all around the world. Due to the communist regime establishment in 1978 and the Soviet invasion in 1979, the movement of the Afghan population has been documented on a national and international scale. In 1990 Afghans accounted for the highest refugee population in the world, reaching its peak at 6.22 million (Monsutti, 2008). The capture of the capital Kabul by the resistance force and the outbreak of war by the Taliban have continued to increase Afghans' migration to neighbouring countries between 1992-2001. However, the intervention of the international coalition led by the US in late 2001 created hope for peace and caused an exceptional wave of repatriation to Afghanistan with more than five million Afghans returning, mostly from neighbouring countries such as

Pakistan and Iran (Monsutti, 2008). However, the withdrawal of the international community led by the US in 2014, the deterioration of security in Afghanistan, and ultimately the collapse of Kabul to the Taliban in mid-August 2021 led again to an increase in the outmigration of Afghans. The collapse was believed to happen mainly due to an extremely corrupt government. Corruption was at its highest level in all sectors including the security sector. Many Afghans believe that the government was principally handed over to the Taliban by President Ashraf Ghani who fled the capital Kabul by helicopter to neighbouring Uzbekistan without any resistance from the Taliban. Furthermore, Ashraf Ghanis' government caused massive political tensions and disagreements among political leaders and divided the people of different ethnic groups in Afghanistan[1] which consequently resulted in the total loss of confidence and support of the people of Afghanistan.

The Taliban takeover of the government led to a sharp increase in the number of internal and international displacements of Afghans as is witnessed since-mid August 2021. The neighbouring countries remain the first destination for most Afghan refugees as in the past. Pakistan and Iran were hosting the largest refugee population in the world during the 80s and 90s, which was predominantly Afghan nationals (3.5 million in Pakistan and 1.5 million in Iran) (UNHCR, 2013). Nonetheless, the increased insecurity in Afghanistan, the withdrawal of the international military and the hostile environment for Afghan nationals in Iran and Pakistan have led to Afghan migration to western countries as was witnessed in 2014 and 2015 (Kuschminder, 2017). Consequently, with the collapse of the Government, the same scenario is likely to reoccur in 2021 and the future.

Approximately 7% of all Afghan refugees are hosted in Europe, mostly in Germany, Austria, and Sweden (Buz et.al 2020). Despite the Covid-19 health emergency, tens of thousands of Afghans have continued to migrate to Europe. According to UNHCR[2] reports during 2020, 45% of the total sea arrivals in Greece have been Afghans, 42% of which were women and children. Furthermore, in 2020, 44,000 Afghans applied for asylum in the EU, making Afghans the

[1] Journal of Democracy available under: https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/the-collapse-of-afghanistan/, accessed on 07 Nov. 2022

[2] UNHCR Operational Data Portal available: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179 accessed on 11 Dec. 2020

second-largest first-time asylum applicant in the EU (Eurostat, 2021)[3]. The European countries including Germany are trying to reduce the number of Afghan asylum seekers by employing restrictive policy measures. As part of these efforts, agreements have been made with Afghanistan, such as the Joint Way Forward for Afghanistan (JWFA) in October 2016, designed to facilitate the return of Afghans from the EU to Afghanistan. This was replaced in April 2021 by a more restrictive agreement, the Joint Declaration on Migration Cooperation (JDMC). Furthermore, the closure of the western Balkan route, the EU-Turkey deal, as well as increasingly unwelcoming policies (Ruttig, 2017), the consistent deportations of failed asylum seekers despite the insecure situation were among the policies and strategies to reduce the number of Afghan asylum seekers to Europe. Afghans, however, persist in their migration to Germany despite the threats including the low chance of recognition as a refugee and the consistent deportations to Afghanistan.

1.3.1.2 Background information on Syrian refugees

The literature on Syrian refugees connects the Syrian refugee migration with the civil war that started in 2011 (Aras & Mencutek, 2015; Akcapar & Simsek, 2018; Valenta et al., 2020). It has been approximately a decade since the outbreak of violence and civil war in Syria which caused the forced-displacement of millions of Syrians to neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and elsewhere around the world. Based on the UNHCR statistics[4], as of March 2021, there were 6.7 million internally displaced and 6.6 million internationally displaced Syrians around the world. Turkey is hosting 3.6 million which is the largest number of Syrians. Lebanon and Jordan are the second and third largest receiver of Syrians, Germany is the fourth, and Iraq and Egypt also host a large number of Syrian refugees. Turkey had an "open-door policy" for Syrians until 2014, which was then slowly changed to "closed door" and later to a "non-arrival policy" due to the increasing number of Syrians crossing the border and the change in the Turkish foreign policy towards Syrians (Aras & Mencutek, 2015 p.205).

[3] Eurostat Asylum Statistics available: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics, accessed on 01 02. 2022
[4] UNHCR Syria Emergency Report available under: https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html, accessed on 07 Aug. 2021

Turkey in the meantime started to call for international support and the cooperation of international organizations and the European Union to settle Syrian refugees.

Syrians continued to further migrate to the EU, and they have been the top country of citizenship for the first-time asylum applicants in the EU between 2013 to 2021[5]. Germany, Sweden, Austria, France, and the Netherlands have been among the top receiving countries of Syrian refugees in the EU. In June 2015, Germany as the top receiver of the EU asylum seekers suspended the Dublin regulations for Syrians based on which asylum application should be submitted to the first arrival EU Member State (Schneider, 2018).

1.3.1.3 Literature on Afghan and Syrian refugees in the EU

The recent research on migration in the EU focuses on different themes including the trajectories of migration, decision-making for migration to the EU, integration challenges and opportunities, increase in the grassroots civic activism during 2015-2016, and more specifically labour market integration (Kuschminder, 2017; Dimitriadi, 2017; (Milan, 2019; Belabbas et al., 2022; & Müller, 2021a).

The increasing number of Afghan and Syrian refugee population in Europe draws researchers' attention and interest in conducting more in-depth research on refugees from these two countries. The literature on Afghan and Syrian refugees in the past has mostly focused on immediate issues such as accommodation issues, infant mortality in migration, children's health, nutrition, and food security (see Bartlett et al. 2002; Alhawarin, Assad, & Elsayed, 2018), war, conflict and often plural reasons as a major cause of migration (Monsutti, 2008; Aras & Mencutek, 2015). The recent research on these refugees has tried to cover different dimensions of migration such as transit migration (Dimitriadi, 2017), migration trajectories and decision making for onward migration (Buz et.al 2020; Kuschminder, 2017), integration and life satisfaction (Maqul, GüneŞ, & Akin, 2021), and return and reintegration issues (Oeppen, 2013; Abbasi-Shavazi & Glazebrook, 2006; Valenta et al., 2020). Belabbas et al (2022) focus specifically on Afghans and Syrians and study their asylum migration in more detail. The above-mentioned study considers the important factors informing asylum seekers' decision to migrate

[5] Eurostat Asylum Statistics available: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics, accessed on 12 Dec. 2021

to the EU, and examines the role of capital, social networks, and information in their migration to the EU (Belabbas et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the recent scholarship on the topic studies the EU's response to asylum migration from the Middle East which predominantly includes asylum applicants from Afghanistan and Syria. Freedman (2021) criticizes the EU's response to refugee migration in the EU. He points out that the EU response in the form of the New Pact on Migration has mainly focused on border closures, pushbacks, marginalization of refugees and migrants, and externalization of migration control to non-EU countries (Freedman, 2021). Moreover, there are critics of the negative effects of EU migration control policies. For instance, on how policies such as the EU-Turkey agreement affect the mental health of Afghan and Syrian refugees stranded on Lesbos Island of Greece. Refugees are reported to live in constant fear of deportation to Turkey (Eleftherakos et al., 2018).

Research on refugee studies in the EU has also focused on the labour market integration of refugees in the receiving societies in the EU. For instance, studies focusing on Afghan and Syrian refugees as job seekers in the different EU member states have studied their challenges and opportunities for integration in the labour markets across the EU (Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018). Brell et al. (2020) compare the labour market integration of refugees with other migrant groups in high-income countries including many EU members. His findings show that there is a substantial difference in the employment rate as well as wages of migrants and refugees specifically in the first decades of their arrival (Brell et al., 2020). Moreover, the literature focuses further on the impact of the prolonged asylum procedures or the lengthy residence in the asylum and reception centers on the employment of refugees. The studies on different EU member states, such as Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, and Netherlands find that the prolonged asylum procedures or the long time spent in the refugee camps have negative consequences on the likelihood, employment rate, and quality of future employment for refugees (Brücker et al., 2019; Bakker et al., 2014; Hainmueller et al., 2016; Hvidtfeldt et al., 2020 & Brell et al., 2020).

Considering the dynamics of refugee migration across the globe and the rising Afghan and Syrian refugee populations as the two highest populations in the world, there is a need for more

research, specifically with a focus on these refugees in the EU and the experiences of the receiving countries such as Germany which is the case study in this research.

1.3.2 Case study of the city of Stuttgart

This study is conducted in Stuttgart, the capital city of the state of BW in southern Germany. Stuttgart, with 43% of its population having a migrant background, is one of the most diversely populated cities in Germany and Europe (Statistics Office 2018)[6]. Stuttgart is a special case not only as an economically strong region and home to global industries but also represents a constructive social and political environment for migration. The city has a very progressive integration department, which was established with the adoption of an integration policy in early 2001, several years prior to the German National Integration Plan (Stuttgart city council, 2016)[7]. The city has received many refugees since 2015 and has increased its integration activities for refugees since then. The City of Stuttgart was perceived as a suitable case for the third objective of this study, the role of companies in the labour market integration of refugees, because it is highly industrialized, and it is home to global players and many large, small, and medium-sized enterprises. Moreover, it has often been mentioned as a positive case regarding multi-sector collaboration and the existence of many initiatives including those by the private companies in refugee integration (Özbabacan, 2009).

The city as a case study allowed us to study the migration and integration experiences of refugees who arrived in Stuttgart. Furthermore, the exploratory case study of private companies including both large international as well as family-owned medium and small enterprises in the city aimed to contribute to the literature on the role of private companies in the labour market integration of refugees in the city.

1.4 Methods

We applied a qualitative case study approach using an inductive method informed by the principles of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded Theory was originally

[6] Statistics Office BW available: https://www.statistik-bw.de/, accessed on 11 Aug. 2019
[7] Stuttgart City Council available: https://www.stuttgart.de/item/show/335193/1/dept/154?language=en, accessed on 11 Aug. 2019

introduced by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their book “The Discovery of Grounded Theory”. Grounded Theory is an inductive systematic methodology in social sciences which aims at “the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research”(Glaser & Strauss, 1967 p.3). This approach studies peoples’ experiences through a complex process and generates knowledge and information on how the process works in practice.

For the purposes of the first and second objectives of this study, which were to explore the trajectories of fragmented migration of the target groups and understand their adaptation to the new lifestyle in the new societies, we chose to conduct individual in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with participants in Stuttgart, Germany during 2018-2019. The in-depth interviews and FGDs gave us the chance to understand the details of individuals' experiences on the topic which could help us obtain necessary information for the research. The interview guideline included the process of participants’ immigration from the country of origin to the country of destination and the process of arrival and settlement into the receiving societies. In order to collect the necessary details for the research, the interviewees were guided to explain their experiences in chronological order and in line with their process of migration from countries of origin to transit countries, ending with the destination. Interviewees included two groups: a) Afghan and Syrian refugees in Stuttgart, Germany, and b) experts from the public sector, NGO representatives, social workers, volunteers, and translators/interpreters in the city of Stuttgart. The refugee participants were selected from different categories including different age groups ranging from 15 to 50, including men and women, families, and unaccompanied minors. The refugee interviewees were living in different accommodation centres including the reception/registration centres, the emergency centres (Notunterkünfte), the common reception centers (Kommunalunterkünfte), and common housing. The interviews and FGDs with refugees took place in the social halls and common rooms for refugees in their accommodation centers or at the University of Hohenheim, and experts were mostly interviewed in their offices.

In line with the principles of Grounded Theory, theoretical sampling was used for this research. This sampling procedure is part of a joint data collection, coding, and analyzing process based on which the researcher decides on subsequent steps such as what data to collect, how, and where. The tools Net-Map by Schiffer (2007) and Process Net-Map by Birner & Sekher (2018) were used to map the process of origin and transit migration, and visualize the actors, participants, stakeholders, and factors involved in the process. Moreover, this method was

practical, and it was easy to involve the interviewees by visually walking them through the migration process they had experienced.

The third objective of this dissertation, which was exploring private companies' engagement in the labour market integration of refugees in the city of Stuttgart, was based on in-depth online interviews with large-scale international industries and family-owned private companies, representatives of public, civil society engaging in public-private-partnerships and individual experts, and a survey on the engagement of public, private, and civil society in refugee integration. The data collection for this research took place from late 2020 to early 2021.

The qualitative data from in-depth interviews, FGDs, and Net-Maps results were analyzed by coding and categorizing the important themes based on the research objectives mentioned above. Different tools such as excel, MAXQDA, flipcharts, and notepads were used to support the identification and summarizing of themes and categories (see further details in the methodology sections of each Chapter).

This research achieved ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Hohenheim. The researcher followed the board's ethical guidelines and made sure to keep the respondents anonymous. Furthermore, in the data collection process, we did have in mind that it's a sensible topic and the interviewees were sharing their migration journeys that were not always simple and risk-free. To get familiarized with the probable situations, I participated in training on communication strategies with traumatized persons and victims of violence. For interviews and FGDs, we always considered choosing a location where the interviewees were comfortable talking and sharing their experiences. The interviewees and FGD participants were informed about the purpose of the research at the beginning and were informed to feel free to decide how detailed they wanted to share the stories and experiences about their migration and integration journeys. They were told to feel comfortable to ask for a break if needed or stop the interview if they felt so.

1.5 Structural outline

This dissertation is structured into five chapters. Chapter 1 gives a general introduction to the research including introducing concepts, research objectives, rationale, case studies, and guides the reader on how the research is structured. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are scientific articles presenting

the research findings on the three objectives. Chapter 5 which is the final chapter of the dissertation discusses the major findings on the roles of the public, private and third sectors in refugee migration management in Germany. It further zooms into the important role played by individuals, points out the limitations of the study and opportunities for further research, and concludes with some policy recommendations.

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2 ORIGIN AND TRANSIT MIGRATION OF AFGHANS AND SYRIANS TO GERMANY: THE INFLUENTIAL ACTORS AND FACTORS BEHIND THE DESTINATION CHOICE

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ABSTRACT

We use Process Net-Maps to visualize the irregular migration patterns of refugees and identify influential actors/factors shaping their decisions. A qualitative case study was used that included 87 Afghan and Syrian refugees (52 individual in-depth interviews and 35 participants in 5 focus group discussions (FGDs)) residing in Stuttgart, Germany. Results show a typical pattern for respondents to first migrate to a neighbouring country, and then a mixture of decisive factors induces them to migrate onward. The perspective of refugees in the destination country covers the migration processes between transit and destination countries which is vital information for the stakeholders in international migration management, and policy developments on asylum migration, integration and repatriation.

Keywords: Afghan and Syrian refugees, influential actors/factors, transit migration, destination choice, Germany

2.1 Introduction

In 2020 a total of 70.8 million people had been recorded as forcibly displaced around the globe, of which 25.9 million are registered as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Approximately 60% of registered refugees come from three countries, including 6.7 million from Syria, 2.7 million from Afghanistan, and 2.3 million from South Sudan (UNHR 2020)[8]. Afghans and Syrians are the two top asylum-seeking populations, not only globally, but also in the European Union (EU) (Eurostat, 2019)[9]. Armed conflicts have continued for over four decades in Afghanistan and for ten years in Syria. The refugee migration and the proportions of Afghans and Syrians in comparison to the total number of first-time asylum applicants to the EU and Germany (DE) between 2011 and 2019 are indicated in Figure 1.

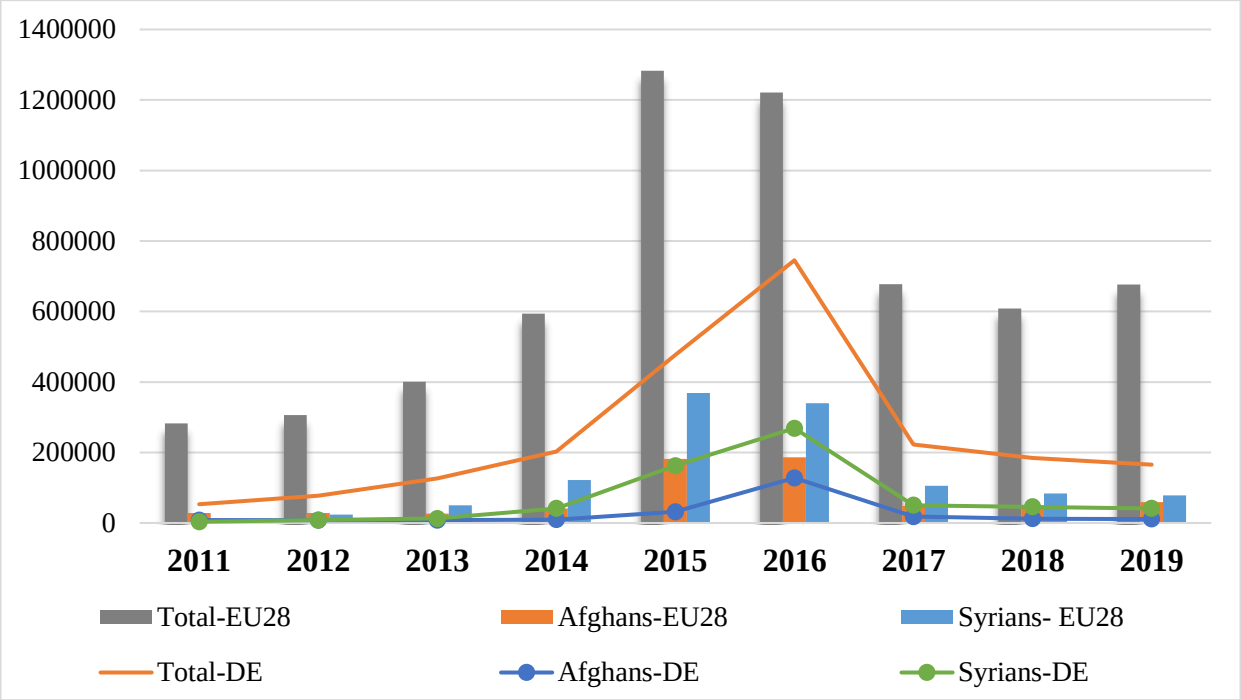

Figure 2.1 Asylum migration to EU28 and Germany (DE) over time (2011-2019)

[8] UNHCR Figures at a Glance available under: https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html, accessed on 12 Nov. 2020

[9] Eurostat available under: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyappctza&lang=en, accessed on 12 Nov. 2020

Source: Calculations by authors based on data from Eurostat 2020

Figure 1 shows that Afghanistan and Syria are the top two countries of citizenship which played an important role in the total number of asylum applications in the EU 28. For instance, the increase and decrease in the total number of asylum seekers from Afghanistan and Syria have caused either the rise or fall in the total number of asylum seekers in the EU during 2015-2019. Germany has been the main country of destination in the EU and has accommodated 37-40% of the total EU28 asylum applicants during 2011-2019. Afghans and Syrians constitute on average 40% of the total asylum applicants in Germany and 55% of the total arrivals in 2016. Afghans are the second-largest group of refugees after Syrians, and they are consequently considered the second-largest contributors to the "refugee crisis" in Europe. In 2015, the number of Afghan asylum seekers in Europe increased by approximately five times as compared to previous years (Eurostat 2019)[10]. The public and media discussions, and migration debates in Germany and some other EU members consider the "European refugee crisis" a severe problem and emphasize the need for strategies to avoid similar cases in the future (Torfa, 2019). To understand this phenomenon, it is essential to know the main determinants of asylum migration and the motivations behind the movements from and to specific destinations (see European Asylum Support Office (EASO, 2016).

The intervening German and European policies included trials to control the number of new arrivals by various means. For example, a political agreement between the EU and Afghanistan, the Joint Way Forward for Afghanistan[11] (JWFA), signed in October 2016, aimed to facilitate the return of Afghans from the EU. Another was the steady decrease in refugee recognition of Afghans in Germany from 72% in 2015 to 55% in 2016 and 47% in 2017 (see European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE, 2017)), which seemed to sharply decrease the number of new arrivals in 2017 and 2018. However, in 2019 Afghan asylum applicants in the EU surprisingly increased by 35% in comparison to the previous year while the number of Syrian applicants decreased by 7% (Eurostat 2019)[12]. The fluctuations in the number of new asylum applicants in

[10] Eurostat available under: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyappctza&lang=en, accessed on 12 Aug. 2020

[11]JWFA agreement available under: https://eeas.europa.eu., accessed on 12 Aug. 2019

[12] Eurostat available under: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyappctza&lang=en, accessed on 05 Apr. 2019

spite of agreements for migration controls raise some questions such as: where do Afghan refugees in Europe come from? Do these refugees come from transit countries? What should migration policy developments take into consideration?

The literature on Afghan refugees focuses mostly on war and armed conflict as the immediate causes of migration to neighbouring countries (Monsutti, 2008). The psychological effects of war on Afghan refugees in the United States has been explored by Mghir & Raskin (1999), and their integration challenges by Oeppen (2013). Afghans have been termed 'transit migrants' and are reported as being the second-highest nationality in asylum migration in Greece (Dimitriadi, 2017). However, the case of Afghan refugees has remained relatively understudied in the academic literature considering their population in the continent and in Germany in particular. Research has considered neither the migration patterns of Afghans to Europe nor the role of influential actors and factors in the process of migration.

We conducted in-depth qualitative research with a focus on Afghan refugees in Germany. To make a comparative perspective possible, Syrian refugees in Germany are also considered in order to identify similarities and differences between the two nationalities regarding their determinants of migration, the path to the destination, and the role of different actors and factors in their destination choice. Syrians were chosen as a comparative case for the following reasons: a) Afghans and Syrians constitute the two largest groups of refugees in Europe and in Germany. b) Both Afghanistan and Syria have histories of armed conflict and both countries are currently in ongoing armed conflicts. It is therefore interesting to compare the factors and actors behind their migration as refugees and the choice of destination. c) The first author of this paper is from Afghanistan and the second author comes from Syria. Data collection was undertaken by authors who speak the languages of the participants and are familiar with their social and cultural backgrounds. This facilitated the data collection and prevented probable shortcomings that could occur during translation and interpretation. This study aims to a) map and explore the trajectories of fragmented migration of Afghan and Syrian refugees; b) to identify the influential factors and actors involved directly or indirectly in their migration decisions from their country

of origin or transit, and to the destination; and c) to recognize the strategic causes behind their secondary movements and the motives for a specific destination country choice in Europe.

This research was conducted in the city of Stuttgart, the capital of the state of Baden-Württemberg (BW), which hosts approximately 13% of all asylum applicants in Germany, which makes it the third-largest recipient state of asylum seekers in Germany (BAMF, 2019) . The primary purpose of this research is to address the knowledge gap regarding the irregular migration of Afghans. This important phenomenon is explored from the perspective of refugees in their destination country, while most other studies explore the matter from a transit country perspective (Collyer, 2010; Kvittingen et al. 2018; Valenta, Zuparic-Iljic, & Vidovic, 2015). The destination country perspective allows us to cover the migration process between the transit and destination countries which we believe is important for the stakeholders including countries of origin, transit, and destination as well as the policy developments on migration management, integration, and repatriation. The relevant stakeholders in the destination country (Germany) include the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF) affiliated with the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat). Clear information on actors and factors behind irregular migration and fragmented journeys gives these authorities the opportunity to make well informed decisions for managing irregular arrivals, drawing safe pathways for migration and setting legal frameworks for integration. Moreover, the findings might be of interest to the states "Länder", city municipalities and local actors such as "Employment Agencies", "Jobcenters" and other private and non-governmental organisations which are ultimately in charge of administrative procedures and practical implementation of the integration policies in their localities.

Another important aspect of the study is the fragmented journeys and secondary movements of Afghans after a long period of stay in the first country of migration and the challenges and opportunities for refugees and the receiving countries. We are aware of the specificity of our target group and the large groups of asylum seekers migrating to Europe during 2015-2017, which is regarded as a time-specific, short-term opportunity for asylum migration to Europe. There are reasons that make this group of asylum migrations a unique case. These include, for instance, the escalation of violent conflict in Syria, the opening of the Turkish border to Europe, the *welcoming culture* of Germany and that of some other EU member states towards Syrians,

the sudden unprecedentedly high number of asylum seekers from the Middle East to Europe, and the invalidity of Dublin regulations for Syrians in Germany. These unique circumstances may have influenced the determinants of migrants' movements and their destination in this specific time and context which is important to be brought up in the agenda of policy makers and help improve migration policies in Germany and the EU.

This paper is structured into five parts. Section 1 is an introduction, section 2 summarizes the existing literature and section 3 describes data and methods. Section 4 presents the results, and the last section discusses the findings and concludes with recommendations.

2.2 Literature

2.2.1 Fragmented journeys and transit migration

Migration without a strictly defined point of destination that takes place in several separate stages is designated as a fragmented journey (Collyer, 2010; Dankwah & Valenta, 2018). Collyer believes that fragmented migration is due to restricted immigration ("immigration controls") in attractive destinations such as Europe, North America, and Australia. He uses the term "stranded migrant" for those who are unwilling to return to their countries of origin and unable to continue their migration.

A critical aspect of irregular migration is the secondary movements, specifically the onward migration of refugees from their first countries of refuge. Transit migration has been the focus of many researchers in different parts of the world such as the Middle East, Africa, and Europe (Collyer, 2010; Kvittingen et al. 2018; Valenta, Zuparic-Iljic, & Vidovic, 2015). Brekke and Brochmann (2014) explore the secondary movement of Eritrean refugees from Italy to Norway, and show the high motivation for secondary movements and the Dublin Regulation as a barrier in front of them that halts them from applying for asylum in the second country. Mcadam (2013), states that "the absence of a legal framework to provide protection" has been a significant reason behind secondary movements of Afghan and Iraqi nationals and "the possibility to rebuild their lives, secure their wider needs, and work towards normality" are mentioned by Somali refugees who arrived in Australia in 2002 (Mcadam, 2013).

The recent refugee migration to Europe has made researchers and policymakers emphasize the necessity for more empirical research in this regard (EASO, 2016). The studies focusing on

destination choice, transit, and fragmented migration have been conducted mostly in transit countries. For instance, Kvittingen et al (2018) focused on the experiences of Iraqi and Syrian refugees in Jordan and explored their aspirations for onward migration. There are studies on Iraqi refugees in Jordan by Dankwah & Valenta (2018) and by Collyer (2010) on a very specific type of stranded migrants based in Morocco, and a study on reluctant and stranded migrants in transit in Croatia by (Valenta et al., 2015). These studies have been conducted on refugees in the countries of transit, whereas we study the matter from the perspective of refugees in the country of destination, which allows us to explore the steps and process in between transit and destination.

2.2.2 Choice of destination

The destination country choice for asylum related migration is a highly debated topic. Some researchers believe that asylum seekers are not in a circumstance to decide, plan and choose their destination country but instead, some factors come together and specify certain countries as a destination for them (Crawley & Hagen-Zanker, 2019; Robinson & Segrott, 2002; Day & White, 2002). However, others challenge this idea and try to prove that even asylum seekers do not end up in a country without their own decision making in relation to the choice of the destination country (McAuliffe & Jayasuriya, 2016; Tucker, 2018; Dimitriadi, 2017).

The current knowledge on reasons behind migration, in general, classifies destination choice into migration-related (visa policies, immigration, and citizenship policies) and non-migration related reasons (colonial relationships, cultural and language similarity or geographical distance) (Mayda and Rodrik, 2005; Grogger and Hanson, 2011). Gilbert and Koser (2006) investigated the level of information the asylum seekers have about the UK before they enter the country. The results were surprising, since the majority of asylum seekers knew very little about the country or its asylum regulations, many had no family ties in the UK, and overall had a minimal role in choosing their destination country. Their findings recognize smugglers as the major players in the choice of final destination. Collyer (2010) and Dankwah & Valenta (2018) both found that technology and social links in the destination country facilitate the migration of poorer individuals from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe. Some studies suggested a relatively

complex mix of political, social, economic, and personal reasons in origin or transit countries as factors that force people to migrate (Dankwah & Valenta, 2018; Dimitriadi, 2017).

Given this topic's importance and the scarcity of research, the need for further study has been stressed by esteemed migration studies scholars (Day & White, 2002; Gilbert & Koser, 2006). The EASO suggested the need for more research to provide evidence for 1) the motivations behind irregular migration to and from specific countries; 2) the dynamics of migration journeys and migration decisions; and 3) migration and non-migration policy impacts on migration decisions (EASO, 2016).

2.3 Data and methods

We applied a qualitative case study approach using an inductive method informed by the principles of the Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This approach helped us to study peoples' experiences of complex irregular migration processes and find out how the process works in practice. The interview guideline was designed to include the process of participants' immigration from the country of origin to that of destination.

2.3.1 Sampling and data collection

Theoretical sampling was used, which consists of a process of joint data collection, coding, and analyzing, based on which, the researcher decides on the next steps, such as what additional data to collect. The sampling criteria included two groups of Afghan and Syrian refugees, diverse in terms of age, gender, arrival time to Germany, and the type of legal status where possible. Data collection took place between August 2018 and March 2019. The profile of individual interviewees who participated in this research is represented in more detail in Table 1. Respondents originated from different parts of Afghanistan (Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Nangarhar, Herat, Ghazni, Ghor, and Bamiyan) and Syria (mostly Aleppo, Damascus, and the northeastern Kurdish region).

The interviewees and participants of FGDs were mainly accessed through social workers in the refugee reception centers, voluntary organizations, social networks, and some snowball sampling.

Table 2.1 Profile of the interviewees

		Afghans (n=24)	Syrians (n=28)	Total (n=52)
Sex	*male*	15	18	33
	female	9	10	19
Age				
	>=18 years old	1	0	1
	19-30 years old	10	15	25
	31-45 years old	11	10	21
	46-60 years old	2	2	4
Year of arrival				
	2011- 2014	4	3	7
	2015	18	20	38
	2016- 2018	2	5	7
Education level				
	Masters degree or PhD	**0**	**3**	**3**
	Bachelor degree	4	18	22
	High school	17	5	22
	Lower than high school	3	2	5
Marital status				
	Single	9	5	14
	Married	15	23	38
Legal status				
	Refugee protection	7	25	32
	Entitlement to asylum	5	0	5
	Subsidiary protection	0	3	3
	National ban to deportation	5	0	5
	Rejection	4	0	4
	Other (asylum application under review or no response)	3	0	3

Source: Authors

2.3.2 Process-Net-Mapping

The Net-Map method was developed and defined as a "low-tech and low-cost" technique by Schiffer (2007), which shows the actors involved in a network, the links among them, and the level of influence each actor has with regards to a specific outcome (Maya-Jariego & Cachia, 2019). A noteworthy benefit of process net-map is that the system boundaries of the network are automatically defined and only actors that influence the process somehow are included in the map. For instance, Raabe et al. (2010) used "Process-Influence Mapping" to investigate the governance challenges in the implementation process of a social safety net program in India. An essential feature of this method that makes it suitable for our study is the possibility of mapping the process of origin/transit migration and visualizing the actors, participants, stakeholders, and factors in a sophisticated cycle. Moreover, this method was practical to use and easy to involve the interviewees by visually walking them through the process they had experienced.

The interviewees were first familiarized with the process and tools of the interview. We tried to keep the discussions very natural and similar to the storytelling of one's migration journey, but we did guide the interviewees and FGD sessions focusing on the following points:

When and why did you migrate from your country of origin/residence or country A?

a) Who made the decision about migration to country B/C, who contributed the financial resources, who helped with information regarding migration and living conditions in country B?
b) When and why did you decide to leave country B/C after a substantial number of years of residence there? When, how, and why did you decide to go further, to Europe and Germany, and why during that period in particular? How well were you informed as to the repercussions of your decision?
c) What were the main events /occasions/ challenges in countries A, B, C [13] and how did you overcome them?

[13] A (Country of origin/residence before migrating), B (Transit country/countries) and C (Destination country/country of residence at the time interview)

2.3.3 Data analysis

The collected qualitative data, the Net-Maps of individual interviews and FGDs, were coded and categorized for the main topics. The main categories were classified into a handful of categories for each theme such as causes of migration from countries of origin/transit, influential actors/factors in migration decisions in the origin and transit countries, major challenges and strategies to overcome them. The frequency of the codes and categories were then quantified by the (*Count & Count If)* functions in Excel to identify the most influential actors/factors in different stages of the migration process. Furthermore, the main quotes related to each theme were translated and added to the themes and organized based on the research questions.

2.4 Ethical considerations

This research obtained ethical approval from the *Institutional Review Board of the University of Hohenheim.* The researchers made sure to keep the anonymity of the respondent's identities, follow all ethical guidelines and confirm their neutrality.

2.5 Results

2.5.1 Origin and transit migration

Figure 2 presents the time spent in transit countries by Afghans in part A and Syrians in part B. Nearly half of Afghans and one-third of Syrians have spent more than one year (+1 year to 48 years) time in a different country than their country of origin before their migration to Germany. The average time spent in different countries by Afghan respondents was 9.6 years and for Syrians 1.1 years. The first transit countries for Afghans are mostly Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and Greece and for Syrians Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Bulgaria, and Algeria.

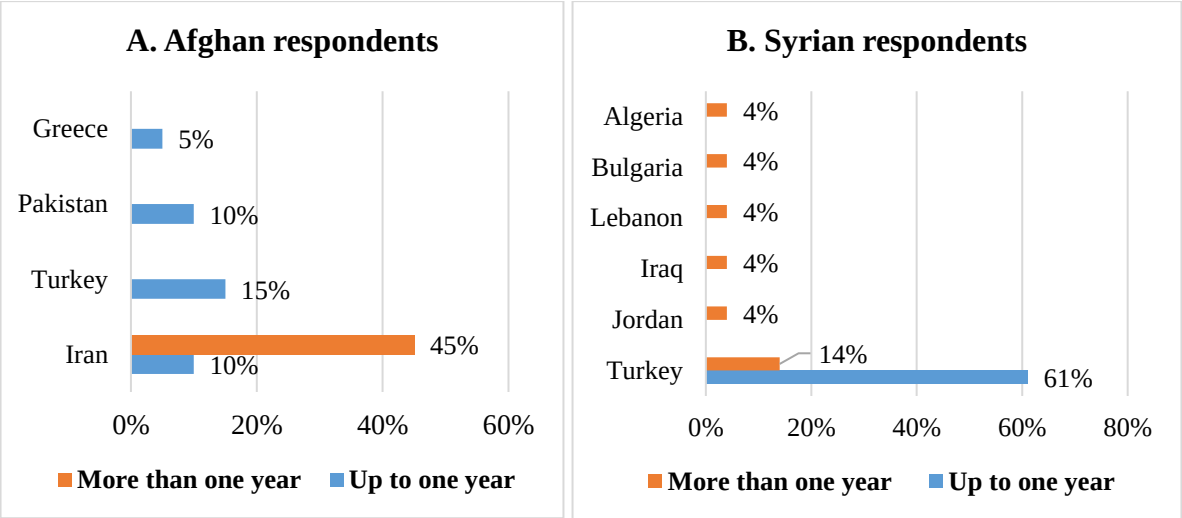

Figure 2.2 Time spent in transit countries by Afghans and Syrians

Source: Authors

Note: The diagram includes respondents with transit migration experiences only. The rest of the informants (7% of Syrians and 15% of Afghans) experienced direct migration to their destination and thus are not included in the diagram.

2.5.2 Process Net-Maps of irregular migration patterns

Figure 3 is a summary of Net-Maps showing all actors/factors behind migration from origin to transit and the destination. Political instability and insecurity issues were the most frequent and decisive factors for migration, and family heads were the leading actors for decision making to migrate from the countries of origin. However, the level of influence of factors and the leading actors change when they move to the transit countries. The first country of migration is visualized as a separate category in Figure 3 because a) people have spent a tremendous amount of time there and b) because it plays an essential role in the secondary movements. The main factors in the first countries of transit were mostly resident permit issues and the risk of deportation, discrimination, lack of long-term prospects, educational barriers, and lack of social and economic support. The most influential actor at this stage is not the family head, but the people smugglers and social links that facilitate the departure to the transit countries. The significant factors for onward migration have been the intention for onward migration, lack of

long-term prospects, and social support in transit. People smugglers, co-ethnics in transit, social media, and social networks also played crucial roles in the process of migration.

Figure 4 summarizes the Net-Maps of two real cases of irregular migration (an Afghan and a Syrian refugee). We have chosen the two cases as the most typical and frequent cases for both nationalities. The most influential factors behind their movements through the pattern and most influential actors are identified and presented briefly. The first case is a 32-year-old Afghan female respondent who had left Ghor city of Afghanistan to Tehran, Iran together with her parents and siblings when she was only 12 and, the second case is a 24-year-old Syrian male respondent who left Syria to Turkey. The most crucial factors and actors behind their migration, the time spent in transit and the path to the destination is summarized in Figure 4.

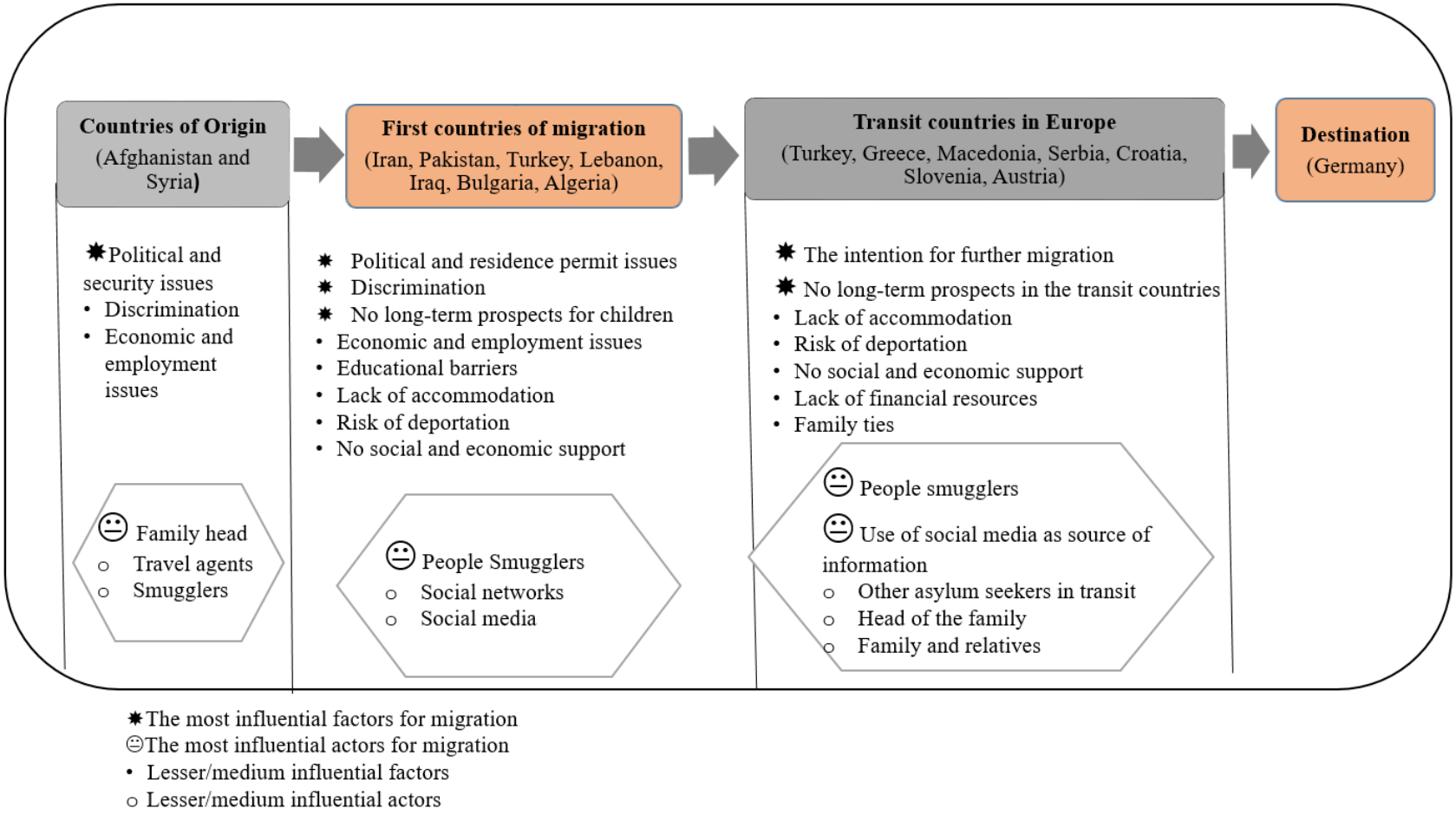

Figure 2.3 Process Net-Maps summary of influential actors/factors behind migration from origin/transit to the destination

Source: Authors

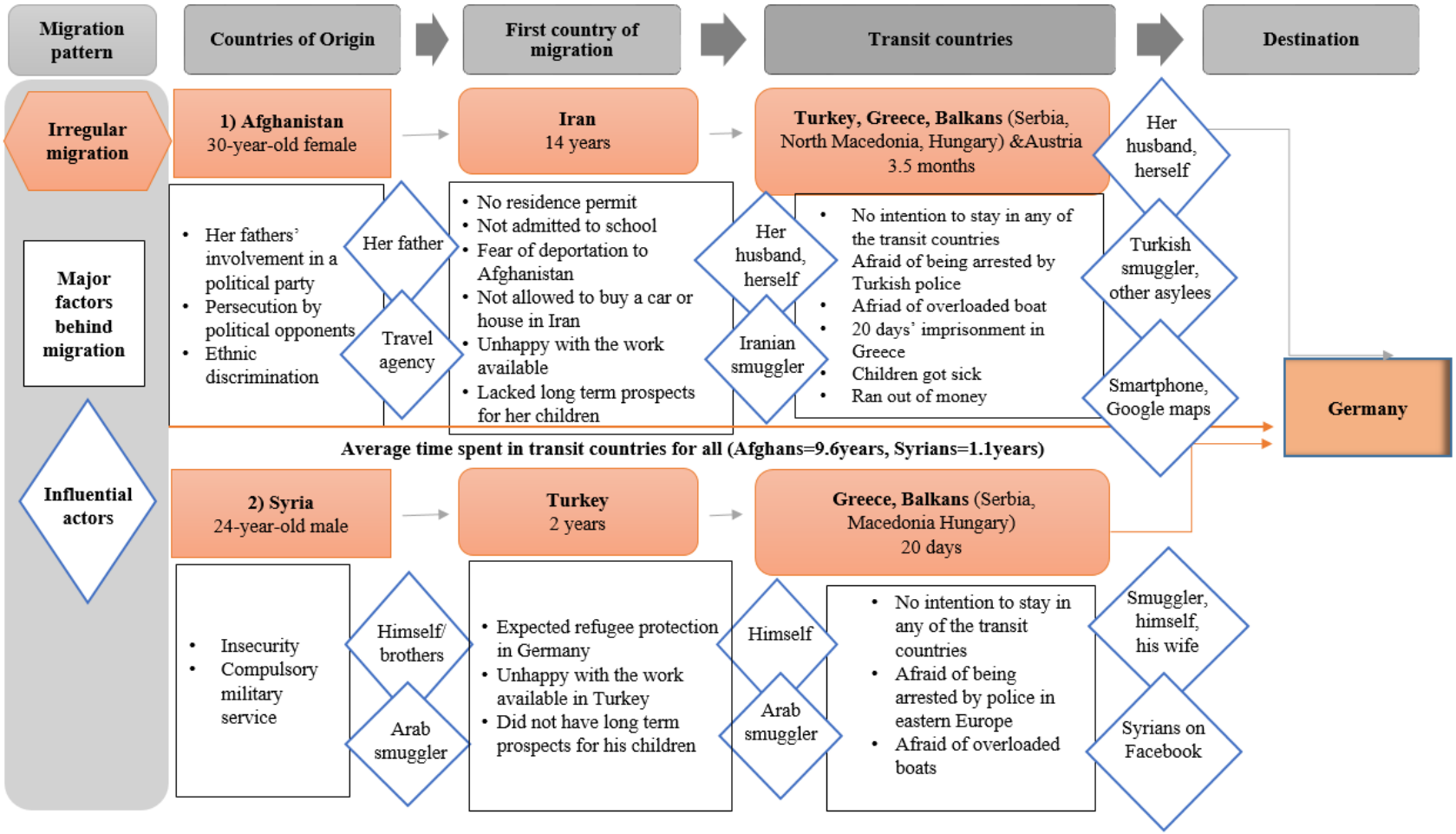

Figure 2.4 Process Net-Map of two real cases from the countries of origin to the destination

Source: Authors

2.6 Main driving forces of migration

Different reasons have repelled people away from their countries of origin or from transit countries. For instance, some of the most frequent reasons for migration from the countries of origin were deteriorated political situations, violent conflict, persecution, personal reasons, and ethnic discrimination, particularly for people of the Hazara ethnicity from Afghanistan and Kurdish ethnicity from Syria. The main reasons for migration in the countries of transit, however, differed. The reasons included legal or political reasons such as unfavourable reception conditions, discrimination and explicit racism, lack of a valid residence permit, fear of deportation to the origin country, and breaches of human rights. Furthermore, some socio-economic factors were exclusively associated with transit countries. They included, for instance, unemployment due to work permit issues, exploitation of labour, lack of property ownership permits, the prohibition against opening bank accounts, and therefore limited job and employment opportunities.

Afghan men and women mentioned similar reasons concerning their driving forces for migration. However, there was a gender-specific case that an Afghan policewoman had to leave Afghanistan as she was prosecuted because of her profession. The reason was that the Taliban did not see the police work as an appropriate job for women and were opposing females, especially in the security sector. There were some differences regarding age. For instance, hopelessness for their future due to lengthy armed conflict and deteriorated political conditions in Afghanistan was mostly mentioned by young Afghans below 30. Ethnic discrimination was a specific driving force for ethnic Hazaras from Bamiyan, Ghazni, Ghor, and Kabul in Afghanistan and for the Kurds from the northeastern part of Syria. War in Syria was the most frequent driving force of migration for both male and female Syrians. However approximately one-third of mostly young Syrians did not mention the war, but the Syrian government forced recruitment for the army or forced conscription as their main reason for migrating to Germany. This reason was not mentioned by any Afghan respondent because the interviewees from Afghanistan were not forced to join the army.

Differing levels of education did not considerably alter the factors driving migration among refugees. However, there were some specific reasons mentioned by educated and employed Afghans. For instance, one journalist had to leave Afghanistan as he was politically prosecuted for

reasons related to his job, and two more reported risks related to their job with German supported projects in Afghanistan. An engineer with a university degree, who was working on German financed construction projects in northern Afghanistan, and another high school educated interviewee working with German troops, both attributed the life-threatening risks to their jobs.

2.6.1 Political instability

Persecution, violent conflict, and increasing instability are the most repetitively mentioned factors that approximately 50% of our interviewees, from both Afghanistan and Syria, pointed out as drivers for migration. These factors also have the strongest influence on the decision to migrate. The reasons included very general political and security related issues as well as personal security-related reasons. For instance, the long-lasting insecurity and loss of hope for the future in the countries of origin, the frequent explosions and attacks, or more individual reasons such as persecution for being a female police officer, an interpreter for German troops, or being a journalist (in Afghanistan). We experienced several cases where interviewees showed us the photos of destroyed houses saying that they have lost their family members, houses and belongings and were induced to leave because of that.

2.6.2 Racial discrimination

One of the most frequently mentioned reasons for the migration of Afghans was discrimination in either Afghanistan or Iran, which was stated by one-third of interviewees. This included ethnic and religious discrimination including ethnic persecution by the Taliban in Afghanistan (for the majority of ethnic Hazara respondents) and, in Iran, discrimination against different ethnicities in employment and workplaces, discrimination against Afghan children at schools, no admission right to attend universities and explicit racism.

> *"I was tired of injustice and discrimination in Iran and always wanted to go somewhere that I have a right to live in freedom… that I am not judged by how I look like or how I talk, or where I come from" … It was hard to me to explain to my children why we were discriminated… why Iranians called us "Afghani Kasafat" meaning "stupid Afghan".* (Afghan female)

Christensen (2016) reports discrimination against Afghans, mentioning “Iran continuously treats the Afghans as disposable, second-class human beings. Afghan refugees and migrants recount endless experiences of discrimination and racism, from the government as well as the population, police brutality, and the structural violence of state bureaucracy” (Christensen, 2016 p.6). It is important to note that many citizens of transit countries seek asylum in the EU. For instance, 11.423 Turks and 9.498 Iranians applied for asylum in Germany in 2019 (BAMF, 2019). Some Syrian respondents also mentioned explicit racism against themselves and their children, indicating that their Kurdish ethnicity was a problem for them in acquiring ID cards or getting a job in Syria and Turkey.

2.6.3 The reception conditions in transit

Discrimination, bad socio-economic and political conditions in the first country of refuge were the additional push factors that caused people to migrate further. Our data shows that a remarkable number of refugees spent a considerable amount of time in uncertain conditions in different transit countries before they migrated to Germany (see Figure 2). The main push factors behind secondary and fragmented movements from transit countries to Germany were the prolonged uncertain conditions in transit. For instance, the lack of work permits and employment restrictions in the first countries of refuge resulted in financial and economic challenges that made our respondents' lives difficult and compelled them to depart.

> *“My parents left Afghanistan because of ethnic discrimination, conflict, and war. We are from a minor ethnic group (Hazara) in Afghanistan and often prosecuted by the Taliban and other terrorist groups. In Iran we had no ID card, although I was born and grown up there, I had no document, no education right, no work permit, and basically no human rights… I was always living with the fear of being caught by Iranian police at anytime and being deported back to Afghanistan. As a 17-year-old (child) I was deported from Iran back to Afghanistan twice, and each time I returned with my family’s support to Iran because I had no one there in Afghanistan. I did not speak the language and did not know anyone and could not stay there.*” (Afghan male)

Furthermore, some restrictions for opening bank accounts, lack of a license for property ownership, trouble at workplaces, exploitation of labour, and violation of their rights in several countries such as Iran, Pakistan, Algeria, and Turkey were the major reasons pointed out by respondents for migrating onwards.

> *In Algeria, I had no ID, no work permit, no bank account. I had to keep my money with my friends. I thought here is not where I want to live and be independent...* (Syrian male)

In addition to the factors from countries of origin and transit, some factors within the country of current destination forced people to stop onward movements and remain unwillingly. For instance, 11.5% of our respondents were stranded in Germany because they were either unable to move onward due to financial or legal restrictions, or were returned to Germany from the UK, Sweden, or Switzerland.

> *"I was planning to go to Sweden. I heard that Sweden is accepting Afghans. But we got registered at the border of Germany, my fingerprint was taken and I had to stay here."* (Afghan male)

Some had registered at the time of arrival to get urgent medical support, food, and shelter. Others knew that registration and fingerprints were important and stopped them from onward migration once they were in the EU. Nevertheless, many interviewees did not know that once they were registered, the Dublin regulation would apply to them and they could not migrate further. Mostly those who did not know and some who knew the regulation had also crossed Germany to Switzerland, Sweden, or the UK, and were returned to Germany after they were recognized as a Dublin case.

2.7 Choice of destination

In terms of the destination choice, we identified factors such as the opening of the West Balkan corridor in mid-2015, which seemed to be an obvious factor that motivated some to accelerate their decision to depart. Furthermore, the pursuit of protection and the perception of an opportunity to be recognized as a refugee in Europe or Germany was particularly important for Syrians. Moreover, socio-economic motivations, educational opportunities, future prospects for children,

and the perception of Germany as a free and democratic country are listed among influential reasons for not only migration decisions but also the choice of Germany as the destination.

Our findings show that most Syrian interviewees (26/28) and only a quarter of Afghan interviewees (6/24) had Germany as a destination at the time of departure from the countries of origin or transit. Syrian respondents referred to the welcoming culture "Willkommenskultur" of Germany or the exceptional opportunity for recognition of Syrians due to the political and security situation in their country as a motivating factor in choosing Germany as their destination country. However, the case for Afghans is very different. Three quarters of Afghan interviewees mentioned that they had not chosen Germany as their destination country at the time of departure; yet they ended up there. We frequently heard Afghans telling us "We wanted to go to Europe" without planning for any specific country at the time of departure. The different actors such as smugglers, other asylum seekers in transit and information from social media played a role in their migration to Germany. Approximately one quarter of Afghans who had Germany listed as their destination, including those who came through family reunification, had expectations for recognition as a refugee, socio-economic opportunities, excellent living standards and educational opportunities for their children. Most of the interviewees who mentioned Germany as a destination at the time of departure emphasized that it was a preferred country of destination, not a planned choice. Many stressed the importance of their intention for migration to safe and secure places in Europe, but few mentioned explicit plans for their destinations at the time of departure.

> *"We were not in a position to choose where exactly we go at the time of departure. First, we paid the smugglers to get us to Turkey, but we did not know if we were taken to Turkey or not? We again paid to be transferred to Greece and so on. We hoped to get to Germany, but you can never trust the smugglers. They leave you where they want, not where you want to go."* (Afghan male)

All 6 Afghans who wanted to migrate to Germany at the time of departure were male, between 18-45 years old with an education level of at least high school and one with a university degree. Three out of four Afghans with university degrees reported migrating without any particular destination country in mind. However, the difference in the age, gender or level of education of Syrian respondents made no substantial difference in their choice of destination. Except the two young

Syrian men who wanted to go to Sweden but stayed in Germany due to the registration of their fingerprints upon arrival, the rest wanted to migrate to Germany.

All Syrian interviewees who wanted to migrate to Germany also had privileged status: "refugee protection" or "subsidiary protection". Similarly, 4/6 Afghans who mentioned that they were planning to go to Germany had either "refugee protection" or "entitlement to asylum" status which were privileged statuses with three years of residence permits and access to integration facilities. They were more satisfied with their living conditions when compared to those whose asylum applications were rejected or were still under review. The FGD participants might have included different statuses including asylum seekers, but it is not reported here because we did not control for the status in our FGD sessions.

Our data shows that the opening of the West Balkan route was perceived as an opportunity to migrate to Europe. For instance, while explaining their migration plan and decision for departure, many interviewees referred to the "*open border to Europe"* while one respondent mentioned "*when we heard that Europe was accepting refugees*" and others noted that*" migration to Europe was not so risky"* or that this is *"the golden time"* as a reference to 2015. The period between 2015 and 2016 was perceived *as a golden chance* for their migration to Europe which might not happen again.

> *"It took us almost 3 months from Iran to Germany. We crossed Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Austria and…Except for Turkey, the police in most of the European countries helped us move on even without paying the transport tickets. It was actually a golden time to migrate."* (Afghan male)

This window of opportunity has affected people differently, considering the time of departure and whether they migrated from their origin or transit countries. For instance, Afghans and Syrians who were already in the transit countries, were geographically closer to the destination, faced fewer limitations and needed less time and resources to get to the Balkans when compared with those who had to depart either from Syria or Afghanistan. Our informants, mostly those from transit countries such as Iran, Pakistan, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, are among those who arrived in Germany during late 2015.

2.8 Supplementary migration factors

Supplementary factors in this research are the category of factors associated with the countries of origin, transit, or destination that have either simplified or complicated Afghan/Syrian refugee migration to Europe. Our findings show that in addition to physical distance, transportation costs, cultural and religious barriers, the refugee-friendly or unfriendly policies in the EU have been a major reason for motivating or demotivating people to move and have therefore largely affected the volume of migration. The EU-Turkey agreement in 2016 caused a 97% decrease[14] in irregular arrivals but has also caused an increase in the migration cost for the same distance which was not affordable for everyone who was migrating to Europe (Mandić, 2017). Furthermore, the JWFA (the EU migration agreement with the Afghan government[15]) is another intervening policy obstacle that aimed to decrease Afghan migration to Europe and ease the repatriation of failed Afghan asylum seekers from the EU. Another factor that is emphasized mostly by Afghan respondents is the political tensions between the country of origin and the first country of refuge (e.g. Iran) that indirectly influenced their migration decisions. For instance, Iran's decision to deport Afghans due to political issues between Iran and Afghanistan caused some to migrate to Europe as they were terrified of being deported to Afghanistan. Moreover, the availability of smugglers and the affordable financial costs of irregular migration during 2015/2016 was another factor that was a decisive factor for many to migrate. There were some reasons related to social and family obligations. For instance, interviewees who had no plan to migrate but migrated because everyone in their family, alongside their friends were migrating, and they joined them in order to not remain alone. Furthermore, a male interviewee migrated because he had to accompany and assist his sister with her children in their migration to Europe[16].

[14] European Commission Migration and Home Affairs available under: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/, accessed on 12 Aug. 2019

[15] European parliament, parliamentary questions available under: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2017-007189_EN.html, accessed on 12 Aug. 2019

[16] The term migrant is used for people who are on the move either in transit or across international borders. While "asylum seeker" refers to those whose asylum applications are still under review and, "refugee" is used as a general term for persons with different types of protection status

2.9 Facilitators of migration

2.9.1 Smugglers

Our results show that people smugglers were among the most influential actors in the determination of destination countries. This is particularly the case for those refugees with no prior defined destination who therefore underwent a fragmented journey. For instance, 20% of Afghan informants with no defined destination followed smugglers' ideas and were consequently taken to Germany. Whereas with Syrians, the clear majority of whom wanted to go to Germany, considered smugglers as facilitators of their journey and sometimes as informants but not as decision-makers for their destination country. The smuggler's information and contact details were found via word of mouth, friends, or relatives in origin or transit, and their journeys were mainly planned, organized, and proceeded via phone calls with what they called “anonymous persons” behind the telephone. Many complained of misinformation by smugglers and some experienced violence, threat, and robbery. Most informants had unpleasant views of the smugglers. They used the terms “uncertain, violent, unexpected, cruel, untrustworthy” and described them as “people after money and indifferent to migrant’s safety and health”.

Irrespective of their level of education, male heads of the families mostly financed the journeys and were the primary decision makers for migration of both Afghans and Syrians. Both nationalities mentioned smugglers as the main facilitators of their journeys and made use of digital technology. Some educated female members of the families played stronger roles in the facilitation of transit migration than males. For instance, in two cases, Afghan females who could speak English were in charge of communication when needed and were involved in decision making as well.

2.9.2 Social networks and digital technology

Afghans rarely reported social networks or family ties playing a role in their destination choice. Exceptions were those, who were reunited with their families through regular procedures and were informed about reception and living conditions in the destination by their family members in Germany. However, few Syrian respondents had social networks and family ties, and only some had contacts with their relatives in Germany before their departure. They were informed about the

possible risks and challenges of irregular migration or were told about the reception conditions. Fellow asylum seekers and co-ethnic networks were important actors for Afghans and had major sway over the migration plan and destination choice. Some were more confident about their co-ethnic networks and believed in them due to a shared ethnicity and thus, considered them more reliable than anything else. Some put their trust in better-educated individuals in origin/transit countries and followed them or their suggestions for their next move. For instance, there was a family of six, who had moved to Switzerland after they had registered in Germany but were returned to Germany three months after they were recognized as Dublin case. When asked why they had moved to Switzerland from Germany, they answered:

> *"We did not know; we just followed another family with whom we were together in the same reception center in Karlsruhe, [Germany]. Mr. A [the male head of another family] with his family wanted to proceed to Switzerland from Karlsruhe. He told my husband about it. So we thought Mr. A is educated and knows better. He said that Afghans had a better chance to get accepted [recognized as refugee] in Switzerland. It was not correct; the Swiss Police returned us back after three months. I wish we had not followed them."* (Afghan female)

In addition to smugglers and social networks, technology and social media played a crucial role in both migration plans, processes, and paths to the destination. In our study, social media sites including Facebook, and YouTube, and technology such as mobile phones/smartphones, power banks, computers, Google maps, and the internet were the initial sources of information, means of communication, and networking for most refugees on the move. Almost everyone we interviewed, male or female, young or old, poor or rich, used either a smartphone with a connection to the internet or simple mobile phones to facilitate their journey. Some carried extra charged batteries or power banks for their smartphones, and some wrapped their phones in several layers of plastic to avoid any damage to them in the boat.

2.10 Discussion and conclusion

This study allowed us to explore the reasons behind irregular migration and secondary movements of refugees to Europe, particularly to Germany. Focusing the case study on Afghans, a relatively understudied refugee group and Syrians a as comparative case, we followed the paths undertaken by irregular migrants, the challenges they experienced, and the most critical factors and actors that affected their movements from the country of origin to the destination.

While collecting data, we noticed that many respondents spent a considerable amount of time in neighbouring countries before their secondary movements in Europe. This initial result brought forth an additional aspect to our research, transit migration. Moreover, exploring the reasons behind the choice of Germany as the destination, we found out that the majority (three quarters) of Afghans ended up in Germany without a prior defined plan for Germany as a destination. However, the case of Syrians differed because most of our Syrian informants planned to come to Germany at the time of departure**.** We also discovered the dynamics of irregular refugee migration to Europe and elements and parties such as smugglers, helpers, and influencers which played a role in their journey's beginning, transition and endpoints.

The primary drive of migrants from their countries of origin was to rescue themselves and their families via migration to a neighbouring country which is in line with the findings of Dankwah and Valenta (2018) regarding further migration in search of a survival strategy. The onward migration depended on the one hand, on the unfavourable reception conditions in the first countries of refuge or the deterioration of the situation in their countries of origin, and on the other hand, it highly depended on the time, available resources, and potential opportunities for onward movements.

A mixture of different factors and some influential actors made the irregular migrations of Afghans and Syrians possible. These factors included political persecution and violent conflict that impacted personal security and political freedom, as well as personal reasons and economic and social pressures in the countries of origin. The main factor behind the secondary and fragmented movements of Afghans to Europe was the prolonged uncertainty in transit, which is not necessarily security-related when compared with those coming from the origin country. Our findings on reasons behind transit migration of Afghans are: lack of legal residence permits, fear of deportation, barriers to education and employment, exploitation of their labour, explicit racism, ethnic and racial

discrimination, and lack of prospects, results which are partly in line with those of Dimitriadi (2017). Syrians mentioned similar, though less difficult, experiences in transit which are in line with the findings of Dankwah and Valenta (2018) about the insufficient reception conditions for Iraqis in Jordan, and Kvittingen et al.'s (2018) findings on ”protracted temporariness” and adverse reception conditions as the main push factor for Iraqi and Syrian refugees’ secondary migration from Jordan. In short, it is not only the physical threats, insecurity or war that lead to migration, but the pursuit of mental wellbeing and social, political and economic security, and the long-term prospects for families with children, that are considered as the major factors which have shaped people’s decisions to initiate secondary movements and to take the life-threatening path to Europe.

Some factors, including expectations for refugee protection such as the welcoming culture of Germany for Syrians and the rise and fall of the West Balkan corridor, were seen as an opportunity for migration to Europe (Dankwah & Valenta, 2018; Mandić, 2017). These reasons were specifically stated by those who were in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan or Iran. The aforementioned policies were also the underlying reasons behind the choice of Germany as the destination for most Syrians and a few Afghans in this study. However, respondents had not made informed decisions based on the asylum and migration policies of the destination. It was instead the publicity of Germany as a democratic country, the chance for refugee protection in Germany, and expected high-quality living standards that attracted many. Besides that, the news on the “opening of borders to Europe”, which was highly prominent on social media influenced people’s decisions for migration and was facilitated by other influential actors.

Influential actors included people smugglers, other asylum seekers in transit countries, and social media, which all spurred migration decisions and determined destination countries. Technology and social media were the initial source of information, means of communication, and networking for almost all respondents, which is in line with Collyer’s (2010) findings on refugees migrating from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe. Social networks and social capital were often reported as crucial role players by providing the necessary information, suggestions, smuggler introduction and means and motivations for onward migration (Kvittingen et al. 2018; Mandic and Simpson 2017; Collyer, 2010). Similarly, the existence of family members in the destination is recognized as a significant factor in decision making for a destination (Robinson & Segrott, 2002). However, it was not the case for Afghans in Germany, because only a few Afghan respondents had family connections or relatives in Germany. Smugglers and co-ethnic asylum seekers in transit were

instead the major actors in these cases. People smugglers were among the most influential players in the determination of destination countries particularly for those refugees with no pre-defined destination. While Mandic (2017) found a close relationship between refugees and smugglers in the Balkans, many respondents in this study complained of misinformation from smugglers, and some experienced violence, threats, and robbery which is in line with Collyer's findings (Collyer, 2010).

Based on our findings on the comparison of two nationalities, we hypothesize that the secondary migration of internationally displaced people depends on the one hand on the length of the violent conflicts and civil war in the countries of origin, with longer periods increasing willingness for secondary movements. On the other hand, it depends on the reception conditions of the first country of refuge. The more unfavourable the reception conditions, the more likely there will be onward migration. The outbreak of violent conflicts in the countries of origin has caused the first outmigration of these two nationalities, mostly to neighbouring countries. Afghans and Syrians have shown different attitudes towards secondary movements which may be due to the length of the outbreak of war and the deterioration of insecurity that has caused people to lose hope for peace in their home countries. In line with Kvittingen et al. (2018), most Syrians we met had initially considered their first transit countries as temporary destinations and intended to return once the conditions in their home country improved. Nonetheless, Afghans who had spent a much longer time in the transit countries had a completely different view of their migration plans. Almost none of Afghans thought of returning to Afghanistan from Iran, Pakistan, or Turkey. However, different age groups had different views of their first countries of transit. The middle and older generations (40 and above) considered Iran or Pakistan as a destination, but the younger generation below 40 had a clear view that they would migrate further.

It is imperative for the destination societies, not only to identify migrants, but to know where people originate and migrate from. Spending several years on fragmented journeys, people have different social and economic conditions, different reasons for migrating and may, therefore, require different measures for support during their reception and integration, and different policies are required for their deportation. For instance, many Afghan respondents who were born and grew up in Iran were provided with an Afghan translator in their asylum interview and had problems understanding the translators' accent. They were suspicious of their asylum application rejection due to translation issues. Some who were born and grew up in Iran/Pakistan could not provide

documents to prove their Afghan identity and therefore had their asylum claims rejected and ended up on deportation lists to Afghanistan. There were cases where lawyers were employed to help, in either stopping deportation or, to intervene in seeking deportations to Iran instead of Afghanistan, as that is where certain applicants initially migrated from. Therefore, we believe that the cooperation of transit countries in the EU and agreements with the countries of origin will be very crucial. Furthermore, the return of failed asylum applicants from insecure countries such as Afghanistan created a lot of tensions and even psychological issues that in the worst case might be solved by their resettlement to a safe third country instead of deportation to Afghanistan.

Moreover, the limitations and restrictions in regular migration may increase the motivations for irregular migration (Collyer, 2010). If we compare the time spent for regular and irregular migration to Germany during 2013-2016, the entry visas for family reunifications took between 1-3 years while the irregular migration during 2015-2016 took some people 2-3 months to get to Germany through the Balkan states. We also witnessed a Syrian woman who had irregularly migrated with her five children, even though her husband was in Germany for two years but could not invite them.

This study's findings are of interest to German migration policymakers and some refugee-hosting EU member states and their allies in international migration management. More cooperation with the transit countries, especially the first countries of migration, is necessary to address the challenges sustainably. Furthermore, Germany and the EU should work together with international humanitarian and refugee supporting organizations such as the UNHCR, the IOM and transit countries to simplify asylum and migration policies, particularly refugees' access to social welfare and labour markets, and should facilitate social and political participation of refugees in the first countries of refuge. This may avoid future mass arrivals in Europe and reduce unnecessary and life-threatening secondary movements.

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3 LOCAL INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES IN GERMANY: A CASE STUDY OF AFGHANS AND SYRIANS IN THE GERMAN CITY OF STUTTGART

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Abstract

This research is a comparative study of Afghan and Syrian refugees’ integration in the German city of Stuttgart. It is a qualitative study based on individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with 91 refugees, and 13 expert interviews with public and civil society representatives, social workers, volunteers, and translators/interpreters in Germany. To answer the question of how well a refugee is integrated, we have developed a multidimensional integration model that clusters the target groups into three categories of *effective, moderate, and poor integration*. The categories are built from the combination of the economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions of integration. Our findings show that legal integration facilitates the three other dimensions, such as economic, social, and cultural aspects. The shorter the asylum application process and more secure the residency status, the faster the refugees obtained access to language and integration courses which consequently better prepared them for labour market integration, accommodation, and enabled better connections to the rest of society.

Keywords: Afghan and Syrian refugees, local integration, opportunities and challenges, Stuttgart Germany

3.1 Introduction

The arrival of an unprecedented number of asylum seekers to Europe was labeled as a political and humanitarian crisis in media and public debates. However, Germans also saw it as an opportunity, and refugees were considered as resources that were highly demanded (Rietig, 2016). According to Eurostat[17] (2016), Afghans were the second-largest group of refugees after Syrians, and they were consequently considered to be the second-largest contributor to the "refugee crisis" in Europe. In 2015, the number of Afghan asylum seekers in Europe has increased approximately five times relative to previous years (ibid). Statistics from the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) show that Afghan and Syrian refugees combined constitute 41% of the total of 1.52 million asylum seekers from the beginning of 2015 to the end of 2018. In 2016, when the highest number of refugees entered Europe and Germany, Afghan and Syrian asylum seekers constituted 55% of the total of over 700 thousand newcomers in Germany (BAMF, 2018).

The refugee allocation in the different German federal states (*Laender)* is done based on the *Königsteiner Schlüssel*[18] that determines how the states participate in the joint financing of refugees. German states take part based on two-thirds of their tax revenue and one-third of their population. The state of Baden Württemberg (BW) has received 13% of all refugees in 2018, which is the third-largest share of the refugee quota after Nordrhein-Westfalen (NRW) (21%), and Bayern (15.5%) (BAMF, 2018)[19].

The step after refugee reception and accommodation is integration, which is considered a vital, crucial, and yet challenging, time-consuming, and not straightforward process. The majority of refugees recently entering Germany spoke no German and had to start from scratch (Rietig, 2016). Integration has been a central topic in the European political agenda which may be due to the

[17] "Countries of origin of (non-EU) asylum seekers in the EU-28 Member" available at Stateshttp://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Countries_of_origin_of_%28non-EU%29_asylum_seekers_in_the_EU-28_Member_States,_2013_and_2014_YB15_III-de.png, accessed on 07 Apr. 2019

[18] BAMF: Initial distribution of asylum seekers (EASY) available: https://www.bamf.de/DE/Themen/AsylFluechtlingsschutz/AblaufAsylverfahrens/Erstverteilung/erstverteilung-node.html, accessed on 07 Apr. 2019

[19] BAMF: Migration and residence available: https://www.bamf.de/DE/Startseite/startseite_node.html, accessed on 07 Dec. 2018

increasing number of asylum seekers in a short time since 2015, or due to the time and resource-consuming process of integration. Furthermore, some pieces of evidence show the poor labour market integration of refugees and thus lower employment levels when compared with the native-born in Germany (Tanay & Peschner, 2017). The importance of integration is also noted due to the fear of emerging "parallel societies" by migrant communities (Danzer & Ulku, 2011).

This study has been conducted in Stuttgart, the capital city of the state of BW in southern Germany, which is home to 170 nationalities from around the world, which makes it one of the most diversely populated cities in Germany and Europe. There are approximately 600.000 inhabitants in Stuttgart, of which approximately 43% are people with a migrant background (Statistics Office 2018)[20]. In the German federal system, states and city councils play a very crucial role in the local integration of migrants and refugees. Even though cities cannot directly regulate the flow of migration, they should either facilitate the integration of immigrants or might have to pay the price of failing to integrate (Özbabacan, 2009). Stuttgart, as a pioneering city in integration, has tried to include migrants and refugees in society by introducing different initiatives such as the "Stuttgart Approach" or *(Stuttgarter-Weg),* a two-way integration process that aims to connect all sectors of society including receiving and immigration individuals and organizations as partners to foster the co-creation of an intercultural urban society (ibid).

We focus on the perspectives of newly arriving refugees, study their experiences and the existing opportunities and challenges for their integration in Stuttgart. We attempt to: 1) find out how well these Afghan and Syrian refugees *have adapted to the lifestyle of* the receiving communities in the city, and 2) explore the key opportunities and challenges either facilitating or hindering the integration of refugees with these two nationalities. The authors have not come across any similar study on this topic and this region.

This paper is structured in 4 sections. Section 2 explains the data and methodology, section 3 presents the findings, and finally, section 4 discusses the main findings and ends with the conclusion and some recommendations.

[20] Statistics Office BW available: https://www.statistik-bw.de/, accessed on 11 Dec. 2018

3.2 Literature

The literature on the integration of migrants and refugees have interchangeably used several terminologies such as inclusion, adaptation, acculturation, and integration to show the process of adaptation of someone in a new society (Morrison, 2009; Block and Gibbs, 2017). Nearly every study on integration points out the complexity of the terminology and the lack of a generally accepted definition for integration. Some have even pointed to it as a "controversial," "chaotic," "misunderstood," and "debated" term (Şimşek, 2018; Castles, 2002). In this paper, we adopt the definition of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) because it considers both the prospects of refugees as well as receiving societies.

> "Integration is a mutual, dynamic, multifaceted, and on-going process. From a refugee perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one's own cultural identity. From the point of view of the host society, it requires a willingness for communities to be welcoming and responsive to refugees and for public institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population" (UNHCR, 2002).

The inclusion of refugees in the receiving societies, the institutional environment of the receiving societies, and the ability of the refugees to integrate are mentioned as influential factors in the integration process (Smyth et al., 2010). Shneikat and Ryan (2018) believe that refugees have the necessary resources and adaptability for the new normality that follows migration, but they require the right socio-economic framework for better integration, a framework that the service industry could provide. A significant body of literature mainly focuses on the economic aspect of integration (Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018) and, more specifically, on the labour market integration of migrants and refugees to their receiving societies (Cheung & Phillimore, 2014). The challenges of integration, include unfamiliarity with the labour market rules in the receiving country, devaluation of their capital, and the loss of status that Afghan and Syrian refugees faced in their labour market integration, for example in Austria (Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018). Furthermore, Danzer & Ulku (2011) studied the role of integration in the economic success of Turkish migrants in Berlin and emphasized the role of education and citizenship as the most important determinants of economic success. Their findings highlight the combination of different aspects of integration such as social, cultural, and political, in addition to the economic aspects, and warn that policies focusing on a

single dimension of integration might fail. Furthermore, a recent study by Şimşek (2018) states that the integration policies of Turkey target only those Syrian refugees who have economic resources, which he calls "class-based integration," and those who lack financial resources are left behind and struggle to access the labour market, education, or housing. Additionally, there is evidence from Germany showing the effects of friendship with German natives on the employment of Turkish migrants, confirming that inter and intra-ethnic friendships lead to better access to the information sources available, and hence accelerates the transition from unemployment to employment, which applies not only for migrants but also for native Germans (Lancee & Hartung, 2012). Furthermore, recent developments in the EU Member States' policies on integration have also mostly focused on facilitating the economic integration of refugees through facilitating work permits to the refugees as soon as possible. For instance, Sweden has recently changed the work permit policy for asylum seekers to day one issuing, and Germany has reduced the asylum seekers' waiting time to access to work permits to three months from the day an individual applies for asylum (Tanay & Peschner, 2017).

The recent literature has also explored the role of social networks, social links, bonds, and the vital role of the receiving societies in the integration of refugees (Ager & Strang 2008). The framework by Ager & Strang (2008) defines the core *domains of integration;* rights and citizenship, as a *foundation for integration;* language, cultural knowledge, safety, and stability as *facilitators;* social bridges, social bonds, and social links as *social connections;* and recognizes some elements such as employment, housing, education, and health as what they call as *makers and means* of integration. Some researchers have, however, criticized that the framework does not consider the status of the refugees in the receiving countries and the role of social class (Şimşek, 2018). In this study, we do consider refugees in the receiving country as well as hint at the role of the social class.

3.3 Overview of migrants' integration in Germany

Germany has accommodated between 37-40% of the total EU28 asylum applicants between 2011-2019 (see Figure 3.1). Afghans and Syrians accounted on the average for 40% of the total asylum applicants in Germany and 55% of the total arrivals in 2016.

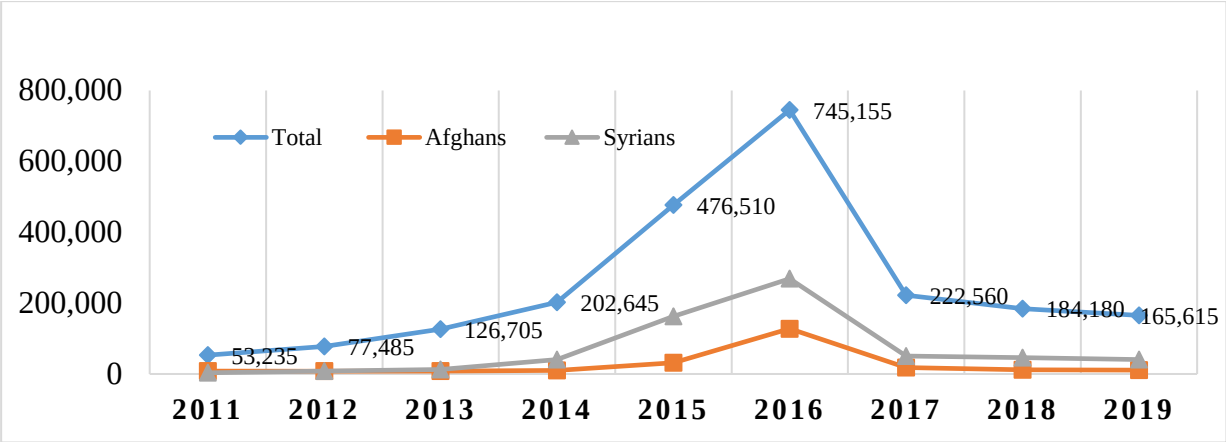

Figure 3.1 Asylum migration to Germany over time (2011-2019)

Data source: Eurostat 2020, calculations by authors

These two nationalities have been among the three largest and top 10 nationalities seeking humanitarian protection in the state of BW (see Figures 3.2, 3.3). The increase and decrease in the total number of first-time asylum applicants seem to show a direct correlation with the change in the number of first-time applicants from Afghanistan and Syria.

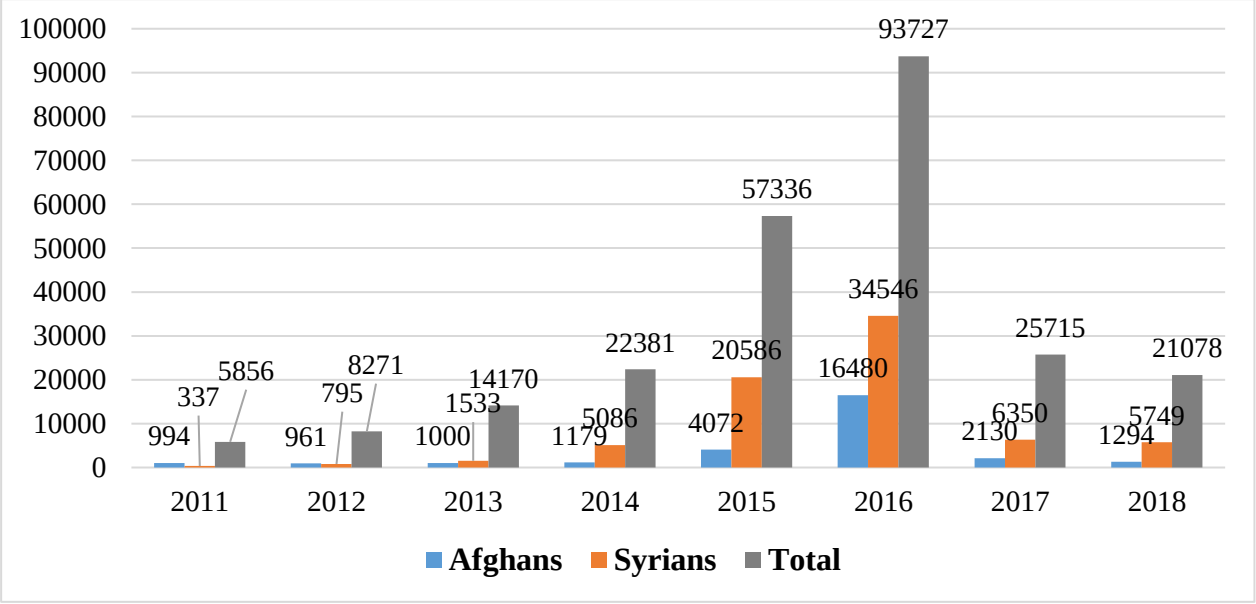

Figure 3.2 First time asylum applicants in Baden-Württemberg

Source: Authors compilation based on data from (BAMF, 2018)

Migrants' integration efforts in Stuttgart go back to the 1950s when many "guest workers" (Gastarbeiter) from Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Turkey came here. During the 1970s, Stuttgart realized that the guest workers did not return to their countries of origin as expected, but instead united their families with themselves and settled for a long-term living in Stuttgart. In the 1990s, it continued with the return of ethnic Germans or *Spätaussiedler* (Özbabacan, 2009).

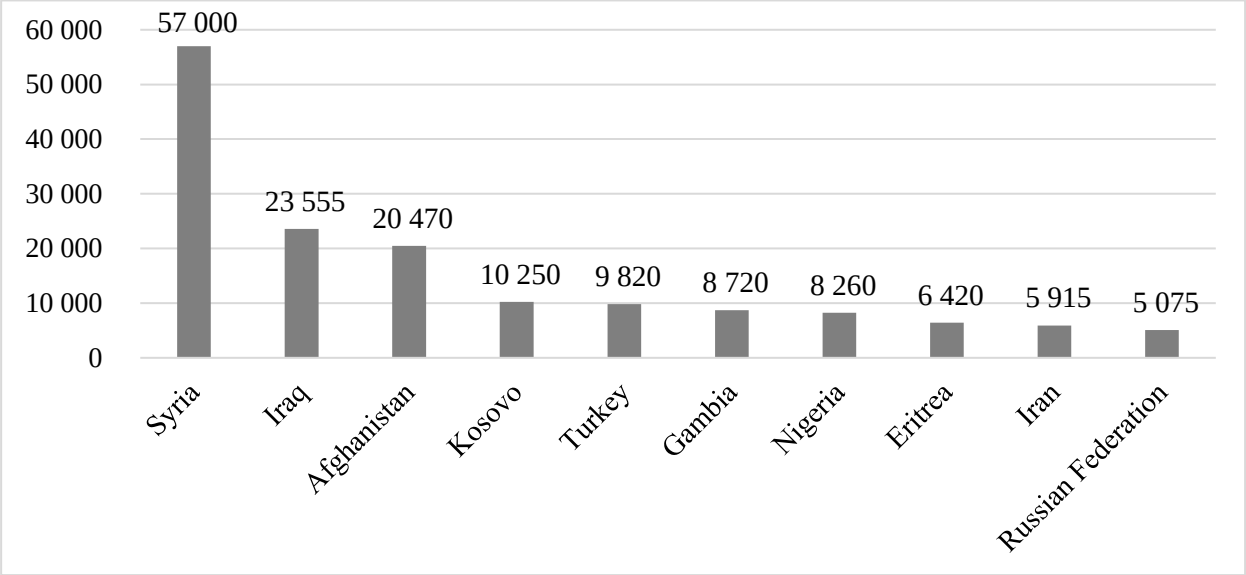

Figure 3.3 Top 10 origin countries of refugees/asylum seekers in the state of BW (31.12.2018)

Data source: Federal Statistics Office, 2020

The refugees' annual report, Stuttgarter *Flüchtlingsbericht – Zahlenspiegel,*[21]shows that there is a steady increase in the number of people seeking refuge in Stuttgart. The number has increased from 560 in 2010 to approximately 8525 in 2016. The number of volunteer-based community organizations in the refugee service sector has also increased from 3 organizations in the late 1990s to approximately 50 in 2017 (Stuttgart city council, 2019)[22]. The increasing number of immigrants motivated Stuttgart as one of the first cities in Germany that developed integration policies such as the "Stuttgart Pact for Integration" (SPI). This policy is labeled as a "vision for an international

[21] Stuttgarter Flüchtlingsbericht – Zahlenspiegel available under: https://www.stuttgart.de, accessed on 11 Aug. 2019

[22] Stuttgart City Council available: https://www.stuttgart.de/item/show/335193/1/dept/154?language=en, accessed on 11 Aug. 2019

city," which was developed by the city council in 2001 when the *Department for Integration Policy* was created and integration was mentioned as a top priority for Stuttgart (Özbabacan, 2009). In contrast, the German National Integration Plan was first introduced by the federal chancellor in 2007. Furthermore, the city obtained the UNESCO "Cities for Peace" Award in 2003 and the award for a successful integration policy from the Federal Ministry of the Interior (Stuttgart City Council, 2019).

3.4 Integration of newly arriving Afghans and Syrians

This section gives an overview of the two nationalities' legal and socio-economic conditions based on statistics from the Central Register of Foreigners (AZR 2020) (see Table 3.1). The data on total asylum seekers at the end of 2019 shows that there are two categories of people with and without residence permits.

The table below shows that the majority of Afghans and Syrians living in the state of BW hold permits for humanitarian purposes, (71% of Syrians and 49% of Afghans) and some other purposes such as education, gainful employment, family, or special residence rights. In addition to permit holders, there is a category of those without a permit, 5.2% of Syrians and 38% of Afghans have no residence permit but have good prospects. This means they are either tolerated, have short term permits, or have neither of the two options. Tolerated status is one of the insecure statuses that allows individuals to stay in the country but is very limited in terms of access to integration measures.

Table 3.1 Afghan and Syrian population by residence status (the German State of Baden-Württemberg, 31.12.2019)

Nationality	Gender	Total	With residence permit		With residence permit							Without residence permit			
						Of which									
			Total	Permanent	Temporary	Educational purposes	Gainful employment purposes	Legal, humanitarian, & political reasons	Family reason	Special residence rights	Application for residence permit submitted	Total	Tolerated	Temporary resident permit	Without toleration or permission
Syrian	Male	48 390	**43 165**	1 395	41 770	**150**	175	36 835	4 450	160	2 835	**2 365**	210	1 220	940
	female	32 870	**29 020**	505	28 515	**50**	45	20 775	7 460	185	1 960	**1 875**	100	965	810
	Total	81 260	**72 185**	1 900	70 285	**200**	220	57 610	11 910	345	4 795	**4 240**	310	2 185	1 745
Afghan	Male	15 690	**7 575**	580	6 995	**15**	40	6 565	350	25	630	**7 480**	1 840	5 055	585
	female	8 170	**6 150**	415	5 735	**15**	.	5 190	520	10	415	**1 605**	285	1 030	285
	Total	23 865	**13 725**	990	12 735	**30**	40	11 755	870	40	1 045	**9 080**	2 125	6 085	870

Data source: Central Register of Foreigners (AZR, 2020)

3.5 Methods

We used a qualitative approach, conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with refugees and experts. The crucial steps we followed were theoretical sampling based on the research questions, data collection, initial data transcription, and coding, followed by focused data coding and classification of data to specific themes and categories.

The findings are based on 52 interviews including male and female refugees, and 4 FGD sessions (1 with males only, 1 mixed, and 2 FGDs with females only) with 39 people in groups of 4 to 9 per session. The respondents came to Germany between 2011 and 2018. The data for this study is collected together with the data for the study of origin and transit migration of Afghans and Syrians (Torfa et al., 2021). The same interviewees were initially interviewed for their migration experiences from origin to transit countries and to Germany and the second part of the interview then focussed on their experiences since arrival in the receiving societies. Additionally, we conducted 13 expert interviews with public and private stakeholder representatives, social workers, translators/interpreters, and volunteers. Furthermore, the State Central Register Office, annual reports, and policy papers were reviewed. The profile of the individual refugee interviewees is shown in Table 3.2 and the profile of the experts are presented in Table 3.3.

This research included people with all four types of protection *(refugee protection, entitlement to asylum, subsidiary protection, national ban to deportation)* as well as rejections and those whose asylum applications were still under review. Approximately 70% of the interviewees had either refugee or asylum protection status with which they could access integration services such as language courses, employment, or family reunification. There was, however, a considerable difference between the two nationalities. For instance, all Syrians interviewed have either refugee or asylum protection, while only half of the Afghan respondents had one of these two relatively prestigious statuses and the other half held the relatively insecure conditions such as a national ban to deportation, named the *tolerated* or *Duldung* status, which is the term used for those whose asylum application got rejected, but they would not be deported back to their countries of origin for different reasons.

Table 3.2 Profile of the interviewees

		Afghans (n=24)	Syrians (n=28)	Total (n=52)
Sex	*male*	15	18	33
	Female	9	10	19
Age				
	>=18 years old	1	0	1
	19-30 years old	10	15	25
	31-45 years old	11	10	21
	46-60 years old	2	2	4
Year of arrival				
	2011- 2014	4	3	7
	2015	18	20	38
	2016- 2018	2	5	7
Education level				
	Masters degree or PhD	**0**	**3**	**3**
	Bachelor degree	4	18	22
	High school	17	5	22
	Lower than high school	3	2	5
Marital status				
	Single	9	5	14
	Married	15	23	38
Legal status				
	Refugee protection	7	25	32
	Entitlement to asylum	5	0	5
	Subsidiary protection	0	3	3
	National ban to deportation	5	0	5
	Rejection	4	0	4
	Other (asylum application under review or no response)	3	0	3

Source: (Torfa et al., 2021)

Table 3.3 Profile of expert interviewees

Type	Number of interviews
Member of Integration Policy Department (Stuttgart City Council)	1
Head of refugee service department (NGO)	1
Migration and integration manager (NGO)	1
Integration manager (Public-Private Partnership)	1
Volunteer	1
Social workers from reception centres from Stuttgart Münster, Birkach, and Plieningen	4
Project coordinator (NGO working for females)	1
Individual experts and activists	2
Member of *International Committee for Supervision of Integration*	1
Total	**13**

Source: Authors

The participants were chosen through a mixture of purposive and snowball sampling as we wanted to include both male and female refugees from both nationalities. Moreover, we wanted to include people with different types of legal status because an individual's type of protection status directly influences the type of integration service they may receive. The interviewees and participants of FGDs were initially accessed through social workers and volunteer organizations and individuals in the reception centres. We considered including reception centres in different geographical locations across the city. Initially, the research topic and objectives were explained to the responsible individuals in the reception centres, and their support was requested to introduce us to the interviewees and facilitate the interviews. The experts included social workers, heads of refugee reception centres, migration and integration mangers from both public and NGO sectors, and volunteers in the city.

In the first phase of the data collection, the respondents were introduced to the research project and tools. They were assured of the anonymity of the interview and encouraged to actively take part in the process of the interview and ask questions for clarification whenever needed. The respondents guided us through their daily integration activities since their arrival and the improvements they witnessed. The activities included the types of integration, language, and education services they received, the formal and informal kinds of integration support they got, and the activities they were doing themselves to get settled. The purpose of this conversational type interview was to the identification of main factors and actors playing essential roles in their

integration. The different service types and factors influencing the process of their settlement, housing, language learning, social and health services, schooling, and employment services were identified and noted on sticky notes and placed on the flipchart. The data collected from the in-depth interviews and FGDs were transcribed, memos were written after each interview, and the data were coded and categorized for the main themes which were ultimately classified into different topics to help respond to the underlying research questions.

The two nationalities (Afghans and Syrians) were chosen because they constituted the two largest populations of refugees in Germany. Furthermore, the authors spoke the languages of the target sample and were familiar with their social and cultural backgrounds. This facilitated the data collection and prevented the probable shortcomings that could occur during translation and interpretation and reduced the costs for time and resources that might otherwise have been required for the data collection and analysis. We used purposive sampling because we wanted to be subjective in the inclusion of both males and females as well as make sure to include people with different types of legal status, including (refugee protection, entitlement to asylum, subsidiary protection, and national ban to deportation) (BAMF, 2016). The inclusion of people with various types of legal status was critical because we noticed that an individual's legal status directly influenced the type of integration service one may or may not receive.

Based on our results, we developed a model to answer the research question on the extent of individuals' integration. The model includes four different dimensions including economic, social, cultural, and legal integration. The measurement of each dimension of the integration and the values for each sub-dimension were calculated with the following procedure: The four integration dimensions and sub-dimensions (see Table 4) were evaluated with the scores of one and zero. Each aspect is evaluated with a (1) in the case it is fulfilled, and with a (0) score otherwise. For instance, if an individual has a job, his employment aspect is scored a one, and if not, he gets a zero. Then the total scores of each individual and correspondingly the total scores for all the respondents are summed up for all the four integration dimensions. There are in total 12 sub-dimensions for a total of 4 types of integration, giving a total score of 12. A score of 12 would mean that an individual is very well integrated into the society they live in. The main purpose behind the quantitative demonstration of the qualitative data on the individual dimensions of integration is to find out how

well refugees are adapted to the new lifestyle, and which dimensions are more successful than the others.

3.5.1 Four dimensions of integration

Our main research question was whether refugees are integrated into their receiving communities and how well they are integrated. For this purpose, we analyzed integration from four dimensions (see Table 3.4). We suppose that an individual is economically well-integrated if they have a job, standard housing, or accommodation out of the refugee reception centers and is financially independent which means that they do not receive any financial/welfare support from the government.

To make the concept more comprehensible, we have evaluated the different aspects of integration dimensions with a score of one in case it is fulfilled, and with a score of zero otherwise. The model attempts to make the abstract concept of integration more understandable for our study to help better answer the underlying questions. There are a few reasons behind presenting quantitative data in this paper. First, since the sample is purposive and relatively small, the findings are not representative. Still, presenting descriptive quantitative statistics can help better assess how relevant different topics for the interviewees were. Second, the scores of one and zero for each dimension allowed us to clearly and visually see the similarities and differences between the results of each integration dimension for two nationalities from Afghanistan and Syria.

Table 3.4 Four dimensions of integration

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Definitions- evaluated with (1,0) scores
Economic	Employment	1 if a person has a job, 0 otherwise
	Housing	1 if a person lives outside of the asylum center, 0 otherwise
	Financial independence	1 if a person receives no public welfare support, 0 otherwise
Social	Social bridges/links	1 if a person was in regular contact with locals/internationals, 0 otherwise

	Social interaction & involvement in local communities	1 if a person was involved in the local community activities as participant/volunteer, 0 otherwise
	Access to education and health services	1 if a person had health insurance and allowance to school/ language course, 0 otherwise
Cultural	Language proficiency B1	1 if a person had B1 or higher level, 0 otherwise
	Cultural knowledge	1 if a person had completed the "Orientation Course" (100 hours), 0 otherwise
	Cultural life satisfaction	1 if a person responded that he was satisfied with the cultural/religious aspect of his life, 0 otherwise
Legal	Refugee status	1 if a person had refugee status, 0 otherwise
	Other protection Status	1 if a person had any other legal protection status, 0 otherwise
	Work permit	1 if a person had a work permit, 0 otherwise

Source: Authors

In this model, an individual is considered as socially well-integrated if they have access to health and education services, developed social bridges and links (have established contacts), is in regular interaction with the receiving community, and is practically involved in local community activities, and either contributes as a volunteer or simply as a participant. Ultimately, access to education and health services is an important factor that paves the way for one's access to social inclusion. Moreover, an individual is counted as culturally integrated if they have language proficiency. We specify it by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages[23] level (B1), which is also a required language level for most employers and universities. Furthermore, cultural knowledge of the receiving society is measured with the "Orientation Course" (100 hours) which aims to provide foreigners with knowledge of the legal system, culture, and history in Germany. The person scores 1 if the course is completed and a 0 otherwise.

[23] Cambridge Assessment, International language standards available: https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/cefr/, accessed on 11 Aug. 2019

Additionally, a third factor evaluates a person's satisfaction with the overall cultural aspect of their life in society, if satisfied 1, otherwise 0.

Finally, our definition of legal integration is that an individual has a legal right to stay which is often refugee/asylum status, or any other type of humanitarian protection with a work permit. Legal integration in this model does not refer to political integration, often understood as citizenship, the right to vote, or any other political rights and responsibilities. It rather refers to the legal rights and responsibilities that a refugee after the entrance into the receiving societies might obtain. It is important to note that none of our respondents had either citizenship or the right to political participation, such as voting, yet. Our findings show that legal integration directly or indirectly affects other integration dimensions, either positively or negatively. It means that the type of social, health, cultural, or economic facilities a person might receive very much depends on the type of status or humanitarian protection a person gets.

3.5.2 Effective, moderate, and poor integration

The different integration levels indicating how well someone is integrated are shown in Figure 3.4. To answer the research questions, we classify the data into three different categories that we call *poor, moderate, and effective integration.* Every respondent's scores will sum up to one final score that could range between 0 and 12. Poor integration refers to those with an integration score of 2-5, moderate integration includes those between 6-8, and effective integration refers to those with the highest scores, between 9-12.

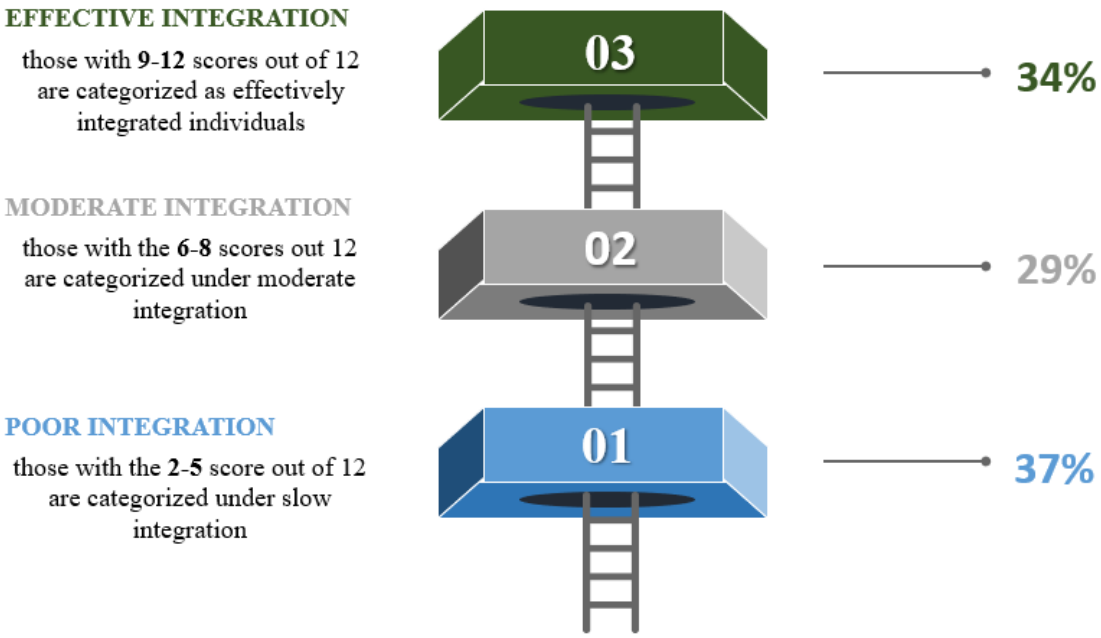

Figure 3.4 Integration classifications

Source: Authors

3.6 Results

The four different dimensions, such as economic, social, cultural, and legal integration of Afghan and Syrian refugees are shown in Figure 3.5. The X-axis shows dimensions of integration and the Y-axis is the average score of each dimension for two nationalities. In general, refugees were better integrated into legal and social aspects than in cultural and economic aspects.

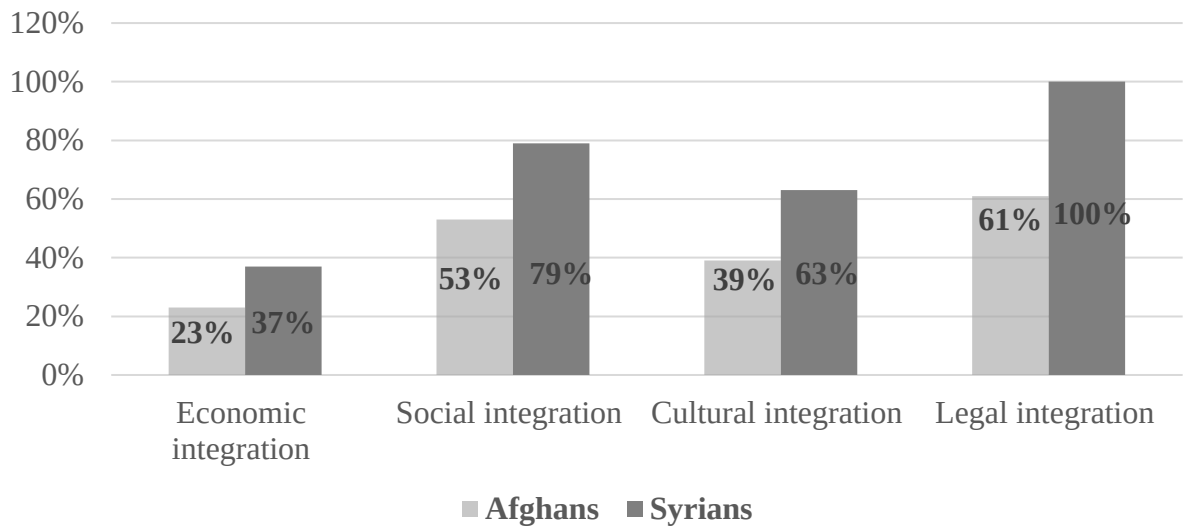

Figure 3.5 Afghans' and Syrians' integration dimensions

Source: Author's compilation

The questions that may arise at this point are: what factors might have played a role in each integration dimension? Why are values for each dimension different from the other? Why are there differences between the two nationalities? The results show that Syrians had better scores in all four integration aspects when compared with Afghans. Legal integration for Syrians is 100 percent since all the Syrian interviewees had either refugee or subsidiary protection status, legal rights, and work permits. However, Afghan respondents had very diverse statuses. Approximately 40% of them were either refused refugee status or are waiting for the results of their asylum application. This long-lasting process of asylum caused a lack of access to language courses and almost all other integration measures and consequently affected all three other aspects negatively. The reasons for overall poor integration in the economic dimension of the model highly depend on the low access and low availability of housing in Stuttgart. The absolute majority of interviewees were still residing in refugee reception centers. Furthermore, many had only short-term work contracts or *"Zeitarbeit"* and were still partly or fully financially dependent on the government.

3.6.1 Effective, moderate, and poor integration

Our results show that 63% of the respondents are either moderately or effectively integrated. The disaggregated results for the two nationalities in Figure 3.6 show a different result than the total of

both. Figure 3.6 illustrates that many Syrians 43%, and only 25% of Afghans are effectively integrated, while 42% of Afghans fall under the poor integration category.

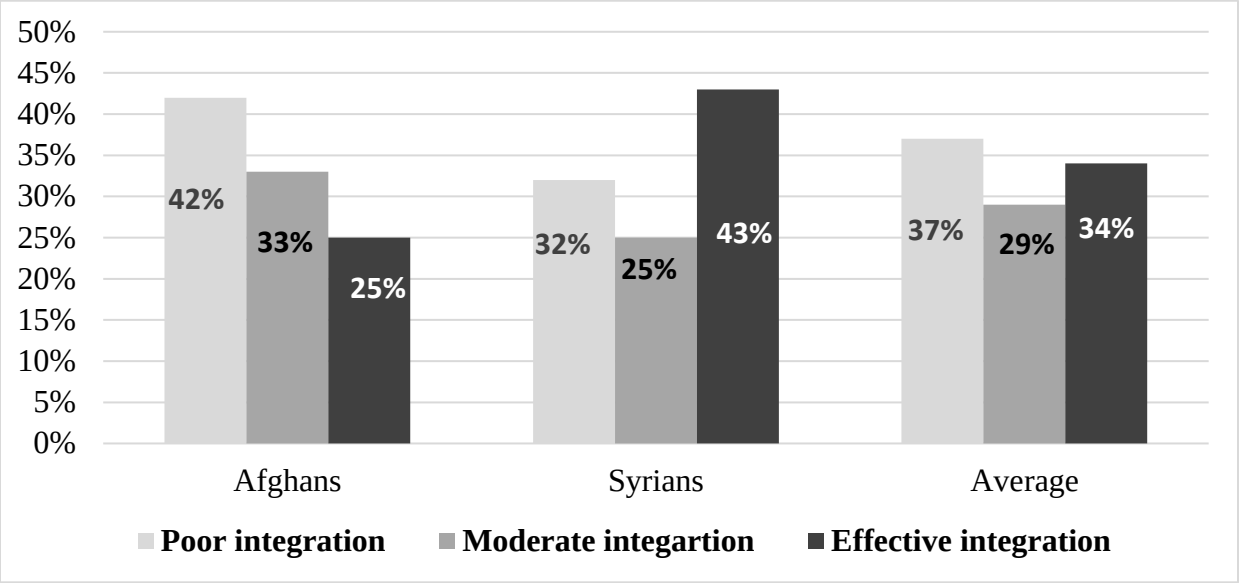

Figure 3.4 Integration levels/classifications

Source: Authors

On further inspection of our results, we notice that legal integration directly affected all three other aspects either positively or negatively. The results show that Afghan respondents lack overall integration mostly because they score very low in legal integration when compared with Syrians. Among the respondents, 90% of Syrians, and only 30% of the Afghan respondents had refugee protection status, the most privileged status, which allows one to benefit from all the available integration facilities without limitations. However, 50% of Afghan respondents had an insecure status which means they had either a national ban to deportation, rejection, or appealed and were still in the asylum process. If they do not have refugee status or legal protection rights, they lack the right to language and integration courses, do not possess a work permit, lack the right to housing and free movement, stay financially dependent on welfare systems for a longer period, might have lower interaction and involvement in the communities because of limited language proficiency and finally, the whole process of integration will follow a comparatively poorer course. However, many Afghan respondents blamed political reasons for their poor integration, for instance, the political agreement of the EU with the Afghan government for the return of Afghan asylum seekers, named *The Joint Way Forward for Afghanistan.* A male respondent said:

> *"The Afghan government does not care about Afghan asylum seekers in Europe. The government has made a deal with the EU to continue the financial aid to the government and return Afghan refugees. That is why Germany is returning as many Afghans as possible instead of processing our documents." Afghan male*

Many Afghan respondents reported discrimination in the process of reception and integration. Some of them compared themselves with Syrians complaining about the rejection of their asylum application, lengthy process of asylum application, lack of or very delayed access to integration facilities. The following is an example quote from a respondent from Afghanistan:

> *"I want the German government to treat all refugees the same. They should not decide our asylum case based on the country we come from… I will return to my home country the moment I know it is safe and I will have the possibility to live there peacefully". Afghan male*

The following section briefly presents the most important factors that either facilitated or hindered refugee integration in Stuttgart.

3.7 Opportunities and challenges for refugee integration

Stuttgart, as the capital of the state, has received many refugees in recent years. The annual report on refugees, (*Stuttgarter Flüchtlingsbericht – Zahlenspiegel),*[24] shows that there is a steady increase in the number of people seeking refuge. Stuttgart is one of the pioneering German cities in the development of integration policy and opportunities for integrating newcomers. For instance, it established a department for integration policy as early as 2001 to coordinate all interrelated fields of action ranging from language support, equal opportunities in education to the intercultural orientation of the city administration aligned in network structure. Respondents have referred to the availability of integration opportunities, the supporting welfare system, and the kindness of volunteers, as main opportunities that facilitate their integration. Stuttgart City Council

[24] The Annual Report on Refugees available: www.stuttgart.de, accessed on 11 Aug. 2020

has dedicated substantial effort to welcome and include migrants, support their integration into the society, economy, and culture by following the motto "everyone who lives in Stuttgart is a Stuttgarter, irrespective of the passport and origin" or *„Jeder der in Stuttgart lebt ist Stuttgarter, unabhängig von Pass und Herkunft "*[25]. There were several offers on top of the traditional national integration measures (600-900 hours of the German language and cultural orientation), for instance, Stuttgart invests in integration through several initiatives such as social and political participation, refugee dialogues, refugee empowerment projects funding refugees, and migrant/refugee-led initiatives. Moreover, there were good examples of opportunities that facilitated the integration of refugees in the city of Stuttgart. For instance, the engagement of over 3000 individual volunteers and the development of an increasing number of local refugees supporting community organizations (Freundeskreise) and migrant-led organizations.

Our results, however, reveal some challenges, such as a lengthy asylum application process, lack of accommodation and long-term residence in the emergency and communal reception centers, insufficient language courses, and a lack of possibilities to interact with the local Germans, and discrimination that hinder integration. Furthermore, the interviews with experts show some challenges such as lack of cooperation and coordination among different stakeholders and what they called "too many offers" and the "short term project-based service provision" leading to some kind of "unnecessary competition" among different service providing organizations in the city. Some expert interviewees believed that fewer offers but more targeted and coordinated offers might be more effective. The interviewees mostly concentrated on the challenges which are explained in more detail in the following section.

3.7.1 The long-term residence in the reception centers

The first and foremost repeated complaint by almost every respondent was the challenging accommodation situation in the reception centers and the low accessibility of housing in Stuttgart. The issue of accommodation was mentioned by 98% of interviewees and it was pointed out as a major challenge in all four FGDs. The respondents considered housing issues as one of the most important barriers to their integration into the receiving societies. Approximately 85% of our

[25] Stuttgart City Council available: https://www.stuttgart.de/item/show/335193/1/dept/154?language=en, accessed on 10 Feb. 2020

respondents were living in asylum centers. Accommodation for asylum seekers was compulsory in the reception and asylum centers for the first 18 months. Furthermore, according to the Asylum Act[26], refugees had restrictions on movement. They had to reside in the district that registered them on their arrival. The limitations could be removed for family, or employment purposes. Nonetheless, some stayed in the reception center for five or more years even though they were recognized refugees and were eligible to move out. The substantial effects of accommodation on integration were pointed out by all the interviewees we met. Some of the most repetitive quotes are presented here:

> "*Accommodation is very important for integration. Stuttgart city should think of a solution for us. We have been living in containers for two and a half years now. We are a family of five and have two rooms of 13m2. Children have no room to learn and do their homework and school programs. We have no privacy here". Afghan female*

Many respondents believed that the main reason for the long-term stay in refugee reception centers is the limited houses available in the residential area of the city. However, some pointed out the additional reasons that make access to available housing more challenging. For instance, high rent per month which is not covered by their allowance from the social welfare system, the financial instability of refugees, lack of houses for populated families with several children that require houses with an adequate number of rooms and facilities, house owners' hesitance due to cultural differences between refugees and the receiving communities, and unfamiliarity with the new cultures discourage house owners to rent their property to refugees. Some reported their experiences of discrimination in finding houses. Some respondents pointed out the serious consequences of the housing shortage. The problems were mentioned to be high demand and low supply or low access to the available housing. For instance, refugees in search of housing were feeling misused by what they called the "Housing Mafia".

> "*There is a housing Mafia in the city. The group who is searching for housing in exchange for money are Syrians who are misusing the other Syrians. I am*

[26] ECRE freedom of movement available: https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/germany/reception-conditions/access-and-forms-reception-conditions/freedom-movement#IV_RC_A_4Freemo_2Initial, accessed on 10 Feb. 2020

> *totally angry with them … German volunteers are helping us learn the language and accompany our children and ourselves to school voluntarily, but Syrians are asking for a huge amount of money from 3000 to 7000 Euros in exchange for searching a house". Syrian male*

Some interviewees reported saving their monthly allowances including their children's allowance, and some mentioned missing their integration courses and doing extra working hours to either save or to pay the monthly installments to people who had found them the apartment for rent. The problem of housing is raised by a protestant association based in Stuttgart *"eva Stuttgart"*, in an article titled *"Dirty business with the housing shortage in Stuttgart"* (eva Evangelische Gesellschaft Stuttgart e.V, 2019).

3.7.2 The time value of integration

The settlement process starting from reception to integration is time-consuming. 10 Afghan respondents including interviewees and FGD participants were waiting for 3-4 years to get a response to their asylum applications.

> *"I wonder how the German government keeps us in this condition for so long. It is costly for us and them. We get mentally sick in this crowded camp. The government spends money on our bed, food, and other expenses but does not decide on our condition faster to let us cover our costs ourselves and give back". Afghan male*

85% of Syrians and 91% of Afghan respondents were staying in the refugee reception centers while this interview was taking place. They hardly had contact with the rest of the society or local community and appeared unhappy and tired, complaining that this long-term uncertain condition was making them sick and hopeless for the future.

3.7.3 "Integration course alone is not enough"

The need for sooner and more practical German language learning facilities was another necessary point raised by 65% of the respondents, even though integration courses and language learning facilities in Germany provide many more hours when compared with some other EU Member

States. Every recognized refugee has the chance to have 300 up to 900 hours[27] of German language courses. However, concerns were with issues such as a lack of timely integration courses, long waiting lists for admission and registration for integration courses, lack of suitable language levels for everyone, attendees with different ages, knowledge, and educational backgrounds, and a lack of practical language learning techniques. The respondents believed that more practical language learning facilities, more on-the-job language, and professional training, homogenous groups of participants in the integration courses, focus on practical exercises, topic-specific vocabularies, more discussions and conversations, and fewer hours on the abstract grammar would make the language learning more effective. A respondent stated:

> "*I am in the same course as a doctor, I have never attended school, and he is a doctor. The course is boring for both those who know and those who don't know much, too easy for those who already know a lot, too difficult for those who know nothing….I am afraid of completing my hours in the end and learning nothing… integration course alone is not enough". Syrian female*

3.7.4 Insufficient social interaction with native Germans

Based on Survey Data from the 2016/2017 BAMF report, about 50% of refugees from Afghanistan, 45% of Syrians, and 38% of Iraqis had several times in a week or daily contact with Germans (Siegert, 2019). Our findings show that facilities for informal interaction with native Germans were highly respected and valued by almost all the respondents. Some evaluated their integration based on the number of German friends they had or the level of interactions with German natives or Europeans in their communities.

> "*In the three and half years here in Germany I have never been to a German's house and have no German friends. The first reason is the limitation in language that we have, the second is that the Germans are very busy, we are living in the camp which is far from the city. If we meet someone, we can't*

[27] BAMF (2019) accessible: http://www.bamf.de/DE/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/InhaltAblauf/inhaltablauf-node.html, accessed on 10 Feb. 2020

invite them because we don't have a house and they don't come to the camp". Afghan female

A few respondents praised facilities such as the Generationenhaus Heslach, an elderly and nursing house that provided a platform for informal interactions between locals and refugees. They provided free Wi-Fi, coffee for the elderly, volunteers, and refugees. Refugees could go there every day from 9:00 to 20:00, and from 17:00-20:00 volunteers helped refugees with their schoolwork, homework, and language learning in general and particularly for those who still had no language or integration courses. The report by Siegert (2019) shows that Afghans had the most frequent contact with Germans and yet felt most frequently socially isolated. However, their findings were unable to show the reasons behind it. Nevertheless, our findings confirm that Afghan respondents in comparison to Syrians had more contacts with German volunteers because they had more insecure prospects, lower access to official government-provided integration measures, and thus had higher participation rates in the voluntarily provided social and cultural initiatives which have helped them get better connected to the local society. Nonetheless, local social contacts alone could not give Afghans much advantage, because of the lack of legal certainty and limited long-term prospects, which may be the major reasons behind their feeling of social isolation.

Volunteers seemed to play a significant role in the integration and facilitation of the daily lives of refugees in Stuttgart. Volunteers had helped the respondents in different aspects of their lives such as language learning, translating their letters or documents, accompanying them to the corresponding governmental offices, finding lawyers and interpreting for them, accompanying them to hospitals and pharmacies, finding houses and accommodation, finding a job, introducing, and connecting them to the rest of the community. Many refugees wished for more and more volunteers and believed that volunteers play an important role in their integration into the receiving societies.

3.7.5 Discrimination

Discrimination at the local level is pointed out as a challenge by both Afghans (54%) and Syrians (43%). The respondents felt discrimination in finding housing or jobs, in the asylum application process, or their daily lives and interaction with the society. However, the discrimination among different nationalities regarding the "classification of refugees as deserving or non-deserving" was

specifically pointed out by Afghan respondents that was highly evident in our data collection process. 90% of Syrians and 29% of Afghans were recognized as refugees and had a three-year residence permit with full eligibility for all refugee rights and integration measures. However, 61% of Afghan respondents had rather insecure protection status that was either subsidiary protection or a national ban to deportation, rejection, or tolerated and some were still waiting for the result of their asylum application. Some individuals obtained refugee status within three months of their asylum application and attended the language courses, found accommodation, evaluated their educational documents, got a job, and lived their lives independently. In the interview, they considered it their luck or chance despite the limited facilities for Afghan nationals. A respondent, for instance, said:

> "*I am really lucky for the process of asylum migration I have experienced. But I do feel sorry for my Afghan fellows. Almost 99% of those I know here got either rejections or nothing yet. They have a lot of problems here. I hear the worst stories about them, and I wish you could interview some of them". Afghan male*

Syrians were distinguished as the most privileged, welcomed, and deserving refugees by some volunteers, social workers, and many Afghan refugees. Some Syrian refugees had the understanding that they were more welcomed by Germany because of the war in their home country.

> *"Most of the conflicts in the camp start with the differences between refugees. For instance, last time, Syrian refugees were saying that the shelter, food, space, or whatever was provided by charity organizations belonged to them, not to others…They [Syrians] were thinking as if they alone had the refugee right". Afghan male*

Finally, many Afghan respondents complained that they experienced discrimination and unequal treatment. They reported discrimination in their asylum application evaluation processing time, and results. Some claimed that their asylum application process took much longer time than that of Syrians, and the consequences of lengthy processes or rejections were delaying their access to social services, language courses, and accommodation facilities, and thus negatively affected their economic integration.

> *"When I got a call from the VHS [Adult Education Center] that I cannot join the language course because I am Afghan, I cannot explain how painful it was for me. I started crying in front of my children…What type of democracy is it? How should I teach my children to believe that Germany is a democratic country when we are experiencing these undemocratic behaviors only because we are coming from a different country than Syrians?" Afghan female*

Most Afghan respondents believed that there were political reasons behind what they understood as discrimination against Afghans. The agreement of Afghanistan and Germany on refugee returns "JWFA" and the policies of President Ghani's government were mostly blamed for the lack of Afghan refugee recognition in Germany.

> "*Germany is giving Afghan asylum-seekers a hard time, low facilities, and rejects most of our asylum applications to push us to leave, but we don't leave because we don't have a suitable situation back home. We don't go back but we will not forget all the unfair incidents or pain in our hearts and that is not good". Afghan female*

Afghans felt on one hand, deserving of protection due to the long-lasting war in Afghanistan, and on the other hand, perceived themselves among the most disadvantaged groups of refugees in Germany. Many Afghans felt discriminated in several aspects of their reception and low recognition rate or high negative response to their asylum applications and thus felt at risk of deportation. The acceptance rate of refugees for Afghans showed a steady decrease in Germany from 72% in 2015 to 55% in 2016 and 47% in 2017 while it remains relatively constant at around 90% for Syrians (ECRE, 2017). Many complained about rejections to their asylum cases because of their nationality, and some accused the Afghan government of "exchanging Afghan refugees for financial aid from Germany and the EU", referring to the Afghan-EU agreement for the return of Afghans, the JWFA. Furthermore, Afghans felt discriminated in finding a seat in the integration course, in finding accommodation or employment.

The interviews with the representative of the city council, social workers, and volunteers confirmed that Afghans faced many rejections to their asylum cases, had to go through a more complicated and time/resource consuming asylum claim after rejections, and therefore had lower

and later access to integration measures, labour markets, and residential housing. However, they emphasize that it was out of their control. For instance, a social worker said: “I cannot introduce one to a language course unless they are eligible and have the necessary papers”. Different treatment of refugees often caused tensions between refugees of different nationalities in the reception centers, and some social workers were concerned that it may cause the politicization and misuse of the refugees and may have negative effects on them in the long term.

3.8 Discussion and recommendations

In this study, we found out that the new-coming refugees had a large number of integration opportunities provided by different actors including the federal government, state, city, NGOs, local organizations, and individual volunteers. However, there were still challenges that hindered their integration process. Challenges included lack of access to proper accommodation (OECD, 2017) and the long-term stay in refugee reception centers. Lack of available housing, and 3-5 years of residence in the emergency or communal reception centers with shared rooms (2-4 persons in a room), poor facilities for women and children, often disturbed them and caused tensions and conflicts. Refugees believed that the living conditions had not only limited them in isolation, limited their chances for social interaction, reduced their privacy, but also affected their mental health. These findings are in line with those of Bakker, Cheung, & Phillimore (2016) that the residence of people in asylum accommodation negatively affected refugees' health in both the UK and Netherlands. The housing situation during times of health emergency, such as Covid-19, was another excessive challenge where social distancing and similar measures were nearly impossible.

Our research, with a focus on the refugees' perspectives, attempted to find out how well they were integrated, what challenges hindered, or what opportunities facilitated their settlement and integration in their new societies in Germany. In this paper, we explored the Afghan and Syrian refugee's integration experiences from social, economic, legal, and cultural aspects in Germany while many other studies have mostly focused on either employment or social integration aspects (Senthanar et al., 2020; Gericke et al., 2018; Kearns & Whitley, 2015; Müller, 2021;OECD, 2018; Giulia, Giannetto, & Noya, 2018).

Factually, the city of Stuttgart is one of the most metropolitan cities with an international population of 43%. It allowed some new coming refugees to build networks with their native

speakers, solve daily issues such as shopping, and familiarity with the city even without speaking the German language. The initial networks were built by volunteers, which helped them build further contacts with both migrants and Germans. This has led to both "vertical bridging" such as contacts with social workers, volunteers, supervisors, or coworkers, and "horizontal bonding" such as contacts with persons from the same nationality or ethnic background which have helped some of the respondents in matters such as employment as well (Gericke et al., 2018).

Taking all four dimensions of integration into consideration, we believe that to some extent our model tackled the issue and could respond to the abstract question we put forward in this research. The quantification of qualitative data was not intended to provide quantitative data but it helped us identify how relevant the topics were for the people interviewed. The findings showed that approximately two-thirds of the respondents were either effectively or moderately integrated, and the rest fell under poor integration (see Figure 5). Furthermore, one-third of the respondents were well-integrated because they scored between 70%-95% for the sub-categories such as employment and financial independence, housing, language proficiency, legal status, social and cultural knowledge, and overall life satisfaction in their communities. Furthermore, the model revealed the overall integration of refugees, the differences between each dimension, and the underlying reasons behind them, and finally the differences in the integration levels between the two nationalities. For instance, the disaggregated data on the two nationalities showed a noticeable difference between the overall integration of Afghans and Syrians.

If we compare both nationalities, more Afghans fell under the poor integration category. Syrian respondents, on average experienced a shorter time for their asylum application process; most of them (25 out of 28 respondents) had secure residence titles, quicker access to integration services, and were therefore in a better position in all three categories and four dimensions of integration than Afghans. The difference, to a large extent, is due to the lack of credible resident permits or protection status, lengthier asylum application process for Afghans versus Syrians, and hence lower and later access to integration measures such as language and integration courses, accommodation, and employment. Thus, our findings suggest the lengthy asylum application process and insecure resident title hampers the whole process of integration. Our findings on this matter are in line with the studies on different EU member states, such as Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, and Netherlands that the prolonged asylum procedures or the long time spent in the

refugee camps have negative consequences on the likelihood of employment, employment rate, and quality of future employment for refugees (Brücker et al., 2019; Bakker et al., 2014; Hainmueller et al., 2016; Hvidtfeldt et al., 2020 & Brell et al., 2020). In other words, our findings suggest that the faster and more secure the resident permit, the better a person is positioned for faster and better integration into the labour market, as well as the social and cultural structure of the society. The importance of a legal residence permit and citizenship is also noticed and considered as a "reward for successful integration" by Smyth et al. (2010). Furthermore, in a German labour market integration study, 70% of employers emphasized the importance of "more legal certainty" for the refugees they employed (Tanay & Peschner, 2017).

Access to the labour market for refugees is restricted to the type of status they get which is also influenced by their countries of origin (Khan-Gökkaya & Mösko, 2020). Moreover, asylum policies for refugees of specific nationalities play an important role in their integration. For instance, the lower recognition rate for Afghans vs. Syrians, implementation of Dublin regulations, and deportation of Afghans were the main reasons that decreased the scores for Afghan respondents. Furthermore, education and literacy levels may have also affected integration. On the average, Syrian respondents had higher levels of education than Afghans. Moreover, the Syrians' qualifications were better recognized than Afghans, which might have also positively affected their integration into the labour market and economic structure of the receiving societies. In 2015, 74% of total applications for qualification assessments (77% of Syrians and 51% of Afghans) were recognized as equivalent German qualifications (Tanay & Peschner, 2017).

3.8.1 Limitations of the study

This research has a few potential shortcomings that need to be considered. The study was conducted on refugees in the city of Stuttgart, which is recognized as a pioneering German city in providing integration services to migrants and refugees. The findings might be comparable to bigger German cities, such as Berlin, but might over-represent refugee integration in Germany as a whole. Moreover, the findings are not scientifically representative as the sample is purposive and small. However, this does not imply that they are not relevant. Despite these limitations, we believe that this study provides an understanding of the experiences of refugees integration in the local areas.

3.8.2 Recommendations

The following presents some recommendations drawn based on our findings which concern the German government, and the city of Stuttgart:

- BAMF may shorten the asylum application process. The lengthy asylum application process (between six months to over four years) was considered a very long time in isolation with limited social contact, limited prospects for future and was believed to hinder the whole integration process. Moreover, BAMF may provide timely language and integration courses to avoid long waiting lists for those eligible for integration courses.
- The national government together with the city council may work on the facilitation of timely accommodation out of the refugee centers. The long-term residence in asylum facilities was one of the major reasons for refugees' overall dissatisfaction or poor integration in Stuttgart.
- The national government and BAMF need to put some effort into eliminating the reasons causing discrimination among refugees of different nationalities. The different treatment of nationalities in access to asylum, housing, and employment created attitudes and often conflicts between different nationalities. For instance, many interviewees perceived Syrians as the most deserving and privileged by Germans compared with refugees of any other nationality.
- The city of Stuttgart may facilitate opportunities for refugees to have direct contact with local citizens through tandem projects with volunteers and local initiatives such as "Generationshaus Heslach". The existence of direct contacts with local Germans was pointed out as a privilege and significant opportunity for integration and its lack as a challenge frequently mentioned by most of the respondents from both nationalities. Female respondents mentioned this challenge more frequently than male respondents and those with low German language competencies felt more socially isolated.
- There is the necessity for better coordination of integration offers and awareness-raising about the role of different organizations and their staff operating on-site, as well as the existing integration opportunities such as language courses, employment, social, cultural, and health events either volunteer/official. Refugees often misunderstood the role of different actors, rarely read the notice boards due to language barriers and were often not informed about the integration opportunities or were confused about whom to contact when needed. Furthermore, this research found overlapping services by different stakeholders and recognized a

cooperation gap among active stakeholders and we thus recommend more cooperation and coordination among stakeholders in the provision of integration services such as job searching initiatives, social and administrative service programs for refugees.

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4 PRIVATE COMPANIES' ENGAGEMENT IN THE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE CITY OF STUTTGART, GERMANY

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Abstract

Private companies of all sizes may engage in the integration of refugees into the labour market. Taking the case study of the highly industrialized German city of Stuttgart, this research explores the motivation of a) private large-scale international enterprises including (automotive and high-tech companies); and b) family-owned small to medium-sized companies (private social enterprises, suppliers to the automotive industries, architecture, and engineering companies), to do so. The research further explores the companies' challenges, opportunities and the lessons learned throughout the process. Utilizing the principles of Grounded Theory, a qualitative case study approach is applied with in-depth interviews with private companies, civil society, public private partnerships, and experts. The findings show that the arrival of a large number of refugees during 2015/2016 has increased the engagement of the companies, increased their cooperation with other sectors, and has correspondingly led to some innovative initiatives in refugees' labour market integration and policy advocacy. The call for the engagement of the private sector and the existence of employment-related policies such as tolerated work permits (Ausbildungsduldung/Beschäftigungsduldung) were essential to create sufficient incentives for private companies to engage in the training and employment of refugees. However, the insecure residence permits and bureaucratic procedures in the public sector mostly discouraged their engagement. Our research shows that the two company types had different possibilities and different approaches towards refugees and faced different challenges while engaging in refugee labour market integration.

Keywords: Private companies, refugees, integration, labour market

4.1 Introduction

Around the world, displaced persons and refugees are supported by highly diverse actors including individual volunteers, teachers, politicians, and public, private, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) (Hinger, 2018; Hesse, Kreutzer, & Diehl, 2019; Danış and Nazlı, 2019; Stürner *et al.*, 2020). The literature has so far almost exclusively focused on the role of the public sector and CSOs in the integration policy and practices for refugees (Schammann *et al.*, 2021; van Selm, 2003; Bontenbal & Lillie, 2019; Embiricos, 2020; Yilmaz, 2019). Exceptions are Müller (2021); Schmidt and Müller (2021) and Omata (2012), who studied the role of the private sector concerning the conception of citizenship, compared workplace integration of refugees with former labour migrants, and the role of the private sector in refugee livelihood in the context of a developing country, respectively. The lack of studies on the role of private companies[28] and the absence of private companies in refugee integration is also noted in existing literature (Omata, 2012; Schmidt & Müller, 2021; United Nations University, 2014). However, with the arrival of a large number of refugees during 2015/2016, private companies have received attention as active actors, with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)[29] and national governments in the United States, Europe, and Germany calling upon the private sector as a key actor and inviting them to take part in the reception and integration of refugees (Müller, 2021c). For instance, in June 2016, the US government launched a "Call to Action"[30] for the engagement of private companies in the global refugee crisis. This call focused on three impact areas including education, employment, and enabling and increasing financial support for humanitarian activities. In Europe in 2019, the World Bank Group came together with the Confederation of Danish Industry and the European Investment Bank to emphasize the role of the private companies in refugee integration and to initiate the program "Private companies 4 Refugees"[31] intending to promote the involvement of the private sector in employment, entrepreneurship, investment, and

[28] The term private companies refer to both large international businesses as well as family-owned medium and small enterprises who have participated in this research.
[29] UNHCR News: https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2018/9/5babbecf4/businesses-commit-helping-refugees-thrive-new-jobs-trainings-investment.html, accessed on 10 Feb. 2021
[30] The White House Briefing Room: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/30/fact-sheet-white-house-launches-call-action-private-sector-engagement-0, accessed on 10 Feb. 2021
[31] Private companies 4 Refugees | The Global Compact on Refugees | Digital platform (globalcompactrefugees.org), accessed on 15 Feb. 2021

services for refugees and host communities. Germany, as a major recipient of the refugees within the European Union (EU), is often named as a case where sectors cooperated successfully in labour market integration. In 2015, the German government appealed to its 30 largest companies to take a role in the labour market integration of refugees (Müller, 2021c). After that, labour market actors have started offering a variety of measures, which sometimes have gone beyond labour market integration (Aumüller, 2016, Brücker et al. 2019, Müller 2021). This has been attributed to pressure from media, the public and employees, as well as social responsibility, showing solidarity, etc. By yielding to this pressure, companies improve their image, and only to a lesser extent their labour market needs (Müller 2021; Müller & Schmidt 2016; Emerllahu 2017). These few existing studies have primarily examined the engagement of large companies and their contributions.

In 2015, almost half a million asylum applications were filed in Germany which increased further and reached its peak at 745,545 persons in 2016. However, due to the EU agreements with Turkey and a few other bilateral agreements, the number sharply decreased to 222,683 in 2017, and it continued to gradually decrease to 185,853 in 2018, 165,938 in 2019, and reached its lowest level at 122,170 during Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. In 2021 however, the number of asylum seekers started to increase to 190,816 and the war in Ukraine is expected to cause another record in the number of forced migration to Germany in 2022 (BAMF, 2021).

German statistics on refugees' labour market integration show that the refugees arriving since 2015 find employment slightly faster than in previous years (Brücker et al 2019). The IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey shows that 19% of refugees arriving in 2015 found a job two years after their arrival and 40% of refugees of working age were employed by October 2019. However, in general, refugees take a longer time to find a job than other migrants. For instance, 55% of refugees and 85% of other migrants had found their first job five years after arrival in Germany (Brücker et al 2019). Evidence on the actual integration of refugees in labour markets is complicated by the fact that refugees are not reported separately in labour market statistics. Results of a representative panel survey among refugees show that employment rates have been increasing to more than 50% for those who arrived between 2013 and 2016 (Brücker et al 2019, Brücker et al. 2020). In 2018, there was no difference in the employment rates of refugees with approved or rejected asylum applications, but the latter work mostly in low-skill and less well-paid jobs (Brücker et al 2019). Challenges remain, especially regarding wage gaps (55% of the average German earnings) and job

placement (30% of those working full time were overqualified, 25% underqualified), as well as gender issues, specifically that female refugees are significantly less integrated into the labour market (Brücker et al 2019). In the city under study, Stuttgart, the overall employment rate was slightly higher for people with German citizenship (62.2%) than for migrants and refugees (53.5%, not differentiated) in 2021(Stuttgart Statistics Office, 2022)[32].

Given the crucial importance of the business sector in refugee integration, one might wonder why there is little known about these actors and why companies are not present in refugee integration debates. We, therefore, want to contribute to filling the knowledge gaps on the role of the private sector in refugee integration, and specifically answer the questions, i) what the motivations behind the engagement of private companies in refugee integration are; ii) what the major challenges and opportunities of private companies in refugee integration are; and iii) what the lessons learned regarding the inclusion of refugees and collaborations between companies and other stakeholders in the labour market integration of refugees are. The study explores two types of companies, a) large multinational companies including (automotive and high-tech companies); b) family-owned small to medium businesses (*Mittelstand*) which included (private social sectors, suppliers to the automotive industries, architecture, and engineering companies). The study is conducted in the city of Stuttgart, which is a special case not only as an economically strong region and home to global industries, but also in representing a constructive social and political environment in migration. The city has a very progressive integration department, which was established with the adoption of an integration policy in early 2001, several years prior to the German National Integration Plan (Stuttgart City Council, 2016)[33].

4.2 Conceptual framework

Recent studies have noted the engagement of private companies and their important role in the labour market integration of refugees[34] in Germany, as well as policy advocacy for generous legal

[32] Stuttgart Satistics Office (2022) Forschungsdatenzentrum der Statistischen Ämter der Länder, availalble under: https://www.forschungsdatenzentrum.de/de/kontakt/stuttgart accessed on 11 Feb. 2021
[33] Stuttgart City Council available: https://www.stuttgart.de/item/show/335193/1/dept/154?language=en, accessed on 11 Feb. 2021
34 "The term "asylum seeker" refers to those whose asylum applications are still under review and, "refugee" is used as a general term for persons with different types of protection status." (Torfa, Almohamed and Birner, 2021 p.17).

rights and access to work permits (Brücker, Kosyakova, and Vallizadeh, 2020; Neis, Meier and Furukawazono, 2018) in addition to the influential role of the business sector on refugees' lives beyond the labour market in Europe, Africa and Middle East (Müller, 2021; Menashy and Zakharia, 2020;Strachan, 2021). Private companies have mostly funded refugee initiatives and implemented technical and professional training; including job preparation, internships, and other training measures (Müller and Schmidt 2016). Since providing professional technical integration services is costly for small and medium enterprises, the authors suggested qualification and training associations, to meet the expected future labour market demand of private companies by providing professional trainings for skilled workers (Müller and Schmidt 2016).

There are factors that either incentivize or disincentivize the engagement of a private company in the integration of refugees into the labor market. Economic and institutional incentives might have been among the driving factors behind private companies' engagement and the relaxation in the restrictive labour market policies that has been gradually occurring since 2014 (Arcarons 2016). Inclusion of the private sector in migration and integration dialogues and emphasis on the importance of their engagement, and the call for their support could motivate private companies even further. However, bureaucratic obstacles remain in place which continue to discourage German employers from employing asylum seekers and refugees (Arcarons 2016). While the same author suggests that the labour market integration of asylum seekers is a long and difficult process, most of their findings have since become obsolete due to rapidly changing legal premises (Arcarons 2016). Regulations that exist at the national level are often ambiguous, leaving room for interpretation at the municipality level. However, studies have found that actors working for municipalities often perceive themselves as powerless. For instance, district municipalities have pictured themselves "as being stuck in a pattern of passivity" (Schammann *et al.*, 2021 p.2910). Additionally, evidence from Heimann *et al.* (2021 p.12) showed that some merely limited themselves to reporting the existing situation and voluntary activities.

We assume that both the discursive environment and actual integration practices influence actors' opinions and influences how integration policies are coined. For instance, the debate by the German Immigration Commission in 2001 on the benefits of labour migration influenced the self-perception of Germany as an immigration country, which became evident in the development of its migration policies in 2007 and the liberalization of these policies in the following years

(Boswell and Hampshire, 2017 p.147). Since 2015/2016, the discourse on refugees and integration has changed from refugees are to be protected not integrated, to refugees as a solution to the skills shortage (Fachkräftemangel)(Schammann, 2017). Many believe that it was the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and her migration initiatives that played an important role in changing this discourse on refugees as well as practical engagement of the different actors including the private sector in the integration process of refugees. The collaboration of public and civil society with private companies in the labour integration initiatives and the existence of employment-related policies such as employment toleration (Beschäftigungsduldung) or vocational training toleration (Ausbildungsduldung)[35] are essential for creating sufficient incentives for private companies to engage further. Our case study, Stuttgart, is a progressive city when it comes to migrant and refugee integration. For instance, the term *newcomer* or *new Stuttgarter* is used for everyone coming to Stuttgart, irrespective of whether one originally comes from Berlin or Baghdad. Moreover, the city is the leading member of a German city network which includes the commissioners of 50 bigger German cities working on integration (Heimann et al., 2021). The local municipal climate on integration initiatives is so well established that even the members of the right-wing populist parties such as the AFD (Alternative für Deutschland) do not argue against it. One may hypothesize that if the political and social discourse depicts refugees as a solution to demographic challenges and skill shortages, it might incentivize the private sector to engage in their integration. If in turn the discourse depicts refugees as competitors to native unemployed or low-skilled workers, it might disincentivize many societal actors from engaging in integration. Moreover, actual practices of street-level bureaucrats and implementation of public programs also influence actors' decisions and policies (Hjörne, Juhila and van Nijnatten, 2010; Dahlvik, 2017). In Stuttgart, the immigration office *(Ausländerbehörde)* is very restrictive, e.g., regarding deportations. There are several reports criticising the Stuttgart Immigration Office, namely the Stuttgart Chamber of Crafts about deportations of refugees in vocational training despite the

[35] For employment toleration, requirements include a "tolerated" status, for more than a year, not being in removal procedures, having worked full time for 18 months (part-time, for single parents), self-sufficiency for 12 months, and a certain level of German language. For the vocational training toleration, the requirements include "tolerated" status for at least six months and a vocational training contract (Brücker et al 2019).

residence permit promise from the Federal Government (Burry 2017)[36] and the strong condemnation by a parliamentary group in the Stuttgart Municipal Council for the deportation of a well-integrated refugee who was arrested by the police in the Immigration Office and transferred to the deportation center. Moreover, a parliamentary group has warned that refugees might lose confidence in the immigration office and will not attend their appointments properly (Stuttgarter Zeitung 2016)[37]. This is in stark contrast to the progressive integration office in the city. The two organizational units are strongly separated institutionally from each other in Stuttgart. In several counties and towns in Stuttgart's vicinity, i.e., Böblingen, the immigration authority and the tasks regarding integration have been reorganized as one new office for immigration.

4.3 Data and methods

For this study a qualitative exploratory case study approach is applied and principles of Grounded Theory are utilised (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The parallel data collection, coding and analysis helped us decide what additional data to collect. Initially, scientific and grey literature, online project documents, project flyers, and company websites were reviewed for details on existing public and private initiatives. Purposive and snowball sampling were then applied to select respondents. The key actors, including public and private actors and partnerships between the two, including the Integration Policy Department of the City Council, the Stuttgart Community Foundation (CF), the Chamber of Commerce (CoC), the Training Campus (*Ausbildungscampus*), and integration managers, who were involved in the refugee integration programs were consulted and interviewed. With the above-mentioned actors' support, private companies involved in refugee integration initiatives were identified and a total of 35 private companies were emailed with the research objective and interview guideline attached. Three companies were contacted by the CF on our behalf. We received positive feedback from 17 actors, including eight private

[36] Mathias Bury, Stuttgarter Zeitung (2017) Kritik an Abschiebungen in der Ausbildung; Berufliche Integration von Flüchtlingen gilt ist anspruchsvoll - Bei Sprachförderung müsse nachgebessert werden, so Experten

[37] Stuttgarter Zeitung (2016) Scharfe Kritik an Abschiebepraxis; SÖS-Linke-Plus; Die Fraktion SÖS-Linke-plus protestiert gegen die Verhaftung eines Kameruners

companies/corporates and nine experts and key actors with whom we conducted in-depth interviews with private companies, experts and representatives of public and CSOs (see Table 4.1).

Our interview partners were often holding leading positions such as manager, deputy or department director, or head of vocational training. Moreover, we got insights from 39 survey responses on the experiences of public, private, and civil society actors on the integration of refugees in southern Germany. The survey was sent to an email list of the 200+ city actors involved in refugee matters in the city (the first author was in the email list). We received 39 responses, where of 63% from the public sector, 7% from the private sector, 15% from CSOs and the rest from individual experts and volunteers. The survey responses helped us understand the initiatives and design the interview guideline we used for our in-depth interviews with the private companies.

Interviews were conducted between September 2020 and May 2021 in German or English with a duration of 50 minutes to two hours. All interviews were recorded. Memos were written and emergent findings were discussed by the first two authors. The interview data were coded using MAXQDA in order to categorize the codes under specific themes and categories. Data analysis was done by summarizing the main arguments and the important themes.

A few qualifications must be made regarding the data collected. First, the size of our sample was small. Moreover, we received more feedback from those companies and individuals who were actively involved in the refugee supporting initiatives. Furthermore, our findings might also be influenced by a gatekeeper bias. This is due to the fact that some of the interviewees were chosen and contacted through the coordinating member of an initiative. One of the potential reasons behind the knowledge gap on the role of private companies in refugee integration is the difficulty in accessing companies for interviews and their refusal to participate and share data. This has also been reported by Müller (2021). The first author's practical work experience in the integration of refugees, her observations as a participant in events and meetings, and her contacts to the gatekeepers were very useful assets to make this study possible. Due to these restraints and biases, it is important to note that the findings are not representative of small to medium private companies in Stuttgart, let alone Germany.

We organize our results according to engagement, motivations, and lessons learned to answer the questions we raised. While presenting the results we compare the opportunities, and challenges of large and small to medium sized family-owned companies, since we found substantial differences

between these two groups. The importance of private companies' engagement and the lack of their engagement were pointed out by the literature but gaining knowledge from the Stuttgart case study, we add on the practical challenges and opportunities of private companies' engagement.

4.4 Results

4.5 Private companies' engagement

The results are based on the in-depth interviews, with the actors summarized in Table 4.1. They included private companies (family-owned and international companies), the Chamber of Commerce, CSOs, public-private partnerships and individual experts. Our results show that private companies in Stuttgart have engaged in very diverse activities, including providing vocational training and qualification programs for labour market integration, employment, and funding public-sector and CSO initiatives, policy advocacy, supporting refugees in acquiring legal status, finding housing and to a lesser extent in daily social support.

Table 4.1 Profile of the expert interviewees and the types of services

Participants ID	Type of company/ organization	Type of service	No. of interviewees	No. Of interviews
021, 027, 023	a) family-owned small and medium businesses (Mittelstand)	Employment/ vocational and professional training	4	3
024, 025, 028	b) large scale international business enterprises	Technical vocational training, funding, donations, employment	4	3
022, 026	Chamber of Commerce (CoC)	Training/employment and coordination	2	2
030, 033, 035, 036, 037	Civil Society Organisations and individual experts	Reception and onsite integration services, advocacy, professional and language training, policy research	5	5

020, 029, 032, 034	Public-Private Partnerships (PPO)	Advocacy, partnership coordination, training, and employment	5	4

Source: Authors

4.5.1 Initiatives for technical vocational training

Private companies' engagement has increased during 2015/16 and since then companies have proactively engaged in the integration of refugees. Our interview partner from a high-tech company stated:

> *"During 2015, we were a bit helpless because nothing was regulated and clear, and no one exactly knew what to do and how. In August 2015 we invited someone from the government and told them that we want to join in supporting refugees. We collected the contacts of potential partners with whom we could work together." #028*

The most common type of engagement of both large international as well as family-owned companies was training refugees for labour market inclusion. Our findings show that the interviewed large companies have primarily engaged in technical and professional training of refugees through different public-sector or civil-society initiatives. The automotive industry and high-tech companies had all taken part in the government-initiated training program called "*Entry-level Qualification"* (EQ)[38] to train refugees in a 6–12-month professional training program aiming to prepare refugees for the labour market.

An example of a multi-sector job training initiative is the Ausbildungscampus Stuttgart[39] (Campus hereafter), a non-profit association jointly established by private companies, civil society, public actors, and private persons in April 2017. The directing board of the Campus includes two representatives of large private companies, two from the public sector, one from a CSO, and two

[38] Einstiegsqualifizierung (EQ) available in IHK Region Stuttgart: https://www.stuttgart.ihk24.de/fuer-unternehmen/fachkraefte-und-ausbildung/ausbildung/ausbildungsbetrieb-werden/eq-1467410?shortUrl=%2FEQ, accessed on 11 Feb. 2021

[39] AusbildungsCampus available: https://www.ausbildungscampus.org/, accessed on 11 Feb. 2021

individual experts. The Campus was an initiative of the Stuttgart Community Foundation[40] (CF) which was mainly financed by private companies in its initial phase. The local government joined later in financing it. The initiative was mentioned as a best practice example of public-private civil society cooperation to support young refugees' integration into the labour market through providing vocational training, internships, and employment. The Campus was a response to the "chaotic situation" during the increased arrival of refugees in 2015/16 when "thousands of people needed support". The CF started roundtables, assembling all stakeholders, including the public and private sector and CSOs as potential partners who could be involved in refugee integration. The CF reported that the private companies joined the Campus voluntarily as stakeholders with high motivation and the commitment to contribute with money, know-how, and ideas.

> *"I think that in Stuttgart the cooperation is working really well. The Campus is the optimum of the cooperation between all three sectors." #028*

The stakeholders believed that the outstanding characteristic of the initiative was that it did not only bring the resources of all stakeholders together but also guaranteed physical meetings of stakeholders. An interview partner involved in this initiative mentioned:

> *"The Ausbildungscampus is a meeting point for refugees and all sectors who have something to do with the integration of them. It connected us all, brought us all under the same roof, shortened our way, and we made personal contacts. We know each other personally, previously we had to write an email and ask who the contact person was, and it took us days or sometimes weeks. Now we spare a lot of time, nerves, money, and resources." #026*

Another interviewee referred to the novelty of the initiative as a "one-stop shop" #26, that reduced bureaucratic procedures for the newcomers. Moreover, the presence of private companies as founding members of the Campus helped to shape the objectives of the Campus based on what the companies demanded in the labour market. An interviewee referred to this point:

[40] Community Foundation available: https://www.buergerstiftung-stuttgart.de/, accessed on 11 Apr. 2021

> *"The private companies [founding members of the Campus] help in considering the needs of employers, with which the Ausbildungscampus can adapt its offers accordingly. #025*

The success of the Campus was also that they were able to flexibly react to new developments. Initially, the main focus was on facilitating employment, later on, they realized that new arriving refugees needed proficiency in the German language and technical training, so the focus was changed to "training and employment". There has also been a shift in the Campus' target group. Initially solely focussing on young refugees with "good prospects to stay in Stuttgart" and later including "everyone"; since there were not many arrivals anymore, they could serve more people and realized that those without good prospects to stay also required support. Some interviewees referred to the need for further improvements in the Campus, for instance, its financing method and the necessity for more creative solutions to the dynamics of the labour market.

> *"As a company, we have been engaged in the Campus for the last 6 years. We might be committed to supporting it in the future as well. But we think it is important that the Campus does not depend on donations in the long term. The city is already giving money, but we must be creative and think together to improve it…" #025*

In addition to participating in the joint initiatives above, some private companies started their own initiatives such as volunteering in their localities, donating, supporting refugees with job application preparation, CV writing, preparation for job interviews, and consultations on the German job market.

4.5.2 Employment

The private companies were training refugees either for the external job market or for self-employment. It was mostly the small and medium-sized companies who were employing refugees due to skills shortage and were happy to employ refugees who participated in the technical qualification trainings. The large international companies rarely recruited refugees and were mostly training for the external job market without planning to recruit them. For instance, many of the automotive and high-tech companies who were taking part in the "Entry-level Qualification"

initiative rarely employed the trainees after their training. These companies were primarily responding to the governments call for their engagement in the integration of refugees due to their potential and structure for technical and professional training. However, they often had no shortage of skilled labour to be filled by recruiting refugees and have high requirements for getting an apprenticeship or employment position. A few of them mentioned that the intention in the first place was to be a trainer not an employer. An interview partner from an automotive company said:

> *"We said from the beginning that we as a company don't employ or give vocational training to everyone who joins our [EQ] training. We will place them in other companies, e.g. in our partner or supplier companies. For instance, we have placed almost all our training participants in different companies." #028*

Nevertheless, small and medium companies openly mentioned the skilled labour shortage as a challenge and started initiatives such as "Initiative for good work [41]" to address their lack of qualified employees. They wanted to make their workplaces more attractive for employees by branding the company as a *"Top Employer",* or by providing certificates, job exchange possibilities, training, and networking facilities for participating companies.

We observed that the two company types faced very different challenges in their engagement. For instance, the insecure residence permits and bureaucratic procedures in the public sector that mostly discouraged the medium and small companies from employing refugees were rarely mentioned by the large companies. The large companies reported rather good experiences in their cooperation with the public sector. An interviewee from an international company said:

> "*We often hear about bad experiences with the public sector, but we have a very good cooperation with them. They all work very fast, are very flexible, and pragmatic. #024*

What was challenging for the big companies was the inconsistent refugee employment policies in different states across Germany. For instance, an interviewee stated:

[41] Initiative for good work available: https://www.initiative-fuer-gute-arbeit.de/, accessed on 10 Apr. 2021

> *"I am in contact with the different state agencies across the country. There are 40 different types of rules and regulations across 16 states across Germany. As an individual company, if you are active across different states, you get to know how difficult and different it is." #24*

The interview partners, from small and medium companies often complained about the public sector bureaucratic procedures and the difficulty to access the public service points:

> *"The apparatus in the city is too bureaucratic. I cannot fill out 10 forms, invest too much time, and do too many applications" #02*

> *"The caseworkers in the immigration office have their legal paragraphs, but also a lot of freedom (Spielraum) if they want to help" #023.*

> *"We follow the classic way of contacting the city, which is not effective. The NGOs are much better networked than the city. If I write Mrs. Z. [social worker from an NGO] it is much better than if I write an anonymous person at the employment agency or wait in the hotlines." #021*

Furthermore, insecure residence permits often caused a "vicious cycle" that many of the interviewees from small and medium companies touched upon. This is illustrated by the following quote:

> *"Employer: We only issue the contract if the refugee receives an extension to the Duldung [*so-called Toleration for Vocational Training/ Employment Purposes (*Ausbildungs-/Beschäftigungsduldung*)*] Foreigners' Office: "We need the contract!" Employer: "We need the visa!" They keep returning the ball to each other!" #030*

The small and medium companies often lacked confidence in the employment of refugees due to the bureaucratic procedures and lack of information about the existing support for companies that employ refugees. The coordinator of a public service point mentioned companies' lack of information about their services as "the biggest challenge" for them. The interviews showed a more nuanced picture; the large international companies were much more informed about existing public support. In contrast, some of the small and medium companies used informal channels for

recruiting refugees. For instance, a company representative who employed five refugees from her neighbouring reception centre asked us during the interview what status her employees should have, and she wanted to check her employee's status after the interview with us. However, she was fully confident that the social worker introduced the *"right people"* to her.

Certain challenges were common for both large and small to medium sized family-owned companies. For instance, the lack of collaboration among different stakeholders involved in the refugees' labour market integration caused *"double efforts"* or *"parallel supporters"* for the same participants such as two or several job applications for one applicant through different channels. Moreover, interviewees from both company types reported that they realized it was *"too early"* for some refugees to be employed or start the vocational training because they required a *"very high support effort"*. Furthermore, refugees' lack of information about the apprenticeship and employment system was brought up by both company types. The following statements illustrate this:

> *"There is a high desire for university studies, not vocational training. They [the refugees] need to be informed that the level of income between university and apprenticeship graduates is only slightly different, for example. But refugees mostly don't know that. They did not have this system in their home countries. The vocational training is similar to a bachelor's degree. That is not clear to many." #022*

Our findings on the solutions and strategies for employment show that both international and family-owned companies have emphasized the "tolerated permits" as the solution to the insecure resident permits for their trainees or employees. Some mentioned possibilities such as the "3+2 regulation[42]" that helped them get legal support, and a few emphasized the importance of engagement in employing refugees.

[42] The Tolerated Stay for Vocational Training available: https://www.unternehmen-integrieren-fluechtlinge.de/die-ausbildungsduldung/, accessed on 11 Feb. 2021

4.5.3 Funding and donations

Financing the Campus was the most popular joint funding project among the interviewed companies. The Campus was initially planned with an annual budget of 400.000€ for two rounds with three years each. The budget was predominantly paid by the four largest private companies and partly by the city council in its second round.

> *"Ausbildungscampus is an initiative that was not possible without the private companies' financial support; not only financial support, for the initiative would not have been created without these four big companies." # 024*

In addition to this financial support, several private companies, including banks, provided donations for associations and language centres for cultural and social initiatives supporting refugees. Some donated to language centres for refugees with low prospects for staying in Germany who would otherwise not get the chance to participate in the government-provided language courses. Moreover, companies had initiatives to raise funding from their employees or encourage them to support refugees by volunteering in the reception centres or by mentoring refugees for labour market access. There was a company that collected donations and then doubled the donated amount and supported several initiatives suggested by their employees, including many refugee integration initiatives during 2015-2016.

The majority of the participating companies were in favour of the Campus activities and were motivated to continue supporting it in the long run. However, one of the large companies that were taking part in financing integration services and offering training for refugees ended their programs at the end of 2018. The interview partner mentioned that the refugee topic was "off the agenda", that refugee integration "is not the task of business" but of the public sector and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), and that the company did not "directly profit" from financing the integration of refugees. Another interviewee stated that since there were not so many refugees anymore, their engagement in the specific apprenticeship programs would not be needed any longer.

4.5.4 Advocacy

In addition to training, employment, and funding, private companies have been advocating for "fair asylum policies" in the region. This included policy advocacy at the national and local level,

as well as advocacy for individual refugees employed by them. An interview partner emphasizing the importance and effectiveness of the private companies' voice mentioned that:

> *"We were the first company who supported the popular statement "We manage it" or "Wir schaffen das" of Chancellor Merkel and had a strong and concrete position in supporting the idea that it is possible." #024.*

Private companies advocated for refugees work and residence permit issues either jointly or individually. For instance, with the active involvement of the CoC, an Advisory Board[43] was created in 2019 to advocate companies' wants at the national policy level. Besides, many companies, including medium and large automotive, high-tech companies and migrant-led companies had individually stood up for their refugee employees, who either had work permit issues or their asylum applications were rejected. This included individual calls to the immigration office and other public sector offices mostly for either residence or work permit issues. Some employed lawyers for their employees, and others made appeals to the court that ended successfully:

> *"We initiated a court case for our employee and participated in court hearings. I started it myself personally. The initiative started when his asylum application was rejected, and he had to leave the country. We brought other actors such as the landlord and a refugee supporting NGO together and appeared in the court and finally got one-year subsidiary protection for him." #023*

Companies used different possibilities to advocate, although advocates were often individuals within the companies. The family-owned companies brought other actors such as landlords and NGOs and filed an application themselves while the large international companies got support from their company lawyers as the following quote describes:

> *"There were two vocational trainees in the company whose asylum applications got rejected and they had to leave the country. But I [the*

[43] "In 2019 the Advisory Board was created which works politically to provide good training and employment. The advisory board is in contact with political representatives and ministries. The board meets several times a year. For instance, we presented our wants to Ms. Widmann-Mauz as state representative for integration and she took note of our wishes and took them to Berlin" Interview # 022

department head] informed myself about solutions and tried to help them by talking to the lawyers, and both could actually stay in Germany. One of them got a permanent job and is working in the company and about the other one I don't know… We as a company did not actively participate in the process." #025

Various interview partners emphasized the role of private companies for the existence of the policies such as "Tolerated Stay for Vocational Training" which did not exist before 2015. The regulations were mentioned to be "far too restrictive" and the necessity for more possibilities for securing the residence permits of already trained and employed refugees were mentioned. The following statement indicates the reason and the important role the private companies played:

"During 2015, private companies were encouraged and were invited to join in integrating refugees. The private companies started training and employing many refugees whose asylum applications were still in process. After one to two years, when BAMF started to announce the asylum results, many were rejected and had to leave the country ("Ausreisepflichtig"). Many companies had actually hired refugees, trained them and then in 2018/2019 many of them were not successful in getting a residence permit (after sometimes year-long court cases), so they were in danger of getting deported. The companies did not accept that their efforts were in vain and protested." #022

Nevertheless, few interviewees mentioned that their companies were not interested in advocating for refugees at the policy level, as highlighted in the following quote:

"*We keep ourselves out of politics when possible. We might of course have our position on supporting refugees who have gone through the first steps successfully and have done vocational training or jobs, and should not be deported. But I am not aware of any statement that went out from our company." #028*

As the quote stated, there were often individuals within companies who were advocating for refugee rights to residency or work permits.

4.6 Private companies' motivations for engagement

In this chapter, we summarize the main incentives that companies reported. The arrival of an unprecedented number of refugees/asylum seekers to Germany during 2015/2016 was mentioned as causing not only the participation of many private companies in refugee matters but also innovative initiatives from the private companies themselves. Some stated that they started joint initiatives on refugee integration and social cohesion such as the "Working Group Migration and Training[44]". Some companies reported *"coming closer"* to each other and increased cooperation and collaboration in social matters.

> *"The biggest challenge during 2015 was that we did not know any other actors on the ground. It was like "we were parked in the dark". With time, we tackled the challenges by getting to know other actors like the working group and joined meetings that made our work easier. We did joint events together, joint information sessions, and worked together. We can say that we established an alliance and used it as an opportunity to solve each other's issues." #026*

Different factors motivated private companies. For instance, the discursive environment that there is a need for private companies' support, corporate social responsibility, offsetting skills shortage, and refugee's competitiveness for certain jobs. It was commonly noted across respondents from private companies of all sizes that they had the feeling they were doing "something good" by engaging in refugee integration. A respondent from an engineering company mentioned that she recently changed her job, and she did not see her old job as "meaningful". She felt that her new job (working on a refugees training project) made "sense" and was satisfying because it was meaningful and important to the lives of the participants. Social responsibility was a major motivating factor for companies to engage in integration activities, one repetitively heard from almost all interview partners from large companies.

[44] "The Working Group Migration and Training was founded in 2016: In the Working Group, 200 very active companies came together, which meet twice a year, and exchange current information on integration and benefits for companies. The working group is in contact with the job center, the employment agency, and the foreign office, and has regular discussions with them on relevant topics" Interview #022

> *"The reasons for our engagement are very easy. It is for social and political contribution "Gesellschaftspolitischer Beitrag" and not any other specific reason." #025*

Besides that, some stated that their engagement in the different refugee support initiatives will be positive for the reputation of the company, showing the company as a society-friendly and social employer. This is illustrated by the following quote from an employee of a high-tech company:

> *"…We don't want to be seen solely as an employer to employ people when we need them but to be part of the civil society. We believe that in a few years it will no longer be enough to provide a working position with a salary for an employee. We already see that it is important for young people with a university degree how a company deals with society. We care about integration as we do for other similar matters such as environmental protection and climate change." #028*

Another incentive for engagement in labour market initiatives was skills shortage which was mostly pointed out by medium-sized technical and social service companies. An interview partner stated: *"The lack of a qualified labour force in the field of engineering and architecture was recognized by our company's leadership. That was the reason why we participated in the IQ*[45] *initiative to train refugees." #027*

Furthermore, some interview partners from civil society and public-private partnerships also mentioned that the engagement of the private sector in the initiatives they were collaborating with was mostly due to the skills shortage the companies were facing. A quote from the interviewee from a large company refers to this:

> *"Some companies have challenges in finding vocational trainees for technical jobs. There could be 100 different reasons. Many were very wild to get refugees as vocational trainees. For example, the company with 600 employees hired 3-4 refugees as vocational trainees and they are still working with them. The company was also happy to employ the trained*

[45] "The support program "Integration through Qualification (IQ)"works toward the goal of improving labor market opportunities for people with a migration background." More information: https://www.netzwerk-iq-bw.de/, accessed on 10 Apr. 2021

refugees who were highly motivated rather than contacting the job agency which usually requires a lot of time and patience." #028

Ultimately, one repeatedly mentioned motivating factor for companies was the refugees' high motivation for learning and working. Many interview partners regarded refugees as assets and admired their respectfulness, their potential for understanding cultural differences, their gratitude, enrichment, patience, and tolerance. In the following section we summarize the lessons learned.

4.7 Lessons learned

The call for help encouraged many private companies to engage in and help create a more positive discursive environment, which was good in theory, but still they could have been better guided on where to practically engage. Private companies were called to help but in early 2015, in practice "nothing was clear" and companies did not know "what to do exactly".

Concerning the employment of refugees, the experts and interview partners from bigger companies, who often providing training, believed that refugees should be employed by small and medium companies, including migrant-led companies, because they often face skills shortage and refugees would have more chance for one-to-one contact and the opportunity to speak their native language which might facilitate their integration into the labour market faster and easier.

The small and medium family-owned companies complained of the bureaucratic processes, lack of information, and lack of transparency in the legal and administrative procedures for refugee employment, while the larger companies were better connected with the public sector and faced little to no bureaucratic process in their activities. In other words, the bigger companies got easier access to the public sector although the small and medium companies needed it more. To solve this issue, the public sector may provide specific contact persons for specific topics such as legal issues, work permits, finance, and accommodation-related topics to give the small and medium companies the access and possibility to solve their matters easily. Furthermore, simplifying the bureaucratic procedures was recommended, as well as familiarizing companies with the regulatory and administrative procedures for refugee employment. The family-owned companies recommended information sessions on the refugees' employment support for companies, the

different status of refugees, types of work permit, and information on the employment support programs provided by different public and private stakeholders.

The CoC, a non-governmental corporation, has played an important role as a bridging institute, connecting private companies and the public sector. The CoC initiatives on labour market integration were Caretaker (Kümmerer)[46] and KAUSA Service Point[47] that were financed by the public sector and supported private companies and refugees by providing counselling sessions, administrative support, preparation for employment and technical training.

Finally, some companies realized that refugees needed better language skills before they were employed as trainees. The training coordinator of a company stated:

> *"We now realize that they should not have started technical training that early! It was initially the wish for both sides. Companies as well as refugees, wanted to start vocational training as soon as possible. German language acquisition is extremely important. We should keep in mind that people were in the migration process during the last 5-7 years and have migrated through different countries, interrupted biographies… they need time to repeat math, learn German terms, etc." #022*

The lesson learned was the necessity to equip refugees with more technical language training before employing them as vocational trainees.

4.8 Discussion and conclusion

An increasing number of public and private actors, CSOs, and individual volunteers have taken part in supporting refugees in Germany since 2015/16. In this exploratory qualitative approach, we studied the role of private companies in supporting the labour market integration of refugees in the German city of Stuttgart. Our findings show that the private companies that participated in

[46] Integration through vocational training - Perspektiven für Zugewanderte (Kümmerer-Programm): Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Arbeit und Wohnungsbau Baden-Württemberg (baden-wuerttemberg.de) Monitoring Kümmerer September 2020 (baden-wuerttemberg.de), accessed on 20 Aug. 2021

[47] KAUSA Service Point Stuttgart available: https://www.stuttgart.ihk24.de/standortpolitik/bildungspolitik/bildungsprojekte/kausa-servicestelle-region-stuttgart-681582, accessed on 20 Aug. 2021

this research have proactively engaged in the integration of refugees, and their engagement has increased with the arrival of refugees during 2015/2016. The private companies mostly contributed by providing training and internships and offering apprenticeships and employment. Some large companies provided funding for the integration initiatives, and others were active in policy advocacy for refugees' labour market access which was also noted by Neis, Meier and Furukawazono, (2018), and Brücker, Kosyakova and Vallizadeh (2020). We found examples of initiatives by private companies such as initiating partnerships with each other, with CSOs and with the public sector, for the goal of qualifying refugees for work, actively offering support to the public sector where needed, organizing solidarity campaigns, and fighting against racism.

The case study teaches us that the discursive environment in Stuttgart has been positive for a long time, and the call on private companies for engagement by the German government during 2015/16 and the feeling of social responsibility were among the main drivers that further motivated companies to participate. Our findings show that the collaborations of the public sector and civil society with the private companies were very useful in labour market initiatives. It is worth mentioning that the initiatives of individuals within large as well as small to medium private companies have played very important roles in the company's decisions on whether to engage, to what extent and on what themes.

Our results might have been completely different if the study was undertaken in a different region of Germany. We caution against generalizing our findings to other German cities since Stuttgart is a special case, not only with high economic potential and employment opportunities, but also because of its inducive discursive environment and its special political culture. Our findings might not represent small and medium family-owned companies in Germany since our interview partners came from already engaged companies. However, the international companies are represented with more confidence since we included most of the prominent automotive industries in our sample.

In line with Zakharia & Menashy (2018; p.65) who described private companies as "high-profile policy actors", almost all interviewed companies have engaged in some sort of advocacy for their employee's legal status and work permits. Besides that, many have advocated for a fair migration policy and more legal certainty for refugees at the regional and national levels. Müller (2021) stated that the civic and political engagement of the business sector might have the potential to transform the lives of refugees and refugee groups. Private companies showed that they did have

the potential and willingness to advocate for more legal certainty for refugees and their labour market access. The work permit regulations such as toleration permits for vocational training/ employment have empowered private companies as critical decision-makers about the destiny of refugees whose asylum applications were rejected and would have had to leave Germany otherwise. The job or vocational training contracts provided by the companies have given failed asylum applicants the chance to stay.

There was a difference between the large multinationals and small and medium companies in the extent and level of their advocacy for refugee employees/trainees; the large international companies being less active in practice. One reason could be that they were doing short-term, project-based training programs for refugees. Thus, refugees were considered interns to them and not employees. In case of deportation, they were not losing an employee, in contrast to the small and medium companies who were therefore practically more active at the political advocacy level. Some trainees of big companies had to leave the country due to the rejection of their asylum applications. The big companies mostly did not do what the small and medium ones did, such as taking the case to the court or uniting other stakeholders such as civil society actors to appeal or contact the immigration office for possible solutions. In a few cases, the training officers in the large multinational companies reported the case to the company lawyers, the lawyer wrote a letter of appeal to the court, and they were not aware of what happened afterward. Another reason could be that the skills shortage was not an issue for large multinationals while it was for the small and mediums companies.

This study does not challenge the broader literature on the role of small and medium companies. In our case study, the bureaucratic obstacles were recognized as discouraging factors for their engagement. However, this does not mean, that small and medium companies in Stuttgart did not do anything to overcome the bureaucratic procedures. There were examples of these companies' challenging bureaucracy by partnering with different stakeholders and, through their associations, advocating for the refugee's residence and work permits. There were examples of private social enterprises that challenged the immigration office regarding prohibitive bureaucratic procedures as well as to stop deportation. For instance, a company reported asking immigration office employees not to limit themselves to their "legal paragraphs" and to use their "room to maneuver" to extend the residence permits of the company's asylum-seeking employees. Another example

was a case which was taken to court successfully. As a result of their practical efforts, the employees who had to otherwise leave the country got residence permits based on their job contracts.

The results of the companies' engagements could be further differentiated according to the nature of their engagement. Companies of both types have engaged in local politics and have, for instance, advocated for an easier access to the labour market. The typical examples were public statements, such as supporting Chancellor Merkel's popular statement of "we will manage it! / *Wir schaffen das!* Some companies even organized campaigns for solidarity with refugees and against racism. It is remarkable, however, that particularly the large multinational companies have not gone so far as to utilize their lobbying power for changing German refugee policies on any government level or even specific bureaucratic decisions on street level. On the contrary, it was the small and medium companies who stood up against deportations of refugee employees. For instance, a deportation case was taken to court and the employee received residence and work permit based on the contract from the company.

Another interesting aspect was the framing of these political or social engagements and advocacy. For instance, the large multinational companies mostly framed their engagement as corporate social responsibility. However, small and medium companies were advocating the idea of rescuing their employees who had been invested in, were ready to work but were lined up to be deported. There was no evidence that private companies were truly acting out of humanitarian reasons. Instead, their engagement served their business interests.

In agreement with the OECD survey results where 70% of the employers emphasized that stable residence and work permits were important to them (OECD, 2017), the legal uncertainty, work permit related bureaucratic issues (Khan-Gökkaya and Mösko, 2020; OECD, 2017) and restrictive procedures of public sector bureaucrats on one hand, and the unfamiliarity of the private companies with the employment system and the existing facilitating policies for refugees on the other, were the main discouraging factors for the engagement of the private companies. In agreement with a study by Dahlvik (2017), where the street-level bureaucrats played important roles in the process of asylum application and refugee status determination at micro and meso-level, the actual practices in Stuttgart also influenced the decisions of private companies for engagement in the refugee initiatives.

Based on our research, we suggest that a publicly available map of the actors and initiatives related to the labour market integration of refugees by the city council would help to make existing offers transparent, facilitate networking and collaboration, and avoid parallel efforts. When companies start an initiative, the already existing initiatives and the potential actors and collaborators are unclear to them. Initiatives such as the "Ausbildungscampus" have brought some transparency by bringing several actors together, but it is still unable to be a reference since not all actors and initiatives are included. Moreover, the Campus should be more inclusive to small and medium sized companies as they are mostly the ultimate employers of the refugees.

A central technical training system with the collaboration of public, private, and civil society would be more efficient than individual companies providing training. It would also help avoid parallel efforts and overlaps with other training programs. For instance, the Campus could be more structured and transformed into a central training system that would not only train new arriving refugees but also the children of migrant workers, the second generations of refugees, and the non-migrant residents who may require technical and professional training for entering the job market.

We noticed that most of the initiatives for labour market integration focused on the refugees with "good prospects" to stay in Germany. Some initiatives focused only on recognized refugees and the participants of the technical training by the international companies were cherry-picked by the labour agency. However, those with less favourable statuses who might need support are often left behind. Future initiatives might consider this issue and identify their target group more carefully.

More research on the role of private companies in less industrial cities, while also including the views of the public and third sector about private companies' participation in the labour market integration of refugees, could provide valuable insights. Moreover, conducting an impact analysis and exploring the topic from the employees' and trainees' perspectives, specifically with a case study on training programs undertaken by the private companies during the last few years, may also be noteworthy.

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5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Taking the case of Afghans and Syrians and their asylum migration to Germany, this research aimed to i) explore the trajectories of fragmented migration and identify the influential actors and factors behind the origin and transit migration of people from these two countries to Germany, ii) explore these refugees' integration challenges and opportunities at the local level in the destination, and iii) zoom in on the role of private companies in their labour market integration.

This section discusses the summary of the findings on the above-mentioned objectives and further discusses the roles of the public, private and third sectors in Germany as a major receiving country. The section further reflects on the important role of individuals within different sectors and concludes with the research limitations, recommendations for future research and policy recommendations.

The first objective of this study explored the reasons behind irregular migration and secondary movements of Afghans and Syrians to Europe, particularly to Germany. Our findings showed that many respondents spent several years on fragmented journeys in neighbouring countries and transit before they moved to Europe. The outbreak of violent conflicts in the countries of origin, as well as political persecution and impacted personal security caused the first outmigration of many interviewees of these two nationalities. The primary movement to a neighbouring country was a survival strategy and the onward migration depended on the one hand, on the unfavourable reception conditions and the prolonged uncertainty in the first countries of refuge, the deterioration of the situation in their countries of origin, the restrictions in regular migrations to Europe and on the other hand, it highly depended on the time, available resources, and potential opportunities for onward movements. The research findings showed that it was not only the physical threats and insecurity that lead to people's migration, but the pursuit of mental, social, and political security and the long-term prospects for families with children that shaped the ultimate decision for initiating irregular migration to Europe. The dominant actors who spurred migration decisions and often determined movements to specific countries were people smugglers, other asylum seekers in transit countries, and social media which are noted in the literature in this regard (Kvittingen, et al. 2018; Mandic & Simpson, 2017; Collyer, 2010). Technology and social media were the initial sources of information, means of communication, and networking for almost all respondents,

which is in line with Collyers' (2010) findings on refugees migrating from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe.

With a focus on the refugees' perspectives, the second objective of this research further explored the case of Afghans and Syrians integration experiences from social, economic, legal, and cultural aspects to study the opportunities and challenges of integration in their new societies in Germany. Our findings showed that the legal integration dimension affected the other dimensions either positively or negatively. In other words, the shorter the asylum application process and the more secure the residency status, the faster refugees obtained access to language and integration courses which consequently better prepared them for labour market integration, finding housing outside of the reception centres, and enabled better connections to the rest of society. The academic literature has noticed the importance of residence permits. For instance, Smyth et al. (2010) noted legal certainty for refugees as a "reward for successful integration". Furthermore, in a German labor market integration study, 70% of employers emphasized the importance of "more legal certainty" for the refugees they employed (Tanay & Peschner, 2017). The city of Stuttgart is identified as a pioneering German city that provides many integration services such as labour market access training, initiatives for social and cultural inclusion, and many volunteer services, on top of what the national government provides for the integration of migrants and refugees. Nevertheless, we identified challenges such as the lengthy asylum application process from six months to over four years that kept people inactive and in isolation for a long period, limited social contacts, limited access to language, and labour market integration. Furthermore, the long-term residence in asylum facilities was one of the major reasons for refugees' overall dissatisfaction in Stuttgart. Moreover, the different treatment of nationalities in access to asylum, housing, and employment created attitudes and often conflicts between different nationalities.

Our findings on the third research objective, the role of the private companies, showed that both the small and big companies in Stuttgart that participated in this research have proactively engaged in the integration of refugees, and their engagement has increased with the arrival of refugees during 2015/2016. The private companies' contributions included providing training and internships and offering apprenticeships and employment. Some large companies provided funding for the integration initiatives, and others were active in policy advocacy for refugees' labour market access which was also noted by Neis, Meier & Furukawazono, (2018), and Brücker,

Kosyakova & Vallizadeh (2020). The case study demonstrates that the discursive environment and the specific government call for private companies' participation were the main motivating factors for their engagement. Moreover, there were further incentives such as skilled labour shortage for small and medium family-owned companies and social responsibility for both types of companies' engagements. There were some differences in companies' approaches towards refugees. For instance, the small and medium companies had recruited refugees with insecure residence permits and mentioned the lack of skilled labour force for their engagement while the large companies trained refugees for the external market and did not intend to employ them, since they did not have a labour shortage issue. The labour shortage as a motivation for companies to engage in refugee integration is also reported by Müller (2021). The small and medium companies had issues with the insecure residence permits and bureaucratic procedures in the public sector that mostly discouraged them from employing refugees while the large companies did not face these challenges and they were happy with the support of the public sector.

We caution against generalizing our findings to other German cities since Stuttgart is a special case, not only with high economic potential and employment opportunities but also because of its inducive discursive environment and its special political culture. Our findings might not be representative of small and medium family-owned companies in Germany since we interviewed very few companies and only those who were already engaged with refugee integration. However, the international companies in our sample are more likely to be representative since the sample included most of the prominent automotive industries in the city.

5.1 What roles have the public, private and third sectors played?

The increase in the extent of international refugee migration brings different stakeholders in the arena of migration and integration management together. This phenomenon not only increases the importance of cross-sector partnerships and diverse stakeholder engagements in the hosting countries but also requires international cooperation for migration management.

The extent of partnerships and the role of different actors such as (public, private, and third sector[48]) in the settlement and integration of refugees have been very different across the globe(van

[48] Third Sector Organizations (TSOs) are major actors in addition to public and private sectors as far as refugee settlement and integration are concerned. Researchers have given different definitions for TSOs. For instance,

Selm, 2003; Bontenbal & Lillie, 2019). In Europe, there have been individual efforts as well as joined initiatives or cross-sector partnerships (CSSPs) to help settle the new coming asylum seekers and refugees (Vurro et al., 2010). The geographical comparison of Europe and North America shows that the European states or public sectors are well known for operating at every stage, from reception of the refugee in the airport to the integration, the so-called "from cradle to grave type", while Canada and the US are believed to be globally well known for their most outstanding public partnerships in refugee resettlement and integration. Canada is particularly popular for the full use of the potential of civil society (van Selm, 2003). The type of services and the extent to which the governments provide services to asylum seekers and refugees are compared to the welfare assistance providing states in Europe. For instance, the UK is stated as provider of welfare lifejackets, Sweden and Netherlands as the provider of lifejackets plus rafts, and the US approach is labelled "the swim or sink" type, with the exception of the limited support of voluntary agencies (Volags) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that receive public funding and charitable donations. This study, however, does not include Germany among the European states case studies.

In German migration history, the federal governments have had fewer incentives to act consistently compared to states and cities. For instance, the local governments had to bear the majority of the costs of housing for asylum seekers (FAIST, 1994 p.443). The German public organizations such as the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and the German local City Councils, Job Centers, and Labor Agency are the major actors in migration and asylum management. However, civil society and volunteers are often praised for Germanys' successful response to the largest refugee arrivals during 2015/2016 (OECD, 2017; Giulia, Giannetto, & Noya, 2018). The German third sector with more than 2.5 million employees is the largest non-governmental employer (Zimmer et al., 2005). The German Free Welfare Association (GFWA) that includes traditional third sector organizations (i.e., Caritas, Diakonie, the Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Deutschen Juden, the German Red Cross, Arbeiterwohlfahrt and the Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband) are the "core players" and "anchor institutions", not only in the German policy community, but also at the EU level. What makes the welfare organizations very unique is their scope for public-private

Garkisch et al. defines it as "heterogeneous groups of organisations" and [..] cooperatives, mutual societies, social enterprises as well as social norms, voluntary and community or civil society organisations and volunteer activities" (Garkisch et al., 2017; P.1843).

partnership and their high level of flexibility in challenging social and political environments and their ability to combine the logic of "business-like social services" with the "logic of civicness and advocacy" (Zimmer et al., 2005; p.62; Giulia, Giannetto and Noya, 2018). In addition to the two sectors, the private sector leaders were also invited by German Chancellor Angela Merkel to the chancellery to discuss the integration of refugees and the role of the businesses in this process (Müller, 2021b). The private companies in Germany since then engage in training and employment, as well as advocate for legal security and generous employment opportunities to the failed asylum seekers (Brücker, Kosyakova, and Vallizadeh, 2020).

To understand the German case in more detail, Table 5.1 gives an overview of the role of the three sectors *public (Pb), private (Pr), and third sector (TS)* in the reception, orientation, and integration of refugees. The table shows the reception which includes the registration, application for asylum, and immediate arrival services, which are predominantly provided by the public and third sector, whereas the private and third sectors play a stronger role in the orientation, education, and integration services in the second and third steps.

Table 5.1 Institutions involved in refugee reception, orientation, and integration

Process	**1. Reception**	**2.Orientation & education**	**3. Integration**
Types of Services	Registration Provision of first reception camps Application for asylum Governance of training for culture and language On-site immediate assistance	Coordination of language training Process of applying for a residence title Consulting, qualification programs, social and unemployment benefits Assistance in day-to-day activities	Coordination of integration initiatives Job application preparation programs, job fairs organisations, Social connections in the community, assistance in appointments with public agencies, health, and educational service
List of Institutions	Federal Office of Migration and Refugees (BAMF)-Pb[49] State Ministry for Family, Women, Integration and Consumer Protection -Pb Migrant and Refugee-led Orgs-TS Volunteers-TS	District Administration-Pb District Admin (Job centre, decentral) -Pb Social office (Municipality level) -Pb Language schools-Pr NGOs, Migrant and Refugee-led Orgs -TS	Federal Employment Agency-Pb Chambers-Pb Educational organisations-Pr Employees-Pr NGOs, Migrant and Refugee-led Grassroot Orgs. -TS

[49] Pb= Public Sector, Pr=Private Sector; TS= Third Sector

	Volunteers-TS	Volunteers-TS

Source: Authors compilation based on information from Hesse, Kreutzer, & Diehl (2019)

Our findings based on the first objective showed that the opening of western Balkans and the German welcoming (the "open door policy"), had some effect on the migration of Afghans and Syrians specifically to Germany. Nonetheless, our findings showed that the decision was motivated by people's awareness about democracy, human rights and women's rights, as well as Germanys' popularity as an economic power among other European countries. In other words, one might say that the private and business sector is the reason behind the popularity of Germany as an economic power and the third sector as advocates for human and women rights and democracy have also been the indirect pull factors for some movements to Germany. Therefore, all three sectors' engagement is crucial to successfully managing migrant and refugees' integration into their communities.

In the case study of local integration of refugees in Stuttgart, we found that Stuttgart is considered a pioneering city in terms of integration policy and practices in Germany. The Stuttgart Pact on Integration (SPI) is labelled as a "vision for an international city," which was developed by the city of Stuttgart in 2001 (Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart, 2001) whereas the federal Chancellor publicly announced the German National Integration Plan approximately seven years later in 2007 (BAMF Integration Forum, 2008). The Stuttgart Model *(Der Stuttgarter Weg)* is another initiative from the city of Stuttgart, which is the decentralization of the accommodation and reception centres for refugees across the city that are governed by the welfare and faith-based organizations. There are 120 accommodation facilities spread across 22 of 23 districts in Stuttgart, each providing social and housing services which are aimed to give refugees more chance of one-to-one supervision (Stuttgart city council, 2016)[50]. However, there is still more need for the city municipality to provide German language courses for disadvantaged refugees who might not benefit from the national integration courses due to their unprivileged legal status. Furthermore, housing was still one of the major issues in Stuttgart, where, due to a lack of access to private housing, thousands

[50] Stuttgart City Council available: https://www.stuttgart.de/item/show/335193/1/dept/154?language=en, accessed on 11 Aug. 2019

of people have been living in the reception centres for several years. These issues could be solved by the city municipality with the engagement of the private and third sector stakeholders. Recent studies show that municipalities do have the potential to achieve more than they currently do and can shift their roles to being more active stakeholders in migrant integration matters (Schammann et al., 2021; Stürner *et al.*, 2020).

5.2 Individuals could make a huge difference

"One should not necessarily become a doctor to make a difference". This is a quote from my father. With this saying, let me add a personal reflection on the important role of the individual and individuals' initiatives. Unlike my father, I was not interested in medical science, which is what he wished for me since my early childhood. My father used to say *"One should not necessarily become a doctor to make a difference"* when he realized my lack of interest in medical science. I was reminded of this quote when I noticed our interesting emerging research findings on the role of individuals in the different sectors working on refugees and integration matters. I believe my father and my uncles did make a real difference in the lives of people by saving hundreds of men, women, and children's lives during dark times when health services were almost not at all available in the most disadvantaged villages in the Jaghuri district of Ghazni in Afghanistan during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Nevertheless, throughout this research, we noticed several individuals from the public, private, and third sectors who made huge differences in people's lives with their supportive initiatives. Some individuals in transit influenced migration pathways and destinations by influencing the decisions of refugees for onward movements or movement to a specific destination. There were individuals behind success stories in the integration to the new societies for some, and the advocates behind the destiny and the "life-changing stories" for others.

In the media and policy discussions, volunteers are often praised for their contribution. We found that there are individuals within the organizations and private companies, not only in the family-owned companies but also in the large international industries, who started initiatives and were the major reason behind the company's participation in the training and integration programs. For instance, an individual in a private automotive company caused the whole company's participation in a training program on labour market integration of refugees that not only continued for several

years but was also expanded in different aspects. Likewise, there were individuals who changed the company's perspective regarding refugee integration. There were individuals who started advocating for their refugee employees' work permit-related issues and took their employee case to the court. Finally, the establishment of the Stuttgart integration policy and the department was credited to Schuster's initiatives during his time at the city council. Mr. Schuster's contributions are an example of what helped shape the city of Stuttgart into becoming a pioneering city in the integration policy and services. "*The Stuttgart integration policy and the department was established at the time of Schuster. The next city councilors have not changed much but built on what Schuster started 20 years ago."*

We believe that individuals could make a huge difference, and therefore, the power of individuals should be counted upon, their initiatives should be valued, and they should be motivated and incentivized in public, private, and third sectors. There is evidence that to some extent this power is appreciated in migration and integration work. For instance, the integration commissioners *(Integrationsbeauftragten),* Integration Guides *(Integrationslotsen),* and the bridge builders, *(Brückerbauer)* are the different examples of initiatives in the migration and integration sector, with the focus on the role of individuals.

5.3 Research limitations

This research has some specific limitations that are addressed here. The specificity of our target group includes Afghans and Syrians as the two largest groups of asylum migrants to Europe during 2015-2017. Some reasons make this group of asylum migrants a unique case. For instance, the escalation of violent conflict in Syria, the open Turkish border to Europe, the *welcoming culture* of Germany and some other EU member states for Syrians, the sudden unprecedentedly high number of asylum seekers from the Middle East to Europe, and the invalidity of Dublin regulations for Syrians in Germany. These unique circumstances may have influenced the determinants of migrant's movements and their destination in this specific time and context which is important to be brought up in the agenda and help improve migration policies in Germany and the EU. Moreover, the time during 2015-2017, in which the origin and transit refugee migration took place was often regarded as a short-term opportunity for asylum migration to Europe. The factors and

actors influencing asylum migration during this period might not be fully comparable with a different time slot.

The city of Stuttgart is a special case study for the integration of refugees as well as for the role of private companies in the labour market integration. Stuttgart is an economically better-off city with a strong private sector presence and an established proactive integration department with twenty-plus years of experience. There might be case selection bias for our study on private companies in Chapter 4, as we have interviewed those companies who were willing to participate and interview with us and could not access those who did not want to participate. Therefore, our case studies are not statistically representative of family-owned companies, but they are illustrative. However, for the bigger companies, we are confident that we have covered the most predominant large international companies. In short, the findings in chapter 3 and chapter 4 of the dissertation as mentioned there, will not be entirely generalizable to other cities in Germany or elsewhere.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

The interviews on the origin and transit migration of Afghans and Syrians in Chapter 2 of this study were very specific in terms of times of arrival and countries of origin. Future research might expand the target group including refugees' arrivals from these two countries to Germany in different decades to explore the different actors and factors that played an influential role in their migration.

More research is required to explore the durability of solutions for refugee migration management from the middle east to Europe and specifically the role of Germany in this. It is also necessary to explore the reasons behind the lack of interaction between the EU Member States, specifically Germany with the first countries of migration and transit countries for Afghans and Syrians, and the potential challenges for agreements on the solutions for asylum migration management.

Related to Chapter 3, a study on refugees' feedback, an evaluation of the training programs and integration services provided by different sectors will be essential to understand the role of the different actors as well as the effectiveness of the different types of services refugees receive.

More research on the role of private companies, related to Chapter 4 of this dissertation, in less industrial cities and including the views of public and third sector about private companies'

participation in the labour market integration of refugees, and opportunities and challenges of the cooperation might be interesting. Moreover, conducting an impact analysis and exploring the topic from the employee and trainees' perspectives specifically with the case study on training programs undertaken by the private companies during the last few years might be noteworthy.

5.5 Concluding remarks

The unexpected and sudden fall of Kabul to the Taliban in August 2021[51] led to fears of a repetition of 2015/2016 refugee movements to Europe. Many EU members, including Germany, continued to search for similar solutions in neighbouring Pakistan, Iran, and Uzbekistan (e.g., the German foreign minister visited Pakistan and Uzbekistan). The visit was believed to not only facilitate the evacuation of the German employees and partners stuck in Afghanistan but to seek long-term cooperation with Afghanistan's neighbouring countries. The ultimate goal might be keeping Afghan refugees in the region and avoiding their migration to Europe, which I believe is still a repetition of the previous agreements (e.g. EU-Turkey agreement) and not a durable long-term solution to the issue of Afghans' migration. Germany's attempts show its understanding of the importance of collaboration with the origin and neighbouring/transit countries but putting restrictions against out-migration of Afghans to the neighbouring countries (Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan), as well as to Turkey and the EU has left thousands of Afghans in need of protection, helpless in the country.

This thesis has contributed to understanding the whole process of migration from migration decisions in the countries of origin to movements to transit and destination countries. It further explores the journey within the receiving country such as integration into the societies within the cities and integration in the labour market integration. I hope that the contributions will help understand the challenges with the ongoing refugee movements and help tackle them better.

[51] Mixed Migration Report available: https://mixedmigration.org/articles/the-impact-of-the-afghanistan-crisis-on-migration/, accessed on 20 Oct. 2021

5.6 Policy recommendations

What do we learn from the German experience on their response to the refugee arrivals in 2015/16? The German humanitarian response during these years is mentioned to be "impressive" (OECD, 2017) which is due to the engagement of different sectors including civil society, private companies and volunteers, besides the government efforts. The major achievements were revision and improvement of asylum acts, the amendments of the Asylum Act[52] and Asylum Seekers Benefits Acts[53], improvements to the administrative capacity for asylum and integration management, facilitation of labour market access through recognition of academic degrees from the countries of origin, work permits given after three months from the asylum application, professional and on the job language training, 3+2 rules for denied asylum seekers and many more (OECD, 2017; Giulia, Giannetto & Noya, 2018; OECD, 2018).

However, there is still room for improvement in both reception and integration within Germany, as well as the role of Germany in migration management internationally. Germany needs to do the groundwork for more effective and efficient employment of the actors and resources that were created during 2015/2016. For instance, there are cooperation gaps and the necessity for better task distribution and data sharing among different public stakeholders (e.g., Job Center, Employment Agency, and BAMF) that could be improved (OECD, 2017). In this regard, Germany could learn from the mentorship programs of Canada and Denmark to engage the mentor groups for labour market integration of refugees and not solely limit them to the day-to-day supporting activities. A survey from 2016 shows that 11% of Germany's population (over nine million Germans) have participated in the refugee support programs either through donations or volunteering in person (OECD, 2017). This could be a great human asset if systematically organized for long-term social cohesion and labour market integration of the new coming population.

Moreover, the national integration policies and practices should be more comprehensive for refugees with similar circumstances and consider the consequences they might have. For instance,

[52] "Asylum Act in the version promulgated on 2 September 2008 (Federal Law Gazette I, p. 1798), last amended by Article 2 of the Act of 11 March 2016 (Federal Law Gazette I, p. 394).", accessed on 20 Oct. 2021

[53] "Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz as amended by the announcement of 5 August 1997 (BGBl. I p. 2022), which was last amended by Article 4 of the law of 17 July 2017 (BGBl. I p. 2541)", accessed on 20 Oct. 2021

Hinger & Schweitzer (2020) mentions that the 2016 Integration Bill divides refugees into different categories of deserving and undeserving by recognizing them with the high chance of 'likelihood of staying' *(Bleibeperspektive)* or low, based on their nationalities. Besides, access to the labour market for refugees is also restricted to the type of status they get which is also influenced by their countries of origin (Khan-Gökkaya & Mösko, 2020). Chapter 2 of this research shows that there is a huge difference in the recognition rate of this studies' target groups (Afghans and Syrians) in Germany which is rooted in the decisions based on their countries of origin. Categorizing Afghanistan as a "safe country of origin" is believed to be unfair to many from central and north Afghanistan who believe they are in genuine need of protection, but have their applications rejected because of their country/region of origin. Our findings from the comparative case study of Afghans and Syrians showed that Afghans being treated as undeserving often felt discriminated against, which sometimes led to conflicts between different nationalities and tensions within the reception centers. To help overcome some of these challenges, the local city municipalities have the potential to offset the differences by providing the integration services to those who may not be deserving based on their legal status but could be perceived to stay in Germany for an unclear period of time.

In international refugee management during the last six to seven years, among many achievements, Germany had some shortcomings. For instance, there was a lack of effective engagement in the countries of origin and first transit countries to reach a durable solution and avoid humanitarian disaster on the way to Europe. Germany rather depended on dialogues and negotiations for agreements with European gates such as Turkey and Greece to stop refugees' onward movement which was not a durable solution. Such agreements turned out to be politically fragile and contrasted with the European and humanitarian law in order to stop people from seeking protection.

To effectively manage the international asylum migration to Europe, Germany as a leading EU Member State needs to act towards humanitarian protection and facilitate the legal migration pathways to Germany. For instance, learning from the Canadian Private Sponsorship Programs of Group of Five which was an initiative for resettlement of refugees and migrants through the diaspora communities and Canadians. Following that initiative, Germany started a pilot project

called NeST[54] which is very similar to that. This initiative could be further expanded and accelerated. Expanding such projects could on the one hand help resettle more people in need of protection and support the engagement of the diaspora communities and civil society in the practical integration and inclusion of newcomers to the receiving societies. On the other hand, it will reduce irregular movements to Germany. Besides that, putting efforts on security and livelihood for people in their countries of origin and advocacy for the respectful humanitarian condition for refugees in their first countries of refuge by facilitating their access to the residence and work permits may reduce continuous human suffering and the loss of life on the way to Europe.

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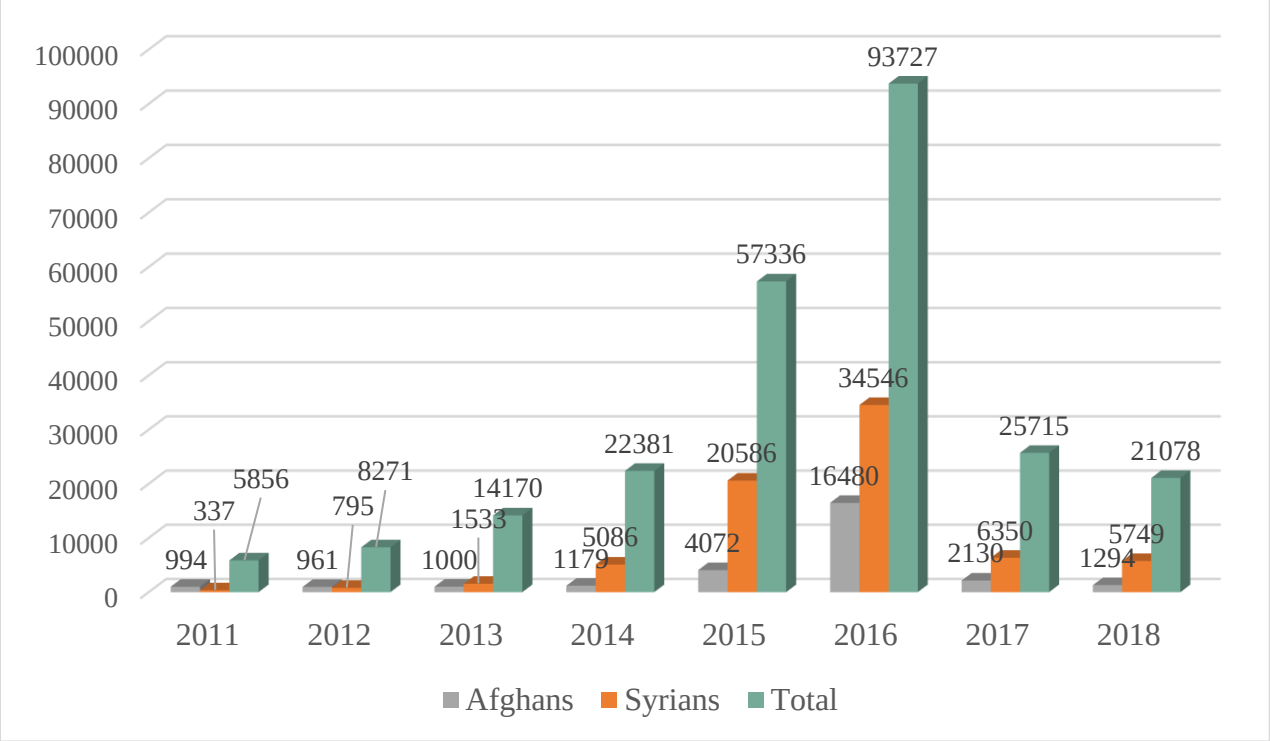
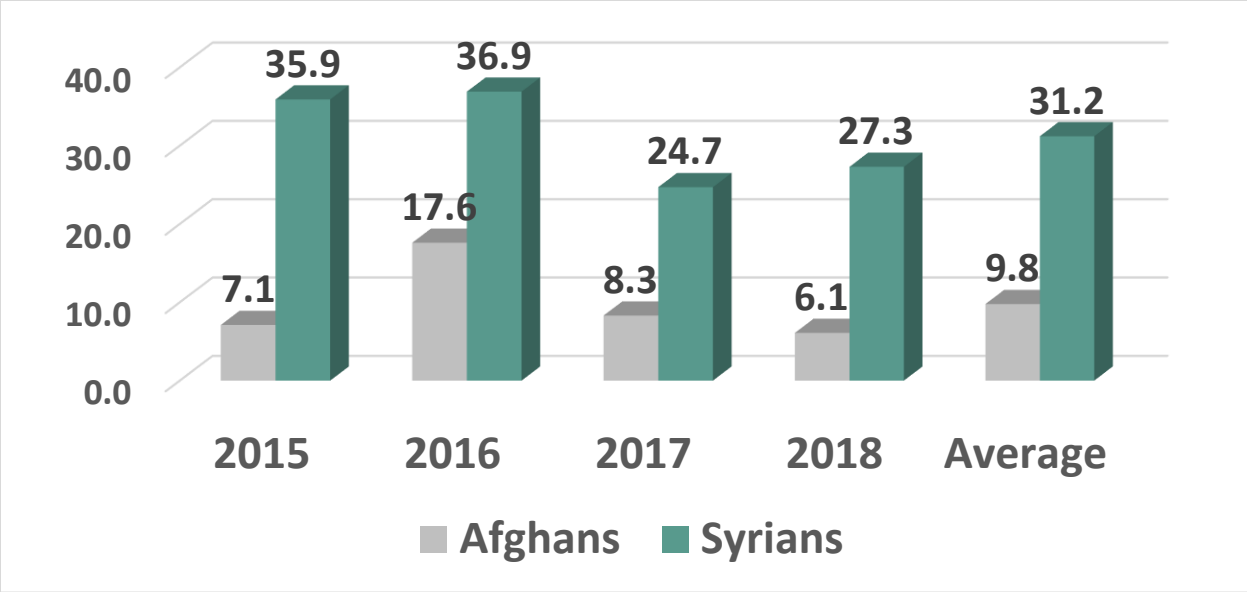
6 APPENDICES



Source: Authors compilation based on data from (BAMF, 2018)

First time asylum applicants in Baden-Württemberg

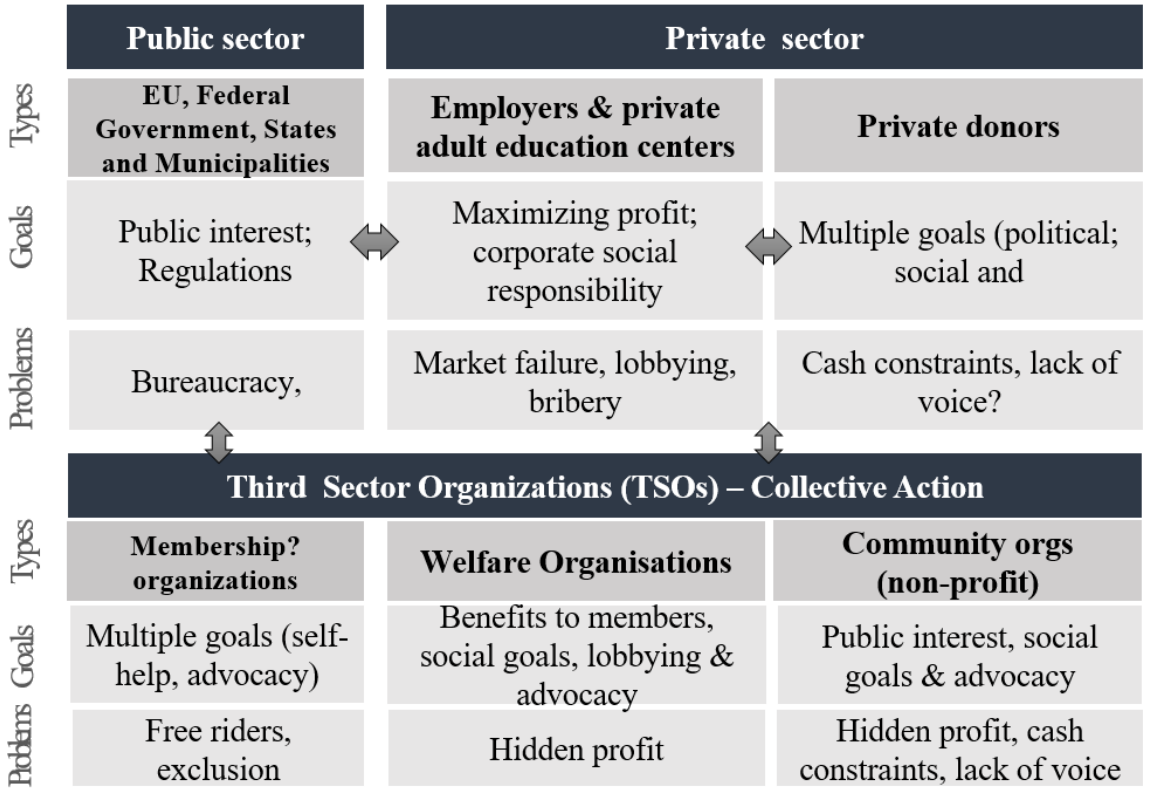


2015	2016	2017	2018	Total in number
441.899	722.370	198.317	164.693	1.527.279,0

Data source: BAMF “Das Bundesamt in Zahlen“ (2016, 2017 & 2018)

Share of Afghan and Syrian asylum seekers in Germany

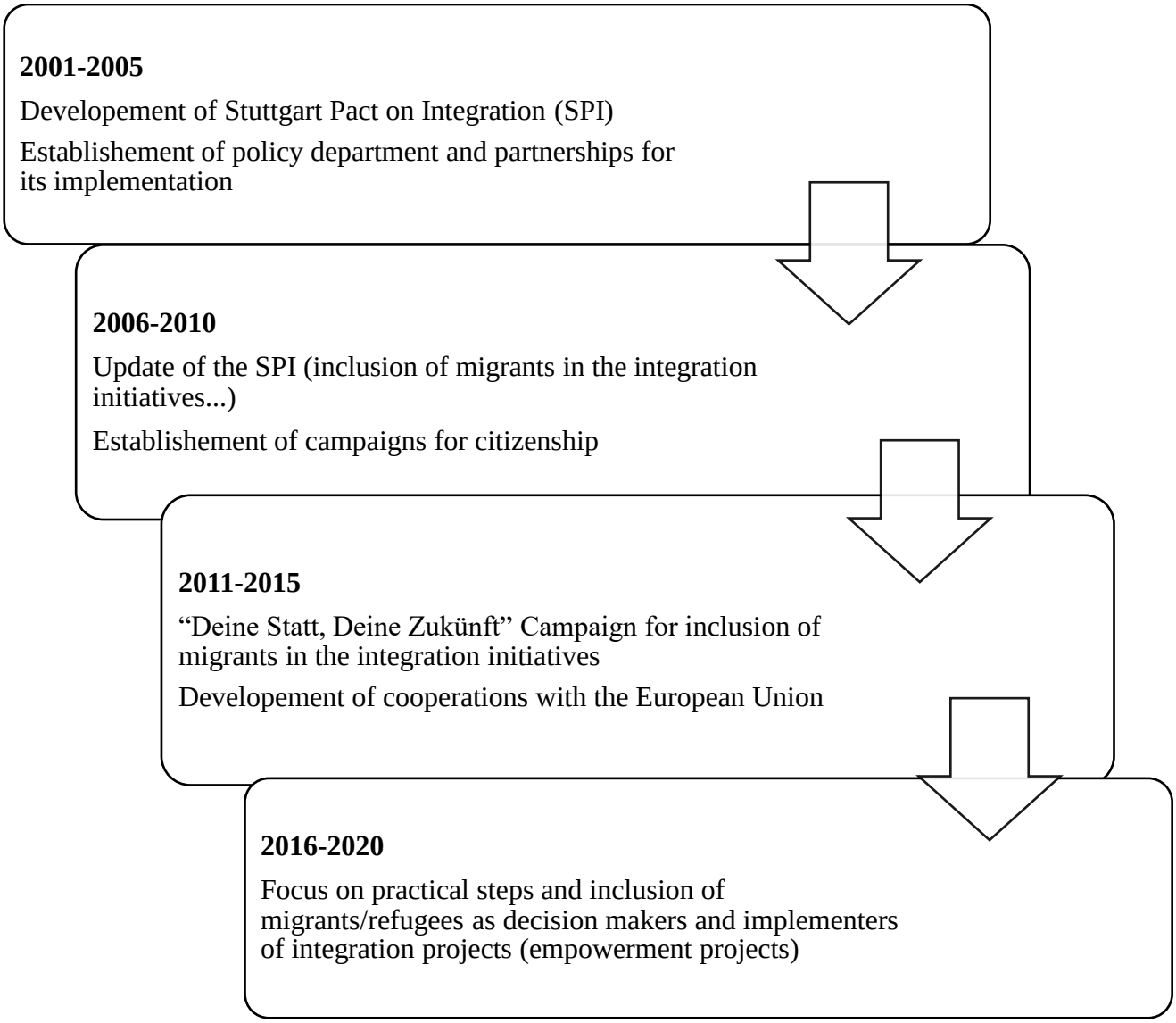
The Three sectors: Public, Private and Third in Migration Management



Source: Authors based on Regina, 2010

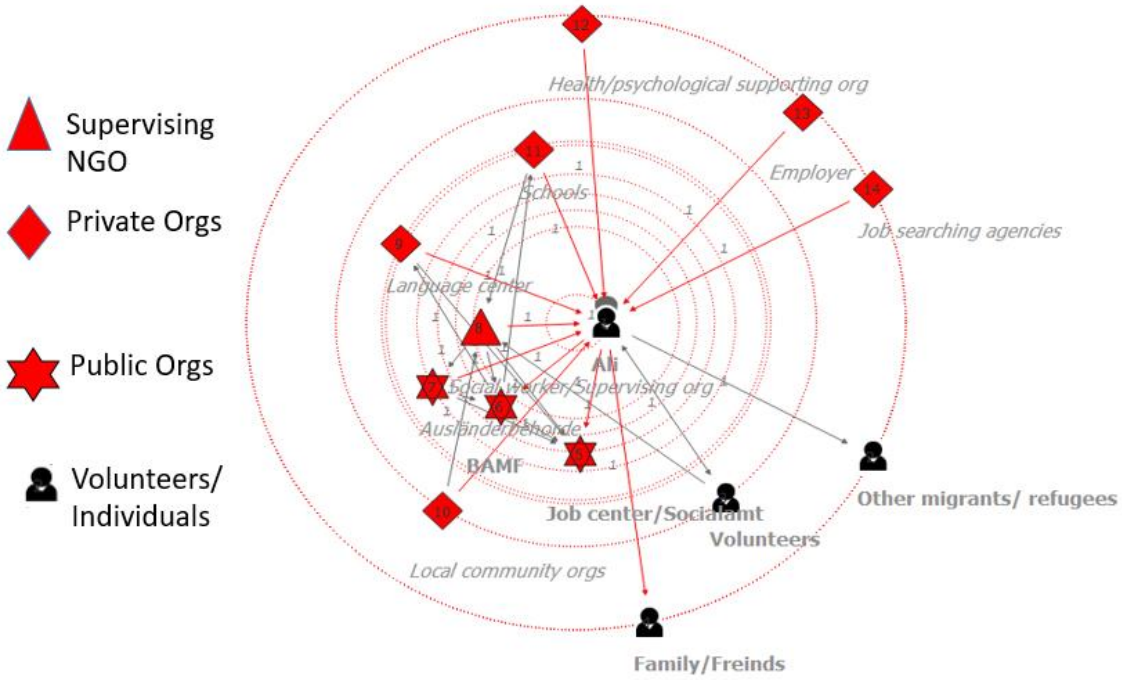
Source: Authors based on Birner, 2010

The three sectors: public, private and third



Source: Own diagram based on information from Stuttgart City Council available under: https://www.stuttgart.de/

Development of Stuttgart integration initiatives



Source: Authors

Actors in the integration process of a refugee – a real case

The closer the actor to the refugee the more frequent the person is in contact with the actor.

Interview guidelines

Die Rolle privater Unternehmen in der Region Stuttgart in der Integration von Flüchtlingen

Interview-Fragen:

1. Würden Sie bitte kurz erläutern, was Ihr Unternehmen in der Flüchtlingsaufnahme und -integration macht und wie es sich engagiert? Zum Beispiel in der Ausbildung, Beschäftigung, Spenden, Finanzierung von Initiativen?

2. Was ist die Motivation Ihres Unternehmens für das Engagement in den oben genannten Aktivitäten? Sind dies eigene Initiativen oder erfolgen diese auf Einladung der Stadt oder Vereinen/Nichtregierungsorganisationen?

3. Beteiligt sich Ihr Unternehmen an politischen Diskussionen/politischen Debatten über Migration und Flüchtlingsaufnahme und -integration? Warum/warum nicht?

4. Wie viele Flüchtlinge hat Ihr Unternehmen eingestellt und welcher Art von Arbeit gehen diese nach?

5. Welchen Status haben Ihre Flüchtlingsmitarbeiter? Berücksichtigen Sie den Status eines Flüchtlings bei der Einstellung? Würde z.B. jemand mit einer Duldung einen Job in Ihrem Unternehmen bekommen?

6. Was sind die größten Chancen und die größten Herausforderungen, die Sie in der Beschäftigung / Zusammenarbeit mit Flüchtlingen sehen?

7. Kooperieren Sie mit anderen Sektoren, z.B. dem öffentlichen Sektor, wie der Stadt und gemeinnützigen Vereinen/Nichtregierungsorganisationen? Würden Sie uns ein paar Beispiele nennen für Kooperationen?

8. Würden Sie uns ein oder mehrere Beispiele für eine besondere Situation nennen, in der Ihr Unternehmen mit lokalen Behörden oder der Zivilgesellschaft zu tun hatte? Das könnten z.B. Erfahrungen mit der "Ausbildungsduldung" oder Arbeitsgenehmigung sein.

9. Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die größten Chancen und Herausforderungen in der Zusammenarbeit mit den vorher genannten lokalen Behörden oder der Zivilgesellschaft?

10. Was wären Ihre Empfehlungen zur Verbesserung der Integration von Flüchtlingen? Worin sehen Sie die Rolle und die Aufgaben privater Unternehmen?

The role of private sector in the refugee integration in Stuttgart

Interview Questions:

1. Would you please shortly explain your company's engagement in the refugee reception and integration? What do you exactly do? For example, train or employ refugees, fund or donate to initiatives?

2. What is your company's motivation for the engagement in the above-mentioned activities? Are these own initiatives or have you been invited by e.g., the city, associations, or non-governmental organisations?

3. Does your company engage in political discussions/ policy debates on migration and refugee reception and integration? Why/why not?

4. As employer, how many refugees has your company hired and what type of work do they do?

5. What status do your refugee employees have? Do you consider the status of a refugee when hiring? For example, would someone with a "Duldung" get a job at your company?

6. What are the major opportunities and major challenges you are facing with refugees as employees?

7. Do you cooperate with other sectors? For example, the public sector, like the city, or civil society actors like non-governmental organisations? Would you like to name a few examples for such a cooperation?

8. Could you give us one or more examples of a particular situation in which your company had to deal with local authorities or civil society actors? This could be experiences with the "Ausbildungsduldung" or work permits.

9. According to you, what are the major opportunities and the major challenges of the cooperation with the mentioned local authorities or civil society actors?

10. What would be your recommendations for improvements of refugee integration? Where do you see the role and tasks of the private sector?

Interviews and FGDs with integration service providing organizations and experts:

This interview section will be conducted with the representatives of organisations and some experts that will focus on the current refugee service procedures, cooperation, and coordination among the refugee service/ integration service providers (public, private, NGOs, local community organizations and etc.) the necessity for more cooperation, challenges and opportunities.

1. Please tell me about your organisation's activities on migration/refugee/integration services? What are the main activities/projects your organisation is doing? Number of Staff members being active on migration/refugee service? Type of activities?
2. Who are your target groups/Why?
3. How are the activities financed? Public? Private? Donations?
4. How have your activities on refugee integration changed recently? Since 2-5-10 months/ years?
5. Which other organisations/partners are you working with? Locally/nationally/Internationally?
6. What type of cooperation do you have with other public or private organisations?
7. Which public organisations/how do the public organisations support you in your work?
8. What are the major challenges/opportunities in your service provision? Regarding the target groups/regarding cooperation/coordination with other organisations and overall?
9. Do you think there is a necessity for more cooperation or coordination among similar organisations? Why? How?
10. How do you think your activities on refugee services will change in the longer term in (2-5-10 moths/ years' time)?
11. What is your idea about the integration services you provide for different nationalities such as Afghans and Syrians? Are they different? Why if so?
12. Do you have suggestions for betterment of the integration service provision for refugees in the future? For public/private orgs, in terms of type of services/activities, cooperation/coordination…

Integration/social service providers/experts

13. Please tell me about your daily services activities as a social/integration service provider
14. What process does an asylum seeker go through (from the reception to accommodation, language, social and labour market integration)- (we will use Process-Net Map method to make it easy, smooth, and visual)
15. What are their major challenges they (refugees in general and Afghan and Syrians specifically) face? How do they overcome them?
16. Do Asylum seekers/refugees get different services based on their legal/refugee status? How different it is? Why?
17. Do you experience integration challenges specific to refugee's background/nationalities? Some examples?
18. How many different organisations are involved in an asylum seeker/refugee's integration process? (Which orgs are they? Who does what?) how important are they? (Visualization method will be used)
19. What are your suggestions for improvement of the integration services? For public orgs/private/NGs/Local community orgs?/
20. Is there anything you would like me to know to understand …? better? End of the interview and thank you!

Interview guideline on asylum migration and integration

Afghan and Syrian refugees in Germany

Hohenheim University, 2017

This questionnaire is prepared for the purpose of in-depth interview with the Afghan and Syrian refugees in Germany.

We highly appreciate your time and enthusiasm for this in-depth interview to help this study on Afghan refugee returnees. We guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of the personal data you provide us in this interview.

Note: this questionnaire has been prepared based on the instructions by Kathy Charmaz,

A. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Please provide the following details about yourself:

1. Age:	_____ years			
2. Gender:	○ Male		○ Female	
3. Marital status:	○ single	○ married	○ widowed	○ divorced
4. Education:	○ High School ○ No Education	○ Bachelor ○ NA	○ Master	○ PhD or more
5. Job:	○ Yes		○ No	
6. Religion:	○ Christianity ○ Other	○Islam ○ NA	○ Hinduism	○ Buddhism
7. # Household.	Total number of households _____ # Migrated _____ # Not migrated _____ # Killed-Injured in a war _____ # Lost _____ # Passed away or other_____			

8. Which country and province are you from?	——— ———

B. INFORMATIVE QUESTIONS (BOTH AFGHAN AND SYRIAN REFUGEES)

1) Please tell me about what happened and how you have ended up in Germany.
2) Which country were you living before you migrate to Germany? Which other countries have you been in Europe?
3) Were you informed of your deportation? How long ago? How was the process?
4) How long were you there in .....?
5) Did you go to school or university there in that country?
6) Did you work there?
7) Do you speak the language of that country? How good? Which level?
8) Could you tell me about your thoughts and feelings when you got to know about your deportation?
9) How did you decide to go to that country?
10) Who, if anyone was involved? When was that? How were they involved?
11) What positive changes do you think have occurred in your life since you're first migrated?
12) What negative changes? If any.
13) Could you describe a typical day for you when you were in ------ (try if for different times) and how is a typical day now here?
14) How would you describe the person you are now? What has most contributed to this change?
15) As you look back in the migration process in ….. or …….. are there events that stand out in your mind? Could you describe each? What happened? How did you respond to that event? the resulting situation?
16) Could I ask you the most important lessons you have learned through your migration experience to Europe? to Germany? Or to Greece…..
17) Where do you see yourself in 2, 5, 10 years' time? Describe the type of person you hope to be
18) What helps you to manage problems you have been facing? Can you tell me the sources of the problems?
19) Who has been most helpful to you during this time? How has he or she been helpful?
20) Has any organisation been helpful? What did the ------ help you with? How has it been helpful?

7 CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

09/2018- 09/2022 **Ph.D. in refugee and migration studies**
Field: Origin and transit migration, refugee migration trajectories, labour market integration, role of different actors in refugees' integration, role of private companies, qualitative and mixed research methods
University of Hohenheim, Germany

Ph.D. thesis title: Asylum Migration of Afghans and Syrians to Germany: Opportunities and Challenges during Transit and Integration

10/2014 - 01/2017 **Master of Science** in Agricultural Economics
Field: Micro and Macro Economics, Applied Econometrics, Quantitative Research Methods and Statistics, International Trade, Project Management and Evaluation, Rural Development Economics, Environmental Economics
University of Hohenheim, Germany

M.Sc. thesis title: ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA) and Its Effects on Trade and Labour

01/2013 – 12/2013 **B.Sc. in Development Management**
Field: Financial Management and accounting, Economic Policy, Business Informatics, Management Science

Institute of Development Research and Development Policy, Ruhr University of Bochum, Germany

04/2007 – 12/2010 **B.A in Economics**
Field: Micro and Macro Economics, Economic Geography, Financial Management and accounting, Economic Policy, Money

and Credit, Banking, Statistics, State Borrowing, Project Evaluation, Theories of Development, International Monetary Issues and Policies
Kabul University, Afghanistan

B.A thesis title: The Role of International Aid in Economic Development of Afghanistan between 2001-2009

01/2006 – 03/2007 **Diploma in Business Administration & Accounting**
Field: Financial Accounting, Management and Development, Statistics,
Management and Accounting Institute, Afghanistan

03/2003 – 10/2005 High School Studies in Science (Mathematics, Physics, Biology…)
Kabul Zainab-e-Kubra High School, Afghanistan

WORK EXPERIENCE / EMPLOYMENT

Since 09/2018 **Ph.D. researcher in refugee and migration studies**
Field: Origin and transit migration, refugee migration trajectories, labour market integration, role of different actors in refugees' integration, role of private companies, qualitative and mixed research methods
University of Hohenheim, Germany

Since 04/2017 **Co-founder and directing member**
Female Fellows e.V
Empowerment of Migrant Women, Women Education and Civic Participation, Migrant Women Participation in Policy Dialogues, Asylum, and Integration Policy Reforms, Germany

09/2021 - 09/2021 **Translator/Interpreter**
US Department State, Afghan Refugees Evacuation Program, US Airbase Ramstein, Germany

05/2017 - 03/2019 **Integration Project Coordinator**
Malteser Hilfsdienst e.V, Integration Service Department
Stuttgart, Germany

10/2014 - 01/2017 **Migration Expert**
EU Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (RTD), Brussels, Belgium

10/2018 – 12 /2018 **Migration and Integration Expert**
Network of European Foundations

Brussels, Belgium

10/2017 – 12 /2019 **Researcher /Refugee Advocate**
European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Refugee Advocates Group (volunteer)
Brussels, Belgium

10/2015 - 01/2016 **Research Assistant**
Institute of Social and Institutional Change in Agricultural Development
University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart, Germany

10/2012 - 01/2013 **Program Assistant, Translator/Interpreter**
Translation of legal and policy documents
Participation in the high-level official meetings/conferences
UNESCO, Kabul Office
UNESCO -Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan
Kabul, Afghanistan

PUBLICATIONS

Torfa, M., Bosch,C., Birner,R.& Hannes,S. (2022) Private companies' engagement in the labour market integration of refugees: An exploratory study of the city of Stuttgart, Germany. International Migration, 00, 1–18. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.13089

Torfa, M., Almohamed, S. & Birner, R. (2021) Origin and transit migration of Afghans and Syrians to Germany: The influential actors and factors behind the destination choice. International Migration, 00, 1‑18. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12900

Torfa .M (2019) Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs) in Europe: Policy Contributions, Opportunities and Challenges, available: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338178771_REFUGEE-LED_ORGANISATIONS_RLOS_IN_EUROPE_POLICY_CONTRIBUTIONS_OPPORTUNITIES_AND_CHALLENGES

Torfa .M (2017) Reframing the Refugee Crisis in the EU: opportunities for employment, growth and integration, available: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338178831_Reframing_the_Refugee_Crisis_in_the_EU_Opportunities_for_employment_growth_and_integration

MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVIEW

Torfa, M., Birner, R. & Almohamed, S. (tbd) Local integration of refugees in Germany: A case study of Afghans and Syrians in the German city of Stuttgart, Submitted to "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies" on 30.11.2021

CONFERENCES/RESEARCH VISITS (SELECTED)

Torfa, M., Almohamed, S. & Birner, R. (2021) Origin and transit migration of Afghans and Syrians to Germany: The influential actors and factors behind the destination choice. International Migration, 00, 1‐18. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12900 pre-publication presentation at the "Formation of Migrants Spaces". 3rd Conference of the German Network of Forced Migration Researchers. September 16th, 2020, University of Cologne, Germany

Torfa, M., Birner, R. & Almohamed, S. (tbd) Local integration of refugees in Germany: A case study of Afghans and Syrians in the German city of Stuttgart 9th German-Brazilian Symposium on Sustainable Development, Presentation in the session "Migration and communication (Socio-dynamics)", September 15-17, 2019, Stuttgart, Germany

Torfa .M (2019) Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs) in Europe: Policy Contributions, Opportunities and Challenges, "European Union Law and Policy on Immigration and Asylum", 01 - 12 July 2019, Odysseus Academic Network, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

INVITED TALKS (RECENT)

2021 *'Europe's Refugee 'Crisis': where are we now?'*
Online Public Event by London School of Economics and Political Science, 25 May 2021

2021 "Transnational Perspectives on Afghan Refugee Protection"
Panel Discussion organised by the German Centre for Integration and Migration (DeZIM), Berlin, 26 August 2021

2019 *"The Future of Asylum in Europe: Assessing and Capitalizing on Changes at the EU Level"*, Conference by ECRE and UNHCR Brussels, 23 and 24 October 2019, Renaissance Brussels Hotel, Rue du Parnasse 19, 1050 Brussels, Belgium

AWARDS/HONOURS

08/ 2014 German Academic Exchange Program (DAAD) Scholarship for "Development Professionals". Award for outstanding students from Africa, Asia, and Latin America to pursue M.Sc. Degree in Development Programs in Germany.

06/ 2018 Ph.D. grant from Evangelisches Studienwerk Villigst, awarded to outstanding research ideas to be pursued as doctoral research projects in a German University.

LANGUAGES

English: full working proficiency
German: working proficiency
Farsi/Dari: full working proficiency (native)
Pashto: basic communication

REFERENCES

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