WELCOMING SPACES

Country report: Germany

**Welcoming initiatives
and experiences of emplacement and displacement**

Project

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Contents

Executive summary

This country report deals with the questions, of how sustainable developments in German shrinking areas are achieved through migration and how these developments contribute to the revitalisation of those areas while providing opportunities for social inclusion both of migrants and long-term residents. More concrete, the report illuminates the interplay between practices of welcoming initiatives and experiences of displacement and emplacement of non-EU migrants (and long-term residents) within multiscalar of networks of (economic and political) power. This interplay is empirically investigated in two shrinking areas: 1) the Altenburg district that is situated in Thuringia (East Germany) and 2) in the Rhine-Hunsrück-Kreis that is part of the associated municipality (*Verbandsgemeinde*) Simmern-Rheinböllen in Rhineland-Palatinate (West Germany).

A short overview of the demographic developments and the migration history in Germany is given in chapter one, the introduction. The German situation is characterised by the fact that the Western part of Germany have continuously experienced relatively high immigration rates since 1960s; much less migrants have arrived in East Germany in the same period.

In chapter two, the criteria of case selection have been described which were done in three phases. In the first phase, the states Rhineland-Palatinate in West Germany and Thuringia in East Germany were selected. Both states are almost equal in size. Besides, there several districts had experienced socio-economic and/or demographic changes and worked out revitalization strategies while being arrival places for non-EU migrants, at least from 2015 onwards. In the following phase, we searched for welcoming initiatives in shrinking districts in Rhineland-Palatinate and Thuringia and have selected them in eight localities. In the third phase, we have looked closer to these localities and, we have finally chosen the two above mentioned districts. Most of the initiatives we had found in the eight selected districts are government-driven or migrant/citizen/NGO driven while none of them were business-driven. The welcoming initiatives are different regarding their size, reach, goals, organizational form and target groups. The chosen welcoming initiatives comprises: 1) associations (non-profit organizations, sometimes funded by the (federal) state, sometimes organised by migrants themselves and/or volunteers), 2) municipal advisory Boards for Migration and Integration (non-profit, governmental driven), 3) actors which are part of welfare state organisations (non-profit) and 4) integration officers (and other social service advisors) financed by the state.

Regarding the fact that the empirical data are gathered in small towns and rural areas the chance is high that it is possible to trace back the identity of the interviewees. Therefore, in this report, neither names of interviewees nor the names of the investigated welcoming initiatives, organisations, institutions or associations are mentioned. An exception are the names of the people who participated in the photo workshop (chapter 4). They have given us the explicit permission to mention their names as authors of their photos.

In chapter three, the theoretical framework of this country research has been elaborated. Main rationale of this report is that displacement and emplacement constitute social practices which produce and are reproduced by networks of multiscalar, unequal power relations. Welcoming initiatives aim to provide access to societal subsystems, social networks and concrete physical places. It is argued that all actors (i.e. individuals, associations and public institutions) who work together to boost the participation of non-EU migrants (and long-term residents), constitute the ´multiscalar social field of welcoming spaces´. From the viewpoint of those migrants who ´receive´ support, a welcoming initiative is part of their opportunity

structure in small and mid-sized shrinking towns (SMST). Based on the overall goal of the Welcoming Spaces (WS) project and this theoretical perspective, the report deals with the following empirical research questions: *1) How are welcoming initiatives embedded and related to political stability and economic viability of the research cases? 2) How are (urban) policies linked to processes of revitalization and migration? 3) Which aspects are related to social wellbeing of migrants from the viewpoint of the migrants themselves and actors of welcoming initiatives?*

Chapter four deals with the research design and (empirical) data collection. Most interviewees are ´professionals´, i.e. employees (with or without migrant background) of the local government, welfare state associations, businesses or other organisations who have the task to support migrants. We have interviewed them in their role as employees. Some interviewees are ´non-professionals´. This does not mean that these people do not act in a professional manner nor that they were not employees in general. Rather, the term refers to people who work for the interests of migrants without being paid by anyone to do this (volunteers). We have interviewed them as private persons, i.e. in their role as citizens. However, this distinction is not entirely clear-cut: every employee is also a resident of a city and a private person. Some employees work as volunteers for migrants alongside their jobs and/or are migrants themselves (and keeping this perspective during the interview situation). Most empirical data have been collected by methods of social qualitative research: in-depth interviews and group discussions.

Chapter five deals with the first and second research question. An overview is provided on the economic and political developments in both case studies. Besides, various perceptions of the interviewees on the economic as well as political developments are given and analysed. Regarding the economic profiles, the Altenburg district seems to be a fusion between a ´restructuring industry´, which is a delicate balance between retaining small towns´ production on the one hand, and industrial branches losing their importance by increasing global competition, on the other. The Rhine-Hunsrück district in general is more rural than the Altenburg district and is mainly characterized by the production of trading goods and social services. An economic hotspot in this area is the Frankfurt-Hahn Airport that has, nevertheless, problems to survive. Like in the Altenburg district, the ´residential economy´ and tourism are intensively promoted.

Chapter six deals with the third research question. It is argued that social wellbeing is related to the experience of emplacement. This experience is related social recognition and to the access to houses which fit to their household size, to employment as well as to places of sociability, Some actors of welcoming initiative have formulated aspects, which they regard as necessary in order to support migrants on the long run and/or to really change conditions and existing unequal power relations: the political will to use margins of discretion, the provision of more money and people to boost the migrant's access to employment and vocational trajectories and, last but not least, openminded residents and politicians who embrace and promote diversity. Research results are reflected in chapter seven, the conclusion.

List of abbreviations

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LIP	Local Integration Plans
RLP	Rhineland-Palatinate
SMST	Small and Mid-sized Towns
SREK	Strategic regional development concept
TH	Thuringia
WI	Welcoming Initiatives
WS	Welcoming Spaces Project

1. Introduction

In line with the overall research questions of the project Welcoming Spaces (WS), this country report deals with, first, how sustainable developments in German shrinking areas are achieved through migration, and second, how these developments contribute to the revitalisation of those areas while providing opportunities for social inclusion both of migrants and long-term residents. We argue that ´welcoming spaces´ in shrinking areas emerge from a situation which is characterized by challenges in social wellbeing, economic viability and political stability. Initially, we differentiate between ´migrants´ and ´long-term residents´. Based on the definition of Çaĝlar and Glick Schiller (2018, p. 5), the term ´migrant´ refers to a person who has crossed international borders and „whose legal status can vary from unauthorized to citizen." The latter are people who had already settled down in these regions for more than one generation (see Masterscript WS project, p. 4). The empirical part of this report shows that the clear majority of migrants who gave us an interview have a residence permit in Germany.[1] ´Shrinking areas´ are understood as regions „characterized by poor job opportunities, outmigration, a closing down of services, residential vacancy and urban decline [and] decreasing public budgets" (Küpper et al. 2018: 229-230, D1.1 WS project).

In Germany, immigration in quantitative demographic terms surpassed emigration after 1945. Since then, people from different countries have been immigrated to Germany for various reasons (Kirchhoff & Lorenz 2018)[2]. Most of them had arrived and stayed in metropolitan areas in the Western part of the country (Figure 1). The last two decades, migration from non-European countries to small and mid-sized towns gets more and more prevalent. Studies illustrate that the EU expansion in 2004 has caused a new inflow of migrants from abroad to non-metropolitan areas in northern Europe (Jentsch et.al. 2007). In particular, many refugees and asylum seekers have settled down there since 2014. In Germany, this immigration has raised hope for many small and mid-sized towns situated in shrinking areas. First of all, more community members boost the tax income that has been decreased little by little by depopulation. Secondly, public services like primary schools and local supply which were threaten to shut down were perhaps able to remain open by the immigration of refugees. Thirdly, the migrants – if they have reached to get a work permit - are probable able to fill the lack of (specialised) workforce for industries and mid-sized companies there (see WS proposal). However, it is not clear if the residence in small and mid-sized towns (SMST) in shrinking areas appeals to migrants for the long run. Especially, because migrants who asked for asylum are not allowed to choose their residential places themselves in the arrival phase. Regarding their very first residential place, the German federal state government distribute them according to the ´Königsteiner distribution key´ all over country. Once distributed, asylum seekers are not allowed to change place during the asylum procedure (law on the ´residence obligation´). The local living conditions of those ´arrival areas´ depends on many factors including local conditions (Kurtenbach 2015, Hanhörster & Wessendorf 2020). While the Western part of Germany have continuously experienced relatively high immigration rates from abroad since 1960s (due to recruitment agreements with Spain, Greece, Turkey, Italy and other countries), much less migrants (inclusive asylum seekers) have arrived in East Germany during the same period.

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[1] There are different residence permissions (see also chapter 6.4): „[..] being entitled to asylum, refugee status or subsidiary protection. In addition, the BAMF can also issue you a National Ban on Deportation (*nationales Abschiebungsverbot*)". (citation see: https://handbookgermany.de/en/right-of-residence), accessed: 30 July 2022

[2] see also: Context Analysis Germany: Deliverable D 1.1 of WS project

Figure 1
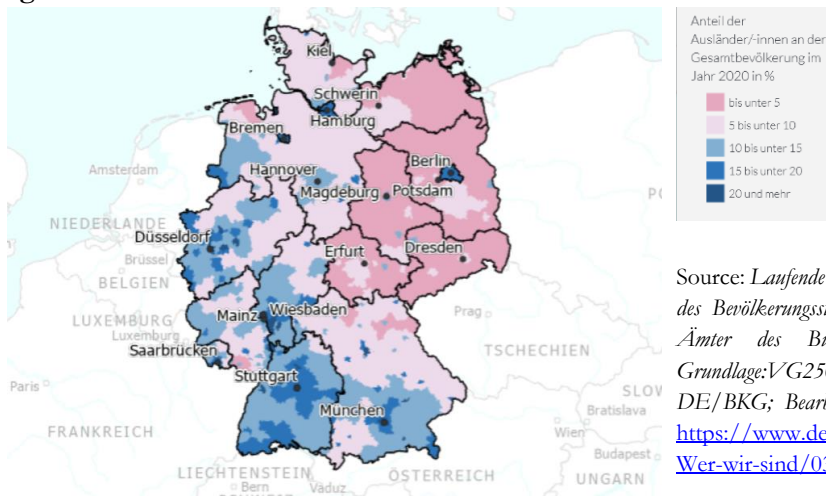
Source: *Laufende Raumbeobachtung des BBSR; Fortschreibung des Bevölkerungsstandes, Regionaldatenbank der Statistischen Ämter des Bundes und der Länder Geometrische Grundlage:VG250 (Kreise), 31.12.2019, © GeoBasis-DE/BKG; Bearbeitung: N. Blätgen, A. Milbert (BBSR);* https://www.deutschlandatlas.bund.de/DE/Karten/Wer-wir-sind/033-Auslaenderanteil.html;

Besides, the German situation is characterized by strong national migration flows. Between 1989 and 2008, 1.6 million people migrate from the former GDR to the West Germany. According to the forecast of the Berlin-Institute for Population and Development (Slupina et al. 2019), this trend continues whereby Eastern Germany will be hit particularly hard, with only eight other large cities besides Berlin expected to grow, while almost all rural districts will lose population (Figure 2).

Figure 2
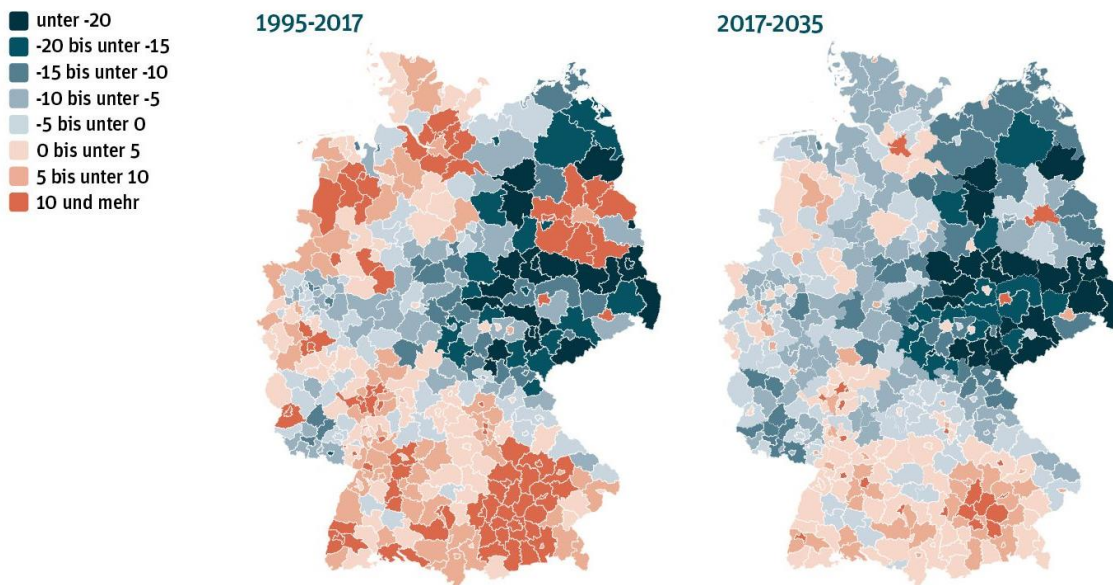
The last decades, small and mid-sized towns in shrinking areas are searching for strategies to become (or stay) attractive places of residence for migrants *and* long-term residents – whether from abroad or from German regions. Some of these strategies aim to unlock endogenous potentials like certain economic profiles or the organisation of local governments and welfare state actors who are able to employ innovative actions in favour for social inclusion (Meier, Reverda & Van der Wouw 2015).

2. Selection criteria of localities and types of welcoming initiatives

To map territorial variables, which are – so far as possible – representative for the German context, localities within shrinking areas in East (´new states) and West Germany (´old states´) have been selected. East and West Germany is divided in terms of demographic change and in terms of gross domestic product per inhabitant (GDP). While the GDP of the old states amounts € 41.940 per person (current prices) in 2021, it was € 29.553 in the ´new states´ (without Berlin) (Jahresbericht 2021:94). However, Holtemöller (2021) argued that the GDP is not a good welfare indicator in itself. „It can be assumed that, measured by the gross domestic product per inhabitant, there will be no further significant equalisation of economic power in East and West Germany in the foreseeable future. This is because the age structure of East Germany, i.e. the ratio of employed persons to inhabitants, is less favourable than in the West. On the other hand, if one looks at important welfare indicators such as consumption opportunities, life expectancy, leisure time and income inequality, living conditions in East and West Germany are more similar than the gross domestic product per inhabitant suggests. In the debates on the catching-up process of East Germany, more emphasis should therefore be placed on labour productivity as a measure of economic strength and on welfare indicators as a measure of the equalisation of living conditions" (ibid. 2021:37).

In this vein, in the Welcoming Spaces project, the attention has been focussed on more than the GDP to estimate the living conditions. It is argued that welcoming spaces are societal structures, networks and physical places which contribute (up to a certain degree) to revitalization of communities combined with the degree in which non-EU migrants are successfully integrated. Therefore a few localities have been investigated in depth. The selection process of the research localities included two phases.

First selection phase
The localities are situated in districts (NUTS-level 2) in an East and a West German state that both had lost population the last years. The states Rhineland-Palatinate (RLP) in the West and Thuringia (TH) in the East are almost equal in size. Besides, in both states several districts had experienced socio-economic and/or demographic changes and had worked out revitalization strategies while being arrival places for migrants / asylum seekers, at least from 2015 onwards. However, the two states differ regarding the population development: the population size of Thuringia (TH) has continuously decreasing (with almost 1 million people) while the population of Rhineland-Palatinate (RLP) has increased with a bit more than 1 million up till now since 1950. Nevertheless, in both states, there are still growing and shrinking districts.

Table 1 Comparison of the states Rhineland-Palatinate (RLP) and Thuringia (TH)

	Thuringia	Rhineland-Palatinate
Total population	2.1 million (2020)	4.1 million (2020)
	2.9 million (1950)	3.0 million (1950)
Number of districts (NUTS-level 2) (incl. single cities)	17 (6)	24 (12)
Size / population density	16.2 km² / 132 inhabitants per km²	19.8 km² / 206 inhabitants per km²
Share rural / urban	Great majority rural areas	Half of the counties rural or urbanized
Share of people ´without German citizenship	5,5 % (2020) in total	12,5 % (2020) in total

Sources: https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Tabellen/auslaendische-bevoelkerung-bundeslaender.html and Slupina et al. 2019

The maps of the population development of Thuringia and Rhineland-Palatinate show that in both states the majority of districts loose population (in the future) (Figures 3 and 4).

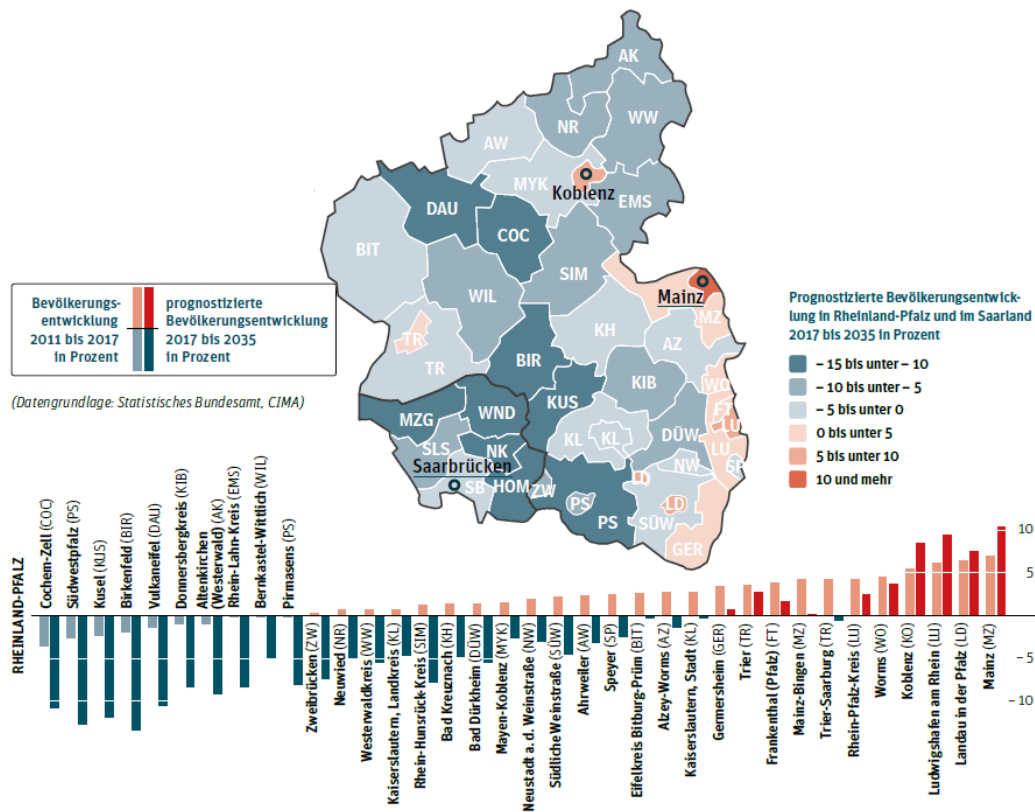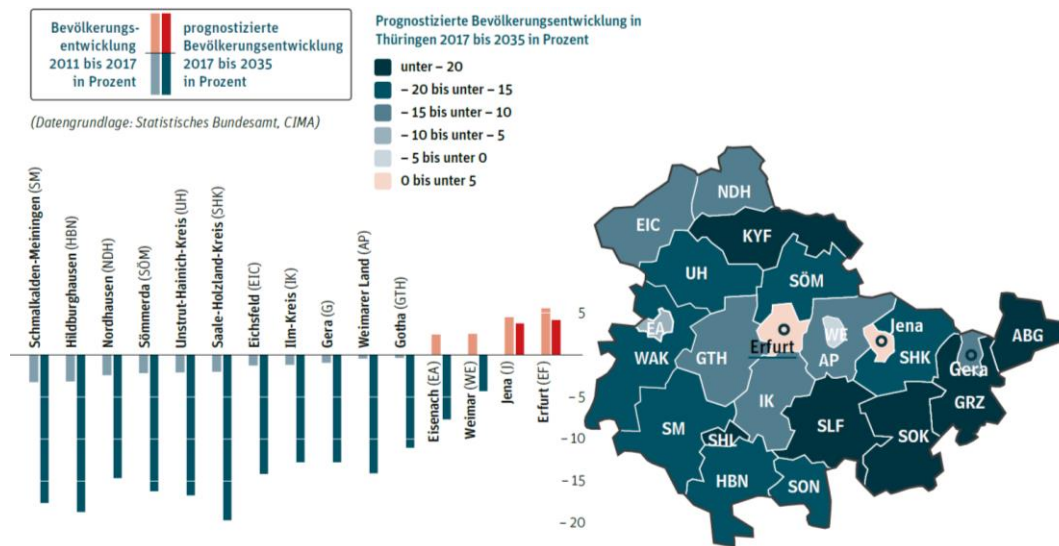**Figure 3 Prognosis of the population development in RLP 2017 - 2035**

Figure 4 Prognosis of the population development in TH 2017 - 2035

Second selection phase

In the following phase, we searched for welcoming initiatives in shrinking districts in Rhineland-Palatinate and Thuringia. Dominic Danz and Laura Foelske trawled through several internet pages of the two state ministries, websites of municipalities, districts and welfare associations as well as Facebook pages. Brochures of the state ministries, financial reports, radio websites and (local) newspapers were also combed through. By this desk research, a first overview on the political context of welcoming initiatives (Box 1) and the most relevant types of initiatives in these areas (Box 2) has been achieved. Finally, 20 welcoming initiatives have been selected in eight localities in Thuringia (**Altenburg district, Ilm district, district Nordhausen** and **district Schmalkalden)** and in Rhineland-Palatinate (**district Altenkirchen, Mayen-Koblenz, district Ahrweiler** and **Rhine-Hunsrück district**) (see Quickscan D. 1.1, German part).

Types of welcoming initiatives in shrinking small and mid-sized towns (SMST)

In the proposal of the WS project (p. 6), four different types of initiatives have been distinguished regarding the driving forces to set them up. The four types are either government-driven, business-driven, citizen/NGO driven or migrant-driven. Most of the initiatives we have found in the eight selected districts are government-driven or migrant/citizen/NGO driven while none of them were business-driven. The welcoming initiatives are different regarding their size, reach, goals, organizational form and target groups. In general, these German initiatives categorize migrants into (recognized) refugees, asylum seekers, people with a tolerance permit or people with a migration background. Two developments are particularly interesting to investigate welcoming initiatives in German shrinking small and mid-sized towns (SMST).

First, municipalities are, above all, bound to national social and asylum laws. The state assigns a right to stay for asylum seekers, decides upon civil rights and, finally, distributes a certain amount of money among municipalities. During the first phase of arrival of migrants, the municipalities are responsible for the allocation of the placement and basic services, and get financial support from the state for it.

Second, some SMST in shrinking German regions have already realized that openness towards diversity that could probably bound migrants to these places over the long run (Kirchhoff et al, 2011). Thus, changes in governmental structures have begun with the development of a number of integration policies and some

programs concerning a 'culture of welcome'. As regards the first aspect, projects have been funded such as integration and language courses, job integration programs, socio-cultural participation, helpdesk and information centres. Concerning the ´culture of welcome´, some municipalities have started with a transformation of their self-image. Framing themselves for being open to the diversity of lifestyles and cultures seems to be crucial for adjusting institutionalized structures to inclusive social actions (Gesemann et al., 2012). A 'culture of welcome' has been initialized by some municipalities and other organizations like hospitals or welfare associations. Employees receive specific training to transform their organizational culture and manner of actions; new employees should be sensible with regard to cultural diversity or be migrants themselves. This 'culture of welcome' has been implemented mostly in a top-down manner (Meier 2018). However, some municipalities and the Chambers (of Craft, Trade, Commerce) take this opportunity to invent new formal strategies like the 'recruitment' of welcome guides (*Willkommenslotsen*). Following the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy supports, welcome guides are „part of the measures to integrate refugees into work and training, which are continued under the umbrella of the Alliance for Education and Training. The total annual expenditure of the program amounts to around EUR 5.4 million, of which around EUR 3.1 million will come from federal funds and around EUR 1.6 million [from state funds]. The remaining EUR 2.2 million will be provided by the private sector".[3] In fact, welcome guides are often volunteering (with a migration background and/or specific language and intercultural competences) who get trainings and their work and training activities have been symbolically recognized by certificates (Meier 2018).

Besides these developments, for municipalities, a fundamental challenge is the improvement of access to (further) education and employment for non-EU-migrants. Here, interest in their personal knowledge and competences must be preferred above emphasis on someone's shortcomings. In reality, however, this intention has often been counteracted by laws and rules which restrict the recognition of (non-European) degrees and educations. Based on a study of several SMST (not all of which are shrinking), scholars show that the great majority of the German towns that have been explored have already adjusted their formal strategies to support migrants (Gesemann & Roth, 2016). However, there are regional differences regarding processes of emplacement or displacement of migrants. Aumüller (2009) suggests that the bigger the town, the more chances migrants have to get a job in the informal labour market, to find their way without support by public institutions, and to encounter migrants from the same country of origin (who can provide them with information or other kinds of support). On the one hand, in small communities, migrants seem to be more dependent on public arrangements of municipalities, services provided by welfare associations and the support of private companies. On the other, especially in small towns, companies do offer special qualification measures by themselves and, because of that, the chances for inclusion in the labour market seem to be good. Aumüller (2009) and other authors (Boos-Krüger, 2005; Georg, 2011; Micksch & Schwier, 2000) point out that processes of emplacement have been realised more easily in small towns which have already had experience with migration before. There, a basis for dealing with diversity has already been laid.

Box 1. Political context of welcoming initiatives

Social and asylum laws regulate, who is entitled to get which kind of social benefits and assistance. The governments assign many of this assistance to welfare associations and regulate how much money they receive for services from the social security system. On the one hand, municipalities are obliged to overtaking certain responsibilities and services for migrants (Schammann et al. 2021). On the other hand,

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[3] https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/DE/Artikel/Wirtschaft/willkommenslotsen.html accessed 24 July 2022.

according to the **principle of subsidiarity**, some social services must be delegated to the private sector, i. e. to non-profit or for-profit (welfare) organisations. In 2016, the **´Integration Act´** (*Integrationsgesetz*) of the **German national government** was enacted. The guiding principle is ´promoting and demanding´ the integration of migrants. In the same period, the red-red-green state government of **Thuringia** decided to create its own ´integration concept´ (*Integrationskonzept*) that is called ´the integration concept - for a good togetherness´ (*Das Thüringer Integrationkonzept – für ein gutes Miteinander!*). This concept comprises nine political action fields to support migrants´ process of ´integration´ which are: intercultural opening and welcoming culture (of governments, organisations and civil society), combatting against racism, fostering German language, promoting access to employment, health, socio-cultural everyday life and building further on a human rights-oriented refugee and integration policy (Kruppa 2017).

The state government of **Rhineland-Palatinate** has also developed an integration concept which is called ´Together for equal chances, openness to the world and acceptance´ (*Gemeinsam für Chancengleichheit, Weltoffenheit und Akzeptanz*). This concept promotes similar issues but there are interesting differences. Rhineland-Palatinate promotes – next to the action fields intercultural opening and access to language courses, education, employment, health – more intensely the **voluntary work** for and with migrants. Here, it has also been acknowledged that **churches** and therewith a number of different **parish communities** are in charge to realise welcoming spaces. It is argued that the churches make and had made „an important contribution to interreligious dialogue and thus also to the equal and peaceful coexistence of religions [..] They not only contribute their own financial resources to refugee work, they also significantly coordinate and promote the work of the numerous volunteers. [..] About 160,000 Rhineland-Palatinate residents are Muslims [..] Numerous **mosque congregations** have been providing important religious and social care for their members and other Muslims locally for many years [..]. They also participate intensively in interreligious dialogue with other religious communities and are partners of the state government in prevention work against the radicalization of young Muslims.” The state government established the ´Islam Round Table´ in 2012 under the leadership of the Commissioner for Migration and Integration (Spiegel & Vicente 2017:59).

´Free´ welfare associations are „mostly non-profit associations [..] that perform tasks for the public sector, i.e. instead of municipalities, states or the federal government, in social and youth work, in the health sector and in the care of children and the elderly. The welfare associations are among the most important independent providers”[4]. There are six ´leading associations´ of those free welfare associations in Germany: *Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO), Deutscher Caritasverband (DCV), Diakonie Deutschland – Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie und Entwicklung (EWDE), Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband (Der Paritätische), Deutsches Rotes Kreuz (DRK)* and the *Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland (ZWST)*.[5] The beginnings of these associations date back 100 years (and more) and thus, they are already established pillars of the German welfare state. A service which all of them offers is, for example, the consulting of adult migrants *(MBE: Migrationsberatung für erwachsene Zuwanderer)*.

Free non-profit welfare associations and private for-profit organisations differ from the public welfare institutions of the German governments. **Public social welfare institutions** are social service providers according to social security laws. These include institutions under public law such as the integration offices, the Federal Labour Office, the social welfare offices, the nursing care and health insurance funds, the family insurance funds as public-law institutions as well as social and youth welfare.

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[4] https://www.bpb.de/themen/deutsche-einheit/lange-wege-der-deutschen-einheit/501170/freie-traeger/; access: 2 August 2022
[5] https://www.socialnet.de/lexikon/Freie-Wohlfahrtspflege; accessed: 2 August 2022

Certain actors seem to be prevalent in the welcoming initiatives we have selected. These types of actors in favour for welcoming spaces are embedded in the political, socio-economic and socio-spatial context of Thuringia and Rhineland-Palatinate (Box 2). Here, the term ´actor´ refers to individuals as well as to organizations.

Box 2. Short overview on most relevant <u>types of welcoming initiatives</u> in Rhineland-Palatinate and Thuringia

Associations are committed to the interests of migrants (or people with a so-called ´migrant background´) and vary in size, reach and history. Some associations are organized and financed exclusively by voluntary citizens (i.e. migrants and long-term residents), while others are partly (and structurally) supported and financed by the municipality, the states and/or the national government. The associations formulate their own goals to support (a certain group of) migrants. Some associations are affiliated with churches, Muslim or other religious communities. These associations include **migrant associations** which are defined here as „organizations that were founded by once immigrants or their descendants and whose members majority have an immigration history" (Klie 2022:3).

In **Rhineland-Palatinate**, migrant associations are most often supported by the national government through advice and (digital) **network services** such as the **IQ-Network** (means: integration through qualification)[6]. They offer the following services: „1. Support with the implementation of relevant events pertinent to the labour market, for example Laboral Market Interviews (IQ Good Practice). 2. Counselling and vis-a-vis Support for migrant organisations which want to implement long term labour-market relevant projects. 3. Update of the IQ Handbook „*Aktive Vereine - Handbuch für Migrantenorganisationen als Partner für Integration und Beschäftigung*" (Active associations - Handbook for migrant organisations as partners for integration and employment)" (see https://mip.consulting/en/projects/iq-service-fur-migrantenorganisationen-rheinland-pfalz/).
The IQ-Network in **Thuringia** offers: 1. advisory „on the recognition of foreign educational qualifications (Information and Advisory Centre Recognition Thuringia) and on qualification opportunities in the context of the Recognition Act and Labour law", 2. qualification on „trained professionals from abroad for the care sector and academics with a migration background from various fields (e.g. pharmacy, pedagogy)" and 3. Accompaniment of „employment agencies, municipalities, public institutions and companies in Thuringia migrant organizations in the care and support of people seeking advice with the help of various offers for training and advice" (see https://www.iq-thueringen.de/images/2020/TP-Flyer/IQ_Netzwerk_Thringen.pdf and https://www.iq-thueringen.de/wem-hilft-iq/angebote-fuer-migrantenorganisationen#).

Associations which are initiated and organised by migrants in **Rhineland-Palatinate** have realized a significant contribution to enhance the representation and the social wellbeing of migrants since decades (Stauf 2004, Naumann 2011) – at least in the mid-sized and big cities – while migrant associations and their broader networks within and outside of **Thuringia** (and in East Germany in general (Hunger 2005,

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Klie 2022) are a relatively new phenomenon (Kruppa 2020). **(Migrant) Associations** seem to be most often organized as non-profit associations. However, the definition of ´non-profit´ is vague and differ per European country. Following Salamon and Anheier (1992) „the German non-profit sector is influenced by two overarching concepts: the principle of subsidiarity, which gives priority to private over public action in many areas of social and cultural policy; and the principle of self-administration, which affords considerable independence to many public law institutions. Both principles act as major organising forces on the shape of the German non-profit sector" (ibid, p. 20).[7] In Germany, „non-profit organisations tend to be closely allied with the state and have come to assume a structure and an orientation that is close to the public sector" (ibid, p. 7). One of our selected welcoming initiatives is organized as **non-profit limited liability company (gGmbH)** that is a legal form suitable for the formation of companies whose income is to be used for charitable purposes.

Municipal advisory Boards for Migration and Integration have the legal task to represent the interests of migrants and long-term residents with a so-called ´migration background´ as well as migrants without German citizenship on the municipal level and within municipal associations. In **Rhineland-Palatinate,** these boards (*Kommunale Beiräte für Migration und Integration*) have been funded in autumn 2009 by law. Since then, more and more municipalities do have organised these boards (see https://mffki.rlp.de/de/themen/integration/integrationspolitik-in-rheinland-pfalz/gremien/kommunale-beiraete-fuer-migration-und-integration/). In some municipalities and cities in **Thuringia Advisory Boards for Foreigners and Integration** are active, too (https://bimf.thueringen.de/akteure/kommunen).

On state level, **the integration officers** are responsible for (among other tasks) promoting the fulfilment of the constitutional non-discrimination of foreigners, counteracting discrimination. against foreigners and improving the situation of foreigners or the promotion of legal, social and cultural participation of all inhabitants. In **Thuringia**, Mrs. Mirjam Kruppa is the integration officer (https://bimf.thueringen.de/beauftragte/amt); in **Rhineland-Palatinate,** on state level, Mr. Miguel Vincente is the integration officer (https://mffki.rlp.de/de/ministerium/beauftragter-fuer-migration-und-integration/).

Finally, in **Rhineland-Palatinate** and **Thuringia** some of the above mentioned (Box 1) **welfare associations** have a major share in supporting migrants and realising welcoming spaces.

Third selection phase
In the following phase of our research, Laura Foelske, Dominic Danz and the author took a closer look to welcoming initiatives in the selected eight districts. In particular, we looked for organisations and initiatives that promote access to employment, socio-cultural networks and places of encounter in everyday life. We noticed that in the **Altenburg district** and **Rhine-Hunsrück district**, the population had declined sharply in recent decades and were characterized by active welcoming initiatives in these action fields. Besides, stakeholders of both districts are interested to take part in our research.

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[7] Salamon and Anheier (1992:21) argue further that: „The parts of the non-profit sector regulated by the principle of subsidiarity are usually referred to as „welfare associations' or 'free carriers', a set of six relatively large conglomerates of non-profit organisations delivering a wide range of health and social services. In fact, the „free carriers' are themselves made up of numerous establishments with different legal status. For example, the Protestant Diakonie, an umbrella for thousands of separate legal entities, consists of registered associations (43.2 per cent), foundations (23.4 per cent), public law foundations and corporations (29.4 per cent), limited liability companies (5 per cent) and other legal forms (Thermann, 1979). Members of the Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband include registered associations (88.6 per cent), limited liability companies (5.5 per cent), with public law corporations and foundations making up the remaining 5.9 per cent."

3. Theoretical and methodological considerations

Due to the major share of the non-profit free welfare associations in realising welcoming spaces, we decided to include them into our empirical approach. As established organizations existing for more than 100 years (Box 1), the small-scaled welcoming initiatives created by volunteers, migrants, long-term residents and/or (social) entrepreneurs in Rhineland-Palatinate and Thuringia the last years differ in size, reach, power, aims and organisational form. Despite these differences, their social practices and relations are developed within and are (re-)produced by networks of unequal power which are part and parcel of social hierarchies. Brenner (2011:32) argues that social hierarchies are reflected in space. "[I]n addition to the „horizontal" or areal differentiation of social practices across geographical space, there is also a „vertical" differentiation in which social relations are hierarchically articulated among – for example – global, supra-national, national [..] and local levels." Çaĝlar and Glick Schiller (2018) further argue that these levels should not be analysed as given. The local, national and global levels „are not separate levels of analysis but part of these mutually constituting institutional and personal networks of unequal power" (Glick Schiller 2015: 2276). They „use the term **„multiscalar**" as shorthand to speak of socio-spatial spheres of practice that are constituted in relationship to each other and within various hierarchies of networks of power." In their approach to „networked processes", Çaĝlar and Glick Schiller „define **social fields** as network of networks, emphasizing that social fields entail multiple and intersecting networks in which actors, as individuals, institutions, or corporate entities, hold uneven power [..] **Networks and the social fields** they constitute may be locally or regionally situated, or they may extend nationally [..] or supranationally [..] In their daily reach, all interpersonal networks may not be transnational in the sense of cross-border connections or be multiscalar, that is linked to actors based in multiple distinct domains of power. However, in our daily lives we all participate in social fields that extend beyond the local." (Çaĝlar & Glick Schiller 2018:8-9).

Çaĝlar and Glick Schiller do not refer to Bourdieu (1985), but their perception of social fields reminds of Bourdieu´s theory of the social, economic and culture fields; a theoretical concept which he developed 30 years ago. Bourdieu argued that actors are always part of a hierarchized social field which is determined by the globe-spanning struggle of capital (re-)distribution. He emphasized the dynamics of „the actors´ game" by which its legitimate structuring principles have been produced:

> „Although the structure of the social field is determined at any given moment by the structure of the distribution of capital and the associated profits within the various fields, it is nevertheless true that in each of these fields both, the definition of what is being played for and the trump cards that sting can always be put at stake: Each field represents the arena of a more or less openly declared struggle for the definition of the legitimate structuring principles of the field." (Bourdieu 1985:27)

Neither Bourdieu nor Çaĝlar and Glick Schiller have explored welcoming initiatives. Regarding Bourdieu´s most famous studies, he focussed his attention on the societal structuring principles of ´habitus´, social classes and fields within social hierarchies, such as the cultural field of art and literature, the religious field or the meaning of real estate within the economic field (Bourdieu et. al. 2002). However, the analysis of the meaning of (French) national government and, therewith, welfare associations according to processes of migrants´ and older poor residents´ participation had played a role in his sociological approach (Wacquant 2006) and especially, in his investigation of the French banlieues at the end of the 1980s (Bourdieu et. al. 1997). He argued that through the dismantling of the (French) welfare state by a globe-spanning redistribution of capital, „in particular, those who are charged with performing the so-called ´social´

functions" have fewer and fewer resources to do so (ibid 1997:210). This refers to police officers, judges, teachers or social workers who aim to help people in their residential, thus local, environment. Without using the term multiscalar, Bourdieu connected – comparable with Çaĝlar and Glick Schiller – the ´subjective´ processes of social positioning to ´objective´ power relations (Wacquant 2006). However, Çaĝlar and Glick Schiller´s (2011) general perspective is to relate migrants´ pathways to the scalar positioning of cities. By so doing, in the comparable study of the ´downscaled´ cities Halle (D), Mardin (Turkey) and Manchester (US) they focussed the attention on several units of analysis. They compare cities as a **crucial unit of analysis** according to five aspects (see: Çaĝlar & Glick Schiller 2018:35-36):

1. „city´s relative declining positioning over time [..],
2. [w]hether the city embarks on a strategy on rebranding and regeneration [..],
3. [t]he way in which city leaders position migrants or minorities within their regeneration narratives [..],
4. services the city provides for migrant settlement [and]
5. [e]vidence of synergy between city regeneration narratives and policies, on the one hand, and the multiscalar modes of emplacement of migrants [..] on the other".

In the **other units of analysis**, the viewpoint of the migrants takes the centre stage. These units of analysis are:

1. the social positioning of migrants and their businesses,
2. the meaning of urban sociabilities for processes of emplacement,
3. process of social citizenship within multiscalar power (ibid. 2018)

Despite the differences in the kind of units of analysis and perspectives, I argue that Bourdieu´s study of the banlieues and Çaĝlar and Glick Schiller´s idea of multiscalar social fields, are purposeful tools to comprehend the role of welcoming initiatives in the context of revitalisation processes of shrinking SMST. Therefore, I suggest, to understand a welcoming initiative as the first unit of analysis and the migrants´ experience of displacement and emplacement as the second unit of analysis. These processes are interwoven with socio-spatial and socio-economic processes framed by location-specific labour market structures, socio-cultural characteristics, traditions of a place, their actor systems, supralocal asylum legal conditions and finally, by the agency of welcoming initiatives. Economically, emplacement, like its opposite displacement, takes place in the context of ongoing capital circulation, which is accompanied by manifold processes of capital dispossession from the commons in specific places. **Displacement** is thus the result of processes of „city-, state-, and empire-building (...) that have stripped people of land, resources, and their means of livelihood and forced them to reposition, reorder, or relocate their lives and relationships." (Çaĝlar/Glick Schiller 2018: 19).

The term **emplacement** has so far only been discussed on the basis of a few empirical studies. Some studies focus on emplacement of migrants through (globally organized) work (Ryan & Molholland 2014, Ceccagno 2011), while others explored the transformation of everyday practices through migration (Englund 2002; Van Riemsdijk 2014). Drawing on Georg Simmel´s (1910 [1969]) concept of **sociability**, Glick Schiller and Çaĝlar (2018: 124) argue an inclusive and welcoming everyday practice is localized, for example, at the workplace, in churches, clubs, neighbourhoods, or public meeting places. Following them, the question is „how, where, why, and within what structural contingencies city dwellers build domains of affect, mutual respect, and shared aspirations."

In our view, welcoming initiatives have a share in the development of domains of mutual respect. In the selected case studies, welcoming initiative's practices are not only focused on emergency assistance and initial care for non-EU migrants. There is also the claim to network assistance and to strengthen their agency and autonomy within local networks as well as access to housing, education and training or jobs. Hence, the notion of emplacement and displacement links together processes that take place at multiple spatial scales and describes their effects, which are ultimately localized in concrete places. The objective of the selected welcoming initiatives is to provide access to social networks, places[8] and employment. The individuals, associations and public institutions who work in favour for ´integration´ constitute the **multiscalar social field of welcoming spaces**. From the viewpoint of the non-EU migrants who ´receive´ support, a welcoming initiative is part of the **opportunity structure** in their SMST. Social benefits provided by the municipalities, are also part of their opportunity structure. Since many social projects are merely funded for a certain period, welcoming initiatives must repeatedly legitimize their ´raison d'être´ to receive public funding. Besides, the old-established free non-profit welfare associations depend on financial resources provided by the national government or other sponsors. Our empirical data illustrates, that the support for migrants highly depend on the political-economic agenda of the SMST. Thus, welcoming initiatives often compete with each other. They must compete in a multiscalar field consisting of many different policy fields, issues and concerns. Based on this theoretical perspective, the following **empirical** research questions are formulated:

1. How are welcoming initiatives embedded and related to political stability and economic viability of the research cases?
2. How are (urban) policies linked to processes of revitalization and migration?
3. Which aspects are related to social wellbeing from the viewpoint of the migrants themselves and of actors of welcoming initiatives?

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[8] Place in the sense of physical places like public spaces, meeting places or buildings

4. Empirical data collection

Most of the interviewees are professionals who are supposed to work for and be paid as an employee and be embedded in a network constituted by organizations, governments and volunteers who support migrants (Table 2). Analysing the first interviews – from which the great majority has been conducted by Laura Foelske – it became clear that they regularly meet other organisations and actors of the local government. These network meetings include, for instance, a network for migration, a network for labour market integration or the IQ-networks (Box 2).

Based on first insights of their professional networks, further interview partners were selected by Laura Foelske. Their territorial scope of action and responsibility ranges from municipal to district level as well as to the state level. Through their network and scope of actions, the connection between the different ´scales´ such as state, district and municipal level became visible for us as researchers.

The ´content´ of the scaled relationships is constituted by the attempt to realise access to employment for migrants, on the one hand, and to broaden socio-cultural networks on site, on the other. Through the interviews, it became clear that there is a close relationship between the experienced social wellbeing by migrants and the access to employment on the long run. Through the integration concepts and local integration plans (LIP), labour market integration programs are promoted which, in turn, has been adopted by the professionals we have spoken.

Table 2 Number of interviewees

Interviewees	Altenburg district	Rhine-Hunsrück district
Professionals)*	12	5
Non-professionals)**	12	16
Total	24 interviewees	21 interviewees

*) * The term ´professionals´ refers to employees (or politicians) of the local government, welfare state associations, businesses or other organisations who have the task and responsibility to support migrants. For instance, helping them to get access to employment, health system, education, etc. The interviewed professionals are migrants or long-term residents as defined in the introduction. We have interviewed them <u>in their role as employees</u> having this specific task.*

*) ** The term ´non-professionals´ does not mean that these people do not act in a professional manner nor that they were not employees in general. Rather, the term refers to people who work for the interests of migrants but were not paid by anyone to do this (volunteers). They were migrants and long-term residents as defined in the introduction. We have interviewed them as private persons, i.e. <u>in their role as citizens</u> of a certain municipality.*

However, this distinction is not entirely clear-cut: every employee is also a resident of a city and a private person. Besides, some employees work as volunteers for migrants alongside their jobs and/or are migrants themselves (and keeping this perspective during the interview situation).

Empirical data have been collected by two methods of social qualitative research: in-depth interviews and group discussions. In our case, the in-depth interviews involved one or two interviewers and one or two interviewees discussing specific topics in detail which are specified by forehand by the interviewer or, as

Hennink et al. (2011:109) put it: „In-depth interviews may be described as a conversation with a purpose. The researcher´s purpose is to gain insight into certain issues using a semi-structured interview guide." A group discussion focusses on a specific set of issues. Following Hennink et al. (2011:136) „[T]he aim is to gain a broad range of views on the research topic over a period of 60-90 minutes."

From the Summer 2020 to Fall 2021, due to the epidemic situation caused by the COVID pandemic, interviewing face-to-face were not possible. Therefore, the interviewees were held by phone or video call, but no group discussions were held by video call. After Fall 2021, further interviews and group discussions were conducted face-to-face on site or, sometimes again, online. All interviewed professionals and non-professionals took part in welcoming initiatives or are actively committed to the creation of welcoming spaces in the selected districts. Last but not least, in the city of Altenburg, a two-day photo workshop took place (see below).

Table 3 Number and kind of welcoming initiatives

Types of Welcoming initiatives (see Box 2)	Altenburg district	Rhine-Hunsrück district
Non-profit organisation	3	2
For-profit organisation	3	0
Free welfare association	3	1
Church / parish community	0	1
Offices within governments (different levels)	3	3

The **interview guidelines for the in-depth interviews** were adjusted to the role of the interviewees as professionals working in certain organisations or as non-professionals. Among others, the following key issues have been discussed with the **actors of local governments**:
- vision on their towns
- economic, social and financial strategies for revitalization of their shrinking town
- perspective on immigration from abroad
- strategies for ´integration´ of migrants
- barriers and chances to realize revitalization strategies
- cooperation with other local, regional and national actors on the issues of revitalization and ´integration´ of migrants and their responsibilities

Among many others issues, the following key ones have been discussed with the **actors of welfare state organizations** and **non-professionals**:
- their tasks, responsibilities and opportunities in relation to the support of migrants
- strategies for fostering migrants´ participation on job markets, education and social networks
- cooperation with other local, regional and national actors on the issues of revitalization and ´integration´ of migrants and their responsibilities
- their perspective on barriers and chances to boost migrants´ emplacement process
- vision on the relation between migrants´ agency and revitalization strategies

The **guideline for the group's discussions** with non-professionals and/or migrants comprises the following key issues:

- familiarity and/or binding with the city and the long-terms residents
- everyday life in their neighbourhoods and their housing situation
- whether or not access to social network, work, (further) education and health system
- barriers, chances and strategies to develop their own agency or/and own (economic) projects
- organization of support and/or getting support from whom
- cooperation with other local, regional and national actors on the issues of revitalization and ´integration´ of migrants and their responsibilities
- experiences of inclusion and/or exclusion, discrimination

Other sources of information were the two days **photo workshop** which were done by migrants and long-term residents in the city of Altenburg (Box 3). Below, some illustrations of the photo made by the participants.

Box 3. Briefing of the participants of the photo project that is held in all participating countries of the Welcoming Spaces project
By Melissa Moralli

What does Altenburg mean to you? Join our photo workshop and show us!

Who are we?
Our names are Dominic Danz, Sabine Meier and Melissa Moralli. We are working on a research project called 'Welcoming Spaces' with several universities and NGO´s. One of the cities in our research project is the beautiful so-called Skat-city of Altenburg. Within the framework of the project we would like to find out how you, as an inhabitant of Altenburg, see your city!

What is it about?
Since photos can sometimes say more than 1000 words, we would like to hold a photo workshop in Altenburg on Monday and Tuesday, May 30 and 31, 2022 from about 10 am - 6 pm (location to be announced). [Name] will lead the workshop with us. In the process, you/you will shoot your own photos of places that mean something to you. Cameras will be provided!

- Photograph places that are important to you!
- What are your favourite places?
- Where do you feel welcome and where not?

Here, some results of the photo workshop:
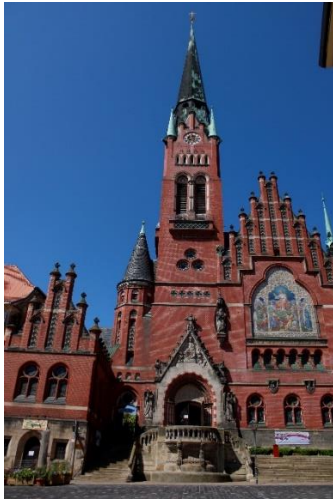
Brüderkirche Altenburg
© Photo Marcel

Vacant building painted by a great number
of pupils © Photo Susann

Social housing bloc in post-war neigh-
bourhood of Altenburg; a substantial number
of migrants live in neighbourhoods with
 a high percentage of social housing
© Photo Valentin

All interviews and groups discussions were transcribed and analysed with the software Altas.ti. Therefore, the transcripts were coded with the method of qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz 2018): „The structuring qualitative content analysis according to Kuckartz is understood as the inductively developed category formation along texts up to the deductive implementation of categories. However, in most cases rather a combined multistage procedure is carried out, in which theoretically derived categories are supplemented during coding. For this purpose, connections between text passages from the transcripts of previously conducted qualitative interviews are searched for. However, the analysis according to Kuckartz is not only suitable for the evaluation of guided interviews, but also for group discussions as well as narrative interviews. Through the formation of categories, it simplifies and explains complex subject matter"[9].

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[9] https://eo-vmw-jwpa.ku.de/journalistik/methoden/methoden-der-empirischen-
sozialforschung/inhaltsanalyse/qualinhaltsanalyse/strukturierende-qualitative-inhaltsanalyse-nach-kuckartz/

5. Welcoming initiatives, political stability and economic viability in the districts Altenburg and Rhine Hunsrűck

Regarding the research questions: 1) *how are welcoming initiatives embedded and related to political stability and economic viability of the research cases?* and 2) *how (urban) policies linked to processes of revitalization and migration?* it is, tempting to view the process of emplacement of migrants in the small and mid-sized towns (SMST), like those in the Altenburg district and the Rhine-Hunsrück district, as different from the migrants´ pathways in large cities. At the first glance, the SMST within shrinking regions have a relative weak position within the hierarchical network of cities and regions. Or to put it in Çaĝlar and Glick Schiller´s (2018:13) terms, SMST are ´disempowered cities´ which aim to deal with and/or counteract shrinking processes is caused by „the pressures of neoliberal urban restructuring but entered the competition with a given configuration of limited access".

However, at the second glance, the effects of demographic transition for the future development of SMST in European shrinking areas are manifold and hardly to predict. For example, results depend on the spatial scale of reference (Kuhn and Klingholz 2013). Moreover, studies have shown that depopulation does not necessarily mean that the rate of economic growth or unemployment is lower than in growing European regions (Kreuter and Klingholz 2012). Rather a variety of factors account for further development of SMST, such as:

- the kind of economic profile,
- its proximity to metropoles,
- its historical development,
- its administrative meaning for the surrounding area and
- the ways in which characteristics were framed by municipalities and civil society actors (see ESPON-on-the-road project (2013)).

Regarding the economic development, SMST in Europe seem to have a greater proportion of jobs in the industrial sector than in the service sector (which actually seem to serve for a higher economic activity rate in average than in European big cities). According to **economic profiles**, the EPSON study distinguishes three categories. The ´restructuring industry´ is characterized by a delicate balance between retaining small town's production of trading goods, on the one hand, and industrial branches losing their importance by increasing global competition, on the other. The second one, named ´residential economy´, is mainly based on local activities like housing demands, tourist activities and social services. The last category, the ´knowledge-based economy´, could either be related to the first or second type, and additionally relies on technical and social innovations, educational institutions and creative industries. In this vein, it is important to clarify the specific characteristics of our research cases which were described in Box 4 and Box 5.

Box 4. Specific characteristics of the Altenburg district By Dominic Danz

Demographic composition. The Altenburg district is the most easterly district in the Free State of Thuringia, has 30 municipalities and is a two-hour drive from the Czech border. In 2005, it had a population of about 100,000, which decreased to about 88,000 by 2022. The above-average decline can be explained by the migration of the population to other federal states, especially to the west of Germany, and the national trend of migration to the big cities. The proportion of migrants without German citizenship – called ´foreigners´ in the German statistics – has grown steadily since 2010: 1.4 per cent in 2010, 2.5 per cent in 2015, and 3.6 per cent in 2020.

Within the Altenburg district, Altenburg and Schmölln are the most populous cities. Altenburg has approximately 31,000 and Schmölln has 13,000 inhabitants. It is particularly noticeable that there is a strong negative net migration in the 18- 25 age group. This trend continues more or less in 2019 (while the trend for the city of Altenburg it is lower.) Family migration (age 30-50) stagnates or is slightly positive. The median age of the population is rising steadily: it was still 50 years old in 2010 and had risen by four years to 54 by 2017 (TMASGFF 2019).

Transport. Altenburg can be classified as a medium-sized town: it functions as a medium-sized centre with partial tasks of an ´upper´ urbanized centre. The nearest metropoles are Chemnitz or Leipzig, both are about an hour's drive from Altenburg. There is a rail connection to Leipzig from Altenburg with a travel time of about 30 minutes. However, the rail networks as a whole have shrunk considerably: while there were 416 ha in the district area in 2015, there will only be 277 ha in 2020 (see for all mentioned statistical dates and facts: *Statistisches Landesamt Thüringen*).

Labour market and economic profiles. There exists no university (of applied sciences) in the Altenburg district. The percentage of pupils who did not graduate in the 2019/20 school year was 7.5 per cent. The percentage of graduates with a secondary school degree was 16.2 per cent in the same year, graduates with a junior high school (*Realschulabschluss*) was 44.6 per cent, and students with a general university entrance qualification was about 32 per cent (TMASGFF 2019).

Despite a population loss of almost 10,000 inhabitants from 2010 to 2020 in the Altenburg district, the number of employees who gain social security contributions increased from 26,800 to 27,500 in the same period. However, the share of ´foreign´ employees which depend on social security decreased (!): in 2015, 656 persons were still receiving social benefits while in 2019, there were only 133.

Most people work in the third sector. The distribution of jobs in the main economic sectors has remained roughly the same over the period. In 2020, 2.4 per cent are employed in the first sector, 37 per cent in the second and 60 per cent in the third sector (own calculations D. Danz)[10]. It is important to note that there is a clear dominance by small scale enterprises in the district of Altenburg: 88.4% of enterprises are micro enterprises, i. e. they have 0-9 employees and 8.8% are micro enterprises works with 10-49 employees. Medium-sized companies, on the other hand, account for only 2.4% of the companies and only 0.4% can be classified as large companies, i.e. with 250 or more employees. This trend goes together with the reduction of the overall unemployment rate: from 13.6 in 2010 to 7.1 per cent in 2020. The share of foreigners in the unemployed population, on the other hand, has increased from 1.71% in 2010 to 11.6% in 2020 *).

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[10] https://statistik.thueringen.de/datenbank/default2.asp; accessed September 2021

The trend in gross wages per worker has increased from € 20,994 in 2010 to € 28,626 in 2019 and disposable (net) income per household has also increased from € 15,626 in 2010 to € 19,883 in 2018. The share of households eligible for the social security service of ´housing benefits´ has decreased by about 50% from 2010 to 2020. Income has risen sharply and it seems that the overall quality of jobs in the labour market has improved in the district in recent years in general.

In terms of the percentage of vacant space in Thuringia, Altenburg district ranks first among all other districts of the state: The proportion of unrented space is 18 per cent of total units in 2017. This results in an average rent per m² of living space of around € 4.9 (TMASGFF 2019).

Box 5. Specific characteristics of the Rhine-Hunsrück district

Demographic composition. The Rhine-Hunsrück district is situated amid the state of Rhineland-Palatinate; a state that is characterized by 3 governmental levels: i) the level of 24 districts next to 12 ´district-free´ (*kreisfreie Städte*) towns, ii) the level of 129 ´associated municipalities´ (*Verbandsgemeinden*) and iii) 2194 towns/villages. The Rhine-Hunsrück district comprises 4 ´associated municipalities´ and 1 ´associated municipality-free town´: Boppard. In 2005, the district Rhine-Hunsrück district had a population of about 107,000, which decreased to about 3,000 by 2022. This decline can be explained first and foremost by the national trend of migration to the big cities[11]. The proportion of migrants without German citizenship – called ´foreigners´ in the German statistics – has grown steadily: 3.6 per cent in 1990, 6.2 per cent in 2015, and 10.0 per cent in 2021[12]. The origin of the migrants is shown in Table Z below. It is particularly noticeable that there is a strong negative net migration in the 20-34 and 50-64 age groups is predicted until 2040. While the age group 80 and above will grow.[13] The welcoming initiatives we had selected are situated **in the associated municipality Simmern-Rheinböllen** and within this associated municipality the Rhine-Hunsrück district is situated.

Transport. The land area of 963 km² is 45.5% wooded, 41.5% is used for agriculture and just under 12% is used for settlements and transportation[14]. Within the district Rhine-Hunsrück district the city of Boppard is the most populous city with approximately 15,000 inhabitants. The nearest big city is Koblenz, followed by Mainz, Trier and Kaiserslautern. There are almost no rail connections between or across the 4 association municipalities. The main line goes along the river Rhine. The traffic generated by Frankfurt-Hahn Airport contribute to the fact that the transport sector of the Rhine-Hunsrück is bigger than in the state RPL as a whole. Frankfurt-Hahn Airport is the only international commercial airport in Rhineland-Palatinate and is an important engine for the economy and the job market in the Rhine-Hunsrück district.

Labour market and economic profiles. There exists no university (of applied sciences) in the Rhine-Hunsrück district. However, there are several vocational schools. The most important economic sectors in the Rhine-Hunsrück district are the (third) service sectors financing, renting and business service providers and public and private service providers. The percentages of the different sectors are in 2021: 1,6% first sector, 37% second sector, 61,4 per cent third sector.[15] The majority of firms are small or mid-

[11] http://www.infothek.statistik.rlp.de/MeineHeimat/tscont-t.aspx?id=101&l=1&g=07140&tp=17635&ts=tsPop01
[12] http://www.infothek.statistik.rlp.de/MeineHeimat/tscontent.aspx?id=101&l=1&g=07140&tp=17635&ts=tsPop06
[13] http://www.infothek.statistik.rlp.de/MeineHeimat/content.aspx?id=101&l=1&g=07140&tp=17635
[14] https://www.statistik.rlp.de/de/regional/monatsheftbeitraege/; 2010, Rhine Hunsrück Kreis
[15] http://www.infothek.statistik.rlp.de/MeineHeimat/content.aspx?id=101&l=1&g=07140&tp=231824

sized: Firms with 0 – 10 employees: 17 per cent; 10 - 50 employees: 27.9 per cent; 50 - 250 employees: 31.6 per cent; 250 and more employees: 22.8 per cent.

About the **economic profiles**, the **Altenburg district** seems to be a fusion between a ´restructuring industry´, which is a delicate balance between retaining small towns´ production on the one hand, and industrial branches losing their importance by increasing global competition, on the other. However, there are still a great number of small-scale artisanal enterprises that ensure the economic viability of the city and the district of Altenburg. Besides, one strategy is to foster a ´residential economy´ that is mainly based on local activities like housing demands, tourist activities and social services.

The **Rhine-Hunsrück district** in general is more rural than the Altenburg district and is mainly characterized by the production of trading goods and social services. An economic hotspot in this area is the Frankfurt-Hahn Airport that has, nevertheless, problems to survive. Like in the Altenburg district, the ´residential economy´ and tourism are intensively promoted.

In addition, the **economic development of places** is actually related to migration and thus, by **migration history.** After the Second World War, West Germany have had a relatively high immigration rate in comparison with the former GDR. This means that to date 1) there are fewer migrants living in the new federal states than in West Germany, 2) that there are fewer migrant organizations, and 3) that the political structures are not oriented toward cultural diversity or multilingualism. Nevertheless, some migrants, in particular from Vietnam, settled down in the former GDR. Some of them had started their businesses and actively supported other immigrants. An interviewee from a non-profit organisation in the Altenburg district distinguish ´old´ and ´new´ migrants from each other regarding their chance being economically independent of social benefits through e.g. working as entrepreneurs:

„There was migration long before 2015, which means that there are also a few relatively well-integrated migrants who have always been active in the field of refugee work or migration work here [..] On the other hand, a lot has happened since 2015 [..] due to the refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Eritrea. This was clearly the case throughout the republic, so that these migrants are different from the longer integrated and also locally present migrants. Both are now represented [..] So the topic of migration and migrants is not homogeneous. [I think that one] has to distinguish very strongly between those who have their own store, have built up their own economic life, partly already in GDR times [..] especially those with a Vietnamese background and in the meantime are really, let's say, self-employed in the gastronomy [..] or the Turks who are entrepreneurs or Kurds and refugees who have arrived since 2015. That is already a big difference." (AL_MB_Transcript)

Moreover, he partly explains the xenophobia with the absence of migration in the past.

"[..] in daily practice, it is simply the case that there are prejudices, that there is still a kind of exclusion simply due to ignorance or due to unwillingness […] The thing is that - and I say this quite deliberately - the GDR had a socialization apparatus that was either artificially imposed or had little contact with migration and dealing with foreign cultures. This still lives on with the term 'Fiji' [with which] the Vietnamese migrants here [are called]. That is still the case [..] And the experience with immigration here is simply different than in [place name] or, let's say, in a West German city in the Ruhr area, which has 25 percent [migrants]. So, I know from [place name] that we had a long socialization process there [between immigrants and long-established residents] that was not always free of tension, but [this process] is simply more polished than

here. This is also really reinforced in rural areas: Altenburg is a rural area. We have 33,000 inhabitants, but people always pretend that we are a big city. But in fact, both the housing situation and, let's say, the density of contacts in the city are somewhat different than somewhere in the real villages." (AL_MB_Transcript)

Nevertheless, he argues that the political structures to support newcomers (which are in fact ´opportunity structures´ as Çaĝlar and Glick Schiller (2018) name it) are broad and well organized in Thuringia. But certain industries, or to formulate it bit more clear, precarious jobs in certain industries seem to ´match´ better with particular migrant groups than with others.

„In principle, here, the support structure is broadly based and also effective [..] and I would say that the Eritreans, for example, because of their faith, are also easier to integrate into precarious, but definitely existing jobs, I would say, in slaughterhouses. While the Arabs or the Afghans are less happy to work there because of their ban on pigs. But for an Eritrean, that's not a problem. And still, all groups say at some point: Altenburg is too small, because the cultural ... or, let's say, the possibilities to actively participate in life here are more limited than in Frankfurt or in Dortmund. It may be a prejudice. [In principle,] they have a better housing situation here and also a good labour market situation. It is no longer the case that there is a lack of jobs here, but it is more a matter of [..] convincing someone [..] to do a three-year apprenticeship. So, the economic [pressure] comes very strongly into conflict not only with the cultural ... but also simply with the motivation [of the migrants]. But we also have one or two positive examples of people who go their own way and who are successful nurses or [work] in the metal sector, crafts." (AL_MB_Transcript)

These and many other quotes from the interviewees show similar aspects, which basically seem to characterise the emplacement of migrants. In Thuringia (and in Rhineland-Palatinate) there are state-wide and regionally organized networks and organizations that aim to integrate migrants into the labour market. However, it is also clear that migrants often work in precarious jobs and that they hardly have access to qualified jobs with (sufficient) social insurance. Many welcoming initiatives try to open a different perspective for migrants through (further) education and qualification. Several interviews show that (especially male) migrants, however, decide against education or further training and opt for a precarious job. There is a question of whether this decision is actually made voluntarily, considering the non-existent or inadequate resources that refugees in particular have. A social worker in Rhine-Hunsrück district argues:

„It is also difficult to tell someone who is 30: „You have to do an apprenticeship for €350.00 a month" when you can earn at least €1,500 elsewhere and secure your livelihood with it. Vocational training [in Germany] is designed for people who are 15 or 16 and still live at home, drive there on a moped and have no costs. But if you're 30 and maybe have a family or even if you want to finance an apartment, then you can hardly go into vocational training. Because even in the well-paying apprenticeships you get maybe 800 € gross [..] That's nothing. So, you can't finance your life from that. And that's where I think we should start [to change something]. It would perhaps be good for all younger people if they earned more." (RLP_Cl_Transcript)

5.1 Perceptions of economic viability and political stability

Returning to the second research question, the following interviewee is, first of all, very aware of the town´s weak position and the limited access to financial and human resources. As an actor of the municipal government, he makes the following problem analysis of the city of Altenburg:

„The trend is towards 27,000 inhabitants, down from 31,000 now. We used to have 57,000. However, a hundred years ago there were only 40,000 inhabitants in the core city. Everything that went on beyond that was Wismut, the GDR, industry, Omega, all these things. And they no longer exist. Then the process just takes place downwards again. We are still losing inhabitants. The painful thing is that we will fall below 40,000 inhabitants." Moreover, he assumes a negative reputation of the city and states: „But we are unattractive - people don't stay. It's a beautiful city, that's not what I mean at all. It's the sum, the total that makes it: such a city as we are. Without its own university, few companies - so, few economies. Then there's this aura of rejection." (AL_O_Transcript)[16]

The interviewee relates the ´aura of rejection´ to the perception of being a city where a number of citizens vote right-wing parties. However, on district level, the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) is the greatest party, followed by the SPD (Social democratic Party of Germany) and Die Linke in the elections 2019.

Table 4 Results of the elections on district level Altenburg district in 2019

Landkreis   077 Altenburger Land

Erfassungsstand	30 Gemeinde/n
Wahlberechtigte	77 669
Wähler	43 475
Wahlbeteiligung	**56,0 %**
Ungültige Stimmabgaben	1 658
Gültige Stimmabgaben	41 817
Gültige Stimmen	129 253

Nr.	Wahlvorschlag	Stimmen	Sitze	%	Stimmenverteilung
1	CDU	29 931	67	23,2	
2	DIE LINKE	13 439	25	10,4	
3	SPD	13 672	27	10,6	
4	AfD	3 588	7	2,8	
5	GRÜNE	942	1	0,7	
6	FDP	1 780	2	1,4	
7	Sonstige	65 901	213	51,0	

Source: http://www.wahlen.thueringen.de, accessed 5 Sept 2022

It is very remarkable that unless the depopulation trend and the assumed ´aura of rejection´, the economy viability has increased significantly in the last two decades. As the numbers in the table below illustrate, the tempo of net migration and depts have decreased while tax income has increased. A considerable number of free spaces (probably by dismantling vacant buildings) have been transformed into green and recreational public spaces.

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[16] All citations are translated by Deepl.com or the author

Table 5 Population development and area distributions of the city of Altenburg)*

Year	2000	2020
Population	41.290 inhabitants	31.101
Net migration	-516	-168
Area in total (ha)	4.493	4.569
Green Spaces (ha)	(2004) 32	375
Recreation Spaces (ha)	85	395
Area for mobility (individual and public transport)	311	333
Tax income (net)	€ 9.6 Million	€ 19.6 Million
Depts	(2004) € 32.8 Million	€ 11.7 Million
Number of farms	(2011) 25 (3258 ha)	14 (3077 ha)
Tourism (visitors per year)	(2001) 29.808	(2014) 38.649 (2020) 18.387

*) Compilation by Dominic Danz based on facts and figures from: https://statistik.thueringen.de/

The city and district government do their best to foster economic viability by building on already existing branches of industry such as the traditional production of game cards or the great number of micro and small enterprises. Moreover, the hope lies in the expansion of housing demands, tourist activities and social services. Regarding the first aspect, an actor of the local government argues that the (big) cities Leipzig, Chemnitz, Zwickau and Gera can be reached within a 90-minute radius. In total approximately four million people live in this region and thus, Altenburg could be an attractive place to live in.

Analysing the governmental document *Standort mit Zukunft* (locality with future)[17], it becomes clear that the urban and economic (re)development is based on the expansion of commercial areas ("from 1.000 sqm to 2 ha") and its central geographical position. Part of this plan is the idea to settle a private university of applied sciences soon. Furthermore, it is aimed to strengthen the tourism industry and revitalize urban parks. Within the so-called integrated development plan of the city of Altenburg some plots within the city are indicated for redevelopment measures.[18]

Looking at the district Altenburg, there are four dominant industrial branches:
1. Automotive supply industry
2. Machinery plant engineering
3. Plastics processing firms and
4. Food industry (incl. slaughterhouses, huge meat-processing firms, production of goat cheese and smaller firms that produce mustard and beer.)

[17] https://www.stadt-altenburg.de/seite/561657/brosch%C3%BCre-altenburg-standort-mit-zukunft.html
[18] https://www.urbaneprojekte.de/kompetenzen/entwicklungskonzepte/integriertes-stadtentwicklungskonzept-altenburg-2030

So far, we could not find out how high the migrant workforce is in each sector, but it is clear that especially in slaughterhouses, meat processing plants and agricultural sector dependent on the working force of Eastern European workers:

„Many people who have come from other European countries have also worked at the slaughterhouse in recent years. The profession of the butcher is no longer the target activity of many young people who were born here in the district. So, labour immigration has actually been a reality for many years – one sometimes has the feeling that not everyone has yet become aware of the fact that this has long been reality and it's no longer just a distant topic […] And agriculture, we noticed when the Corona pandemic entered a critical phase last year at the beginning when it came to the border closures. Because we had seasonal workers who helped in the hop or in the asparagus harvest. The farmers, who could count on corresponding support in past years, were simply faced with a real challenge: How can I harvest the crops now if the workers can't get across the border? Of course, these are always challenging for individual companies, for individual players. This is not something that everyone necessarily has in mind. So, there is also sometimes a gap between reality that has been lived for a long time and the self-perception of a certain group in a region.” (AL_WF_Transcript).

This interviewee seems to refer to a lack of acceptance of diversity within this ´certain group´. This impression is also confirmed by statements of other interview partners. In this vein, the topic of diversity, and thus the presence of migrants from European and non-European countries, hardly plays a role in urban redevelopment planning. An actor of the local government relates cosmopolitanism in the sense of being ´open to the world´ (*Weltoffenheit*) rather to the chance to attract international investors then to a diversity of the population consisting of migrants and long-term resident or their transnational relations.

„I perceive fair appearances, where one has briefly a three-quarter hour panel discussions and one says, what one plans in its city will be. And that the rents no longer go only four euros fifty, but also for eight euros fifty. That's where they [the investors] start, because they only redevelop houses if there's a return on investment (...) We already have contacts here and there (...) so that cosmopolitanism already attracts something”. (AL_O_Transcript)

In contrast to this idea of cosmopolitanism, this interviewee doubts if the migrants who have arrived in the Altenburg district the last years will be able to fulfill qualified jobs. Rather, so he argues, after finishing further educations, they or/and their children will have more chances to get access to qualified jobs.

„In our case, unfortunately, there is still a lot of auxiliary work. Because, as explained earlier, the degrees [of migrants] are still missing. Recognized or [if they have] finished school or trainings that it will change - but at the moment, there is not yet the classical [workforce we need]”. (AL_O_Transcript).

Our empirical data illustrates that the access to qualified jobs it is still difficult for non-EU migrants unless there is a general lack of labour forces:

„Well, through company visits I know of individual examples where integration has worked. The respective entrepreneurs describe both positive and negative experiences. So, you can't blame it on age or on the countries of origin. It is very individual how the integration success works. There is a challenge […] to fill new jobs […] Often the serious will to learn and to work, to tackle is much as important that a qualification. Of course, skilled workers with certain qualifications are needed, but there are also large areas of economic

activity where it is purely a matter of really wanting to put one's labour to work. Language barriers always play a major role here. Because the minimum is just the safety conditions and the communication to the colleagues must function. You have to be able to talk to each other within the teams." (AL_WF_Transcript).

However, in the Altenburg district, the job market has been changed the last years. Small craft businesses are facing stronger competition from supra-regional and globally organized companies such as Amazon. One interviewee explains:

„Yesterday I was allowed on a first tour at the Amazon logistics centre near the city of Gera, but that is only five kilometres from the border to the Altenburg district. The foundation stone was laid in 2020 [..] As of today: Over 1000 new jobs subject to social insurance contributions. Further tendency rising. It is precisely this settlement of the logistics centre that is just getting the labour market going in all of eastern Thuringia. The representatives of the labour administration, agency and job centre, have also confirmed this there once again. If a new player comes into the vicinity and from the beginning holds out the prospect of 12.60 euros gross wage with further growth prospects and the activities that are done there ... It is the most modern Amazon logistics centre in Germany with a lot of robotics. At least the managers who were visible on site yesterday had a very people-friendly management style. Whether that will be the case when the cameras are gone, I don't know."

Following his opinion: „It's a very exciting: this new centre challenges some companies in terms of their business model, because - regardless of qualifications - 12.60 euros are paid, after 24 months over 14 euros, overtime paid and so on. That doesn't work for every smaller company around here. That's a new challenge. But we think it's fundamentally important. After all, we also want the business models of our companies to develop further for the benefit of our population. So that more income is possible and thus more prosperity in the region [..] No one has anything to gain from preserving business models from the 1990s that only work with hourly wages of 9.50 euros in the long term. This cannot be the purpose of regional development. We need a growth orientation, at least as far as quality is concerned. That the employee also has the chance to participate in the growing prosperity. Political decisions are now being announced that a minimum wage of twelve euros is being considered. That's why it's always necessary to further develop our own business models, and we also work together in the region to do this." (AL_WF_Transcript).

To verify his arguments, we try to find more information on the new logistic centre of Amazon and we have found this job advertisement (Box 5).

Box 6. Example of a job advertisement (October 2022) for: **Amazon shipping/warehousing employee (m/f/d) – Gera**

🕐 Job and shifts: Full-time contract: Rigid shifts - early shift / late shift / night shift: (Long term shift scheduling facilitates work/life balance); Full time - 40 hours, 5 days a week

🈂 Wage: Calculated hourly wage of 13,00€ + possible overtime pays and special payments.

🎓 Experience: - No previous experience necessary, you will receive on the job training; - Minimum age 18 years

✅ Responsibilities for you and your team, esp.: - Receive, inspect, sort and store goods. - Picking, packing and shipping orders- Process the entire range of Amazon products

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> 📑 We offer you: - Temporary employment contract; - Guaranteed wage increase after 12 months (currently calculated €13.77/h gross) and 24 months (currently calculated €14.67/h gross) of employment with the company; - 28 vacation days (with an average 5-day week)
> - And many more benefits! You can find more information about the benefits here.
> 💪 What makes you stand out: - Physical aptitude (up to 8h standing/walking, max. 15kg lifting); - Good knowledge of German or English
> (Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator)
>
> **Check out what it's like to be an Amazon employee and learn how our European team works here.**

However, unless the above stated ´very people-friendly management style´, the daily newspaper Ostthüringer Zeitung published an article in March 8, 2022, in which workers complain about their working conditions[19].

The analysis of the empirical data indicates that despite the shortage of skilled workers, it is not easy to provide non-EU migrants access to qualified jobs in the broader **Altenburg region**. Especially the entry into small and medium-sized companies seems to be difficult. Amazon as a large international company, offers more chances of finding a well-paid job, partly because English is spoken there. But we could not get any information about the working conditions 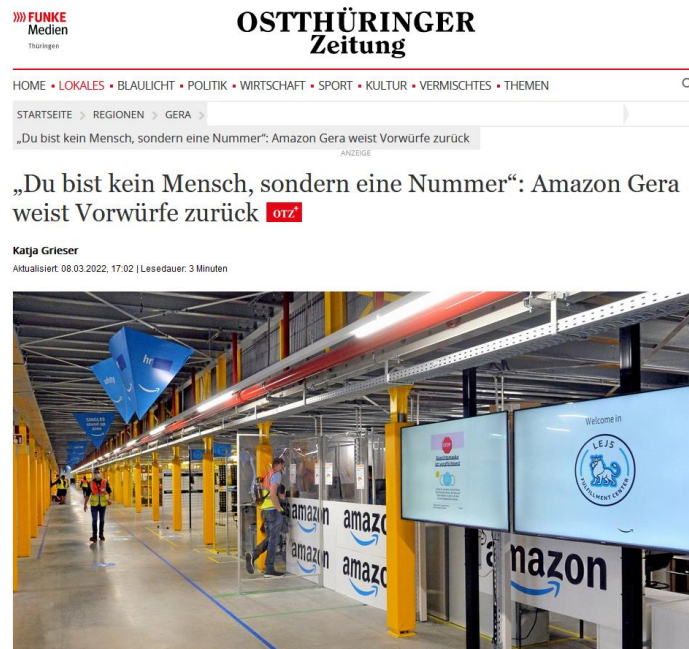at Amazon Gera. The welcoming initiatives were not able to fundamentally improve this situation. Nevertheless, there of course, smaller successes are achieved.

The tendency that non-EU migrants have limited chance to get a qualified job despite the lack of (skilled) workers, seems to be true for the **Rhine-Hunsrück district** as well. The economic structure there is characterized by numerous medium-sized companies and craft enterprises. Following the regional government, its economic structure is constituted by a mix of „global players and medium-sized businesses,

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[19] https://www.otz.de/regionen/gera/amazon-gera-weist-vorwuerfe-zurueck-id234763301.html

newcomers and long-established companies, complemented by high-tech in the trades, modern agriculture and renewable energies. Optimal conditions count for all of them. The excellent transport and logistics network, attractive land and real estate prices, many qualified employees and the proximity to the metropolitan areas - the Rhine-Hunsrück district offers you all this and more."[20] In order to attract more businesses and people to the district they have developed a regional marketing strategy which is called ´promised land´. The ideas of ´promised land´ are based on the four main topics:

1. nature and recreation,
2. family and social issues,
3. environment and responsibility and
4. economy and funding. [21]

For this regional redevelopment strategy and marketing, the issue of immigration from abroad or ´diversity´ of the population does not play any role. Regarding the propagated issues for revitalisation, it seems that, first of all, the residential economy for families and tourism, and second, a delicate balance between retaining small towns´ production and industrial branches losing their importance by increasing global competition are dominant.

Table 6 Population and area distributions of Rhine-Hunsrück district in 2021**

Year	2021
Population	103.767
Area in total km2	991
Green Spaces (incl. forest and agriculture) km2	858
Recreation Spaces km2	10
Area for mobility (individual and public transport) km2	64
Tax income (net)	€ 1.8 Million (2020)*
Depts	(2004) € 1,6 Million*

*https://www.statistik.rlp.de/no_cache/de/gesellschaft-staat/finanzen-steuern/pressemitteilungen/einzelansicht/news/detail/News/3179/

**http://www.infothek.statistik.rlp.de/MeineHeimat/content.aspx?id=101&g=07140&l=1&tp=4095

See also: http://www.infothek.statistik.rlp.de/MeineHeimat/content.aspx?id=101&g=07140&l=1&tp=4095

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[20] https://www.kreis-sim.de/Unser-Landkreis/Wirtschaft/
[21] https://www.gelobtesland.de/rhein-hunsrueck-kreis/familie-soziales/

Table 7 Nationality of the migrants without German citizenship living in Rhine-Hunsrück district in 2021

Ausländer nach den am stärksten vertretenen Nationalitäten[1] 2021

Nationalität	Insgesamt[2]	Männer[2]	Frauen[2]
Rumänien	1.340	730	610
Syrien, Arabische Republik	1.095	630	470
Polen	790	415	380
Türkei	765	415	350
Bulgarien	500	250	250
Philippinen	480	370	105
Russische Föderation	335	125	210
Afghanistan	320	205	115
Kroatien	310	170	140
Bosnien und Herzegowina	285	150	130
Ausländer insgesamt	10.335	5.565	4.765
Ausländeranteil in %	10,0	10,8	9,1

1 Quelle: Ausländerzentralregister des Bundesverwaltungsamtes. - 2 Zur Wahrung der Geheimhaltung persönlicher Verhältnisse sind alle ausgewiesenen Fallzahlen aus der Ausländerstatistik jeweils auf ein Vielfaches von Fünf gerundet. Abweichungen zwischen den ausgewiesenen Summen und den Summen der Einzelwerte, die für deren Ermittlung maßgeblich sind, ergeben sich durch das angewandte Rundungsverfahren. Alle ausgewiesenen Anteils- und Verhältniszahlen sind unter Verwendung gerundeter Ergebnisse der Ausländerstatistik ermittelt worden.

Source: http://www.infothek.statistik.rlp.de/MeineHeimat/content.aspx?id=101&l=1&g=07140&tp=17635

Besides revitalization and regional marketing strategies, several actors made indeed efforts to enhance the access to jobs for migrants. During our research, we were regularly made aware on the program ´Integration through Qualification (IQ)´. This network (also known in Thuringia) operates in every German state (Box 2) and aims to qualify migrants and relate businesses to potential employees. However, it seems that particularly volunteers and a very limited number of social workers are in charge to do so in the Rhine-Hunsrück district. Therefore, a special booklet is published to qualify, in turn, volunteers who should support migrants in their pathways towards employment in their home towns and region[22]. Following the volunteers themselves, they doubt whether to advise migrants to train or to start (an often non-qualified) job immediately. A social worker argues:

(How am I supposed to) „explain why someone should do an apprenticeship when he earns €15.00 an hour on the assembly line in the factory, maybe a bit more with the night shift. And then he ends up with more than the trained person (...) But I believe that this will hit us hard as a society. The people we have failed to educate and train. I'm convinced that if you spend your life doing shift work, standing on a production line in some stinking plastic factory, you won't stay healthy in the long run. Now people are maybe in their mid-20s or early 30s (...) and can put up with the work. But when they're 50, maybe they won't (...) And then

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[22] MigraNet – IQ Landesnetzwerk Bayern, 2017, Abeitsmarktintegration von Geflüchteten. Informationen für Ehrenamtliche

we'll hopefully have reached the point in society where we won't say that it's because they're migrants, but that we've failed to train people in good time." (RLP_Cl_Transcript).

Another interviewee confirms, that several non-EU migrants work in factories in the region.

„We already have quite a bit of, let's say, manufacturing business with us (…). They are always desperately looking for workers (...) Meanwhile, there are a whole group of Eritreans and Somalis who work there. Of course, they always work precariously and in (night) shifts, so that you can't do any language courses or anything like that on the side. And they always stay among themselves. There are hardly any Germans there. There are no opportunities for advancement." (RLP_FR_ Transcript).

We also received statements comparable to these quotes from many other interview partners. They are surprising at first, because the so-called integration of migrants is supported and promoted by political programs. Both Thuringia and Rhineland-Palatinate drew up political programs several years ago and set up network organizations to help municipalities, independent agencies and other organizations implement them. These programs comprise a number of action fields enumerated below (Table 7). In these integration programs, the societal subsystems are first mapped and then, objectives are formulated for each field of action and who is responsible for realizing and financing these actions.

Table 8 Action fields (*Handlungsfelder*) of the integration policies of the states Rhineland-Palatinate and Thuringia

Published in 2013, Original Title: **´Integration, Anerkennung und Teilhabe - Leben gemeinsam gestalten – Integrationskonzept Rheinland-Pfalz´ (*Integration, Recognition and Participation - Shaping Life Together - Integration Concept Rhineland-Palatinate*), edited by** the Rhineland-Palatinate Ministry of integration, family, children and youth and women	Published 2017, Original Title: **´Das Thüringer Integrationskonzept – für ein gutes Miteinander´ (*The Thuringian integration concept - for a good coexistence*) edited by** the Thuringia Ministry of migration, Justice and Consumer Protection
Field of action Intercultural Opening and Intercultural Competence Field of action Participation Field of action education Field of Action Vocational Training and Labor Market Field of action Family Health field of action Field of action religion Field of action Culture, media, education and information Field of action Refugees	Welcome and recognition culture Combating exclusion, discrimination, racism Language as the key to integration Education as the key to social participation Employment and labour market: prerequisite for a self-determined life Health: a value in itself Housing: feeling at home Integration and social participation: shaping one's living environment Human rights-oriented refugee and integration policy

During our fieldwork, we were not able to find out in detail how large the amounts are that are made available for these fields of actions per year. However, many interviewees argue that the financial resources are not enough to realize access to language courses, further education or health care, especially in the years 2015 and 2016. An actor of welcoming initiative tells us that the integration officers of some states have submitted an application, „a cry for help", to the responsible federal ministry and they did not get any additional financial support. Following one of our interviewees in the Rhine-Hunsrück district, financial resources were redistributed from the national to the local level without making clear, however, that these must be used for ´integration´. Thus, certain amounts of money have been used for other issues such as debt repayments. Therefore, some interviewees in the Rhine-Hunsrück-district doubt about the realisation of the formulated ´integration goals´, because the program is not backed up with enough money.

„The Federal Republic of Germany has said in 2016 [..]: we must provide money for the integration work on the ground. These are the´ integration millions´ (ultimately it was billions) that were distributed to the individual federal states [..] Rhineland-Palatinate has dutifully forwarded half of the money to the cities and counties, but without clear indication. [..] Then it was like this: There are some districts [..] where half is left at the county level. And the other half is distributed according to a certain key to the places where refugees have been accommodated [..] You can go there and say: Here, I want to create an initiative. That costs 15,000 euros. [..] And then you get the money, so, this is Paradise [..] But there are also places [..] that are highly indebted. Then the higher authority (in our case the ADD, General Directorate of Internal Affairs) says: you have to put the money into debt repayment, you can't use it for refugee work. That is even legal. Because if money is not earmarked for a specific purpose, then you first have to see that you can get the budget back on track [..] The Rhine-Hunsrück district is now the second or third richest district in Rhineland-Palatinate. We had a district administrator who saved and saved and saved [..] that's why we are in such a good position. We have many industrial settlements and good companies with a lot of jobs. We are desperately looking for workers, which is of course also very good for refugees. But we were too stingy to spend even one euro on integration work. Or to think about where to put the people [..] We now have a huge housing shortage and we have major infrastructure problems because we have poor public transport. So, there is a lot to do [..]" (RLP_FR_ Transcript)

To estimate how far these integrations programs, have social effects we try to find relevant literature which however hardly exists. Filsinger and Gesemann (2018: 4-5) state that „it has only been possible to make limited statements about the effects and effectiveness (including unintended consequences) of municipal integration policies and concepts, especially since impact analyses represent a considerable challenge in view of the large number of governmental and non-governmental actors, the integration of municipalities in a multi-level system with diverse program and project funding. It can be reasonably assumed that the anchoring of a binding strategic integration management as well as the successful formation of structures and networks in relation to the many different actors can be expected to make integration concepts effective in the medium and long term, although the limited potential for action and control of municipalities must be kept in mind."

Figure 5 Election results of the last county elections in Rhine-Hunsrück district, 2021)*

Landtagswahl 2021

Endgültiges Ergebnis

Wahlkreisstimmen in %

SPD	CDU	AfD	FDP	GRÜNE	LINKE	FW	Sonst.
29,5	35,2	7,2	7,7	9,3	0,4	9,1	1,7
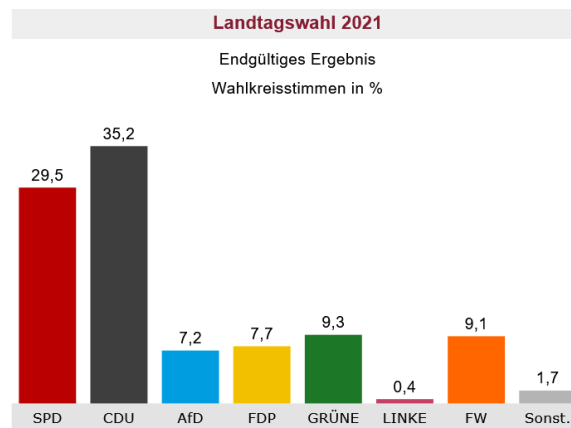
*) ´FW´ means ´Freie Wähler´ (free voters): in order to understand who are these ´free voters´ have a look at this article: https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/lexika/handwoerterbuch-politisches-system/202024/freie-waehler/. Source, accessed on 27 Oct. 2022: https://www.wahlen.rlp.de/de/ltw/wahlen/2021//ergebnisse/0001400000000.html

In addition, our empirical data illustrate that most of the interviewees who work for non-profit organisations in the Altenburg district as well as in the Rhine-Hunsrück district are critical towards the perception of ´integration´ which is propagated in the governmental integration programs. In this vein, an interviewee of a non-profit organisation in the Altenburg district pleas for another view on migrants, namely migrants as human beings who enrich the economic field and society rather than reducing them on the duty to fulfil labour shortage:

"[For example, the field of action] labour market: in general, the projects always boil down to saying: how can we integrate these people into our labour market? They should learn German, they should get to know the structures, integrate themselves, etc. How about rethinking a little different and saying: Wait a minute, these people all bring something with them - and it's not only another type of cooking. It's art, culture, it's education, it's language. What if we thought away from language barriers and saying: Germany is an industrialized country, we produce for almost every industry. These people actually open the international market for us. Syrian people can work in relation to and with Syria. People still sell machines to Syria or Turkey, Russia or Ukraine or wherever. Address this diversity! You could train these people so that you can ... well, if I were an entrepreneur and I was working internationally or I was considering expanding internationally, my first target group would be these migrants. I would hire an Italian, a Turk, a German, a Syrian ... whatever, with different cultures into my company and I would say: Okay, you are now responsible for the Italian market. You're responsible for the American market. And we overlook that, though. Because we always repeat and say German, German, German. Yes, of course German. But you can't learn German overnight. You can't." (RLP_MB_Transcript)

In line with Çaĝlar and Glick-Schillers (2011), he pleas for the recognition of migrants as individuals with an own agency, capabilities, social and global connections. In this sense they are ´scale-makers´: „Migrants become scale makers as they labour, produce wealth, raise families, and create and reproduce social institutions, thereby they contributing to the economic, social and cultural, and political life of their cities" (ibid. 2011:11). The narration of an interviewee in the Altenburg district goes in the same direction:

„Of course, I see it as a huge chance to say: „These people have managed to escape. They have managed the long way from their home country from such a precarious situation here to us!" That means that there [..] is somehow a survivability, a very blatant survivability. Also, their resourcefulness to look: „Where are there paths where there are actually no paths at all?" We can learn a lot from that. And that helps again and again in integrating people into the labour market. Sometimes I think: „As Germans, we don't necessarily have this kind of cleverness. We think in terms of the system." And [the migrant] can just go somewhere and it somehow works out! You don't even know how (laughs). That's a potential. Moreover, I have another potential in mind: [..] these networks that [the migrants] have, among themselves, often this strong connection or the [..] sense of duty to help each other, must help each other. That is, of course, a huge potential. Because then integration can also flow quite differently and the need for support. For example, [the fact that] if the [migrants] want to start their own business, even if they shouldn't have any money at all, but they borrow some money from some friends, from somewhere. Then I pay that back or not. And that is also a great potential." (AL_D_Transcript)

5.2   Economic viability and sustainable revitalization strategies

Coming back again to the second research question, how urban policies are linked to processes of revitalization and migration, it becomes clear, that **sustainability** plays a role in the making of (new) policies. An interviewee of a non-profit association in **Rhine-Hunsrück district** narrates:

„Well, we are actually also an extremely successful district. In fact, we were once, for example, Europe-wide or nationwide, called energy municipality of the decade. So, by ecological policies elaborated by the district administrator we are very well positioned. We produce far more electricity than we need. And we have a lot of wind turbines, which again causes a lot of controversy among the people. Okay, we are pioneers there, for example, our waste management works well and produces its own energy. So, they really do super good things." (RLP_FR_ Transcript)

In fact, this citation refers to the official political program, called *climate protection concept*[23]*,* that was adopted ten years ago, in 2011. „The goal is to develop the local energy resources, consisting of biomass, sun and wind, to such an extent that the total energy consumption can be reduced by 40% by 2050. Buildings will be renovated so that the energy demand is halved. With the help of this concept, the consumption of fossil energy is to be reduced overall. These ecological policies are based on scientific research on the ´municipal value creation from renewable energies". This was investigated by the Institute for Ecological Economic Development (IÖW) in cooperation with the Centre for Renewable Energies (ZEE) at the Albert-Ludwig University in Freiburg. Subsequently, the Agency for Renewable Energies (AEE) prepared an elaboration on the value creation in the Rhine-Hunsrück district.[24]

Policy programs, dealing with the subject of climate change, have also been developed by the **Altenburg district**. Although sustainable development policy programs here are still in their infancy, it is remarkable that in Altenburg they have been organized intersectoral from the beginning. Under the motto ´Progressive

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[23] https://www.kreis-sim.de/Klimaschutz/Ziele-Motto-und-Konzept/
[24] cited and sligthly change from: https://www.kreis-sim.de/Klimaschutz/Ziele-Motto-und-Konzept/Regionale-Wertsch%C3%B6pfung/

Rural Area - Altenburger Land´[25]. A strategic regional development concept (SREK) is being drawn up as a basis for action for sustainable structural change. The concept is to be developed in cooperation with regional and supraregional actors from institutions, administration and politics and from civil society by December 2023. It is also conceived as serving as a basis for action for the realization of measures that will contribute to the reduction of the consumption of fossil energy resources. This pilot project is one of 18 projects selected within the funding measure ´Active Regional Development´ as part of the federal program ´Region gestalten´ [26] and is funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, for Construction and Home Affairs in cooperation with the Federal Institute for Research on Construction, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development. Before this program has been started, some interviewees emphasized already the importance of an inclusive, intersectoral policy approach to sustainable development. In this vein, an actor of the regional government pleas for the consideration of cultural offers for all age and social groups, a sustainable agriculture, vocational and education programs for migrants as part of a (social) sustainability.

„A question that we are discussing very intensively in the district, also in the context of the restructuring [from fossil to sustainable resources] is [..] What can be the future of the county? What can we actually score with? And what is realistic? [..] There is an association here called association of the support of farmers [..] where people have joined together who have farms [..] really large farms with a lot of land and who say: „it can no longer be that we practice conventional agriculture. That can't be the future, ecologically or economically." What strategies are there to maintain these farms with a shrinking population. What can we do? [..] And that's where I see a lot of people saying, hey [..] we need to actually think innovatively, we need to think sustainably. We need a concept of how to generate energy locally, for example. How can you store energy on site? What kind of cultivation of the land is promising for the future? I would say that bioextensive agriculture is the classic keyword here. There are actually players who are very active in this area." (AL_ZW_Transcript)

Within the public and political discussion on sustainability in the two research areas, the issue of qualified and social secured jobs for migrants but also in general has very often been mentioned.

"[..] in the meat industry, for example [..] nothing is developing there. And these are our points of reference, where we have to say: „Man, what we actually need in the region are high-quality jobs!" It's nice that there are [meat] industries here [..] There will always be people who have to work in this sector! Because it is simply the level that suits them. That's okay, too. But what we need as well are jobs for qualified people for higher educated people. [..] So, this is related to the question: What does society choose? If it wants to develop sustainably and socially sustainable - which is not yet certain - then it would make sense to develop the migrants in this direction as well [..] But independently of this, it is of course important [..] to make it clear again, also for the migrants, that there is a primacy of education. [..] What brings Germany forward is not the fast job, but the qualitatively good job. And that is independent, I would say, of the sector: whether it's a locksmith or an organic farmer is completely irrelevant. The point is to create this understanding: it's about high-quality work, that's what makes the German labour market." (AL_ZW_Transcript)

In sum, in the Altenburg district and the Rhine-Hunsrück district, the narration of immigration from abroad as a positive social development plays almost no role in urban (re)development plans, let alone that these

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[25] see for detailed information, also of the planned participation process: https://www.altenburgerland.de/de/themen-a-bis-z/strukturwandel and the pdf-documents in this website

[26] https://www.bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/DE/forschung/programme/region-gestalten/region-gestalten-node.html

issues have been explicitly propagated. According to the interviewees, the participation of migrants in the primary, well-paid labour market is, so far, only the case for a few persons. Our assessment is that migrants tend to (have to) work in poorly paid service areas, in which they can hardly develop a perspective or job carriers. These jobs do not offer further training opportunities or future prospects.

During our fieldwork, we visit network meetings of organizations that deal with the issue of the shortage of skilled workers, the hurdles to the recognition of foreign degrees and training were described as high. This is particularly difficult for small craft enterprises. In addition, language barriers and so-called ´cultural´ differences between established and employees with a migrant background hinder the hiring or continued employment of immigrants. In addition, long asylum procedures prevent entry into the labour market. If migrants do not have a permanent residence, they need a permit to work, which is issued by the foreigner's registration office (*Ausländerbehörde*). At the same time, however, at the national level as well as at the district levels, programs have been developed to promote ´integration´ for decades. By so doing, Rhineland-Palatinate as well as Thuringia have launched integration policies and programs. But, following some interviewees, these integration programs are not sufficiently backed by financing packages.

6. Welcoming initiatives and social wellbeing in Altenburg district and Rhine-Hunsrück district

In this chapter, the research question: *Which aspects are related to social wellbeing from the viewpoint of the migrants themselves and of actors of welcoming initiatives?* take the centre stage. Although social wellbeing was already defined as an aspect of health by the WHO in 1946, it has received increased attention in social scientific research, particularly in recent decades. Health is more than the absence of disease: it is a „state of complete physical, mental and social well-being"[27]. After Keyes (1998) demonstrated the relationship between health and social dimensions - such as social recognition, social ties, and actual experienced participation - other studies followed with similar findings and conceptual extensions. Social wellbeing is a process in which the interrelation between life situation and personality traits is significant (Keyes & Lopes 2002). In the WS research project it is argued, that life situation constituted by employment and income situation, housing, health, education, social acknowledgement and the opportunity to take part in social interaction and gatherings without being discriminated. Moreover, we suggest that social wellbeing depends on type and amount of public investment in places and neighbourhoods where migrants live (WS project WP 1 Masterscript).

From the analysis of the group discussions and the interviews with the migrants it emerges that they attach their social wellbeing to various aspects. Among others, these include indeed access to work in general and qualified employment, which is meaningful and self-fulfilling. Work as a place of social recognition and to make a living independent of social benefits is very important to all the persons interviewed. In the same breath, however, they repeatedly mention the difficulties of finding a job, which is not precarious, or getting invited to job interviews. Here, they also often speak of hidden or open discrimination and exclusion: sometimes in the workplace, often in public spaces like supermarkets or streets. In contrast, there are places where people feel safe and accepted. These welcoming spaces, however, are often spaces created by themselves (their friends and families) or/and welcoming initiatives. In some cases, migrants create their own spaces with self-generated resources and efforts.

6.1 Social wellbeing, displacement and emplacement by employment

The importance of work in migrants´ lives and for their social wellbeing is evident from this quote from a person who live and work in the Altenburg district:

„Work is very important. So, if we can work, then you can definitely make a home here [..]. The topic of work, the topic of equality... so, that everyone here is equal. Doesn´t matter whether it´s headscarves, Muslims, Germans or migrants. If that [..] is treated equally, you also feel that way. So it plays a big role that I feel not less than the people here. But when I go to my job centre, to the police, there have been many cases where they say, „well okay, this is a German", [..] and against a German you have no chance to report him. Although the law actually doesn´t make a difference between Germans and migrants. There are ... I personally know many people who say, „Stop it." (AL_GR_Transcript)

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[27] see Röhrle: https://leitbegriffe.bzga.de/alphabetisches-verzeichnis/wohlbefinden-well-being/

The longing for having a good job as well as being perceived and treated as equal has been mentioned by almost every migrant, who took part our groups discussions in the Altenburg as well as Rhine-Hunsrück district. In this vein, an interviewee, who has resided a few years in the Rhine-Hunsrück district, told us:

„So, what I need? I need work, I need money, I can find through work. [..] But how [..] am I supposed to spend money? If I want to go to a big city, I always must take a bus somehow back and forth [..] so when I work [is important] where I can work. And save money that way. Later, kind of build a house. Yeah, everybody has a goal." (RLP_GR_Transcript)

Another person narrates, "[I] have been living here in Germany for almost eight years. Now, I work as an advisor at a [regional government]. Fortunately, I have found a good job [..] No, I have not done any training here. I studied in Iran and I had my diploma recognized here. It took a year and a half, but it was recognized." (RLP_GR_Transcript)

The majority of migrants interviewed in Rhine-Hunsrück district stated that they had undergone further vocational training next to their language courses, the last recent years.

„I took a German course, then I did an apprenticeship and now I work in [Rhine-Hunsrück district]. This is the area where I live, this is where I arrived and this is where I still am. And that's what's going on so far. [..] I did an apprenticeship in electronics for industrial engineering, so not in the direction of buildings, but machines and automation. Yes. [..] I want to ... I don't know yet, I can't say whether I'll stay or whether I'll go, but that will come up. But so far, I don't plan to move anywhere else." (RLP_GR_Transcript)

Our discussions with migrants also illustrate that men have more chance to get and finish an education than women. Young families often choose to have at least the man's turn first to get an education or go looking for work as this quotation shows:

„I have been in Germany for four years. Before that, I lived in Greece for two years. Now I live here with my family. I have three daughters, yes. Now my husband is doing language course, integration course and [..] I wait my husband finished and the baby is grown and then I do an education." (RLP_GR_Transcript)

Especially in the rural areas of the Altenburg district and Rhine-Hunsrück district, the access to employment is closely related to the actual accessibility of schools, firms or services. Most interviewed migrants rely on public transportation and this leads to problems, or at least to an additional burden. People living in the Rhine-Hunsrück district – which is even more rural then the Altenburg district – are highly affected by this.

„I have been here for three years and I am now doing an apprenticeship [..]. I live in [Rhine-Hunsrück district] and I like it because my brother had lived there. Then I got to know this [gathering space] and that helped me a lot. At that time, I started to learn German. That was a good help and now I continue. Four months ago, I got my driver´s license and I bought a car, small car. Now everything is good. [..] My training starts at six in the morning and if I didn´t have a car I would have to go by bus. Then I would have to get on the bus at four thirty and wait on the street for an hour in between. That doesn't work at all... didn't work out well. But now I don't have a problem." (RLP_GR_Transcript)

In addition to the positive fact that many migrants, we have spoken in both districts, have succeed in obtaining an apprenticeship position, they told us about experiences of discrimination, which seems to be

most obvious during the process of finding a (qualified) job.

„As a foreigner, I can't go directly to a company and submit an application or something. [..] And in general, it's always very difficult here, because the companies always take Germans first, then European people and then, if they need more people or something, they take foreigners last. That's usually a big problem for us, too. We want to work in Germany or something, but we don't always have many opportunities." (AL_GR_Transcript)

Accompanied by someone from a welcoming initiative, one interviewee applied to a company, which was looking for several employees and explicitly stated that nationality was irrelevant.

„It said in the newspaper: we are looking for [several] employees [..] no matter what nationality [..] So, I said, well, I'll go together with [name]. I called and made an appointment and then the person - he was still very young - said something like this: „I don't want any foreigners". I answer, „But I am a foreigner." I would have liked to throw something in [his] face, but of course I couldn't do that. I got up and walked back and forth across the room. [..] I got so upset, because really, just Nazis like that [..] Then I said to him: [..] „You can keep making as many ads in the newspaper or on the Internet [as you want], you won't find anyone for your ideal model [..]." They have a clear idea: they want this, this, and this, and in the end, there is a shortage of skilled workers." (AL_GR_Transcript)

Besides the experience of discrimination, people are disrespected in many situations in everyday life. Three persons in a group discussion described the following:

I 1: „No. Rather not. It does happen that people ask: Where did you come from, how did you get here, this and that". And then I keep it a bit [at a distance] so that it doesn't come to these topics. I do a little bit of topic change there, or whatever."
I 2: „Okay. That happened a little bit when I bought a car, for example. They [in my town] then asked me: why can you afford a car? Why? I had work, I had money, I buy. „You're from Africa." Yes, and? Yes, from Africa, it can't be that someone buys a car. All good. Yes. You can change the subject. Or just walk in Germany."
I 3: "[..] most people have such an idea about us, so ... they think that I get social welfare [..] but I am a taxpayer here, like everyone else. If someone asks me where I come from and has such an idea in their head, then ... that makes me mad." (RLP_GR_Transcript)

This narration is added by someone who made a bad experience with actors of the German governments: „But the authorities [..] I think we can't arrive at all because we have so many problems [..] you are also discriminated against because of the colour of your skin or where you come from [..]. But to experience that from the state side [..] is [..] really bad. I can also give an example: a case worker from the regional government once said to me: „You are a small refugee and I am the boss here. And you do everything I tell you to do." [..] I don't think people like that should work there at all. Who can't deal with people." (RLP_GR_Transcript)

Some interviewees in Altenburg made similar experiences. A young Muslima argues, that she had no access to a job as hairdresser because of her headscarf: „Altenburg has not been positive for me so far. Because of my headscarf, I didn't have so many chances. I'm now doing a specialized baccalaureate in Leipzig. Here, I have not found this direction. There is, I think, only the normal baccalaureate. We have been in Germany

for eight years now. I have done several internships here: at the hairdresser's, at a dressmaker's, in a kindergarten, quite a few. [..] My first idea was to become a hairdresser. But because of my headscarf I couldn't continue working here in Germany. Overall. Yes, I also applied in Leipzig and other cities, but it didn't work out. That's why I always had to look somewhere else. I'm not the kind of person who just sits down and says: No, everyone doesn't want you because of your headscarf. No. I am a person who [..] always wants to try and go further. Because I also have a good brother in my life." (AL_GR_Transcript).

Actors who work for welcoming initiatives often feel powerless to change migrant's life situation. However, in numerous cases they manage to develop coping strategies together with migrants, support them during the asylum procedure or persuade firms they know well to hire non-EU migrants. This is the case in both districts, as the citations below illustrate.

„I have [supported] an EU-woman from Romania. Ten times this woman applied at company [name], but it did not work. An acquaintance of mine works there and I called her and then she said: okay, when you know her, bring her and we'll try it for a week. And she works there until today. When she needs holidays or something, she gets it right away. And that's [because she] loads three tons [name] a day alone, you must load [things] into some containers and you have to be so fast - back and forth - and she's standing there and she can do it, but nobody else can do it. Yes? A really hardworking employee can only manage two or two and a half tons [a day]. And she: three tons a day, yeah, yeah, and she says: but I don't know German, I just say hello and bye." (Al_GR_Transcript)

„But of course, there are also success models. The people who do an apprenticeship. So, they are also well off and can [afford] an apartment. A lot of people get their driver's license here, because it's a rural area. I think that's different in some cities. But I'm worried, especially about the people I accompanied through the asylum process five years ago. They are now very much in their clique with fellow countrymen. I mean, some of them have married. Somali women in particular who did follow [their husbands later] started families. Then they withdraw quite a bit and [have] too few opportunities to practice the German language in everyday life. And I think that's a great pity. Some of them know less German now than they did five years ago". (RLP_FR_Transcript)

6.2 Social wellbeing and political strategies against discrimination

The problem of discrimination is an ongoing and controversial discussed issue throughout Germany and thus also in Altenburg and Rhine-Hunsrück districts. The German federal government responds with the program ´Live Democracy!´ (*Demokratie leben!*) (Box 7).

Box 7. Goals and political action fields of the federal program Live Democracy!

The program aims to strengthen „the understanding of democracy, democratic education and social cohesion. The projects funded focus on fundamental principles such as equality, the rule of law, the protection of human rights and social participation in political processes. In particular, children, adolescents and young adults are supported in exercising their rights of participation and co-determination." The program aims to „develop solutions to enable all people in Germany to live

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peacefully and without discrimination, regardless of their origin, religion or sexual orientation. For this reason, the funded projects deal with selected forms of group-based misanthropy as well as multiple discrimination and support the recognition and appreciation of diversity. The aim is for our society to see diversity as an opportunity and to deal constructively with the associated contradictions and conflicts. In addition, the German government wants to „prevent the emergence of anti-democratic and anti-human attitudes as well as extremist attitudes and [prevent] radicalization processes at an early stage. This includes not only right-wing extremism but also Islamist extremism and left-wing extremism.")*

The program defines four areas of action at three government levels:

1. The level of municipality and district level: „The federal program supports cities, districts and municipal associations in the Partnerships for Democracy. These are local and regional alliances that develop appropriate strategies for the specific situation on the ground - participation-oriented and sustainable."

2. On state level: „In each federal state, „Live Democracy!" promotes the work of a state democracy centre. The state democracy centres bundle the measures for strengthening democracy and diversity in the respective state, network all relevant actors and coordinate the offers of mobile counselling, victim and affected person counselling as well as distancing and exit counselling on site. The state democracy centres were established in close cooperation with the state governments."

3. On national state level: „In the federal state area of action, competencies are pooled and cooperation between civil society organizations is strengthened nationwide. Fourteen competence centres and networks bring together and further develop expertise from all thematic areas of the federal program. They organize professional events and training measures and promote the development of professional standards."

4. On project level: „More than 160 model projects develop and test innovative approaches to promoting democracy, shaping diversity and preventing extremism. They address important questions and problems in our society, are implemented in an impact-oriented manner and are designed to be participatory. After successful testing, the methods and materials they develop are to be used in the pedagogical practice of child and youth welfare as well as in other regular structures. The model projects are located in the three fields of action „promoting democracy", „shaping diversity" and „preventing extremism"."

)* Cited and translated (deepl.com) this website: https://www.demokratie-leben.de/das-programm/ueber-demokratie-leben#c216
)** Cited and translated (deepl.com) from this website: https://www.demokratie-leben.de/das-programm/ueber-demokratie-leben#c99

One of the 160 model projects have been realised in the **Altenburg district**. There the idea has been that the so-called ´local partnership´ fund i.e. distributes the money from the federal government to local or regional projects which: 1) deal with local history and the history of political education in the Altenburg district, 2) want to promote an inclusive society and 3) provide information and education about undemocratic tendencies and thus, work for social integration through special appreciation and strengthening of civil society[28]. The means of strengthening democratic thinking in the region are not to just funding individual projects over a period of three to five years. According to an interviewee working

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[28] See for more information in detail: https://www.lap-altenburgerland.de/

with this local partnership, it is particularly important to network with various organizations on a permanent basis and to discuss the issue of discrimination publicly again and again. The network consists, among others, of various welcoming initiatives, but also representatives of churches, social welfare organizations, sports clubs and children's and youth associations.

Figure 6 Model project in the Altenburg district funded by the federal funding program ´Live Democracy! ´

)* https://www.lap-altenburgerland.de/

6.3 Social wellbeing and welcoming initiatives´ contribution to emplacement

The empirical data illustrate that some interviewees are not only excluded from the labour market due to a lack of qualifications or language skills. There are numerous situations, in which they encounter prejudices. Particularly, people from Eritrea and Somalia and women who wear a headscarf must live with everyday insults and humiliations they experience in public places like supermarkets, streets or playing grounds, but also in the social services offices of governments as well as in their hard-won jobs. In many cases, social situations of discrimination were described in passing – and especially after the recording tape was turned off. Being (continuously) discriminated in everyday life is a painful experience that only few, and certainly not those affected themselves, like to talk about.

At the same time, the migrants we have spoken keep on going and try to take advantage of the opportunity structures in place. In doing so, they are supported by welcoming initiatives that act as intermediaries, as guarantors and everyday supporters. And despite the widespread latent rejection or publicly visible prejudices against non-EU migrants, some of them succeed in gaining access to work and were able to appreciate the chances they get and moreover, their living in small communities and rural places.

„It's true that the people who arrive have it [..] a little easier. That comes from above, from the state. As long as people don't get a residence permit or recognition first, then there are problems. [But after that] it starts. Then people say: okay, you can work, you have recognition, a residence permit, and then people settle down a little bit and then [you] move on. Then it starts. In the countryside, I think it's easier to integrate if you want to and to have contacts, to learn German. Here, for example, I know people who were here and then had moved away and they miss that there is [this meeting place] here, for example. They don't find anyone to help them when they have problems [..] That's why for integration, in my opinion, it's better in the country. And the other thing, how it goes on is just normal like with everybody. Like with everybody". (RLP_GR_Transcript)

Another interviewee of the same group discussion appreciates meeting places very much:

"[This meeting place] actually plays a big role, especially internationally [..] That gives really good [..] if you are completely new here, then you have contacts to Germans and to German society. And that definitely helps. You learn. [..] All the German courses that are [organized] on a voluntary basis, they help really well. [..] I met a lot of people here and I found my first job through [this welcoming initiative]. Because there was [..] a politician [..] who approached me here [at the meeting place] [..] through this contact I got a job. That really plays a role. [..] If people want to stay here, I can understand that, because another big society [in a big city] needs more courage and stuff like that. [..] Here you are welcome, everybody is there, everybody, volunteers and everything. In big cities you're on your own, nobody can ... comes to you and says to you, „okay, do you need anything?" That's what's missing in the big cities and here it's much better." (RLP_GR_Transcript)

An actor of a welcoming initiative has realised the (above mentioned) meeting place together with church members and volunteers supported by the local government. This interviewee of a non-profit association described the development and the political and social aims of this meeting place as follows:

„We had a demo against the AfD two years ago and afterwards a few people [..] met. From the church, majors and so on. And one point was raised, namely that there are too few such ´third places´: places where you can meet on neutral ground low-threshold. And especially now in Corona times that is of course extremely so. [..] I mean, of course there are mosques here in the district where people might meet. But otherwise you don't catch them [migrants] at all. And the people who haven't managed to arrive in a neighbourhood where you meet neighbours regularly or by chance or already have German friends or friends from other nations - yes, they are lonely. I am convinced of that."
[..]
„Our [meeting place] should be a part in the community where all people get together. A meeting place for everyone. And to do that, we must reposition ourselves, and fortunately [name of the place] is very open to that. During the winter, we developed this idea further, together with an [external] mediator and came to the conclusion that [..] the local population doesn't like to go in there [at this specific place]. Then they said, we'll try to achieve synergy effects and actually move it [to another place within the village]. There is a big garden where you can do a lot with children. And because [this new place] is not so preloaded for people [..] And then we looked for [new] project partners: for example, the community library and so, practically [our meeting place] is now also a reading café. There was funding for that, too. Then there was another great thing: [there is a funded project in Rhineland-Palatinate] called Kita Plus (*Kindergarten plus*). There is state subsidy for the expansion of day care work with children and youth in social areas. And the colleague

who has the job here came and [..] said: „I can also use [your meeting place] to work with parents and children outside of kindergarten hours. [..] And he also has a budget. That's super great.” (RLP_FR_Transcript)

In addition to the concentration and mix of activities and organizations, which are essential for the survival of such places of encounter, it really matters if that encounters whether or not can take place on 'neutral' ground. Neutral in the sense that a place is not associated with a political party, a certain parish community or a particular association. Especially in rural areas, these places are rare, since meetings usually take place either at home or are organized by associations. The welcoming initiatives in the Altenburg district have realised several places of encounter on neutral ground, like former vacant buildings, e.g. in the city of Altenburg. Sometimes, buildings or places were even prepared together.

„We have a large meeting place, but [..] I also need a small room of my own where I can talk to someone in peace. Then we got - through different networks - old windows and people restored them together, made a design and built a glass box out of these old windows for me to use as an office in our event space. [..] So [we] just grab people by the things they can. With this building, for example, it was quite clear that I know someone who was a carpenter or [he] knows someone who is a good structural engineer and then I grab them with their strengths and then do something practical. What goes well, you do more and what doesn't go well, you leave [..] The Germans knew, „Yes, they are also migrants," but we didn't overemphasize that, because that's not the issue. It was about the fact that we have a common task, which perhaps makes a different sense for everyone: for the migrants, the sense was not to sit at home and to go crazy there, rather that they can do something for a change, see with their hand power that they create something; that they can show their potential. We take beautiful photos and they can also show that in an application. Because they don't have any training, they don't have a certificate, but I can put a picture with it and say, „You can see here what he can do." And [the migrants] have the opportunity to come into contact with Germans and also to simply speak German, which they usually lack in their normal everyday lives. And the [German] people from the day group, they don't have to sit in the factory, where they sit every day and where they do things that perhaps don't make much sense to them or such mindless repetitive work. Instead, they have a real project where others also go. They are allowed, I would say, to get out sometimes. [..] Maybe it's also something special for them. And the [fact] that in the end there are migrants from whom they actually think that they suck doesn't matter anymore, because the other thing [that you built something together] is more important." (AL_F_Transcript)

Another welcoming initiative in the Altenburg district founded an association and hired some rooms to create a meeting place for their members. Here, no public funds were requested. They argued that they want to create a meeting place for everyone who has immigrated to the place.

„We have ... that's really great [..] two men [rebuilt] all this by themselves and here we talk about volunteering and donations. So, we don't have anybody who said: here you have ten thousand euros [..] Everybody pays a part: ten euros, twenty euros, fifty euros [..] because we have a certain goal [..] Our goal is [..] to reduce prejudice [against Muslim people], actively here in [this place]. For example, we want that no matter where someone comes from, they will be offered an apartment [..]. And we also want to introduce ourselves [..]. We don't want that these organizations come to us and say "the Muslims want a prayer room because they pray ten times a day." Thank you! But we don't pray ten times a day and we can introduce ourselves and say: „Our problem is this and this and we don't talk about migrants at all, [we are] Germans now and done! And that's why we want to draw integration ourselves with this association for example [..]: "Say, we think

integration is this and that and so on." We want to work through these goals with all [organizations] [..] and through our events, like private lessons for pupils [..] or a youth centre. [..] We also have the religious part, I say, the prayer room, where people can pray. And that's an important point where you say there's a clear message here [..] so we don't have a closed door where you say what are people doing in here? You can just open the door, pray along or on Friday, for example, we have consultation hours: the first time in Arabic, then it becomes German. And the person who has questions can ask his question. We also have, as I said, our youth meetings, because the young people are definitely a part of this society and of us. Young people meet and discuss the difficulties here in [name of the place]." (AL_GR_Transcript).

Welcoming initiatives in the Altenburg district and Rhine-Hunsrück district realize and maintain meeting places and, by so doing, they enable social interaction between migrants themselves and between migrants and long-term residents on a regular basis. Moreover, actors of welcoming initiatives go to meet migrants and long-term residents within their neighbourhoods. There, they also try to boost encounters and activities for everyone. In this vein, an actor of a non-profit association/welcoming initiative recounts:

„People are connected in their neighbourhood [..] and when others show up there ... and all of a sudden, out of the 50 vacant apartments, people from 30 new nations are sitting in 40 apartments [..] of course people notice this. If there is no one there whom I can ask what that is about and where they come from [..] then the people are frustrated. That's why they more or less wait for someone to show up who they can ask something [..] People think you're from the city. They think you're a politician. They think you're the concierge or the landlord or someone else. They don't really care, basically. They have a really long list anyway, because that's usually residential areas that are a little bit neglected. And they just want to tell them that – in the hope that there will be a change – that will bring something positive for them. They have frustration because in their perception [it's said], „Now all these new people are coming here and all of a sudden something is being done here and we've been sitting here for 30 years and no one has taken an interest in us." Or simply, because they might also become a bit lonely over time. So, there are also a lot of people who just want to chat a bit and are happy when someone takes an interest in how it used to be in the GDR and what they lost. There are also many older [residents]. [..] When the weather is nice, we do something outside so that people can see: „Okay, the refugees, they care, they can apparently talk, because they know that we don't know Arabic and Persian." So, they see: „Yeah ok, [welcoming initiatives] talk to them. They're not afraid." [We have] a role model function and when they see that I walk across the street and the refugees come to me from all corners [..] with their slips of paper [where questions are written on]. And at some point, a German also comes and has a slip of paper like this and asks, „What is this?" And then I can give him the same answer. Then the feeling comes up a bit: In many things, we are actually all in the same boat. That's the wish, the ulterior motive with which we try to do it and do a lot outside, so that they can see: Okay, the [migrants] don't get everything here as a gift or anything else, but they come and the [welcoming initiatives] sort things out." (AL_F_Transcript).

Additionally, new ideas are developed according to needs in the field: „And then there are cases where you say you need several people. In Thuringia, for example, we started a program called Instead-Education. We simply noticed that many refugees come here who have no school-leaving qualifications and no previous education. Not only in the area of language, but also in the area of school [as an educational system]. And we worked out something with the Thuringian ministries. The project was actually started a few years ago [in order] to learn learning skills in the first place. And the basics of mathematics or social studies: learning to learn is actually the most important point. [..] Sure, for state programs you need a certain number [of people who need it]." (AL_D_Transcript)

Next to this variety of activities which are illustrated by the quotations, the field of support of welcoming initiatives is broad. Professionals and volunteers (who are members of welcoming initiatives or who are related to schools), arrange language courses, joint people to doctors, governmental institutions or organize leisure activities.

If we look at all their contributions, it is evident that they not only provide access to work, education, health and housing, but also promote self-determination and empowerment. To achieve this, they use their local knowledge and tap into social networks. At the same time, their social networks grow through working with migrants and migrants respectively expand their social networks when they set up own welcoming initiatives. However, the empirical material also illustrates that (too) much time goes into the struggle for legal and civic recognition of diversity, as will be clarified in the next paragraph.

6.4 Welcoming initiatives´ efforts for social change

The social practices of welcoming initiatives are characterized by a main paradox in the German context: there is a contradiction between a generous promotion of integration, on the one hand, and rigid asylum and residence laws on the other. Therefore, they are continuously forced to mediate between rigid laws (asylum laws) and living conditions (human rights). The asylum law and residence act deepen social inequality and categorize people into a social group of those, who have a right to stay and work, and a group of those, who are only tolerated. This distinction complicates the work of the welcoming initiatives. Following many welcoming initiatives this categorisation of people hinders the process of emplacement. To understand their everyday struggle in detail, it is necessary to realise that the German residence act (*Aufenthaltsgesetz*) „regulates the conditions under which persons who do not have German citizenship may enter Germany and reside here. A distinction must be made between EU nationals [..] and so-called third-country nationals (*Drittstaatangehörige*): Persons who do not come from an EU country or from the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland. Third-country nationals generally require a residence title to enter and stay in Germany[29]. Residence titles, such as the visa for family reunification, the residence permit for studying or because of refugee recognition [..] are issued for a specific purpose and for a limited period. These [residence titles] are to be distinguished from the **residence permit** and the **toleration** *(Duldung),* which are **not residence titles**. The residence permit grants asylum seekers a right of residence only for the duration of the asylum procedure. In contrast, tolerated residence is not legal (but also not punishable). Tolerated persons remain obliged to leave the country, but deportation cannot be carried out due to an obstacle to deportation, such as illness or lack of a passport."[30]

In general, **asylum seekers** have only **legal access to labour market** „after three months for asylum seekers who are not obliged to live in a reception centre, after six months asylum seekers with minor children and after nine months for asylum seekers without minor children (even if they are obliged to live in a reception centre). **Tolerated persons** have only access to the labour market after six months if they are obliged to live in the reception facility, otherwise after three months. Persons have no access to the labour market 1) during the first three months of residence, 2) for the period of stay in an initial reception facility (§§ 47 and 61 of the Asylum Act). **Not allowed to work** are asylum seekers whose asylum proceedings have been rejected as manifestly unfounded or inadmissible and no suspensive effect of the action has been

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[29] In this report the non-EU migrants are synonym with the so-called ´third-country nationals´
[30] Quote: cited and translated with deepl.com: https://www.asyl.net/themen/aufenthaltsrecht/aufenthaltstitel

ordered, and for tolerated persons who are themselves responsible for the obstacle to deportation or who have violated their duty to cooperate in the removal of the obstacle to deportation and for foreigners from a safe country of origin (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ghana, Kosovo, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Senegal and Serbia) who have applied for asylum after August 31, 2015." [31]

Above these rules, the execution of these in practice means that "[a]sylum seekers and tolerated persons generally **require a work permit,** which is issued by the **local foreigners' authority** *(Ausländerbehörde)*. As a rule, the Federal Employment Agency (BA) must approve the employment. It checks the employment conditions, i.e. whether there are comparable working conditions with nationals (e.g. in terms of wage levels); this check also applies to temporary employment agencies. Foreigners with a toleration or residence permit can be employed in temporary employment relationships." (source: see footnote 31).

Dealing with these laws and legal requirements take up a huge amount of time for numerous actors working for welcoming initiatives: thus, trying to get the right papers for migrants and make work, education, residence, etc. possible. And within this process, many interviewees of welcoming initiatives argue that governmental actors (who work for e.g. the local foreigners´ authority) are not willing to use discretionary powers when it comes to creating prospects for staying or creating opportunity to participate in the labour market. An actor of a non-profit association in Rhine-Hunsrück district argues:

„Our district is contradictory. There is a funded project that promotes the prospects of staying [..] I wrote to the (politician) what about the realization of the prospects of staying if engineers can and want to stay here while his wife is to be deported? That does not fit together. Then I think: the (politician) would have had discretionary powers here [..] There are a lot of discretionary powers especially in the law on foreigners (*Ausländerrecht*), but it seems to me that these are always used to the disadvantage rather than to the benefit of the persons concerned" (RLP_FR_Transcript).

This experience has been shared by other actors of welcoming initiatives in the Altenburg district. They also plea for the use of margins of discretion:

„We have someone who has trained as a geriatric care assistant. [That is a] shortage occupation. But he is only a tolerated person. He [..] is almost done now, has the final exam and is not admitted to the final exam because the Toleration *(see status above)* is not considered proof of identity. Crazy. I think that's massively crazy. Because this is a profession with a shortage, he has been working in this field for two years and is now not allowed to take the final exam [..]. And then, of course, the first thing to do for us is to call around, call the training provider. Is there anything you can do? Calling the admissions office. Is there room for discretion? Now is actually the third stage, we must politically readjust and must try it through the Ministry of Education. [..] So [what we want to achieve is] that not only passport or ID card is valid as proof of identity, but also a Toleration. [..] So, it is really: the mistake lies in this case in the law itself! There really is a Thuringian law for ... that has a long name. [..] In a case like this, you can clearly see where the problem is. There really is a problem in this law. And that can be changed relatively easy [..] So, it is important for us as a host society, especially in a shortage occupation, that people get an admission for the final examination. If these people have already done the training here the whole time. It's not just a matter of them being allowed to start the training, but that they are allowed to complete the training [..] That was the reason to say: Well, that's absurd, and this absurdity has to be eliminated somehow. [..] [If we want to achieve

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[31] Quote: cited and translated with deepl.com: https://www.bmas.de/DE/Arbeit/Fachkraeftesicherung-und-Integration/Migration-und-Arbeit/Flucht-und-Aysl/arbeitsmarktzugang-fuer-fluechtlinge.html

integration], then there must be people who want to and who also want to use the leeway. Hence, it's clear that the foreigners authority also has the task of deporting people. But the question is: To what extent do they use their leeway to say: We'll keep the people there? That's always the case: Who wants to use the leeway? And that's what you have to find. Who can use leeway and who wants to use leeway? [..] I'm really glad that we now have a state government in Thuringia that really says: they want to. We notice in all three government parties that they are working on the issue and want to do so." (AL_D_Transcript)

An actor working for a governmental authority deals with the topic of discretion. This interviewee pleas also to use the margins of discretion, although it cannot be achieved outside the legal frameworks:

„That is precisely [..] the idea. Although one must also always be careful with the concept of discretion. This common term of discretion, is not the one you work within governmental authorities. Discretion also always means being bound by law. That means that we as the executive can only do (!) what the legislator allows us to do. And when we talk about discretion, it is as if discretion means that the legislator says you have three possibilities and now choose the variant that fits best for the individual case [..] But [..] here it's more a question of culture. It is about the question: how do I, as [governmental actor] read the law? Do I read the letters only or do I [ask myself]: What is the intention of the legislator? And is the intention of the legislator perhaps what we and the other actors also want, yes? And what possibilities do I find now? Is there perhaps an exception? For example, can I negotiate with the education authority and say: Dear school, could you waive compulsory education for this particular case for period X, or could you accept a private education provider [next to you] and say: compulsory education exists and what is done there is part of the compulsory lessons, just outsourced lessons; in the case of a practical learning day, for example. That would be a concrete case of saying: Man, it might be exciting for someone who doesn't get along with the school system if he could do some practical work, a little sawing, filing, drilling [during school hours]. I'll put it this way. You can't do that within schools [..] but maybe there is another educational institution that can. And now the question is: How do I get the education authority to say, without violating the legal requirements: Okay, that makes sense for the student, or maybe even for several students, and how do I get that neatly regulated within the framework of the legal possibilities? [..] But that only works if all partners meet regularly, so that a basic trust exists. Then you can find individual solutions." (AL_ZW_Transcript)

This citation illustrates what many other interviewees tell us: if welcoming initiative want to improve social wellbeing, relevant organisations must be build up and resilient networks with diverse actors, where not only trust is the cement, but also a similar idea of an open society, have to be maintained. Operating in a rural or small town can sometimes be an advantage, because social networks are ´thin´ in the sense, that people know each other personally (over longer period) and encounter each other in more than one social role. In both districts this advantage has been mentioned. .

Interviewer: „How does your work look like when it comes to motivating the host society to be open?"
Interviewee: „Of course, you have various options. On the one hand, it is [..] always good to formulate your own perspective within the network, which you have influence. [..] For me, that means in concrete terms that I always promote this idea in the various networks in the district and [..] at the state level [..] in general. [..] when a topic like this comes up, that you always strongly advocate for it and say: we as a district think it makes sense that because this and this [..] the second thing is, that I think about how I can promote something like this. For example, through discussions that I initiate, i.e. specialist meeting days, workshops on the subject, things like that. Yes, the project open, cosmopolitan community' is something like that, or [..] the topic of skilled worker immigration or [..] the topic of [our region as] a ´region of the future´: Where

do we see ourselves in ten years? These are quite classic instruments for me [..] and also to take up topics that are taking place in society; via the district council, via the committees, via various working groups, where quite different opinions clash. And then to say: [..] what does integration actually mean?"
[..]
„This is the advantage of a small district [..] here, everyone knows everyone. That means that when I do something in my [professional] function or am involved in an association or am out as a private person, there is not such a sharp distinction. In other words, there is a very intensive mix of what one would classically call ´civil society´ and ´established structures´. It's not so easy to separate them anyway, and when we talk about associations like [name], we actually have civil society". (AL_ZW_Transcript).

Based on the idea of being embedded trustful social networks, which is an important mean to act successfully as a welcoming initiative, some interviewees discuss with us steps which are necessary in the near future.

„We have to make sure that we take the next step. That is: let the places benefit from the fact, that there are such [meeting places]; that everyone gets something out of it. And some [initiatives] manage to do that [..] And [there] find a bit of advice, support, where you don't have to bring [someone] along, but where you find sociability or you can make new [friends] and so. That's something where we try to create incentives at the state level [..] It's not about honouring three volunteers once a year [..]. It's about structural promotion of civic engagement [..] and then, they go after our working meeting and decide: „We should do an event where associations introduce themselves". But that is nothing sustainable (!). We still think in terms of clubs, which no longer reflects reality. And I have a big problem making that somehow understandable, [..] because, they all grew up here and they think in clubs [..]. We want to develop the community as such. We don't just want to do refugee work. [..] We are not funny people who do refugee work. We are way beyond that. We want to develop the community as a whole [..] to make people aware that you can only really develop a community with a full-time office. [..] You need structures, you need concepts. And yes, and that must actually be wanted." (RLP_FR_Transcript)

With this attempt, this welcoming initiative names a trend that has already begun in many German rural communities: the search for a socio-spatial opportunity structure that is socially inclusive in the sense of centralizing various offers instead of continuing to build parallel structures for different target groups or letting them run side by side. Thus, welcoming initiatives are already making an important contribution towards social sustainability.

7. Conclusion

Firstly, this report deals with the interrelation between practices of welcoming initiatives and experiences of displacement and emplacement of non-EU migrants and long-term residents in shrinking areas. Emplacement and displacement, as well as the initiatives´ practices, constitute and are constituted by multiscalar networks of unequal power relations.

The shared experience of displacement by migrants and long-term residents was very clear illustrated by an actor of a welcoming initiative in the Altenburg district using the example of the place of residence. Migrants and long-term residents live in „residential areas that are a little bit neglected" (see quotation chapter 6.3) and hope for an improvement of their situation. Long-term residents feel displaced because their former socialization (or the socialization of their parents) in the GDR has not been acknowledged by today's majority society ("what they have lost"). While migrants feel displaced because they have left their country of origin (most often) involuntarily. In Çaĝlar and Glick Schiller's (2018: 19) words, both social groups have lost (by state-building or war) their lands, their „resources, and their means of livelihood" and now are forced „to reposition, reorder, or relocate their lives and relationships." They had no influence on these globally extending conflicts or national political developments in the past. To change these power relations are out of their reach. The explored welcoming initiatives aim at solidarity between these two groups through a shared understanding.

However, there is a difference between long-term residents´ and migrants´ experience of displacement due to denied access to 1) German citizenship and 2) (partly) to skilled and meaningful jobs and work. Missing work permits, no recognition of (or no more proof of) education trajectories in the country of origin as well as widespread discrimination have a lasting negative effect on their social wellbeing. Through various practices, welcoming initiatives try to overcome barriers: be it through very time-consuming discussions with the local foreigners´ authorities, personal job mediation or personal guaranteeship. Thus, welcoming initiatives contribute in various ways not only to emplacement but also to the social wellbeing of migrants.

For example, by their practices meeting places are created and maintained. These places provide places of sociability – or real welcoming spaces – where „city dwellers build domains of affect, mutual respect, and shared aspirations." (Çaĝlar and Glick-Schiller (2018: 124). Social gatherings also create opportunities for self-awareness, social recognition, cultural and educational opportunities, as well as networking with official representatives of the host society, which can lead to job offers (see citation chapter 6.3). Meeting places are also created by migrants with resources from their own community. By so doing, they create themselves a network of power relations which allows them to produce and maintain gathering places for themselves and others.

Secondly, this report illuminates the relationship between welcoming initiatives´ practices, displacement and emplacement and the revitalisation of the selected areas. To investigate this interplay, the following research question are formulated: *1) How are welcoming initiatives embedded and related to political stability and economic viability of the research cases? 2) How are (urban) policies linked to processes of revitalization and migration? 3) Which aspects are related to social wellbeing from the viewpoint of the migrants themselves and of actors of welcoming initiatives?*

Regarding the last research question, from the viewpoint of migrants, 1) the feeling of safeness, 2) the access to houses which fit to their household size, 3) money, 4) the access to employment (by car or public transport) and places of sociability, and 5) the opportunity to develop themselves further as well as 6) social

recognition (either from long-term residents or the German national state) are main aspects of social wellbeing.

In addition, the actors of welcoming initiative have formulated aspects, which they regard as necessary to support migrants on the long run. Conditions and existing unequal power relations must be changed comprising 1) the political will to use margins of discretion, 2) the provision of more money and people to boost the migrant's access to employment and vocational trajectories and 3) more openminded residents and politicians who embrace and promote diversity. Due to the latter aspect which refers to the second research question, migration and diversity do not yet play a role in the official (urban) policies linked to processes of revitalization. Urban policies are rather related to ´traditional growth-oriented´ location policy such as residential economy, tourism and restructuring industry. Open-mindedness in the sense of cosmopolitanism is rather present in the ambition to attract international investors (see chapter 5). To realise this, actors of local and regional governments create their own networks which are likely closed to people who define cosmopolitanism with respect to the resident migrants. Hence, through these networks power relations are (re)produced, by which the way how revitalization of their districts takes place are controlled and guided. In contrast, other political networks are created to foster sustainable revitalization strategies (see chapter 5.2) which are combined with political programmes to combat discrimination (see chapter 6.2).

It is within these contradictory multiscalar networks of power that welcoming initiatives must operate (which is the answer to the first research question). However, they are not powerless. The empirical data illustrate that they succeed in developing trustful social networks constituted by several different and reliable actors on site (see chapter 6.4). Here, working in small towns seems to be an advantage. Based on their practices and experiences with migration, actors of welcoming initiatives have developed an alternative view on ´integration´ (citation end of chapter 5.1). It is a view that pleas for the recognition of migrants as German citizens while criticizing the emphasis of assimilation. Besides the suggestion that laws and rules should be changed, one interviewee points out, welcoming initiatives should direct their full energy in contributing to an inclusive community through corresponding offerings at central meeting places that are open for everyone (chapter 6.4).

8. Notes for further research in WP 2-5

Working Package 2: The transformation of rural areas is omnipresent in Germany and has become a nationwide task in recent years. The federal government has launched various funding programs to provide financial support to municipalities and companies. This involves the conversion of traditionally working businesses to sustainably producing ones, whether in agriculture or industrial manufacturing. Both in the Rhine-Hunsrück district and in the Altenburg district, these transformations are taking place and could be studied in more detail. The issue of immigration plays only a disorderly or indirect role in this transformation. The main focus is on the creation of secure, socially insured jobs as well as on increasing job offers for highly qualified workers.

Working Package 3: The German federal government as well as the state governments of Thuringia and Rhineland-Palatinate, have set up countless programs for the integration of immigrants in recent years. These programs are aimed at improving educational opportunities or improving access to the labour market. However, interviews with welcoming initiatives reveal that discrimination and a negative attitude on the part of long-established residents in the countryside (and, in some cases, people who work in the foreigners´ authority) prevent participation or at least make it more difficult. A further question is how local governments can raise awareness and promote social interaction between the two groups. This also involves the question of how funds are distributed and who uses them for what purpose.

In the case of the Altenburg district, it is very interesting that a transformation process is currently being initiated in which a regional development plan is to be developed with great participation by civil society. The question here would be whether the topic of immigration also plays a role in this process on the one hand and whether, on the other hand, migrants can actually participate in the process.

Working Package 4: The war in Ukraine and the reception of refugees from Ukraine dominate the political and public debate. While few newspapers and academic debates address the integration process of migrants who have arrived since 2015. Nevertheless, work continues the execution of integration programs described above and, from time to time, prizes are awarded to certain municipalities for successful integration projects. In the daily newspapers in the Rhine-Hunsrück district and in the Altenburg district, the topic of migration plays almost no role.

Working Package 5: The German situation due to welcoming initiatives is characterized by two paradoxes. First, there is a contradiction between a generous promotion of integration on the one hand and rigid asylum and residence laws on the other. The practice of the actors of welcoming initiatives is therefore characterized by the continuous mediation between rigid laws (asylum laws) and living conditions (human rights). The laws deepen social inequality and make a distinction between people who have a right to stay and work and people who are only tolerated. Once recognized, migrants initially seem to have every opportunity. But - and this is the second contradiction - they are not recognized as full citizens of German society. Discrimination shapes not only their experience in public spaces, but also their experience while looking for a job. Despite these resistances, many migrants have found jobs. Further investigation into social interactions at work or in other (public) spaces could nuance the picture of almost universal discrimination.

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[..]   some words or sentences left out

[words in brackets]   missing words added by the author to make the sentence comparable or replacement of words to guarantee anonymity

..   little break in the speech

(!)   stressed by the interviewee