Migration

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Abstract: In the last two decades, the topic of migration has gained importance for society as a whole, for science, and especially for sociology.¹ Although Germany was in fact predominantly an immigration country throughout the 20th century, it was not until the turn of the 21st century that this was accepted in Germany's self-perception. This is also reflected in the sociology of migration. In addition to an increase in publications, there have been changes to its subject matter and paradigmatic frameworks. In comparison to classical immigration countries, the developments outlined can be interpreted as a "catch-up normalization" of self-perceptions and scientific concepts. In the following discussion, I focus on international migration; the broad, theoretically and empirically exacting field of integration research is considered only in passing, as are questions of domestic migration, "ethnic minorities," and racism. German-language scientific publications from the 2000s onwards and monographs published as early as the 1990s are taken into account, insofar as they were discussed in *Soziologische Revue* from 2000 onwards. For reasons of space, individual studies that were discussed in the aforementioned reviews of *Soziologische Revue* are not usually cited. Europe is of particular interest with regard to migration. In no other region of the world more than half a billion people can move, work, and settle freely across national borders. The various major refugee and migration movements after the Second World War, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, as a consequence of the wars in Yugoslavia, and more recently in the context of the wars in Iraq and Syria also make Europe one of the most interesting laboratories for migration research. The German-language sociology of migration has enormous potential in the European context. In order to understand the transition to the 21st century as the fundamental turning point it in fact is, the following section begins by outlining the initial situation up to the end of the 20th century. I then present the development of important topics in the 21st century.

Keywords: German-language migration sociology, transnational labor mobility, mechanisms of belonging, categorization, system integration, social integration

Note: Translation from German, including all quotes from German literature, by John Koster for *SocioTrans—Social Scientific Translation & Editing*.

1 This conclusion is the result of term searches in the online German dictionary *Digitales Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* (DWDS; *Digital Dictionary of the German Language*) and in the German-language sociology journals (e.g., on *Google Scholar* and *Publish or Perish*). My thanks go to Martin Wittsieker and Rafael Bohlen for their support with the searches.

1 Sociological Migration Research in the Past and Present Century

In the German-speaking world, the topic of migration remained theoretically and empirically underdeveloped and constrained by nationalistic perspectives for the duration of the 20th century. For the German-speaking world, there has been no study of comparable sociological significance as *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1974) was for the USA (Pries, 2015). In the second half of the 20th century, neither the extensive immigration and emigration movements that began in the second half of the 19th century nor the beginnings of “migration sociology” (*Wanderungssoziologie*; e.g., Weber, 1984) and neither the real migration-related expulsions (forced labor, forced resettlement, “*Umvolkungen*” [ethnic repopulations], etc.) nor the migration research of the Nazi era were subjected to sociological reflection (Pries, 2014). Parallel to their counterfactual societal self-perceptions as non-immigration countries, migration was largely marginalized in German, Austrian, and Swiss sociology until the 1970s. Although about two-thirds of all people living in the FRG and the GDR after the Second World War had firsthand experience of forced migration (Bade, 2000: 297ff.), it was not a topic of the first sociology congresses after 1945.

Introductory and survey publications on migration sociology made recourse, in a kind of “zero-hour” mentality, to theories and empirical studies drawn almost exclusively from English-language migration sociology (Hoffmann-Nowotny, 1970; Albrecht, 1972). Until the 1980s, the field was dominated by predominantly static notions of nation-state societies, of their “morphology” and functional contexts. Under these circumstances, the sociological treatment of migration-related integration dynamics already had a critical potential. The dominant model was an assimilatory model according to which “immigrants” (*Zugewanderte*) became gradually more normal (Esser, 1999). Until the 2000s, many empirical studies were based on such an understanding of assimilation (Heckmann, 2015; Ohliger, 2007; Worbs, 2010), but it has increasingly been called into question in the context of the social upheavals since the 1990s.²

The implosion of real socialism, the Balkan Wars, and the eastward expansion of the European Union in the 1990s have led to complex migration movements. An “Immigration Commission” was set up in 2000, and a new citizenship law came into force the same year. The Immigration Act of 2005 largely redesigned integration and migration policy. In the same year, the new Microcensus Act meant that for the first time, data was collected on “migration background” (with a question about parents’ country of birth). While the proportion of people living in Germany who were not

² Cf., e.g., Münz et al., 1997; Pries, 1997; Bommers, 1999; Tränhardt, 2000; Bade, 2007; cf. on Austria Weiss, 2007; Latcheva and Herzog-Punzenberger, 2011; Reinprecht and Latcheva, 2016, and the other contributions to that volume; on the concept of segmented assimilation in the USA, see Portes and Zhou, 1993, and Xie and Greenman, 2005).

German citizens was about one-tenth of the total population, the proportion of people with a “migration background” was about one-fifth. This new method of counting contributed—among many other factors—to Germany’s increasing understanding of itself as an immigration country (Mehrländer and Schultze, 2001). The case was similar in Austria and Switzerland.

There have also been qualitative changes for science. Many studies were published with the aim of providing a comprehensive overview of migration and integration (Curre and Wunderlich, 2001; Gogolin and Nauck, 2000; Haller and Verwiebe, 2016; Mottier, 2000; Reinprecht and Latcheva, 2016; Treichler, 2002). Studies of youth dealt more comprehensively with experiences of migration (Weidacher, 2000). The reporting of academic foundations and federal and state ministries on the topics of “immigration” (*Zuwanderung*), integration, and migration policy grew enormously.³ Bös stated (2004: 159): “Two battles have thus been won: It no longer sounds strange to describe Germany as a country of immigration, and the sociology of migration is a recognized and growing branch of German sociology.” A decade later, Geisen summarized in an omnibus review: “While it has long been a marginal topic in the various disciplines, in the 21st century [...] migration research has become an increasingly important subject area, especially in sociology. Sociology [...] regards migration as a central constitutive condition of modern societies” (Geisen, 2015: 527f.). This can be illustrated with reference to various topics.

2 Internationalization of Labor Mobility

In its perspective on work, the predominant focus of migration sociology was for a long time the “guest workers” and their successor generations. This changed, on the one hand, with the massively increasing labor mobility within the EU, above all with the corresponding eastward expansions (Nowicka, 2007; Palenga, 2014; on Germans living in Russia, Strobl and Kühnel, 2000; on Switzerland, e.g., Mendy, 2014). On the other hand, transnational mobility within professions and organizations also came into view during the reporting period. Kreutzer (2007) reviewed six monographs and two edited volumes “on occupational mobility in intercultural workplaces.” This topic area makes it possible to combine classical migration research with occupational sociology, sociology of work, and organizational sociology and, in general, with

³ Cf. the reports published since 1991 by the Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration, the *Migrationsreport des bundesweiten Rates für Migration* published since 2000, the migration reports of the Federal Ministry of the Interior published since 2004, the annual reports of the Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Migration und Integration published since 2004, and the migration reports of the Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) published since 2005; on Austria, cf. Fassmann and Stacher, 2003, where an annual *Integration Report* has been published since 2011; in Switzerland, an annual *Migration Report* has been published since 2007.

globalization and intercultural studies. Kreutzer (2007: 35) wrote: “High mobility does not produce ‘thick cosmopolitans’ who practice a deeper intercultural exchange, but a differentiation into special transnational, functional, organizational, and professional worlds.”

This conclusion is underscored by research in the now established field of transnational domestic and care work (e.g., Hess, 2005; Lutz, 2007; Haidinger, 2013; Larsen et al., 2009; Villa/Hark, GENDER, this volume). An essential question in the context of transnational labor mobility is the regulation of labor; although some approaches and initiatives have been diagnosed here, in general the societal regulation of cross-border mobility hardly keeps pace with the rate of its propagation (Mense-Petermann et al., 2013; Staples et al., 2013; Cyrus and Kip, 2015; Krings, 2015; Pries and Shinozaki, 2015; Klemm, 2019). Mobility has been examined within the framework of the new field of mobility studies as a practical resource of the self-employed (Dannecker and Cakir, 2016).

In Europe in particular, the increasing internationalization of work and employment is already being anticipated in higher education and training by corresponding measures such as the EU’s Erasmus program. Gerhards et al. (2016) investigated how, in the face of globalization and transnationalization, the educated middle classes in particular are pursuing transnational educational strategies to aid their children’s acquisition of multiple languages, foreign experience, and intercultural competence.

3 “Migration Background” and the Politics of Designation, Belonging, and Diversity

Since the turn of the century, research and debates on belonging and labeling have intensified (Poglia, 2000 offers a critical take on the Swiss context; Karstein/Wohlrab-Sahr, CULTURE, this volume). In Germany, some scholars have criticized the use of the official category “migration background” or even the term “integration” (Foroutan, 2014; Supik, 2014). Contrary to this, Treibel (2015) advocated for maintaining and expanding the concept of integration. The introduction of the category “migration background” (the country of birth of a person’s parents has been surveyed in Great Britain for decades, in Austria since 2008, and in Switzerland since 2003) allows for more nuanced assessments of, for example, discrimination and educational pathways, but can also be perceived as a new mechanism of exclusion (Aigner, 2013; Gresch and Kristen, 2011; Hentges et al., 2008; Pries, 2016: 162). Bielefeld (2004) opposed culturalist and essentialist reductions of “the foreign” (*des Fremden*) but considered the topic essential: “Foreigners and being foreign, the other and distinctness, difference, interculturality, and transnationality and thus also collective belonging and its changing meaning are keywords from which a new master narrative can be composed, the contours of which are still appropriately vague considering its subject” (ibid. 398; critically of Switzerland, Mottier, 2000, and the contributions in Cattacin

et al., 2016). Beck-Gernsheim (1999) emphasized that ethnic attributions are socially constructed and communicatively mediated and that, towards the end of the 20th century, the approach to ethnic categories had become more reflective; Mecheril (2003) and Broden and Mecheril (2007) discussed the problems of ethnic attributions to others and as self-attributions.

On the basis of 40 qualitative case studies, Honolka and Götz (1999) analyzed the complex structures of multiple identities. Drawing on a more classical theoretical concept of marginalization, Hämmig (2000) noted that second-generation immigrants in Switzerland still experienced structural, social, familial, and cultural tensions. The diagnosis offered by Muti (2001) views border demarcations within and among Turkish immigrant groups not as tending towards either unification or dissolution but rather as overlapping and differentiating, partly reactivated collective affiliations that always refer to the experience of othering by other immigrant or non-immigrant groups. Attia (2013) held that many studies with sociological pretensions (Heitmeyer, 2002; Stolz, 2000) remain at the level of essentially social-psychological studies of values, attitudes, and prejudices. They are “thus based on explanatory models that do not think of the discriminations and devaluations that are under investigation as social phenomena but trivialize them into attitudes and prejudices” (Attia, 2013: 4).

Genuinely sociological conceptions of xenophobia in the context of migration and integration developed only haltingly. Johler et al. (2007) took a comparative approach to studying the treatment of “foreigners” across Europe. An interesting advance in this direction is the model, based on Bourdieu’s capital theory, that conceives of racism as an independent “objective structural dimension of social space” located in the habitus (Weiß, 2001: 353) (cf. also Aydin, 2009; Yildiz, 2016). Schraml and Bös (2008), in their review of five monographs and five edited volumes, showed that “the other” and the meso level of networks and organizations that mediate it were systematically addressed in the more recent sociology of migration.

There has also been a significant further development with regard to the sophistication of gender perspectives in the study of migration (Han, 2003; Lutz, 2007; Mattes, 2005; Matthäi, 2005; Sackmann, 2005). Salzbrunn (2012) emphasized in her scientific “mapping” of the topic of diversity that, in discussions about multicultural, “parallel,” and “immigration” societies, migration sociology is systematically linked with general sociology and other subdisciplines: “It is no longer asked whether social cohesion is threatened by more diversity [...]. Rather, it is now assumed that social diversity exists as a fact and that the so-called ‘migrants’ have long been—legally, in everyday practice, and in many cases also through historical transformations—part of the societies that, by othering them with designations such as [...] ‘people with a migration background’ (Germany) miss the real interdependence, hybridization, and emergence of new cultural practices” (ibid.: 389).

4 Conceptual Conflations: Migration and Integration, Ethnicity and Gender

As long as migration is thought of as a single irreversible event or as a temporary “guest stay,” it can be conceptually separated from the process of integration. In the summary of the discussion of a study on *Migrants in German League Football*, Faist (2005: 38) accordingly criticized that “parts of the methodologically sophisticated German-language migration research and those on ethnic minorities still remain trapped in an—albeit modified—assimilation model that sees structural assimilation [...] as the decisive point of entry into majority societies.” In a literature review, Aigner (2013) cited the work of Esser and Heckmann as examples of classical integration concepts but was skeptical of their analytical separation of integration from migration: “The theoretical framework should be viewed more broadly than the current focus on ‘integration as a post-migration process’ suggests” (cf. also Kalter, 2008; Kleinschmidt, 2011; Löffler, 2011). Integration can take place plurilocally between the region of origin and the region of arrival. Migration is often a prolonged process of complex multi-level participation in economic, cultural, social, and political life.

Between the models of monistic assimilation and multicultural coexistence, integration was increasingly understood as the as equitable as possible participation of all people and social groups in shared social and societal life, as a process of mutual understanding and negotiation, and as an invitation to participate in all activities and areas considered important for society (SVR, 2010; Monz, 2001; Treibel, 2015). Giese (2002: 68) diagnosed a “gradual move away from normative concepts and sweeping labels.” Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, in particular, research on Islam has increased significantly. Reuter and Gamper (2007) presented a review of 12 studies on the topic. Recent research has shown that Islamic religious orientations and practices can contribute both to the entrenchment of traditional models of society and social roles and to emancipation, to the development of independent identities through intergenerational negotiations, as well as to divisive group formations.

Religious, ethnic, national, generational, and political demarcations are to be understood as dynamic and complex processes of negotiating self- and social attribution. For a long time, German-language migration sociology has been about, but not by and inclusive of, people with their own histories of migration. This has changed fundamentally in recent decades. “The proportion of researchers who are Muslims themselves or at least have a ‘migration background’ is conspicuously high. [...] It is quite significant that the public debate about ‘correct’ Islam reporting is being conducted by Muslims and migrants themselves” (Reuter and Gamper, 2007: 47; cf. Göle and Ammann, 2004; Kelek, 2002; Stauch, 2004; Ucar, 2010). Hafez (2014; cf. also Tezcan, 2015; on Switzerland, Berger and Berger, 2019) has contributed a review of two books on the subject of Islam, pointing out the dangers of essentializations.

Many multidimensional analyses of the connections between migration and integration are now available, for example, on Muslim youths (von Wensierski and

Lübcke, 2012; Weiss, 2007), on different groups of migrant female service workers (Lutz, 2007), and on the relationship between migration and gender among the female “guest workers” of the 1950s through the 1970s (Mattes, 2005). In introductory works, too, the themes of migration and integration are increasingly given equal weight and dealt with in their reciprocal relationships (Han, 2010; Oswald, 2007; Treibel, 2011; Schütze, 2008). Geisen (2015) held that the topic area of migration and integration has become more important in sociology but that there is still a lack of conceptual and theoretical developments that can be integrated into general theoretical conceptions of sociation. “Analyses rely primarily on established concepts such as national-ethnic-cultural multiple belonging, intersectionality, or the concept of masculine hegemony. [...] In contrast to this, the particular interdependences of entanglements and relationships in the context of migration need to be made visible in their complexity and ambivalence” (ibid.: 546).

5 Transnationalization, Development, and Refugee Studies

Transnationalization research has gained considerable influence since the 1990s (Weiß, GLOBALIZATION AND TRANSNATIONALIZATION, this volume). The spaces of human life are examined as relational networks of social practices, symbolic orders, and artifacts spanning various nationally constituted societies (Pries, 1997). Transnational migration understood as an ongoing event of migration with cross-border flows of communication, ideas, and resources is also significant in Europe. This generally does not mean that people migrate permanently between different national societies but that complex transnational (family and organizational) social networks exchange resources and information and that life strategies are developed transnationally (Pries and Sezgin, 2010; Cappai, 2005; Dahinden, 2005; Novicka, 2007; Pusch, 2013; Palenga, 2014; Vorheyer, 2016; Nedelcu and Wyss, 2015).

Zifonun (2009: 334) concluded a review by pointing out that all the publications raise questions about the “analytical relevance of reference spaces of migration and integration that lie beyond the nation state. The authors of the monographs and anthologies refer [...] to the significance of Europeanization, globalization, transnationalism, and world society.” In this context, the relationship between migration and development was also discussed anew (Faist, 2007/08; Schwenken, 2016; Gerharz/Rescher, GLOBAL SOUTH, this volume). Discussing a detailed monograph on the ethnicization of social inequality in the national and global context (Haller, 2015), Faist (2017: 16) criticized: “The drawing of borders that are of decisive importance for national politics also takes place beyond the nation state. Haller, however, constructs a dichotomy between a national and a global view of social inequalities.” This also brings new challenges for the sociology of migration and integration (ibid.: 19). Sterbling (2017), on the other hand, in his discussion of an anthology on the subject of

migration and social transformation, emphasized that the refugee movement of 2015 in particular, and the more national than European political reactions to it, have jolted “the decisive structural significance and powerful inertia of national conditions suddenly to the fore of politics” (ibid.: 458). This can be read as an argument for a multidimensional and multi-level analysis in migration studies (for an international comparison on youths with a migration background and their capacity for mobilization, cf. Loch, 2008).

Transnationalization research was also relevant to analyses at the meso level of migrant (self-)organization (mosque and cultural associations, for example). For a long time, such groups were treated as problematic to the extent they were discussed at all. This has changed since the 1990s as a growing number of empirical studies were undertaken, such as those that took a comparative approach in examining the migrant organizations of various national groups (Fijalkowki and Gillmeister, 1997; Thränhardt, 2000; Diehl, 2002; Hunger, 2002). The focus of these studies was on the integration functions of migrant organizations for the arrival society (Huth, 2003; Halm and Sauer, 2005). The studies were then extended conceptually by links to transnationalization research. In this way, they examined, for instance, the role of transnational organizations of migrants *in between* their regions of origin and arrival (Cappai, 2005; Dahinden, 2005; Pries and Sezgin, 2010; Waldrauch and Sohler, 2004).

Ceylan (2006) applied the concept of the “ethnic colony” in an attempt to capture organizational and institutional aspects of integration dynamics at the level of urban neighborhoods (cf. also Jagusch, 2011). Rauer (2008) analyzed constructions of what defines one’s own group and what defines ‘the others’ in Turkish migrant associations’ discourses on migration politics. Oltmer et al. (2012) examined from a historical perspective the political and social (organizational) relationships between “guest workers” countries of origin and arrival. In the Austrian context, several articles in Biffl and Rössl (2014) dealt with diaspora and transnational relations between countries of origin and countries of immigration. These studies and similar ones were also helpful in overcoming the second dualism, the one between research on migration and research on integration.

Since the refugee movement of 2015, German-language migration research has been inundated with the topic of flight and refugees. There were earlier predecessors, however, such as the important, pioneering studies by Rosenthal (2004) and In-between (2010). Studies on the refugee movement of 2015 have incorporated and integrated transnational and organizational aspects along with many aspects dealt with in the previous sections and in border-regime research (Hess et al., 2016; Stoecklin et al., 2013; BIM, 2016; Gansbergen et al., 2016; Pries, 2016; Krause and Schmidt, 2018; Zajak and Gottschalk, 2018; Yildiz, 2016). In 2016, the Socio-Economic Panel was expanded to include a forward-looking study that initiated a survey and analysis of the flight and integration processes of about 4,500 refugees in Germany (Brücker et al., 2016; Brücker et al., 2018). It remains to be seen how sustainable the research and funding interests will be in the future.

6 Sociology of Migration: From the Margins to the Center of the Discipline

German-language sociology of migration has broadened considerably over the last two decades while also developing strong foundations at the institutional level (professorships and journals, for example). It has emancipated itself as an independent field, but it is also explicitly mindful of its manifold interrelationships with integration research. Contemporary sociology of migration takes into account forms as diverse as shuttle migration, repeated temporary migration, and transnational labor migration as well as more complex processes such as forced migration. The path dependence and cumulative causation of migration dynamics are also taken into consideration. Especially in Europe, with its dense networks of communication and transport, but also beyond it, migration creates transnational social spaces between regions of origin and arrival that put cross-border exchange processes (such as the departure and return of qualified people, remittances, transformed economic expectations, new political demands and gender-related claims to participation, wage competition and displacement from the labor market) on a permanent footing.

As the boundaries between voluntary (labor) migration and forced migration become more complex, mixed-migration flows and the interrelations between different types of migration are being explored. These can be influenced by political and legal frameworks, but they can only be controlled and directed to a limited extent. Migration dynamics essentially follow the logic of the migrants' collective action in their respective socio-spatial contexts and are refracted by their own and external politics of drawing boundaries (politically, ethnically, socially, legally, by the police, etc.). Today, international migration is to be understood as an open-ended process that remains fragile and revisable over multiple generations and leads, through reciprocal perceptions and designations of self and other among migrants and non-migrants, to various (economic, political, social, and cultural) forms of plurilocal inclusion and participation. Processes of migration can no longer be understood and explained without explicit reference to sociological concepts of social action, social order, and social change. And conversely, in the 21st century any analysis of society and social groups has to consider migration as a fundamental aspect. German-language sociology of migration has come a very long way in the last twenty years. Particularly in the areas of transnational labor mobility, the politics of naming and mechanisms of belonging, and transnationalization and refugee studies, it may prove to be of special interest for international research and discussion as well.

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