

Coping with Migrants and Refugees

Multilevel Governance across the EU

Edited by
Tiziana Caponio and Irene Ponzio

First published 2022

ISBN: 978-0-367-65522-8 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-65531-0 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-12995-0 (ebk)

6 The multilevel governance of asylum seekers' reception in Germany and the role of the local level: A local-to-local comparison

Birgit Glorius and Simone Gasch

(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003129950-6

The funder for this chapter is TU Chemnitz, Germany



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

6 The multilevel governance of asylum seekers' reception in Germany and the role of the local level: A local-to-local comparison

Birgit Glorius and Simone Gasch

Introduction

After 2010, the number of asylum applications in Germany gradually increased, notably due to arrivals from the Western Balkan states and secondary movements of asylum seekers from Italy. In 2013, application numbers exceeded the 100,000 threshold and increased rapidly thereafter. The peak of this development was reached in 2015 with around 890,000 registered entries and 441,899 applications for asylum (BAMF 2016; BMI 2016a). After refugee movements via the Balkan route increased throughout the summer of 2015 and many got stranded in Hungary, the German Chancellor and the Austrian government decided to lift the Dublin regulation on September 4, 2015 and accept several thousand Syrian asylum seekers from Hungary. During these weeks many asylum seekers entered the country without registration and identity checks. Even though border controls were introduced at the Bavarian-Austrian border on September 13, 2015, the number of incoming asylum seekers remained high. At major border crossings such as the city of Passau in East Bavaria, up to 10,000 people arrived per day and had to be taken care of in quickly established emergency reception facilities, from which they were re-distributed throughout Germany. As governmental organisations were not ready to respond to the rising numbers and needs, there was an enormous engagement from civil society organisations to provide a humane arrival and welcome (Egger 2018, 144). In November 2015, 206,101 asylum seekers were registered in Germany; the number of asylum applications rose from 73,135 in the first quarter of 2015 to 155,410 in the last quarter of 2015 (BAMF 2016, 10).

In March 2016, the closure of the Balkan route and the signing of the EU-Turkey agreement brought a significant reduction in the number of asylum seekers entering the country. Arrivals in Germany dropped from over 100,000 in January 2016 to around 16,000 in April (BMI 2016b). However, asylum application numbers still increased in 2016, up to around 772,000, due to delayed registration procedures in 2015 (BMI 2016a).

The reception of asylum seekers in Germany is governed by a complex system of state governance, formed by federal, state, district, county and

local authorities. While major decisions regarding the asylum procedure are taken by the federal government and governed at the national and state level, the actual reception and accommodation of asylum seekers is organised at the local level. In terms of governance, the sixteen federal states are responsible for the reception process. They delegate this task to the municipalities, which are organised in counties or self-organised (usually larger) cities (Frech et al. 2019). In some federal states, yet another administrative level exists: the district level, which acts as an intermediate authority between state and county/local administration¹. In the asylum process, district authorities are responsible for the administration of first reception facilities and the coordination of reception measures.

Regarding the reception of asylum seekers as a multi-level governance (MLG) issue, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also play a role. They take various forms, such as spontaneous refugee relief groups that act on local or sometimes neighbourhood levels, NGOs with multi-level structures such as Caritas or Red Cross, or NGOs with political influence on the state level and with local and regional branches, such as the refugee councils.

The aim of this contribution is to examine the implementation of refugee reception in Germany, taking into account the multilevel structure of actors and varying power constellations among them. Focusing on two local case studies, the cities of Aachen (North Rhine-Westphalia, NRW) and Chemnitz (Saxony), the chapter will highlight the functioning of refugee reception as a multilevel governance issue and will analyse convergences, divergences and the underlying factors. It will first briefly present the two case study sites. Then it will elucidate decisional processes regarding the asylum reception system at state level. The contribution then presents research results on the implementation process at the local level in Aachen and Chemnitz, followed by a comparative discussion of the local case studies. The final section will continue and finalise the discussion in relation to the multilevel governance framework.

The contribution is based on a country report on the multilevel governance of asylum seekers' reception in Germany (Beinhorn et al. 2019), which is based on desk research, analysis of secondary data and expert interviews.

Case study selection: Aachen and Chemnitz

For the local-to-local comparison, we selected the cities of Aachen in the far west of Germany, and Chemnitz in the far east (Figure 6.1). The selection aimed to reveal the divergence of local policies and practices regarding the reception of asylum seekers. The criteria were framing features such as geographical location, wealth level and population structure (especially regarding the share of migrant population) on the one hand, and political profile in terms of party majorities and political cultures on the other hand, i.e., more progressive and positively oriented towards migration versus more



Figure 6.1 The German case study sites: Aachen and Chemnitz; Design: Stephan Schurig

conservative and less favourable on the issue. In our case study selection, we focused on sameness regarding socio-economic conditions and size of the cities, and difference regarding political profiles. Furthermore, considering the diverging experiences with migration and migrant integration in East and West Germany during the Cold War, we selected case study sites in former East and West in order to analyse if those experiences are still shaping integrative practice and framing discourses on immigration and integration. Notwithstanding that the selection of only two case study localities cannot deliver a representative result, the comparative framework enabled us to identify similarities and differences and the underlying factors.

The city of Aachen is located on the western fringe of NRW, the most densely populated region of Germany. In early industrialisation, Aachen became an important site of textile production. Nowadays, the most important sectors are machinery and the automobile industry. While Aachen is located in a German periphery, it is very well connected to major Western European capitals such as Paris or Brussels. The population development in Aachen is stable, with foreign citizens comprising almost one fifth of the population (18.2%, 2017). This rather high share² is typical for a West German industrial agglomeration, which recruited large numbers of labour migrants from southern European countries during the 1960s and 1970s. Many of those former labour migrants settled in Aachen with their families. Today, the foreign population of Aachen is made up of 156 nationalities, of which Turkish citizens represent the largest group (13.3%), followed by Syrians (6.2%), who mainly arrived as asylum seekers in 2015–2016. Due to its large university, a considerable number of international students and scientists reside in Aachen, notably from China (5.8% of foreign population). In contrast to the political constellation of the state of NRW, with a traditional social democratic government, the conservative party was the strongest party in Aachen from 2009 until 2020 (Table 6.1). Since 2020, the Green party is the strongest party and also presents the mayor.

Chemnitz is the third largest city in Saxony. The city and its region used to be the industrial core of Saxony, starting with the textile industry during early industrialisation. During the twentieth century, the machine industry also gained importance. After 1989–1990, Chemnitz suffered an economic breakdown with high unemployment and huge population loss (nearly 25% between 1990 and 2009), which changed the age structure towards a strongly ageing population (share of population who are 60 and older: 34.3% in 2010). Since the 2000s, the economic and population situation has been stabilising again. Due to the restrictive migration policies of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Chemnitz used to have a very low proportion of foreign inhabitants, but it increased from 4.8% in 2010 to 7.6% in 2017, mostly due to the arrival of European Union (EU) migrants, international students and asylum seekers. At the end of 2017, Syrians represented the largest group of foreigners (14.3%), followed by Chinese (6.4%), Afghans (5.6%) and Indians (5.6%) (Stadt Chemnitz 2018a). The “asylum crisis” of 2015 was made visible in Chemnitz by the overcrowding of the federal first reception facility located in the city, so that emergency accommodation facilities had to be established all over the city in September 2015. Since then, refugee migration and asylum politics have been strongly debated and politicised issues in the city and the region. The State of Saxony has been strongly shaped by conservative politics and is under conservative rule since Germany’s re-unification. While Chemnitz at the time of our inquiry had a social democratic mayor, there is no clear majority in the conservative or social democratic wing, but a variety of parties from across the whole spectrum, as a result of less fixed voting behaviour in former East Germany (see Beinhorn et al. 2019).

Table 6.1 Key data and information on Aachen and Chemnitz, representing time of the field research

	<i>Aachen (North Rhine-Westphalia)</i>	<i>Chemnitz (Saxony)</i>
Population	255,967 (December 31, 2017)	247,422 (December 31, 2017)
Unemployment rate	7.9% (December 31, 2017)	7.1% (October 2018)
Average disposable annual income per capita	20,078 EUR (2016)	19,659 EUR (2016)
State government	Strong social democratic tradition (SPD ruling party in 32 of 40 years since 1980); conservative government (CDU/FDP coalition) since 2017	Strong conservative tradition (conservative government since re-unification); grand coalition 2004–2009 and since 2014
City government	Conservative mayor from 2009 to 2020, grand coalition in city council Election results for city parliament 2014: CDU 36.3%, SPD 26.0%, Green 16.5% (AfD 2.5%)	Social democratic mayor since 1993 Election results for city parliament 2014: CDU 24.6%, Left Party 23.7%, SPD 19.44% (AfD 5.6%)
Proportion of foreign nationals	18.2% (2017)	7.6% (December 31, 2017)
Persons with “asylum background”, of which a: asylum seekers b: rejected asylum seekers	Not available 1,759 (2018)	5,687 (December 31, 2017) 993 (December 31, 2017) 597 (December 31, 2017)
Main countries of origin of asylum seekers	Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Ghana (2018)	Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Iran, Libya, Russian Federation, Pakistan, Lebanon (2018)

Source: Statistical Offices of Aachen and Chemnitz; own elaboration

The Reception system. Decisional processes and implementation

The reception of asylum seekers in Germany is a multistage process. From the point of entry at a national border, asylum seekers are distributed over the sixteen German states, the *Länder*³. After an initial stay in a state's first reception facility where the asylum application is initiated, they are further distributed to the counties and municipalities of the states, where they are accommodated during the asylum procedure. Based on the governance structure of the Federal Republic of Germany, the sixteen states have considerable discretionary power in the shaping of asylum reception processes. The following sections will highlight the main features of the reception system, decisional processes and implementation in the two case study states.

Refugee reception in NRW

Laws and Directives

The allocation of refugees in NRW is regulated by the Law on Reception of Refugees (*Flüchtlingsaufnahmegesetz*, FlüAG), which was first enacted in 2003 and has changed several times since then. Municipalities are obliged to accommodate asylum seekers. The allocation is conducted by the five district governments (*Bezirksregierungen*) of NRW, based on monthly reports from the municipalities. Since January 2017, the municipalities have received a monthly lump sum of EUR 866 per person for the allocation and subsistence of asylum seekers, of which 3.83% has to be taken for social care. Until then, lump sums were calculated annually and amounted to EUR 10,000 per person. There is no reimbursement for the care for recognised refugees, or for rejected asylum seekers or persons who are obliged to leave the country, after a grace period of three months (FlüAG NRW 2003).

In 2012, the state's Law on Participation and Integration (*Teilhabe- und Integrationsgesetz*) came into force; it was the first integration law on the state level, which is a reflection of NRW's long immigration history. It promotes integration on state and municipality levels and allocates the task of accommodation and care for asylum seekers to the municipalities. A State Competence Centre for Integration supports all integration measures on the municipal level, notably by informing municipalities about regulations and funding schemes for the integration of various immigrant groups. Municipalities have the duty to collaborate with the responsible ministry (Ministry of Children, Family, Refugees and Integration) for the purpose of integration planning (*Teilhabe- und Integrationsgesetz NRW* 2012).

In December 2015, a key strategy paper (*Eckpunktepapier*) was formulated by the Ministry of Interior and Municipal Affairs (*Ministerium für Inneres und Kommunales*, MIK) and NGOs such as the refugee council and integration council of NRW. The paper officially expressed a paradigm shift in the understanding of integration, shifting the focus from mere organisation of asylum seekers' accommodation to responding to individual needs for accommodation, care and support and ensuring that those are met in a decent and appropriate manner. In this context, housing was stressed as a crucial element of integration. Clear and measurable quality standards for all kinds of accommodation were envisaged. Those quality standards, which had already applied to secondary reception facilities since October 2014, were made mandatory for the whole of NRW and were also applicable for the first reception facilities of the state. However, as one interview partner argued, "the ultimate decision regarding the standards to be implemented is taken by the ministry" (interview with a district administration representative, Cologne, October 2018). Furthermore, those minimum standards were not made obligatory for group accommodations

on the municipal level. The paper also envisaged intensified communication between governmental and NGOs, and transparent communication of measures—such as information regarding new facilities—to the public (MIK et al. 2016).

Implementation

According to the federal and state laws and ordinances, the accommodation of asylum seekers in NRW follows a three-stage structure. As a first step, asylum seekers are allocated to one of the five first reception facilities of the state (*Landeserstaufnahmeeinrichtung/EAE*), where they stay between five and eight days (AsylG §22, Decree MKFFI–LEA MKFFI). There, they are registered, a medical check is carried out, and they are presented to officers of the Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) in order to organise the status determination procedure. As a second step, asylum seekers are transferred to one of the central accommodation facilities (*Zentrale Unterbringungseinheit/ZUE*), where they have to stay for up to three months to await the decision on their asylum application (§47 AsylG). After that period, the asylum seekers are redistributed to the municipalities, where they are allocated to group accommodations and eventually further distributed to individual apartments. However, in reality there are a considerable number of asylum seekers who are re-distributed even though their asylum application is still pending (interview with a representative of the Department for Transitional Housing, Aachen, October 2018). This is either due to the overwhelming numbers of applicants, meaning their applications cannot be processed within the three-month period, or to complicated status determination procedures which in any case take longer than three months.

Due to changes in the state asylum laws, certain groups of asylum seekers are now obliged to stay in the first reception facilities for the full duration of the status determination process. This not only applies to people from “safe countries of origin,” but also to others who have little prospect of being granted refugee status. The measure aims to ensure the departure of rejected asylum seekers and facilitate their deportation. Integration measures are not offered during this period, and children in first reception facilities are formally excluded from compulsory education:

They have to stay up to eighteen months in the state facilities until the decision. Until the requirements are fulfilled, there is this categorisation of good and bad prospects of staying...If there is a 50% acceptance rate it is a good prospect of staying...but additionally after the legal changes concerning the Asylum Law, people who are not from safe countries of origin...are also not allowed to leave the state facilities.

(Interview with a NRW refugee council representative, October 2018)

Refugee reception in Saxony

Laws and Directives

In Saxony, the state's Refugee Reception Law (*Sächsisches Flüchtlingsaufnahmegesetz*, SächsFlüAG) regulates the reception, accommodation and distribution of asylum seekers in accordance with the Asylum Law and the Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act. It was first enacted in 2003 and has changed several times since then, especially between 2015 and 2018, mainly concerning the participation of the state in the financing of reception. The law obliges the counties and cities in Saxony to accommodate asylum seekers (§2 SächsFlüAG). The distribution of asylum seekers is based on a quota system that is calculated on the basis of population size. Housing can be provided not only as collective accommodation, but also in individual apartments (§3 SächsFlüAG). Counties and cities are reimbursed for the allocation of asylum seekers with a quarterly lump sum of EUR 2,446 per person (§10.1 SächsFlüAG).

Between 2009 and 2014, state authorities developed quality standards for the accommodation of asylum seekers in Saxony (*Heim-TÜV*) and implemented a monitoring system for collective and decentralised accommodation throughout the state (Der Sächsische Ausländerbeauftragte 2017, 2019). Since 2015, Saxony has issued funding directives to financially promote offers from independent sponsors, including the "Integrative Measures" (*Integrative Maßnahmen*) and "Social Care Refugees" (*Soziale Betreuung Flüchtlinge*) directives. The former directive promotes measures for integration, participation and social cohesion, such as language courses, first orientation measures and education, while the latter supports services around resolving conflicts, coping with everyday life, volunteer work, and dialogues between the resident population and refugees. Applications from social service providers on the basis of those directives are processed by the accommodation authorities in the counties and cities.

Unlike NRW, the state of Saxony has no integration law. There is however an integration concept, which was first developed in 2012 and reformulated in 2018. The concept strongly focuses on "ordered immigration of qualified labour migrants and students," arguing that with demographic decline there is a necessity to "develop economically sustainable solutions, mobilising and using the potential of immigrants with their children and grandchildren" in order to maintain Saxony's standards of living (SSMSV 2018, 4). While the reception of asylum seekers and integration efforts are mentioned in the concept, a utilitarian tone prevails, arguing that the efforts of integration "might pay off in the long run due to rising tax revenues," if refugees are integrated into the labour market (SSMSV 2018, 21). This rather one-dimensional approach towards migration and integration corresponds with the long conservative political tradition in Saxony, and also reflects the specific migration history of a post-socialist region, as discussed above.

As will be shown, those diverging regional migration histories serve as an important explanatory framework for the analysis in this chapter.

Implementation

The Saxon State Directorate is responsible for the initial reception and redistribution of asylum seekers in the state. It decides how many asylum seekers are assigned to each county/city according to a distribution quota that is based on the population share. On the basis of this quota, Chemnitz receives about 6.0% of all asylum seekers in Saxony. In 2016, the Saxon State Directorate agreed to notify the municipal associations four to six weeks in advance about the approximate number of asylum seekers who would be distributed to the respective municipalities in each of the coming weeks (interview with a Saxon State Directorate representative, November 2018). This was strongly appreciated by municipal representatives, as the following interviewee states:

We noticed that more and more people came. The numbers increased more and more. Then the municipalities in Saxony actually united [in an “asylum” working group] and demanded that state authorities provide more information. Because we knew too little or too late about who was coming, and when. And I can’t magically find an apartment tomorrow that is fully equipped, with cutlery and a couch and a bed.

(interview with a representative of the social welfare office, Chemnitz, October 2018)

The “asylum” working group consisted of representatives on the county level and met several times a year in 2015 in order to increase their influence at the state level. The working group invited state representatives from the State Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection or the State Directorate in order to discuss problems regarding local reception and accommodation processes. Through this, the municipalities had the possibility to be involved in decision-making to some extent and to change certain situations.

The State Directorate organises the redistribution of asylum seekers by checking which counties or cities will be next to take in asylum seekers, or which counties are lagging furthest behind with the quota. As of November 2018, there were six staff members who complete the task of the distribution, each one being responsible for certain counties. A computer tool provides information on asylum seekers that are ready to be distributed. They are arranged in groups of ten to fifty people and assigned to a county. A list is sent to the counties and they have the possibility to veto if there is anything wrong with the tableau. The staff of the Saxon State Directorate generally coordinate with the staff at the county level:

...Often county authorities say: “I still have an apartment in which I can accommodate four people.” This could be a family or four single people. But they have to get along with each other. They are not supposed to be completely contrary nationalities. “Do we find anybody suitable there?” We certainly consider that, as far as the distribution quota allows.

(Interview with a Saxon State Directorate representative,
November 2018)

The State Directorate seeks to distribute groups which consist of families and individual asylum seekers, in order to arrive at an even mixture. According to the State Directorate, counties prefer to accommodate families, as they are considered to be easier to care for than single persons. The staff members also consider the ethnic composition of asylum seekers to respond to municipalities’ assessments that some nationalities are more troublesome than others (interview with a Saxon State Directorate representative, November 2018). Even though there is a cooperative climate between local/county and state actors, the final decisions are made by the State Directorate, and in case of disagreement are implemented in a top-down manner:

It’s just going to be set that way. As a rule, however, this works quite well and the employees of Saxony’s State Directorate have a very good relationship with the employees on the municipal level.

(Interview with a Saxon State Directorate representative,
November 2018)

The cooperative climate is also fostered by transparent communication between the state and local/county levels. For example, allocation lists are regularly sent out to the counties and municipalities, and at the end of the year, the total numbers are collated, to check if every county and municipality collaborated in the accommodation of asylum seekers in accordance with the quota system.

The distribution of asylum seekers to the sites of secondary reception usually takes place after the initiation of the asylum process, which consists of the creation of a case file and the individual status determination interview, carried out by an officer of the Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees. People with a good prospect of being granted the right to stay are re-distributed quite quickly to the secondary reception system. Since new federal laws were introduced in 2015, people from so-called safe countries of origin or people for whom another EU Member State is responsible according to the Dublin procedure stay longer in the first reception facilities. However, during the times of rapidly increasing arrival numbers from winter 2014–2015 onwards, there were also numerous cases where asylum seekers were re-distributed to secondary reception sites without even having started the registration and application procedure (interview with a Saxon State Directorate representative, November 2018).

All in all, the Saxon State Directorate takes the decisions in the distribution process. There is a dialogue with the counties and cities, and concerns are heard, but in the end the State Directorate assigns the asylum seekers and the counties have to take care of the accommodation.

Local implementation processes

The following section examines how the reception system actually works in our case study sites, focusing on the local structures, actor networks and responsibilities. The analysis will also highlight how those systems worked in times of increased arrivals, commonly referred to as “refugee crisis,” in 2015–2016.

Local implementation of asylum seeker reception in Aachen

Responsible authorities and structure of the reception process

In the city of Aachen, the Department for Transitional Housing (*Übergangswohnen*) is responsible for the accommodation of asylum seekers who are transferred from the state’s central accommodation facility (ZUE). The Department for Transitional Housing is part of the municipal Department for Housing, Social Affairs and Integration (*Fachbereich Wohnen, Soziales und Integration*). Before arrivals increased in 2013, the Department for Transitional Housing had to provide accommodation for a limited number of people (less than 100 back in 2009), who were accommodated in municipal collective accommodation, including self-contained apartments. With the rising number of people in 2013 and 2014 (March 2011: 151, November 2013: 507, October 2014: 845), the municipal administration established a cross-sectoral task force, within which representatives of different departments of the administration decided on all measures “very concrete, jointly, and also with joint responsibility” (interview with a representative of the Department for Transitional Housing, Aachen, October 2018). Members of the task force highlight the intensity of the cooperation, due to close individual contact with representatives of various departments, enabling decision-making processes.

As the municipality has the majority ownership of the municipal housing association, it could provide housing in municipal buildings which were empty and awaiting restoration. After a provisional renovation, asylum seekers “who already knew German a little bit, who had their kids in school, and who knew how things worked were transferred to their own apartments, to free up capacity in the transitional facilities” (interview with a representative of the Department for Transitional Housing, Aachen, October 2018). Additionally, private homeowners were encouraged to offer apartments for rent. As the political support in Aachen for the reception of asylum seekers is high, members of the municipal parliament have direct consultations with

the task force when quick decisions on the acquisition of housing need to be taken, “and then we give you the ‘OK’ with an urgent decision” (interview with a representative of the Department for Transitional Housing, Aachen, October 2018). The Department for Transitional Housing has to provide regular reports on the housing situation to the municipal parliament, so that necessary decisions can be made and implemented as fast as possible.

INTERNAL REDISTRIBUTION

The redistribution of asylum seekers to Aachen is decided by the Arnsberg district government according to the criteria of the state’s Law on Reception of Refugees (§3 FlüAG NRW). The Department for Transitional Housing gets detailed information two weeks beforehand in order to prepare the allocation and has to report monthly statistics on locally accommodated asylum seekers to the district government. Aachen provides collective accommodation (2015: 171, 2018: 950), self-contained apartments in transitional accommodation (2015: 329, 2018: 650) and regular apartments (2015: 341, 2018: 814). Decisions on the type of accommodation are based upon the asylum seekers’ language knowledge, needs and skills. Even though asylum seekers are eligible to rent and live in apartments individually, this is very rare in practice, due to limited housing offers in the city, notably within social housing. Thus, the local accommodation system is strongly shaped by the logics and structures of municipal authorities and housing markets.

In order to respond to citizens’ concerns in the process of refugee reception, public meetings were organised prior to the opening of a group accommodation. They were jointly organised with the press office of the city and politicians.

They confronted their voters. They showed up and said: “We are fully behind this idea! We want to manage this as the city of Aachen. And please talk to us if it doesn’t work here in the city region.”

(interview with a representative of the Department for Transitional Housing, Aachen, October 2018)

Social workers also participated in these events. According to the Department for Transitional Housing, the opportunity for direct contact between Aachen’s citizens and the social workers of the group accommodation increased trust in the allocation procedure, and helped to minimise fears. This structure also helped to mediate conflicts or misunderstandings during the time of allocation in the neighbourhood.

SOCIAL CARE

Even though the immediate sustenance, accommodation and benefits to secure asylum seekers’ livelihoods are the responsibility of a municipality,

there is an intensive cooperation with various non-governmental welfare organisations that provide counselling. Welfare associations offer all kinds of consulting, for example, how to apply for asylum seekers' benefits or child benefits, or how to find a place in a kindergarten. Often, members of NGOs are much more present in the group facilities than the part-time social workers who are officially in charge, so that the former "are more often approachable for the people" (interview with a German Red Cross representative, Aachen, November 2018), even though their task is to ensure decent everyday living conditions rather than provide social counselling.

Relations between administrative actors and welfare organisations are described as positive by several interviewees, with informal consultations on a day-to-day basis:

A lot is managed in an informal manner. If you know each other personally, you can work things out face to face. Often that is faster than following the official procedure.

(Interview with an NGO representative, Aachen,
November 2018)

Also the cooperation among the NGOs is good. Furthermore, several local NGOs are connected with organisations at the state level and can thus profit from an expanded network for the flow of information or influence on political decisions at the state level. This can be highlighted by the example of the local project "*Café Zuflucht*" (Café Refuge), which provides counselling regarding the asylum procedure. The NGO is supported by the association *Refugio e.V.*, which is a member of the state's refugee council. While the counselling activities of *Café Zuflucht* are funded by the state, the state refugee council is commissioned by the state government to coordinate local complaint management. If asylum seekers or counsellors in *Café Zuflucht* in Aachen have complaints, those complaints are collected and channelled through the state refugee council and can thus be dealt with and resolved at the state level.

The coordination of the complaint service provided by the refugee council serves as a control mechanism. It means that the accommodation facilities, first reception facilities and central accommodation facilities are visited without prior announcement to check how they are working and if there are any problems. These will be discussed at regular intervals at the round tables with the state secretary and the district government. We talk about how it [accommodation] can work practically and which changes should be implemented.

(Interview with a NRW refugee council representative,
October 2018)

As stated by the interview partner from the state's refugee council, complaints at the local level regarding the length of the asylum procedure are

dealt with by local counselling centres, and “when ...refugees are actually in the municipalities, it’s possible to support them. This means at local level together with politicians, but also with the administration to see how the integration process of refugees works.” (interview with a NRW refugee council representative, October 2018)

LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF ASYLUM WITH MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

In December 2014, a platform called “*Bündnis für Flüchtlinge*” (Alliance for Refugees) was set up by the mayor of Aachen, aiming to connect different local actors such as volunteers, representatives of confederations or welfare organisations⁴. This platform, which was divided into three different working groups, evolved into a network of institutionalised actors with a loose but efficient working structure, as a representative of an NGO reflects.

We have an association for refugees. There were people, simply citizens, who united in 2015. And this network still exists...because it takes part in many meetings and is present everywhere. And these people do most of the actual integration work.

(Interview with an NGO representative, Aachen,
November 2018)

Having united to manage practical issues at first, the platform soon engaged with conceptual work on integration issues, such as the reformulation of the city’s integration concept in 2018 (Stadt Aachen 2018).

The huge engagement of different civil society actors proved a challenging task, not only regarding the coordination of activities among the various organisations, but also regarding asylum seekers’ access to information about the various services available. Consequently, publicly employed social workers who worked in the group accommodation facilities served as information brokers:

...every accommodated person has the possibility to benefit from volunteer services because they are brought together by the social workers. They know the different services. And even if a refugee is not picked up from their building by a volunteer, he or she still has the possibility of going somewhere and getting involved.

(Interview with a representative of the Department for Transitional Housing, October 2018)

Additionally, there are three people within the Department of Transitional Housing who are responsible for the supervision of the voluntary engagements and offer advanced training for the volunteers. According to the department, depending on the neighbourhood, there are varying degrees of citizens’ engagement, as well as varying degrees of anxiety and fear.

Depending on where you live and your immediate environment and its opportunities, there are certainly differences in the cultural offerings, in soft skills and neighbourhood interactions.

(Interview with a representative of the Department for Transitional Housing, Aachen, October 2018)

Another aspect of local asylum governance which was brought to the fore by our interviewees was the adaptation of activities to regulatory changes. Thus, while some years ago refugee counselling was primarily related to the asylum procedure as such, recent regulatory changes have enabled some groups of asylum seekers to strive for integration already while they are waiting for their asylum decision. Consequently, counselling now also deals with access to the labour market, language courses or education. While on the state level and regarding state-sponsored activities there is a strict separation between asylum seekers with “good prospects” for refugee status and those with “bad prospects,” local counselling ignores those differences and offers consultation regarding integration activities to every client:

It means: from now on, we advise people independently of their legal asylum status. It means: people with tolerated stay. It means: People during their asylum procedure...It doesn't matter whether it is a recognised refugee or family member who arrived later or whoever.

(Interview with an NGO representative, October 2018)

This stance is in line with the integration concept of the city of Aachen from 2018, which departs from traditional approaches towards integration and stresses joint citizenry, human dignity and an inclusionary attitude as the basis of cohabitation: the “Aachen attitude” is defined as a “general inner position, with which all Aachen citizens can engage with each other, no matter their origin. A joint attitude supports a sense of belonging and coherence, so that all citizens—migrants and autochthones—will feel accepted” (Stadt Aachen 2018, 9). The concept highlights the potential of immigrants, perceiving them as “active designers of their life, brave and flexible people who can enrich society” (Stadt Aachen 2018, 11). This approach aligns well with the participatory approach towards integration formulated by the State Law of NRW on Participation and Integration (Law on the support of societal participation and integration in NRW, 2012), which was the first integration law in the Federal Republic of Germany. Both this law and the municipal integration concept present a mature stance towards diversity, developed on the basis of a long migration history in the region.

Local implementation of asylum seeker reception in Chemnitz

Responsible authorities and structure of the reception process

The Saxon Refugee Reception Act (*Sächsisches Flüchtlingsaufnahmegesetz*) is the regulatory basis for the organisation of asylum seekers' reception.

Regarding accommodation, it provides for group accommodation and decentralised accommodation in apartments. The city of Chemnitz decided to focus on decentralised accommodation in apartments, meaning that asylum seekers should preferably be housed in apartments rented by the social welfare office. The municipal accommodation and care concept of 2016 set the goal of housing two-thirds of asylum seekers in separate apartments. This goal had been reached in the past, where up to 80% of asylum seeking migrants were accommodated in apartments (Stadt Chemnitz 2016, 2). This was possible due to a considerable amount of available municipal housing stock, which made decentralised housing economically favourable. But the decision was also framed by the argument to avoid ghettoisation processes and promote the integration of asylum seekers, as some local interviewees put it. However, the distribution was limited to some central areas in the city, because especially on the outskirts, citizens protested against asylum seekers being housed in their neighbourhoods.

In 2015, Chemnitz had four collective accommodation facilities with 376 beds (Stadt Chemnitz 2015, 6). As of 2018, there are five collective accommodation facilities, with a total capacity of 546 beds: two operated by the city of Chemnitz, and three by a property management company that is contracted by the municipality (Stadt Chemnitz 2018b, 7). The municipal accommodation and care concept contains standards for the operation of the collective accommodation facilities based on the Saxon Administrative Regulation on Group Accommodation (*VwV Unterbringung*). This includes, for instance, that the accommodation should be spread all over the city and should be well connected to the public transport system. In addition, group accommodation should generally not host more than 150 people and should provide personal space of at least six square metres per person (Stadt Chemnitz 2015, 7; Stadt Chemnitz 2016, 4). Every collective accommodation centre has a security guard and usually a fence surrounding the territory. Security conferences take place in order to ensure safety inside and outside the accommodation centres (interview with a representative of the social welfare office, Chemnitz, October 2018). As municipal representatives argue, those conferences mostly address the protection of asylum seekers, as there have been cases of violent attacks against them. On the other hand, the social welfare office also cooperates with the Chemnitz police in order to monitor the asylum seekers. Police patrols take place in the surroundings of the accommodation facilities. Employees of the social welfare office also conduct control visits to the apartments, even if the tenants are not present. Sometimes the police are also involved in these visits. Even though this measure was officially introduced via the new accommodation statute of 2017, representatives of NGOs doubt if it conforms to the German Constitution, which stresses the right to privacy (Article 13 GG). The implementation of this measure must be interpreted as a political effect of the strong politicisation of asylum in Saxony. Especially in the city of Chemnitz, security concerns are an important part of the public discourse on refugee reception.

The majority of apartments is rented and furnished by the social welfare office (interview with a representative of the social welfare office, Chemnitz, October 2018). This office rented 864 apartments in 2016, and 604 apartments in 2017 (Stadt Chemnitz 2018b, 7). The apartments, which have access to the public transport system and support facilities, are located in different parts of the city. There is a maximum occupancy of five people in a three-room apartment, and four people in a two-room apartment. All apartments are furnished and equipped with white goods (Stadt Chemnitz 2015, 8; Stadt Chemnitz 2016, 5). To find suitable apartments, the municipality cooperates with the municipal property and building management company GGG, and also encourages private homeowners to offer their apartments. Those measures are financially supported by the state:

And then there were various directives that were supposed to provide financial incentives for landlords to provide housing for a certain period of time. The Free State [of Saxony] also paid money when a landlord, a private landlord or a large cooperative, said: “I will dedicate this apartment for refugee housing for five years and make it available to you.” Then the landlord got a one-off payment.

(Interview with a representative of the social welfare office, Chemnitz, October 2018)

Since December 2015, the property management company GGG has also been involved in organising the renting, and the supply and maintenance of furniture (Stadt Chemnitz 2016, 5). Since the numbers of asylum seekers decreased in 2016, apartments were rented out to other tenants in 2017 and 2018. In addition, the social welfare office tries to transfer the rental agreement to asylum-seeking tenants after their asylum request has been accepted, so that these accepted refugees do not have to move out of their temporary housing and can thus keep their social contacts and relations with the neighbourhood.

INTERNAL REDISTRIBUTION

When the municipal social welfare office receives the list of incoming asylum seekers from the Saxon State Directorate, the staff usually has one week to organise the distribution of asylum seekers to the accommodation facilities. According to the accommodation and care concept of 2015, incoming asylum seekers are supposed to stay in collective accommodation for an initial period of orientation, before being distributed to apartments (Stadt Chemnitz 2015, 6). However, in 2015, due to the increasing number of incoming asylum seekers, some asylum seekers were immediately allocated to individual housing. The redistribution decisions are taken by a team from the social welfare office. Primarily, couples, families and single women are distributed to apartments, while single people are selected as flat mates to

share an apartment. Since 2016, the distribution to apartments has also depended on the prospect of an asylum seeker being granted the right to stay (Stadt Chemnitz 2016, 3, 5).

They first should stay in the collective accommodation in order to determine: who would suit an apartment? Who should remain in the collective accommodation? Who fits, who integrates well? Who is participating well? But this process was impossible to operate due to the influx of people. We took in 200 people a week during the peak phases, at the end of 2015. There was no time to sort. We immediately said: “Families with children, into the apartments!” Our goal was first of all to accommodate, provide food, money and a secure life.

(Interview with a representative of the social welfare office,
Chemnitz, October 2018)

The property management company GGG has extra employees who organise house meetings when asylum seekers move in and introduce these newcomers to house rules such as quiet hours, cleaning and the separation of waste and recycling (interview with a representative of the social welfare office, Chemnitz, October 2018). This is also meant as a measure to reduce concerns of the other tenants regarding co-habitation with asylum seekers.

The updated municipal asylum concept of 2018 provides that families are accommodated immediately in apartments and single men are hosted in collective accommodation during the whole asylum procedure (Stadt Chemnitz 2018b, 7).

They started to accommodate only families in individual housing, and allocated single men to shared apartments. Those men were then re-allocated into huge collective accommodation centres if there was a case of conflict. For example, if there was an argument among flat-mates, and one person said: “I don’t want to live with these people any more,” this was used as an opportunity to disband the shared apartment. And they were then redistributed to collective accommodation.

(Interview with a Chemnitz NGO representative,
February 2019)

There were several reasons for this policy change: first, regarding the management of housing capacities, the municipality had engaged in long-term agreements with two big collective accommodation centres. Given the declining numbers of arriving asylum-seekers, the re-enforcement of collective housing was a matter of economic rationality. Second, addressing the selectivity of redistributing single male asylum seekers into collective housing, the public discourse on criminality and security is relevant. As a triggering event, several interviewees identified the so-called “Jaber al-Bakr incident,” where an asylum seeker in Chemnitz was found to be engaging

in terrorist networks and had collected explosive material in his apartment. Thus, the redistribution of single male asylum seekers can also be interpreted as an effect of criminalisation of asylum seekers and securitisation of the asylum discourse: “They think that they can control people better in collective accommodation centres” (interview with a Chemnitz NGO representative, February 2019).

With regard to the quality of the accommodation, interview partners assess the apartments as of good quality and well-equipped. However, the quality of group accommodation was found to have changed since 2015. This was mostly due to two new group accommodation facilities with 150 places that were set up at the end of 2015 and early 2016, and which have a bad reputation.

There are two collective accommodation centres and if you are accommodated there it is understood as punishment. I don't know whether this is also formulated like that by the employees of the social welfare office. They are really ugly; two huge buildings. So far, I have only been to one. There is a big wire mesh fence around it, and security. I had to hand in my identity card. There are only men in there and when you live there, you think you will never get out unless you are deported. These are huge shelters and only one social worker works there. That's not sufficient at all.

(interview with a Chemnitz NGO representative,
February 2019)

An interviewee from another NGO in Chemnitz even claims that a differentiation into “good” and “bad” asylum seekers is taking place, resulting in selective redistribution into specific collective accommodation facilities:

There are those that are considered as better ones, where families also live. And there are those that are considered as the places where petty criminals or even felons go. The clients also know that. I have already heard people say: “I don't want to go there; I don't want to become a criminal”.

(Interview with a Chemnitz NGO representative,
November 2018)

SOCIAL CARE

Usually the social welfare office is responsible for the social care of asylum seekers in Chemnitz. Until 2014, social workers of the social welfare office helped asylum seekers to orientate in the new environment. They provided consultation hours in the collective accommodation centres and in the social welfare office. With the increasing number of asylum seekers in 2015, the city of Chemnitz has mainly delegated this task to four non-governmental welfare organisations. These contracts usually last for one year and are

renewed, if necessary, three months before the end of the contract. The four NGOs take care of asylum seekers that are accommodated in apartments. One employee is responsible for eighty asylum seekers (interview with a Chemnitz NGO representative, November 2018). The collective accommodation centres are looked after by social workers of the social welfare office or the private operator (Stadt Chemnitz 2018b, 16). According to the municipal accommodation and care concept these tasks include support in getting accustomed to a new way of life, support in the organisation of daily life, support with basic health and hygiene care, promotion of contacts with the resident population, psychosocial support, support in moving into an apartment, and mediation of integration offers (Stadt Chemnitz 2015, 13). The asylum concept of 2016 emphasises the promotion of independence and integration of asylum seekers with a high prospect of being granted a right to stay; social workers are instructed to focus on those people (Stadt Chemnitz 2016, 8). Social workers execute the social support according to the guiding principles of the city of Chemnitz. They have to visit the asylum seekers in their apartments at least once a month and offer consultation and individual advice. The social workers are also obliged to check the apartment and communicate to the social welfare office if anything is damaged (interview with a Chemnitz NGO representative, November 2018). According to several interviewees, there is less access to counselling and integration services for people who are accommodated in collective accommodation, because they are often not aware of these services and receive less individualised advice (interview with a Chemnitz NGO representative, November 2018 and February 2019).

In addition to the social support organised by the city of Chemnitz, several NGOs have been present for many years in Chemnitz and offer a variety of counselling and integration projects for migrants and asylum seekers. Caritas, for instance, offers migration counselling for adult migrants, counselling for asylum seekers, and Café International. The café was founded in 1996 and serves as an open meeting space for refugees, other migrants and Chemnitz citizens. The concept has changed according to the changing needs of the asylum seekers. At the beginning international newspapers were an important offer for many people, and later computers with internet access. Nowadays Café International is mainly a contact point for consultation for asylum seekers and recognised refugees:

It is a meeting place for refugees, and at the same time we can offer counselling for orientation in everyday life: “How do I register my child in school? How do I open a bank account? I need an interpreter for a doctor’s appointment. I have a problem with an authority; I don’t know how this works. I have to fill in an application form. I have received a letter and I want to write an answer.” We do all that. I call it a living room consultation.

(Interview with a Chemnitz NGO representative, January 2019)

In addition, information on certain topics of interest is presented, such as the Saxon school system, and experts are invited in some cases. Café International is well known and frequently visited by about forty to fifty refugees a day, mostly from Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia or Morocco.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF ASYLUM WITH MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

In 2015, when the number of incoming asylum seekers increased, the mayor of Chemnitz decided to hold weekly meetings with various local actors involved in the reception process in order to accelerate decision-making.

So she said: “That’s the topic that I have on my desk and I have to make decisions for the city here.” Because, there were so many decisions to be made in the administration, with three and a half thousand employees...that’s just difficult—even as an office manager—to quickly say: “Order 200 beds quickly!” Or: “Buy this quickly!” I always need cooperation partners for my work....And that’s why what we called the “Asylum coordination staff meeting” was held every Monday....And there, all topics that required decisions were put on the table.

(Interview with a representative of the social welfare office, Chemnitz, October 2018)

This coordination staff meeting included employees from, *inter alia*, the youth welfare office who are responsible for unaccompanied minors; the purchasing department who are responsible for buying household items, such as beds, couches and refrigerators; the personnel department who are responsible for recruiting new employees; and the services department who are responsible for granting benefits (interview with a representative of the social welfare office, Chemnitz, October 2018). Those NGOs who were sub-contracted by the municipality for social work with asylum seekers were also partly invited to these meetings.

The decisions of the mayor also served to reduce or circumvent bureaucratic hurdles, for example, regarding the issuing of tenders for public orders, or the requirement to do an inventory of all public goods, which would have included all newly purchased furniture for asylum seekers’ apartments.

...and everyone said: “We have to put out a Europe-wide tender to get this stuff!” We are a public service! We can’t just drive to Möbel Boss [German furniture chain] and fill up a trailer. So decisions had to be made. “Can we deviate from that now?” And then the mayor must say: “Yes! We will deviate from that. We will call there and ask whether they still have couches!”

(Interview with a representative of the social welfare office, Chemnitz, October 2018)

The interviewee highlights the fact that those meetings were headed by the mayor, so that manifold decisions could be taken without lengthy horizontal and vertical decision-making processes in the municipal administration:

Certainly there were different opinions sometimes, but you needed to come to a decision. Or you needed somebody who was entitled to make the decision for you. That's why we needed her [the mayor], as chief decision-maker.

(Interview with a representative of the social welfare office, Chemnitz, October 2018)

After arrival numbers decreased, the coordination staff meeting was dissolved in January 2017 and the tasks were once again executed by the responsible administrative units (Stadt Chemnitz 2018b, 24). This regular structure arranges consultations of the social welfare office with NGOs on a six-weekly basis, organised in various working groups such as "Counselling Working Group" or "Health Working Group." During those meetings, the NGOs are informed about new regulations and amendments in the reception procedure (interview with a representative of the social welfare office, Chemnitz, October 2018). Furthermore, the immigration commissioner and the social welfare office also organise network meetings and workshops on asylum every six months in order to promote exchange between the different actors and to discuss relevant topics (interview with a representative of the social welfare office, Chemnitz, October 2018).

You can always pick out interesting things and it is a good opportunity to meet. That means having the people who are active in the field in one place and actually seeing a face that you have only heard on the phone before, and that's what it's good for. In terms of content [presentations and workshops], it's mixed; I'm not always interested in everything.

(Interview with a Chemnitz NGO representative, February 2019)

Most of the interviewees stated that there is a good actors' network of those involved in the reception of asylum seekers, based on mutual trust, support and cooperation. One interviewee articulated a slight decrease of cooperation since asylum seekers' numbers had fallen, which leads to the assumption that the enormous pressure provoked and supported the establishment of a dense network and cooperative relations between multiple stakeholders. Notwithstanding those positive reflections, we need to stress the persistence of hierarchical relationships between state and non-state actors in the case of Chemnitz. Being involved in communication processes does not mean that NGOs in Chemnitz were or are invited to participate in decision-making processes. Thus, from the analytical perspective of the MLG approach, we cannot clearly identify an expansion of such activities in this case.

The outcomes

The comparative analysis of local reception systems in the cities of Aachen and Chemnitz has shown manifold commonalities and convergences, but also differences in terms of policy interpretation and implementation. One major commonality is the organisation of asylum reception as a top-down process, starting at the state/district level, and based on a distribution key which ensures a regional fair share. While municipalities are actually responsible for secondary reception, they also received asylum seekers at the stage of first reception during the “refugee crisis.” In both local/regional case studies, there were policy adaptations reacting to the changed situation, notably regarding the state funding of asylum reception processes, but also regarding integration measures. In Saxony, the first measure was the development of quality standards and a monitoring system for group accommodations in 2014. This was followed by a funding scheme for integration measures, coordinated on the state level. The Social Ministry developed an integration concept in 2012, which was reformulated in 2018 and can be seen as a guideline for integration measures and subsequent politics on the state level. However, it mostly focuses on “ordered migration of labour migrants and students” rather than on immigrants in general, and it follows a rather assimilationist approach towards integration and a utilitarian argumentation. The allocation of asylum seekers and decisions on the funding of integration measures mostly follow a top-down logic. Even though actors from local and county levels and non-governmental actors are integrated in multi-level communication structures and can present their experiences and assessments—for example, regarding negotiations with the district government on the redistribution of asylum seekers—they are not involved in decision-making processes or the development of strategic approaches towards the reception and integration of asylum seekers.

The state of NRW enacted an integration law in 2012, which provides the central philosophy and regulatory basis for subsequent integration measures. It was the first state integration law in Germany and highlights the strong and long-term role of immigration in the state of NRW. Regarding the issue of refugee immigration, the law was followed by a strategy paper in 2015, which was jointly developed by governmental and non-governmental actors. They identified housing as the basis for integration processes and defined quality standards for asylum-seekers’ accommodation. Furthermore, multi-level cooperation and communication processes were strengthened, for example, with a complaint management system coordinated by the state’s refugee council, or with the installation of a state competence centre for integration which supports all integration measures on the municipal level and is responsible for the allocation of funds for NGOs. Both those measures are backed up by the state’s integration law, which in paragraphs nine and ten sets out support integration measures of NGOs as

well as the representation of municipal stakeholder groups such as refugee councils on the state level (Law on the support of societal participation and integration in NRW, 2012). This paves the way for MLG processes, meaning that actors located at different levels participate in decision-making processes.

Thus, MLG processes appear to be more developed in NRW than in Saxony, as actors' networks seem to be better vertically connected and thus also NGOs and municipal representatives can engage in policy-making processes, while in Saxony, NGOs seem to be less well connected vertically and have less influence on policy-making processes. An important reason may be found in the migration history of both states and the general political culture. While NRW presents itself as a diversity-oriented state and furthermore gives integration processes a strong foundation via its Integration Law, Saxon politics is shaped by its socialist and post-socialist past, with great reluctance to use participatory approaches, a conservative political culture and a strong politicisation of migration and asylum, so that more diversity-oriented approaches and NGOs that advocate for immigrants and refugees have more difficulties being heard.

Let's now turn to the local-to-local comparison, focusing on the reception, care and integration of asylum-seeking migrants in the cities of Aachen and Chemnitz. The statistical data on both cities show that they have about the same population size and wealth level, but that there are some differences regarding the demographic development, and also regarding political culture, which both influence the local governance of reception. While the city of Aachen has a long and notable migration history which was proactively integrated in the local narrative, the city of Chemnitz could be labelled as a New Immigrant Destination (see Lichter and Johnson 2009; Ray and Morse 2004). In Chemnitz, visible diversity has only emerged since the turn of the century, and asylum seekers and refugees take a greater share in the diversity development than in Aachen. In both cities, our analysis focused on the topic of reception, notably during 2015 and 2016, when the German reception system was put under tremendous pressure.

Regarding the organisation of refugee reception, there were major differences at the beginning of the observation period, but converging processes in the later phase. While Aachen focused on group accommodation and started to develop decentralised housing only in response to rising arrival numbers, the city of Chemnitz had a concept of decentralised housing for a long time, not only because of available capacity in the housing market (as an effect of a long period of population decline), but also because of the assumption that the decentralised allocation of asylum seekers would support integration and increase acceptance in the local population. Both cities had to cope with quickly rising numbers of arrivals, which—in both cases—led to an intensification of horizontal cooperation, in order to arrive at quick solutions and avoid resources being wasted due to local actors conducting parallel activities. In both cities, NGOs play a major role

in social care, counselling and support for asylum seekers, and cooperation between state and non-state actors is described positively. Multi-level cooperation between local, district and state levels is less well developed; it exists, but mostly regarding practical issues of reception rather than strategic decisions.

The strongest divergence was observed in the treatment of those asylum seekers with lower prospects of receiving residence status. Generally, this group is difficult to handle on the local level. While state resources provide for the duration of the asylum procedure by law, and state and non-state funding schemes support the integration process after status determination, there is a gap regarding state resources for rejected asylum seekers. The detailed data for Chemnitz shows that the share of rejected asylum seekers in the city amounts to one tenth of all of those with an asylum background. Recent changes in the asylum law, which—among other aspects—stipulates that asylum seekers with poor prospects for refugee protection should stay in first reception facilities during the whole asylum procedure, may provide a relief for municipalities, as they will not have to cater for those migrants in the future⁵. However, during the years of increased arrivals, when those regulations were not yet in force, the opposite happened: even asylum seekers who had not yet entered the asylum procedure were redistributed to the municipalities, and local actors had to develop a stance towards two groups: those with good prospects of refugee protection, and those with bad prospects.

In the case of Aachen, the reaction was in line with the most recent municipal integration concept of 2018, with pleas for equality and citizenry for all persons who reside in the city. This stance is the foundation for the local actors' arguments for making the same integration offers to all migrants, regardless of their residence title or prospects of staying. In Chemnitz, on the other hand—where the topic of asylum is strongly politicised and connected to the topics of security and terrorism—the changes of asylum law supported a roll-back in the reception efforts: in particular, single male asylum seekers who are perceived as potentially problematic are now allocated to specific group accommodation facilities where they are subject to intensive control. This measure has a bi-directional signalling effect, as it shows that the local authorities respond to the population's safety concerns, and at the same time gives an inward signal to the asylum seekers that there is no integration path into the local society for the time being. At this point it becomes obvious that the regulatory changes which enforce separated reception paths for asylum seekers with high and low prospects of being granted a right to stay have trickled down into policy approaches at the municipal level.

An unresolved issue is the leap from “rejected asylum seeker” to “forced stay,” if repatriation or return cannot be organised. This situation holds true for the majority of rejected asylum seekers at the time of writing (2021).

Hence, a separation of people with good and bad prospects of staying may make sense from a state governance perspective, in terms of a clear signaling effect to the outside, but in terms of local practice it exacerbates the problem of integration, as integration measures come too late or not at all, and affected asylum seekers remain outside of the community.

Regarding the influence of local politics on asylum reception processes in Aachen and Chemnitz, we can see that Aachen, with a conservative mayor, acted more inclusively than the social democratic Chemnitz. The reasons for this rather unexpected differentiation lie in the migration history of both regions, and the political culture of the larger regions in which the cities are located (notably the political constellations at state level), and also reflect the power hierarchies in the governance of migration and asylum in Germany.

Final considerations on MLG

This chapter aimed to explore the governance of asylum seekers' reception in Germany, focusing on two local case studies and on accommodation arrangements as a crucial component in the reception process. The argumentation followed the rationale of this volume, which focuses on MLG as a distinctive configuration of policy making, characterised by: (1) challenging vertical state-centred hierarchies and blurring boundaries between state and society, (2) the involvement of interdependent actors for policy implementation, and (3) involving cooperation and interaction instead of imposing power. The central research question of this volume is if policy convergence is achieved by MLG or by top-down control.

The German local-to-local comparison showed that this question is not easy to answer: the comparative perspective revealed a number of commonalities in the local reception systems, but also differences, and converging but also diverging processes due to the increased pressure on the local reception system, and as a consequence of policy changes. In this final assessment, we will react to the three research hypotheses for this volume, namely: (1) MLG policymaking is more relevant in federal states, due to the higher necessity of coordination, (2) MLG arrangements will develop from below to more efficiently address complicated issues and (3) MLG stems from the agency of local level authorities and non-public actors, depending on their definition of the situation and their interest in the issues at hand.

Even though H1 seems to need a broader comparative framework, as offered in the concluding chapter of this volume, our findings regarding asylum governance in Germany which are given in this chapter and in Chapter 9 suggest that MLG policy-making is indeed strongly relevant in a federal state, due to the multiple levels of policymaking involved: the federal level itself, the state level, the district or county level, and municipalities. Alongside strong coordination efforts between all those levels, we can also see a common policy framework in the case of asylum-seeker redistribution:

starting at the *Königstein Key* described in Chapter 9, the idea of burden sharing in the reception of asylum seekers is scaled down from federal to state, then county and finally municipal and even neighbourhood level. Although local experiences sometimes challenge the strict logic of distribution keys by bringing local and regional variations of receptivity to the fore, the burden-sharing framework seems to act as a common ground upon which further political negotiations can take place. We can hypothesize that without the scalar distribution arrangement, politicisation of asylum would be even stronger, and policies even harder to implement in the complex federal system.

H2 and H3 both address the role of local actors, either regarding the impact of specific policy issues (H2) or considering the cooperation of public and non-public actors and negotiation of their specific interests (H3) in the context of MLG arrangements. The findings in this chapter have shown how strongly levels of policymaking are intertwined, notably regarding the implementation of policies introduced by the federal government. Even though the hierarchical structure of power in the federal system remained in place, the “refugee crisis” of 2015–2016 increased the visibility of local actors and thus their argumentative power in the structuration of asylum politics. This was most obvious in the restructuring of funding, with increasing lump sums for the reception process on the local level in both states under examination, NRW and Saxony. The analysis of local reception processes highlighted the interdependence of public and non-public actors. In both case studies, horizontal cooperation or network governance significantly increased during the “refugee crisis,” as did the intensity of bottom-up negotiations between local, district and state authorities. This was shown with the local alliance for refugees in the case of Aachen and NGO structures that connected policy actors at a local and state level in the case of North-Rhine Westphalia, as well as in the case of negotiations with the Saxon State Directorate regarding the demographic and ethnic composition of asylum seekers to be redistributed to the municipalities. However, even though cooperative interactions increased and were evaluated positively, the hierarchical power constellations between different levels of government and between public and non-public actors remained in place and restricted decisions on the ground. Thus, while local actor constellations, framing features and negotiation processes can efficiently address pressing issues in the reception process and find specific solutions on the local level, state power—imposed by means of law and funding schemes—helps to keep local reception systems harmonised, in line with the Common European Asylum System. Referring to research hypotheses H2 and H3, we can neither reject nor accept them. The analyses did not reveal MLG arrangements *sensu stricto*; rather we found multi-level communication and interaction between state and non-state stakeholders, but always together with some non-negligible degree of hierarchical power in place.

Notes

- 1 This is actually the case for the two local case studies presented in this chapter. In both federal states, district authorities act as an intermediary authority and have an important role in the asylum reception process: the district government (*Bezirksregierung*) in Aachen, and the Saxon State Directorate (*Landesdirektion*) in Chemnitz.
- 2 As a comparison: in Germany, the share of foreign population amounted to 11.7% in 2017 (StBA 2019, 26).
- 3 More details on the reception procedure starting at the borders are given in chapter 9.
- 4 Since April 2015, it is a network of the Aachen metropolitan region (*Städteregion*).
- 5 Several relevant bills were passed in the German parliament between 2015 and 2017. Regarding the prolongation of stay in first reception facilities for certain groups, notably the bill on accelerated asylum procedures (18/6185, 18/7538), the bill on the enforcement to leave the country (18/11546) and the extension of the list of safe countries of origin (18/1528) are relevant (see Beinhorn et al. 2019).

References

- Beinhorn, Jana, Simone Gasch, Birgit Glorius, Melanie Kintz, and Hanne Schneider. 2019. *National report on the governance of the asylum reception system in Germany*. Ceaseval Research on the Common European Asylum System. http://ceaseval.eu/publications/WP3_Germany.pdf
- BAMF (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge). 2016. *Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2015. Asyl, Migration und Integration*. Nürnberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2015.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=16
- BMI (Bundesministerium des Innern). 2016a. "Monat August 2016: 18.143 EASY-Registrierungen," Bundesministerium des Innern, updated September 9, 2016, <http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2016/09/asylantraege-august-2016.html?nn=3314802>
- . 2016b. *Migrationsbericht des Bundesamtes für Migration und Flüchtlinge im Auftrag der Bundesregierung. Migrationsbericht 2015*. Berlin: Bundesministerium des Innern. https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/themen/migration/migrationsbericht-2015.pdf;jsessionid=1AF54F8BF09CEE652750D0CD7FFC49CE.2_cid287?__blob=publicationFile&v=5
- Der Sächsische Ausländerbeauftragte, (ed.) 2017. *Heim-TÜV "2017. Teil I: Evaluation der dezentralen Unterbringung und der unteren Ausländerbehörden im Freistaat Sachsen*. Dresden: Der Sächsische Ausländerbeauftragte. https://sab.landtag.sachsen.de/dokumente/landtagskurier/SAB-HEIM_A4-TUEV-interaktiv-2017.pdf
- Der Sächsische Ausländerbeauftragte, (ed.) 2019. *Heim-TUV "2019. Teil II: Verwahrung "oder „Ankommen“? Die Unterbringungssituation in Sachsens Gemeinschaftsunterkünften für Geflüchtete*. Dresden: Der Sächsische Ausländerbeauftragte. https://sab.landtag.sachsen.de/dokumente/sab/SAB-HEIM_A4-TUEV2019_web-240619.pdf
- Egger, Christine. 2018. "Neues aus der Mittelstadt. Flucht und Migration in Passau." In *Flucht Migration und gesellschaftliche Transformationsprozesse. Transdisziplinäre Perspektiven*, edited by Simon Goebel, Thomas Fischer, Friedrich Kießling, and Angela Treiber, 141–164. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

- Frech, Siegfried, Reinhold Weber, Hans-Georg Wehling, and Paul Witt, (eds.) 2019. *Handbuch Kommunalpolitik*. Stuttgart.
- Lichter, Daniel T., and Kenneth M. Johnson. 2009. "Immigrant Gateways and Hispanic Migration to New Destinations." *International Migration Review* 43 no. 3: 496–518. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2009.00775.x>
- MIK (Ministerium für Inneres und Kommunales) et al. 2016. *Eckpunkte zur Aufnahme und Unterbringung von Flüchtlingen in Regeleinrichtungen des Landes NRW vom 22. Dezember 2015 konkretisiert durch Handlungsempfehlungen je Eckpunkt vom 17. Mai 2016*. https://www.mkffi.nrw/sites/default/files/asset/document/0_eckpunkte_und_handlungsempfehlungen-1.pdf
- Ray, Brian K., and Ann Morse. 2004. *Building the New American Community: Newcomer Integration and Inclusion Experiences in Non-Traditional Gateway Cities*. Sponsored by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/documents/immig/BNAC_Report1204.pdf
- SSMSV (Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Soziales und Verbraucherschutz). 2018. *Zuwanderung und Integration gut gestalten – Zusammenhalt leben. Zuwanderungs- und Integrationskonzept II des Freistaats Sachsen*. Dresden: Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Soziales und Verbraucherschutz, Geschäftsbereich Gleichstellung und Integration. https://www.zik.sachsen.de/download/ZIKII_Kurzbrochuere_barrierefrei_klein.pdf
- Stadt Aachen. 2018. Integrationskonzept Aachen 2018. Aachen – das sind wir alle! https://www.aachen.de/DE/stadt_buerger/gesellschaft_soziales/integration/pdf_fotos_materialien/Integrationskonzept_2018.pdf
- Stadt Chemnitz. 2015. Unterbringungs- und Betreuungskonzept von Flüchtlingen der Stadt Chemnitz (B-046/2015). Chemnitz. https://www.chemnitz.de/chemnitz/media/download/aktuelles/anlage3_unterbringungs_betreuungskonzept.pdf
- . 2016. Asylkonzept der Stadt Chemnitz als 1. Fortschreibung des Unterbringungs- und Betreuungskonzeptes von Flüchtlingen (B-055/2016). Chemnitz. https://www.chemnitz.de/chemnitz/media/aktuelles/fluechtlinge/asylkonzept_2016_05_neu.pdf
- . 2018a. *Statistisches Jahrbuch 2017/2018 Stadt Chemnitz: – Die Jahre 2016 und 2017 in Zahlen*. Chemnitz. https://www.chemnitz.de/chemnitz/media/aktuell/publikationen/downloads/jahrbuch_17_18.pdf
- . 2018b. Zahlen und Fakten zum Thema Asyl (B-091/2018). Chemnitz. https://session-bi.stadt-chemnitz.de/vo0050.php?__kvonr=6973017
- StBA (Statistisches Bundesamt). 2019. Statistisches Jahrbuch. Deutschland und Internationales 2019. https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Querschnitt/Jahrbuch/statistisches-jahrbuch-2019-dl.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

Laws and Regulations

Asylgesetz (ASylG) [Asylum Law]

Flüchtlingsaufnahmegesetz Nordrhein-Westfalen 2003 (FlüAG NRW 2003) [Law on Reception of Refugees in the State of North Rhine-Westphalia]

Sächsisches Flüchtlingsaufnahmegesetz, SächsFLüAG [Saxon Refugee Reception Law]

Gesetz zur Förderung der gesellschaftlichen Teilhabe und Integration in Nordrhein-Westfalen und zur Anpassung anderer gesetzlicher Vorschriften, vom 14. Februar 2012 [Law on the support of societal participation and integration in North-Rhine Westphalia and for the adaptation of other laws and regulations, as of February 14, 2012/Integration Law NRW 2021]

Verwaltungsvorschrift des Sächsischen Staatsministeriums des Innern über die Mindestempfehlungen zu Art, Größe und Ausstattung von Gemeinschaftsunterkünften (VwV – Unterbringung), as of April 24, 2015 [Saxon Administrative Regulation on Accommodation]

Ministerium für Kinder, Familie, Flüchtlinge und Integration des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen. 2015. *Eckpunkte zur Aufnahme und Unterbringung von Flüchtlingen in Regeleinrichtungen des Landes NRW*. <https://www.mkffi.nrw/sites/default/files/asset/document/eckpunktetpapier.pdf>