

**Places for Integration?
The Socio-spatial Distribution of Immigrants in German Cities**

Marcel Helbig & Stefanie Jähnen
WZB Berlin Social Science Center
Reichpietschufer 50, 10785 Berlin, Germany
marcel.helbig@wzb.eu, stefanie.jaehnen@wzb.eu

Extended abstract for the
European Population Conference 2020, Padova

Background: In the last few years, immigration to Germany was largely characterised by refugee migration. Between 2015 and 2017, almost 1.4 million persons seeking protection came to the Federal Republic of Germany, of which approximately 890,000 in 2015 (BAMF 2019: 10). However, they were the largest immigrant group only in 2015 – in the years before and after, it were intra-EU migrants. There has been a relatively high positive migration balance especially vis-à-vis the (south-)eastern European countries Romania, Poland and Bulgaria in recent years (BAMF 2019: 54f; BMI 2016: 34). Immigrants from EU countries are much less frequently unemployed than persons from the main non-European countries of asylum seekers. Nonetheless, they are much more likely than Germans to belong to the group that carries out simple auxiliary activities (Fachstelle Einwanderung 2017: 4, 8).

Research question: In our study, we investigate where immigrants' places of residence are located in German cities: How is the residential location of immigrants related to the social composition of the neighbourhoods they live in? In a first step, we examine the socio-spatial distribution of immigrants in large and medium-sized German cities between 2014 and 2017. In a second step, we look at differences between the individual cities and in how far they can be explained by contextual factors at the city level.

Theoretical framework: Patterns of residential choice result from the interplay between differentiated housing supply, households' preferences and resources as well as the way housing is allocated to the population (e.g., Häußermann 2012: 390). According to the spatial assimilation model, preferences are similar for natives and migrants, while their realisation mostly depends on economic resources (Bolt & Kempen 2010; South & Crowder 1997). Following this, we hypothesise that recent migrants often reside in low-income neighbourhoods since many are – at least at the time of their arrival – socioeconomically disadvantaged (cf. Grabka et al. 2019). Besides, we also take into account the argument of the

ethnic enclave model which claims that ethnic concentration is a source of amenities and support for migrants (Schaake et al. 2010). Apart from the micro-level perspective, scholars acknowledge that housing market players act within the economic, political, social and demographic context of the countries, regions and cities they live in (cf. Kempen & Özüekren, 1998: 1644). In our theoretical framework, we combine supply and demand-oriented approaches with a contextual approach that stresses the importance of macro-developments. We test if the socio-spatial distribution of immigrants is related to a range of contextual factors at the city level.

Data: To address our research question, we draw on data for 86 large and medium-sized German cities in the period from 2014 to 2017. Data for 56 cities originate from the Inner-city Spatial Monitoring data set (*Innerstädtische Raumbewachung*, IRB) of the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR). It contains uniformly defined, small-scale data on the district level that are collected on a yearly basis. Additionally, we requested comparable data from 30 cities that do not take part in the IRB. In total, we rely on data for 3,770 districts. City-level contextual factors are taken from different other sources of the BBSR.

Measures: The dependent variable measures the development of the share of foreigners in the individual districts between 2014 and 2017 in percentage points. Our key independent variable is the social composition of the districts in 2014 – the year preceding the large refugee influx. For this, we use the share of recipients of social assistance benefits (SGB II) and calculate city-specific quintiles. Further predictors at the district level are changes in the number of inhabitants (especially shrinking population) in the years until 2014, and the percentage of foreigners in 2014. At the city level, we include the vacancy rate, the logarithmised population, and tax revenues.

Method: We estimate linear multi-level regression models because districts are nested within cities. As population size of the districts varies, respective weights are applied.

Results and implications: For the entire city sample we find that the proportion of foreigners has increased significantly more in the most socially disadvantaged districts. This link is much tighter in East German cities. Findings do not support the ethnic enclave model: the proportion of foreigners increased more strongly after 2014 in areas where *fewer* foreigners lived in 2014. It seems that the residential location of migrants is mostly a matter of socioeconomic means. This further exacerbates the social situation in already disadvantaged neighbourhoods and represents a challenge for integration. When taking a further look at the

individual cities, we observe no relationship between the development of the share of foreigners and the social composition of the districts in 13 out of 86 cities. 14 show a moderate association and 59 a strong one. Visualised on a geographical map, there are not only marked differences between east and west, but also between north and south. The variance between the cities can partly be explained by the vacancy rate and tax revenues. With rising tax revenues, the link between the development of the share of foreigners and the social situation of the city districts diminishes. This could be attributed to a gain in the mere capacity of cities to counteract socio-spatial inequalities.

References

- BAMF* (2019): Migrationsbericht der Bundesregierung. Migrationsbericht 2016/2017. Nürnberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge.
- BMI* (2016): Migrationsbericht des Bundesamtes für Migration und Flüchtlinge im Auftrag der Bundesregierung. Migrationsbericht 2015. Berlin: Bundesministerium des Innern.
- Bolt, Gideon & Ronald van Kempen* (2010): Ethnic Segregation and Residential Mobility: Relocations of Minority Ethnic Groups in the Netherlands. In: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36 (2): 333-354.
- Fachstelle Einwanderung* (eds.) (2017): Arbeitsmarktintegration von Zuwanderungsgruppen in Deutschland (= Working Paper; 02/2017). Berlin: Minor.
- Grabka, Markus M., Jan Goebel & Stefan Liebig* (2019): Wiederanstieg der Einkommensungleichheit - aber auch deutlich steigende Realeinkommen (= DIW Wochenbericht; Nr. 19/2019). Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung.
- Häußermann, Hartmut* (2012): Wohnen und Quartier: Ursachen sozialräumlicher Segregation. pp. 383-396. In: *Ernst-Ulrich Huster, Jürgen Boeckh & Hildegard Mogge-Grotjahn* (eds.): *Handbuch Armut und Soziale Ausgrenzung*. 2. ed. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Kempen, Ronald van & A. Sule Özüekren* (1998): Ethnic Segregation in Cities: New Forms and Explanations in a Dynamic World. In: *Urban Studies* 35 (10): 1631-1656.
- Schaake, Karina, Jack Burgers & Clara H. Mulder* (2010): Ethnicity at the Individual and Neighborhood Level as an Explanation for Moving Out of the Neighborhood. In: *Population Research and Policy Review* 29 (4): 593-608.
- South, Scott J. & Kyle D. Crowder* (1997): Escaping Distressed Neighborhoods: Individual, Community, and Metropolitan Influences. In: *American Journal of Sociology* 102 (4): 1040-1084.