HAMBURG, GERMANY

A Preliminary Case Study of
Refugees in Towns

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Acknowledgements

Unlike our other case studies, this project in Hamburg, Germany focused dominantly on one domain of integration—housing—and was not conducted by a localized researcher. We feel the findings are nonetheless important and compelling, revealing critical good practices and challenges with refugee integration. Additionally, a localized perspective was achieved through the depth of the connection to Hamburg by MIT's International Service and Technology Initiative. To build on this report's preliminary findings, RIT is conducting ongoing localized research with refugees in Hamburg and other towns in Germany and the EU.

This work is a case study of the Refugees in Towns (RIT) Project of the Feinstein International Center (FIC) at the Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, and benefitted from the contributions and support of many individuals and organizations.

The case study was developed, conducted, and written by Jessica Sadye Wolff, a second year Master of City Planning student in MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning. The author would like to thank the staff at the Central Coordination Unit for Refugees (Zentraler Koordinierungsstab Flüchtlinge), the staff at Födern und Wohnen, and representatives from Hamburg für gute Integration for generously giving their time, sharing opinions and providing information which has been foundational to this project. She would also like to thank the individuals who were willing to share their experiences with the German asylum process. The thoughts shared from these interviews were critical to the development of this research project.

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About the RIT Project

This report is a case study of Refugees in Towns (RIT), a research project that aims to promote understanding of migrant and refugee experiences with integration—both formal and informal—in urban settings in the U.S. and around the world. Our case studies are ground in local knowledge. They are designed, conducted, and written by refugees and locals, capturing their voices and the perspectives of the communities in which they live. The project was conceived and is led by Karen Jacobsen, and is based at the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University. It is funded by the Henry J. Leir Foundation.

Our goals are twofold

1. First, by gathering a range of case studies we are amassing a global data base that will help us analyze and understand the process of immigrant and refugee integration. These cases reveal global differences and similarities in the factors that enable and obstruct integration, and the different ways in which migrants and hosts perceive, co-exist, adapt, and struggle with integration. We draw our case studies from towns in resettlement countries (e.g. the United States); transit countries (e.g. Greece), and countries of first asylum (e.g. Lebanon). Our long-term goal is to build a global, grounded theory of integration.
2. Second, the RIT project seeks to support community leaders, aid organizations, and local governments in shaping policy and practice. We engage policymakers and community leaders through town visits, workshops, conferences, and participatory research that identifies needs in their communities, encourages dialogue on integration, and shares good practices and lessons learned.

Why now?

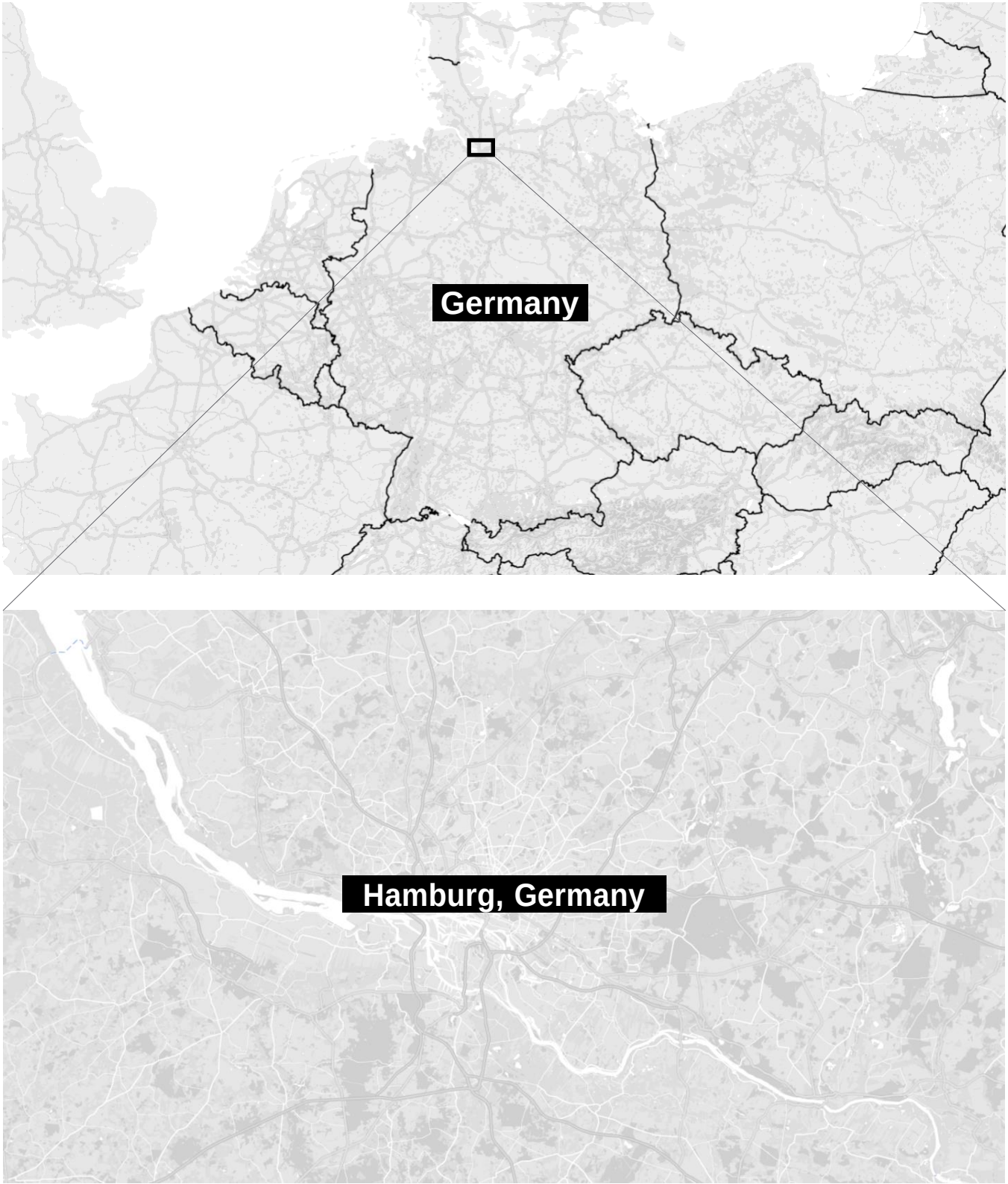
The United States—among many other refugee-hosting countries—is undergoing a shift in its refugee policies through travel bans and the suspension of parts of its refugee program. Towns across the U.S. and globally are responding in a range of different ways: some are resisting national policy changes by declaring themselves to be “sanctuary cities,” while others are supporting travel bans and exclusionary policies. In this period of social and political change, we need deeper understanding of integration and the ways in which refugees, other migrants, and their hosts interact. Local perspectives on these processes are not well represented in the scholarship on integration: our RIT project seeks to draw on–and give voice to—both refugee and host communities in their experiences with integration around the world.

For more on RIT

On our website, there are many more case study reports from other towns and urban neighborhoods around the world. Keep in touch: we regularly release more reports as our case study projects develop. There is also more information available about RIT’s researchers, goals, practical local outcomes, and theoretical analyses.

www.refugeesintowns.org

Location



Introduction

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' 2016 Global Trends Report, global human displacement is at a record high. In 2016, more than 10.3 million people were displaced from their home. Overall, 65.6 million people have been forcibly displaced from their home, including 22.5 million refugees and 2.8 million asylum seekers. An increasing percentage of refugees are seeking protection in urban areas. By the end of 2016, 60% of refugees were living in urban areas. As refugee crises become increasingly protracted and increasingly urban, the role of local governments will become more important. Thus, the need for place-based innovative long term housing and settlement solutions is more urgent than ever.

Since the end of 2014, Germany has received more than 1.3 million refugees. In the midst of a prolonged national affordable housing shortage and a so called "migration crisis," the federal government approved an unprecedented housing policy enabling the temporary construction of residential units specifically for refugees and asylum seekers in areas previously zoned for non-residential uses.

This research project explores the spatial and ethical implications of Germany's new national housing policy and its impact on integration, using the city-state of Hamburg as a case study. This research project will analyze the effects of an unprecedented and innovative land use policy on local planning processes, the resultant housing accommodations, and the experience of asylum seekers and local residents. By focusing on the inherently spatial aspect of refugee housing, this case study will foreground the impact of political and geographic choices on the integration experience. Lessons from the implications of this policy will have significance for countries that are seeking creative ways to incite construction of new affordable housing units for marginalized populations in land-constrained urban areas in the future.

Methodology

As an urban planning student who is both interested in refugee housing and recognizes that widespread displacement will likely be one of the biggest issues of my generation, I wanted to study an urban case with an engaged local government acting as a leader for innovative refugee housing policy. I was looking to learn about and potentially develop transferable strategies to support other local governments who may face similar scenarios in the future. As I started researching cases, I came across a plethora of refugee housing programs run by international organizations as well as many non-urban refugee camp examples. After learning about Germany's reliance on urban planning policy to institutionalize asylum seeker housing, I decided to focus on this case. I selected Hamburg as the case study site for two reasons: 1) MIT's Media Lab already had institutional connections with a research group in Hamburg having supported a city wide public engagement campaign and 2) as will be elaborated below, the local government pursued particularly innovative policies and implementation to quickly reconcile asylum seeker housing needs with a state-wide affordable housing shortage.

For this research project, I spent several months reviewing relevant literature and policies before spending one month in Hamburg. During my fieldwork, I completed 17 interviews with local

government officials, urban planners, asylum seekers, camp management teams, and local residents. I was impressed with how generous my interviewees were with their time and resources to support this project. Out of all of my interviews, I found the four interviews with asylum seekers particularly difficult. As I asked about their experiences and impressions, these conversations felt one-sided to me as I was benefiting by learning from them, but I was unable to provide direct support during such a difficult life transition in exchange.

During my time in Hamburg, I also completed site visits to one initial reception facility and more than 20 follow-up housing sites. While I had scheduled visits and tours at a couple of these locations, most of my site visits were unplanned and simply consisted of me walking around the area to get a sense of the place and documenting the housing typologies and spatial arrangement with photos. My experiences visiting these sites varied widely as some locations felt significantly more private (and thus uninviting and exclusive to visitors) than others. I think this sense of exclusivity depended on the size of the site and its connectivity to the existing street grid. While visiting larger complexes that were located off of main roads, it was especially obvious that I was an outsider. Comparatively, I felt more comfortable visiting housing sites that were embedded into the surrounding residential urban fabric so my visit did not appear to be such an obvious intrusion of private space. I would imagine that newly arrived asylum seekers might feel similar variations of inclusion or exclusion based on how well the follow-up housing sites are integrated with the adjacent neighborhood. The question of whether these housing sites should or should not *feel* private and inaccessible, and whether that feeling is intentionally manufactured through design, is an important one to consider in future research, policy, and housing integration practice.

Interview Sampling Chart

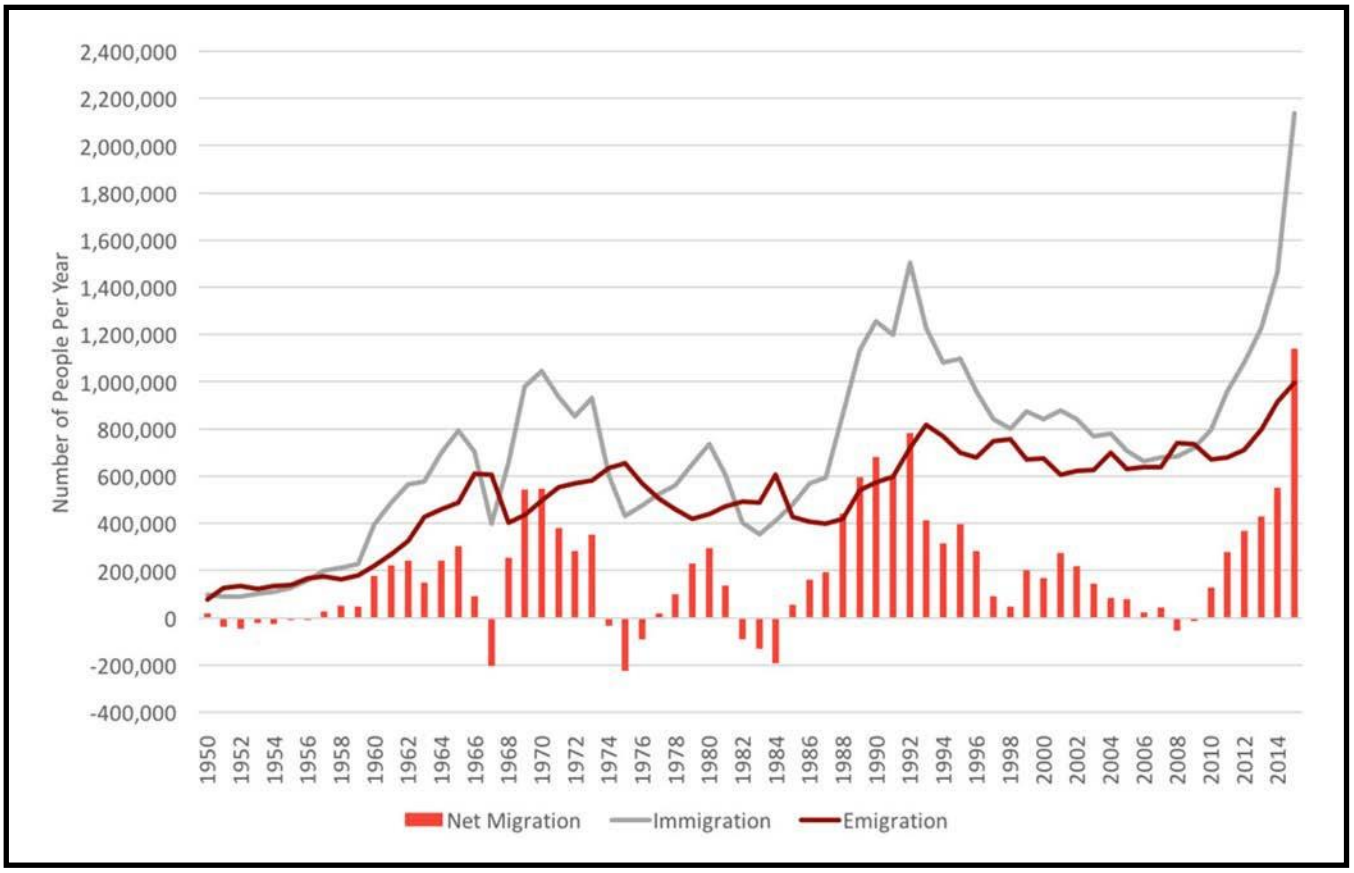
	Number of Interviews *Men*	*Women*
Local government	2	1
Academic	1	2
City planning	1	0
Camp management	1	3
Asylum Seeker	4	0
Other Stakeholders	2	0
Main organizations of key informants	Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg Government	
	Hamburg Central Coordination Unit for Refugees (ZKF)	
	Fördern und Wohnen	
	CityScience Lab, HafenCity University	

Overview of Refugees in Germany

Germany has experienced several prior phases of migration. After widespread displacement across Europe during World War II, Germany became a destination country for labor migrants (Rietig and Müller, 2016). From the mid-1950s through 1973, Germany invited over 2.6 million "guest workers" from Turkey, Italy, Greece, and Spain to support a burgeoning manufacturing industry (Katz, Noring and Garrelts, 2016). In the early 1990s, approximately 900,000 people from the former Yugoslavia, Romania and Turkey sought asylum in Germany (Ibid). Informal conversations revealed that local residents' animosity towards current asylum seekers may stem from experiences with prior migrant groups and their lack of social integration.

During the Cold War, the Berlin Wall was a physical separation between East and West Berlin preventing internal migration. Immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989-1990, more than 3.7% of the population of East Germany (nearly 600,000 people) emigrated to West Germany (Heiland, 2004). As uncertainty about reunification decreased after early 1990, annual outmigration rates from East to West Germany settled around 1% of the population (Ibid).

Table 1: Migration Patterns in Germany, 1950 – 2015



(Federal Statistical Office, 2014).

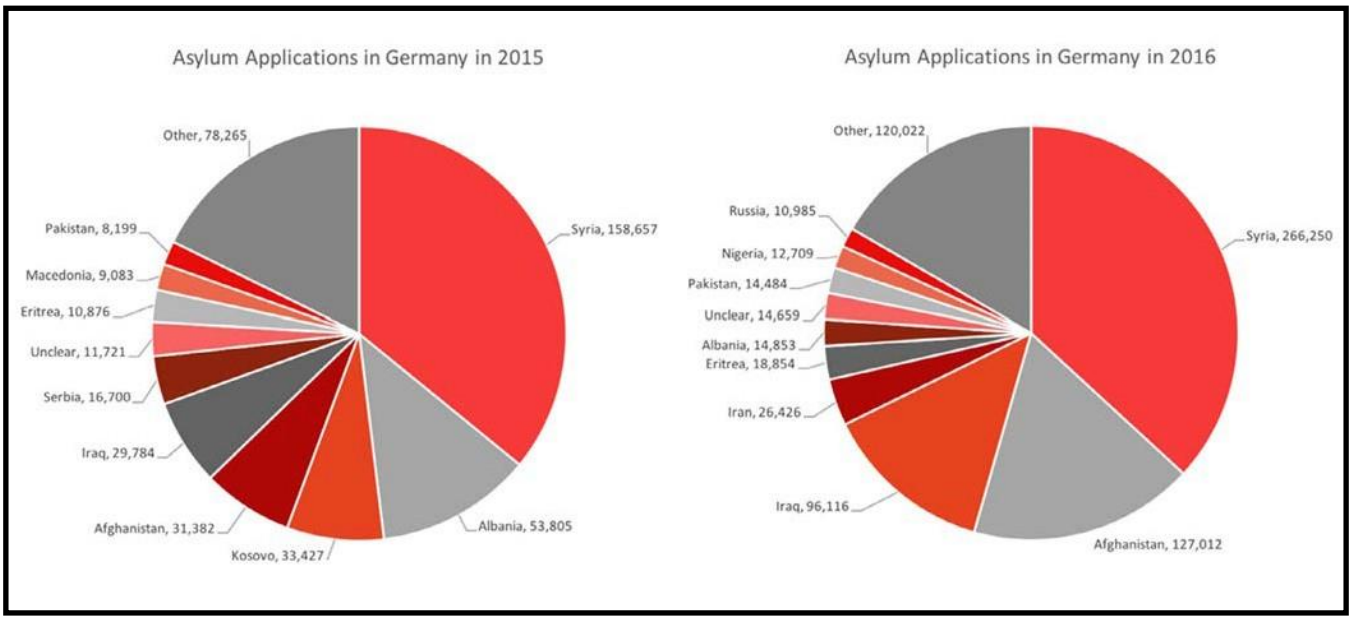
The number of people immigrating to Germany is the highest it has been since 1950. The current wave of migration started in the end of 2014 and consists primarily of asylum seekers from Syria, Albania, Afghanistan, and Iraq. In August 2015, Germany suspended the Dublin Procedures for Syrian asylum seekers, effectively opening Germany's borders and allowing Syrians who arrived in Germany to stay there, rather than being sent back to the first country of arrival in the EU[7]. While the Dublin Procedure was suspended only for Syrian asylum seekers, widespread perception of Germany's openness to asylum seekers resulted in an influx of asylum seekers from many different countries. In 2015 alone, nearly 890,000 asylum seekers arrived in Germany (Ibid). The graphs below show the distribution of asylum applications in Germany by country of origin in 2015 and 2016.

There is an ongoing national debate about asylum policy in Germany as the opinions of local residents vary from hospitable and supportive (reflective of the *Willkommenskultur* or "welcoming culture" for which Germany received international praise) to discriminatory and aggressive. Generally, local residents supported Angela Merkel's leadership, her commitment to refugees, and her decision to open the border in 2015; however, they expressed concerns about how to ensure that such a large number of asylum seekers would seamlessly integrate into society. Even though Angela Merkel's political party, the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) maintained the largest number of seats by winning 24.7% percentage of seats in the fall 2017 national election, a far right wing party, Alternative for Germany (AfD) won 13.3% of seats in its first time running in an election (Clarke, 2017). This increase is acknowledged as a shift in national opinion against Angela Merkel's asylum policies.

Asylum Process in Germany

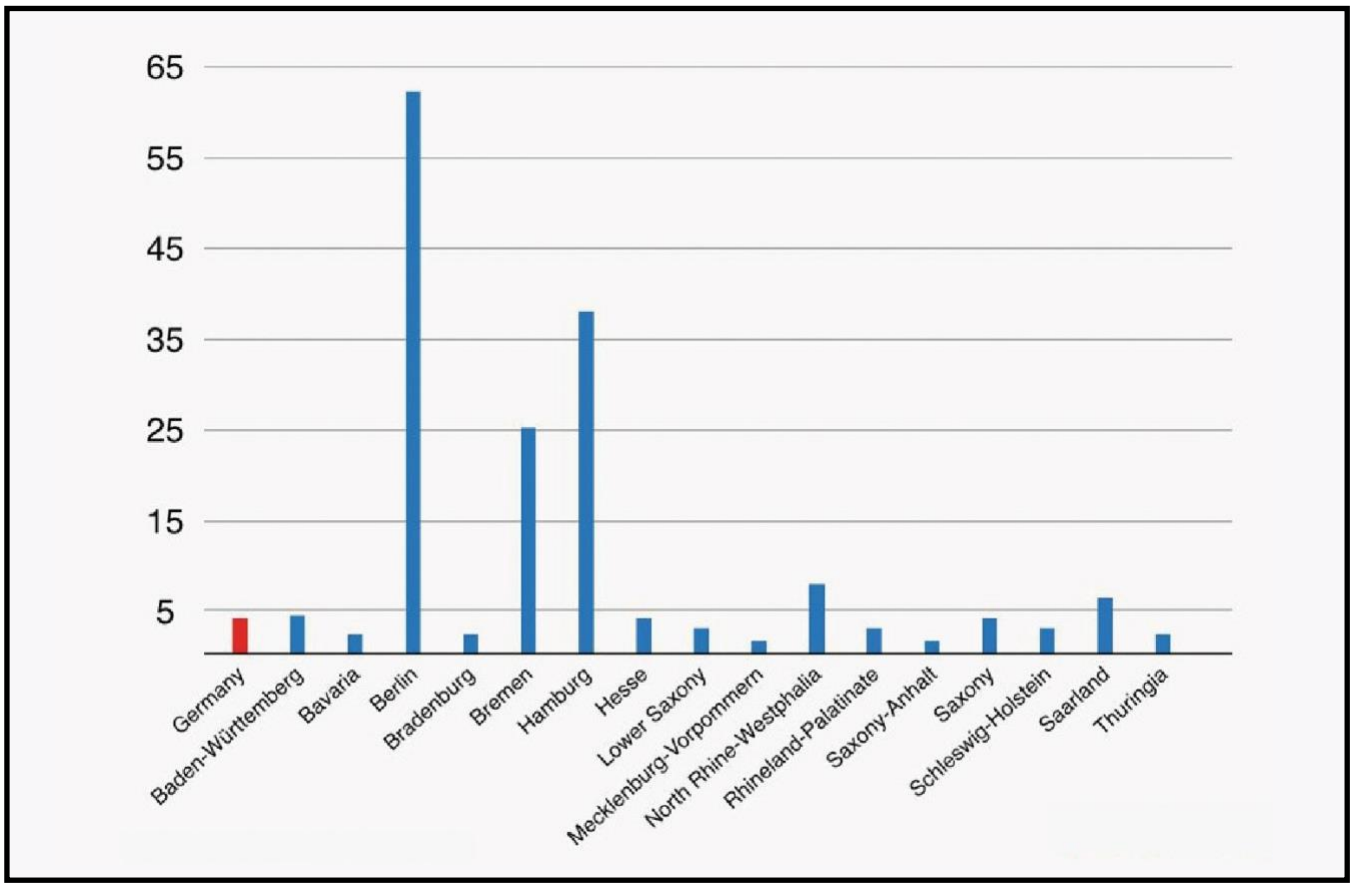
Since the beginning of 2015, Germany has received more than 1.3 million asylum seekers. Asylum seekers register in whichever state they first arrive, but upon registration in the federal system, they will be assigned to one of the sixteen federal states according to a distribution system based on population and tax revenue. As a result, densely populated city-states that have greater populations and tax revenue, but are also more severely land constrained, receive disproportionately more refugees. Using data from 2015, the graph below shows that the three city-states in Germany (Berlin, Bremen,

Table 2: Asylum Applications in Germany, 2015 - 2016



(German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2016).

Table 3: Refugees Accepted in 2015 Per Square Kilometers for Germany and German Federal States



(Katz, Noring, and Garrelts 2016).

and Hamburg) which have the densest urban populations nationally, receive significantly more asylum seekers per square kilometer than other federal states. This is especially problematic as these city-states also have the lowest availability of developable land.

Upon receiving a state assignment, asylum seekers are first housed in an initial reception facility with communal living arrangements and a cafeteria. Asylum seekers live there as they complete the asylum application process. Individuals may receive an initial approval of asylum for between one to three years depending on their home country.

Initial Housing Facilities

(Hamdan, ZKF).

Follow Up Housing Sites

(Wolff, 2017).

Upon receiving asylum, individuals are transferred to a follow-up accommodation site. These locations are mostly comprised of shared apartments with three, two-person bedrooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. At the end of the asylum term, individuals may reapply for a continuation. After living in Germany for over five years under asylum protection, asylum seekers are able to begin the process of applying for permanent residency.

Overview of Refugees in Hamburg

Hamburg, a city-state in northern Germany with a population of 1.8 million people, has received more than 55,000 asylum seekers since the end of 2014. Representatives of the local government said their goal was to prevent homelessness among asylum seekers, even as the city was receiving more than 500 people per day at the peak in November 2015. The rapid population increase exacerbated an already limited stock of social housing units and there were insufficient locations to house incoming asylum seekers.

To enable accelerated housing development, Olaf Scholz, the Mayor of Hamburg, proposed an amendment to the Federal Building Code (§246) that would allow the construction of temporary asylum seeker accommodations in non-residential areas (Gesetz über maßnahmen 2014). This

unprecedented land use policy was intended to both provide for construction of temporary accommodations and offset the existing social housing shortage. The new policy was approved in 2014 and expanded in 2015. The land use exception enables land constrained city-states, such as Hamburg, to build asylum seeker housing in non-residential areas (such as parks, parking lots, and commercial sites) for a maximum duration of three to five years. This amendment can be used for new construction until December 2019. When speaking about the use of §246 to extend housing particularly in industrial zones, one city planner said, "by the [exception] §246 it is possible. The refugees live inside where no German could live because the living conditions are too bad. It is not possible to live there [permanently], but they are now allowed for these three years."

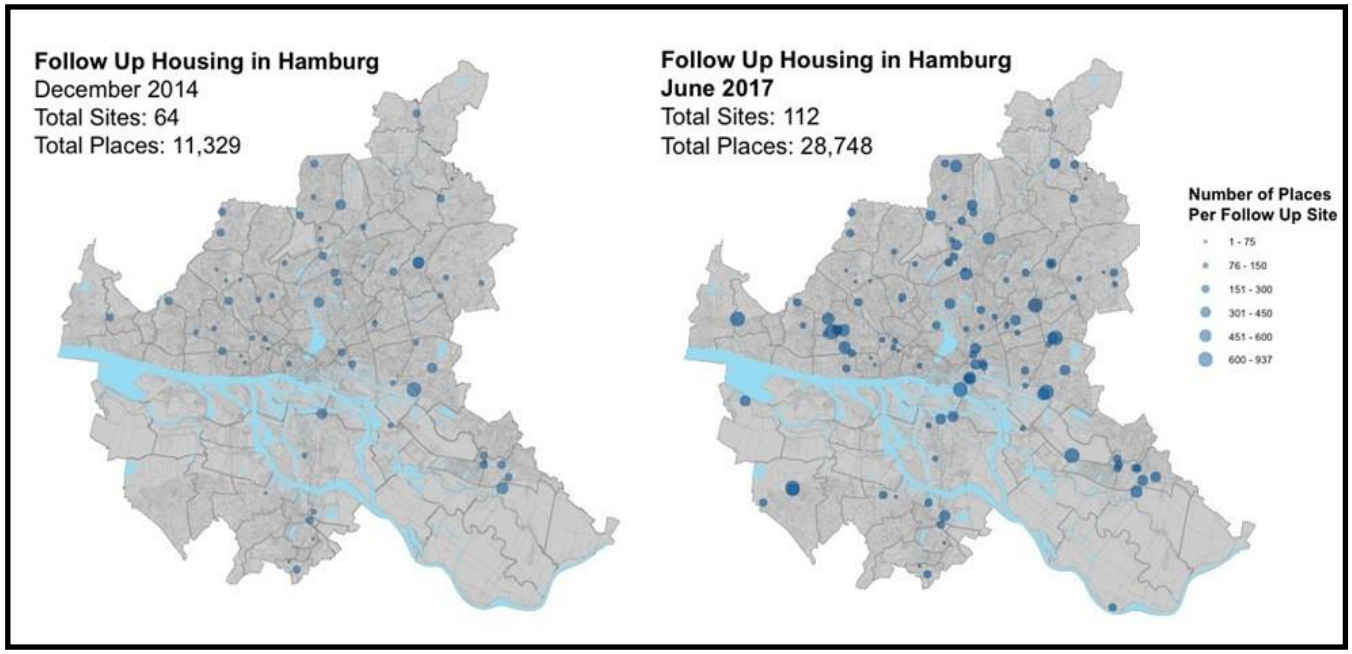
Mapping the Refugee Population

When asylum seekers are assigned to the federal state of Hamburg after registering in the national system, they are first housed in an initial reception facility. Upon confirmation of asylum, individuals can move out of the initial facility. Those that can afford to find their own accommodations do so. Those that cannot currently afford a home on the private market are moved to follow-up housing sites for more permanent accommodation.

Approximately half of the 55,000 asylum seekers who have arrived in Hamburg since the end of 2014 require housing assistance from the local government. At the start of the "crisis" in December 2014, there were 79 existing follow-up housing facilities that could accommodate a total of 11,329 people (Central Coordination Unit for Refugees, 2017).

As large numbers of asylum seekers started arriving in Germany throughout 2015, the local government of Hamburg had to identify additional housing sites for new construction. That was particularly challenging given that a majority of residential land in Hamburg is already fully developed. Thus, new construction for follow-up housing commenced primarily in non-residential areas under the new federal land use policy §246. Of the nearly 50 new housing sites that have opened since December 2014, only 4 have been located on land designated for residential use. As of June 2017, there were 112 sites with a total of total 28,249 places (Ibid). The map below documents the geographic distribution of follow

Map 1: Follow Up Housing Sites in Hamburg



(Central Coordination Unit for Refugees, 2017).

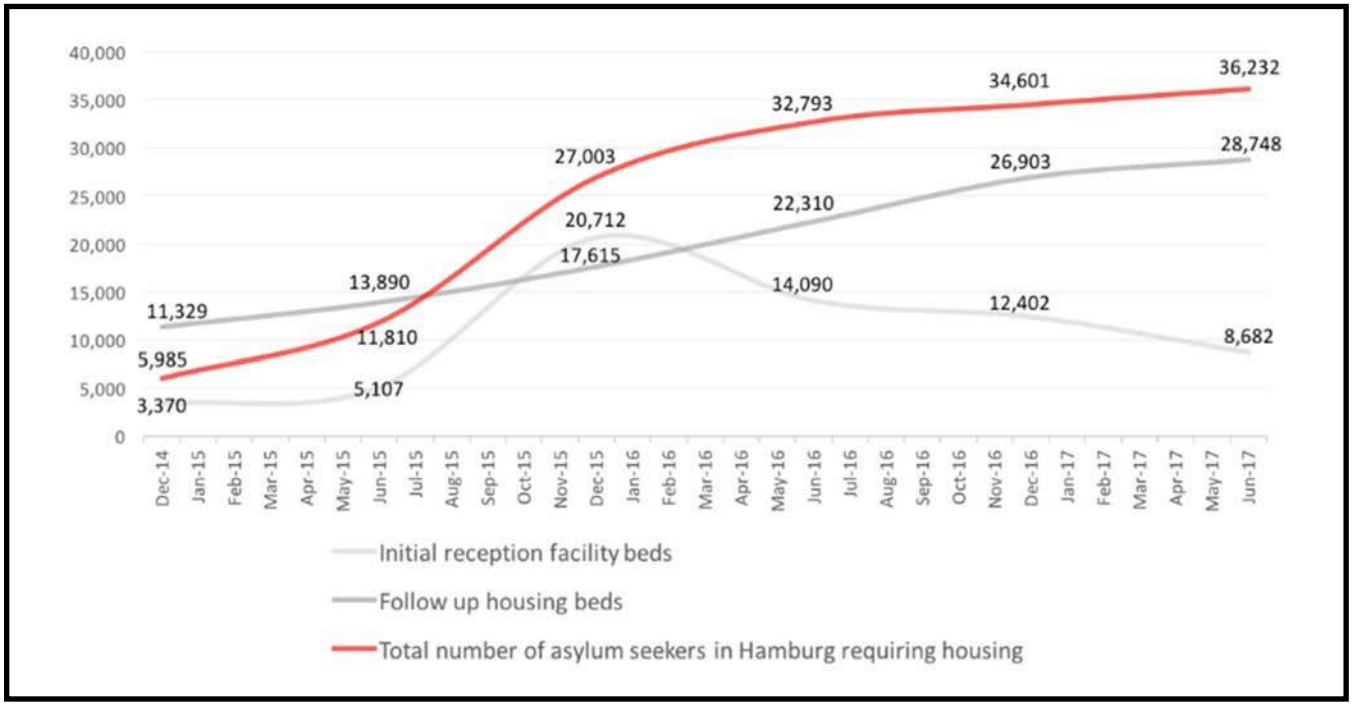
up asylum seeker housing sites across Hamburg as they existed in December 2014, as of June 2017. The icons are scaled to represent the number of total places per site.

As housing needs kept growing throughout 2015, it became increasingly difficult to identify new housing sites. Many neighborhoods created resident organizations or mobilized existing groups to file lawsuits against the city. Local feelings of "not in my backyard" were disguised through legal cases defending obscure nature reserve policies and endangered tree species. Though the city won nearly all of the 40 lawsuits, these legal proceedings delayed construction for between six to eighteen months at many sites. Local government officials expressed frustration at the construction delays imposed by these lawsuits and acknowledged that local residents were mostly using them as a way to keep asylum seeker housing out of their neighborhoods.

Given that new asylum seekers were arriving in Hamburg daily, the government could not afford to wait for the legal proceedings that were nearly guaranteed by residents in richer neighborhoods. In an interview, a Hamburg city planner suggested that they purposefully started to locate more asylum seeker housing sites in poorer neighborhoods with the expectation that local residents either could not or would not be willing to pursue a legal obstruction. Thus, the distribution of asylum seeker housing in Hamburg is disproportionately skewed towards poorer neighborhoods.

Due to the necessity of constructing on available sites that were not previously planned as residential developments, many of the follow-up housing units are quite far away from other residential developments. Moreover, lack of integration with the existing street grid network ensures that, for many of the housing sites, unless one is purposefully trying to visit a particular site, it is unlikely that you would simply walk by it. One asylum seeker housing site manager said, "I think it's a problem that they build many of these facilities far outside. Everybody in Germany is talking about integration, but they don't see it's a two way street. It's not only what people have to do, but you also have to give someone the opportunity…If you build camps so far out of the city, then people will have trouble getting into contact with people who live here."

Table 4: Asylum Seeker Housing in Hamburg, Germany, December 2014 – June 2017



(Central Coordination Unit for Refugees, 2017).

Even as the number of asylum seekers arriving monthly has decreased since November 2015, the provision of follow-up housing for individuals who receive asylum in Germany continues to be problematic. The following graph demonstrates that the number of asylum seekers in Hamburg that require follow-up housing has been greater than the number of available follow-up places since July 2015.

As of May 2016, a new federal law requires asylum seekers to live in their assigned federal state for their first three years of residence in Germany (Deutsche Welle, 2016). This policy purposefully restricts movement between states to prevent a potentially politically untenable situation where large numbers of asylum seekers would flock to major cities. In conversations with asylum seekers, they consistently said that larger, more central urban neighborhoods are preferred locations of residence due to a greater availability of housing, jobs, diversity of people, and existing social connections with friends or family. Thus, it will be interesting to see where asylum seekers choose to live once they regain the political freedom of movement in two to three years.

The Urban Impact

Creation of The Central Coordination Unit for Refugees

Hamburg's local government responded quickly and creatively as large numbers of asylum seekers continued arriving in the city and strained existing systems. In the German local government system, the Ministry of the Interior and Sports manages initial reception facilities, while the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Family and Integration manages follow-up housing and integration activities. As these two phases of housing are inextricably linked, coordination between the Ministries at the height of the "migration crisis" proved complicated and time intensive. In order to facilitate a more streamlined housing and asylum seeker support system, the local government of Hamburg created the Central Coordination Unit for Refugees in October 2015 (Zentraler Koordinierungsstab Flüchtlinge in German, abbreviated as ZKF). Anselm Sprandel, the current head of ZKF who previously worked in the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Family and Integration, envisioned the role of ZKF and convinced Mayor Olaf Scholz of its necessity and importance. The staff of ZKF is tasked with managing all stages of refugee accommodation, preliminary integration measures, coordinating volunteers, and organizing citizen participation. ZKF sourced employees from both ministries.

As of Fall 2017, the Central Coordination Unit for Refugees was formalized as a permanent government unit that will continue managing the city's asylum seeker housing programs and will remain staffed in preparation for future refugee housing needs. Hamburg is the only German state that created a new refugee housing authority in response to the increase in migration. Recently, other federal states have sent representatives to Hamburg to learn about the creation and responsibilities of ZKF to assess if a similar agency should be replicated in additional jurisdictions.

Resident Pushback Against Expanded Asylum Seeker Housing Plans

In October 2015, as asylum seeker housing pressures tightened, the local government announced a plan to construct one large (approximately 4,000 person) permanent asylum seeker housing unit in each of Hamburg's seven

districts. While these sites would initially be built under §246 with a temporary term, city planners anticipate amending the underlying development plan so that the new residential development can remain indefinitely. These buildings are being built to federal social housing standards so that after they are used exclusively for asylum seekers for 15 years, the apartments will become part of the city's social housing stock. There has been widespread pushback regarding the development of these temporary-to-permanent follow-up housing sites for two main reasons: 1) local residents do not want a large (300+ person) development of asylum seekers to remain in their neighborhoods, and 2) the selection of these sites did not include typical public engagement processes. By using §246 to legalize the initial development instead of following traditional (and time intensive) processes to amend the development plans, some local residents believe that the local government is essentially coopting additional land for residential development without proper review.

In response, a collection of 13 neighborhood resident organizations mobilized to create a group called "Hamburg for Better Integration" that petitioned the government to limit the number of asylum seekers living in any one location. The widespread public concern about these large housing sites potentially arose from continued animosity towards prior groups of migrants, especially Turkish immigrants, that have settled in densely clustered communities that are quite insular from other Hamburg residents. Leaders of the group assert that their pushback against the housing plan was not an affront to asylum seekers; rather, it was a community organizing initiative in support of integration. The leaders argued that placing 4,000 asylum seekers in a single building would not facilitate interaction with local residents, a dynamic necessary to move towards integration.

After several failed attempts to gain the attention of local politicians and confirm changes to the housing plan, Hamburg for Better Integration initiated a local referendum on asylum seeker housing. In a powerful message to government officials about local opinions, it took only four days to collect 26,000 local resident signatures supporting a referendum vote for a more dispersed housing scheme in March 2016. Local government officials wanted to prevent a referendum at all costs because, as one official said: "A referendum would have polarized the society…It would not have been a referendum for smaller refugee camps. It would have been pro or contrary to refugees." At this point, negotiations between the local government and Hamburg for Better Integration began.

In June 2016, an agreement on the future of asylum seeker housing distribution in Hamburg was reached. The agreement includes stipulations regarding how new housing locations will be selected, how to encourage more even distribution of housing sites throughout wealthy and poor neighborhoods, and a future goal of housing no more than 300 asylum seekers at a given site.

The Refugee Experience

Asylum Process

During my fieldwork in Hamburg, I had the opportunity to interview four asylum seekers who were at different stages of the process–two had received asylum, one received asylum one week after our interview, and one was still waiting to hear back. Three of the people I interviewed were living in follow-up housing and one was still living at an initial reception facility. I also interviewed two administrators at different housing sites who were able to provide me with a general perspective on asylum seekers' experiences. Additionally, I had

both formal and informal conversations with local residents to learn about their experiences and opinions regarding asylum seeker housing and integration.

Underlying the entire refugee experience in Hamburg is the uncertainty of the German asylum process. Access to almost everything is predicated on an approved asylum case. Without legal asylum status, asylum seekers cannot find work and cannot rent an apartment. When asked what would make his living situation more comfortable, one asylum seeker said "if you have a paper [for legal asylum] you can do anything. You can work. You can find a better place. You can do anything. It's really hard if you don't have asylum in Germany." During the application process, asylum seekers are able to go to German classes or children can go to school. Otherwise, individuals are restricted from doing much else and expressed extreme boredom during the application period. This period had lasted more than 26 months for one of the asylum seekers I interviewed–a length of time that is much longer than officially estimated, but has become increasingly common.

Housing

Housing is an important part of the integration process for asylum seekers as it can provide both personal comfort and stability during a difficult transitory phase. The asylum seeker housing system in Hamburg is based on the understanding that once an asylum seeker finds a job and can afford to pay a monthly rent, he or she will try to locate a private apartment and move out of government provided follow-up housing as soon as possible. Conversations with asylum seekers confirmed that the lack of privacy and lack of control over their housing location inspired many people to seek their own housing in the local market. Unfortunately, compounding the lack of affordable houses in the city's real estate market, asylum seekers face great prejudices. Individuals recounted experiences when landlords made both direct and indirect references that clearly demonstrated their disinterest in renting an

(Wolff, 2017).

apartment to asylum seekers. As a result, few asylum seekers are able to identify an affordable apartment in the city's housing market and thus few people move out of the follow-up housing sites. Between January and November 2017, only 3,000 of more than 33,000 asylees living in follow up housing moved out (Central Coordination Unit for Refugees, "Positive Balance Sheets," 2017). As spaces are not frequently turned over, additional follow-up housing is required. Construction has not kept pace with the arrival rate of asylum seekers. Consequently, when an individual receives legal asylum and is able to transfer out of an initial reception facility, there are not typically follow-up housing places available.

When spaces do become available, a publicly owned company called Fördern und Wohnen manages the follow-up housing assignment process for asylum seekers. They try to fill open spaces as quickly as possible. If one person in a six-person apartment moves out, another individual will be transferred out of an initial reception facility to take the open place. Staff members told me that they will try to place individuals who speak the same language within one unit, but that they will purposefully mix nationalities within a given building to encourage conversation in German among asylum seekers from different places. Conversations with individuals living in follow-up housing suggest that the most difficult part is a lack of feeling at home. Since all available spaces need to be filled, a six-person apartment could have six individuals or a family with two children and another couple. Thus, even though the conditions are notably improved

over the initial reception facilities, there is still a lack of privacy and a low sense of ownership over the space.

The local government asserts that no individual will stay in an initial reception facility for more than six months; however, follow-up housing provision has been complicated and there are many "über-residents" who have been living in an initial facility for more than a year or longer. As of January 2017, there were more than 6,300 asylum seekers who had received asylum, but were still living in an initial reception facility for more than six months simply because there were not follow-up housing spaces available (Central Coordination Unit for Refugees, "Objectives for 2017," 2017).

Employment and Education

While in the asylum application process and living in an initial reception facility, individuals receive 106 euros per month for all personal expenses (lodging and food are provided by the state). As individuals are not allowed to work and supplement this income prior to receiving asylum, many people pursue black or grey market jobs in order to support family in Germany and family back home. Undocumented work puts asylum seekers in an especially vulnerable position as they have no avenues of accountability should their employer withhold pay and getting caught would seriously impede the asylum application. During my interviews, I learned that many asylum seekers turn to black market jobs in small bakeries and construction labor positions.

Upon receiving legal asylum, individuals receive a greater monthly stipend (approximately 410 euros per month) and can search for their own employment opportunities. Even so, one individual said he would never be able to get a job in Germany similar to the one he left behind at home in Afghanistan. It is the asylum seeker's responsibility to coordinate between a potential employer and the refugee Job Center which provides working permit approval. This process is arduous and time consuming. Those I spoke with who had gone through this belabored process, suggested that it had taken too long and forced them to forfeit employment opportunities.

Education is continuously available both before and after receiving asylum. Most follow-up housing sites have an on-site preschool. School age children are incorporated into the local school system and there are several different German language course opportunities available for adults.

Interaction Between Asylum Seekers and Local Residents

Interaction between asylum seekers and local residents is a major component of integration, particularly to practice language skills, to learn about each other and to share their own cultural identities. Three of the asylum seekers I spoke with noted that they had limited interaction with local Hamburg residents, with the exception of those that held administrative positions at the housing sites. One individual sometimes went to the center of the city to play soccer and befriended some local residents there. He enjoyed this opportunity because "in football, you meet a lot of people… They know me because I am the only refugee who plays with them… Sport has its own complications. You can understand each other even if you don't speak. You can communicate in the sport way."

Through both formal interviews and informal conversations with local residents of Hamburg, my general impression is that they are eager to support asylum seekers. In early 2015, a multitude of community organizations developed in order to assist refugee integration, to provide material goods, and to support language learning. One local resident, who has been involved with media documentation of migration in Germany for decades, noted that the local government missed an opportunity to capitalize on the local desire for engagement and to build on this momentum. Personal prejudices prevent some German residents from interacting with asylum seekers, but, as previously discussed, the physical location and design of many follow-up housing sites does not encourage spatial proximity or engender a welcoming atmosphere.

Conclusion

Housing is just one component of a complex asylum and integration process. In comparison to other refugee housing programs, Hamburg's use of urban planning regulations to provide asylum seeker housing is exceptional. Housing provision for nearly 30,000 asylum seekers in less than two years is a substantial achievement, though conversations with asylum seekers and local residents alike suggest that improvements can be made. As Hamburg continues to welcome asylum seekers and continues to require additional follow-up housing, greater consideration regarding spatiality and distribution of housing could facilitate better integration and ease local residents' concerns.

Overall, the progressive nature and innovation of Hamburg's recent asylum seeker housing policies can serve as new best practices for both humanitarian shelter organizations and municipal governments seeking to expand housing provision for marginalized communities. Specific policy innovations and collaboration between local government and residents continue to shape asylum seeker housing in Hamburg. First, Mayor Olaf Scholz, who was intimately aware of the difficulties of asylum seeker housing provision in a land constrained urban area, lobbied for greater flexibility in federal land use regulations to facilitate increased housing construction. His initiative and vision led to the development of a new land use regulation that expanded the local government's ability to provide follow-up housing. Local government officials and city planners demonstrated incredible creativity and determination to develop fast-tracked procedures and a new government agency to facilitate rapid housing provision. Though shared housing conditions may not feel particularly homey or comfortable, the scale of housing provision demonstrates a strong commitment on behalf of the local government to support asylum seekers in the integration process. Continued negotiations with local resident organizations will provide a local level of oversight moving into the future.

While housing is widely acknowledged as a "marker and means" of integration and can be a public representation of commitment to refugees, housing provision alone is insufficient to facilitate integration (Ager and Strang, 2004). The complex process also requires extensive social connections and relationships, language and cultural knowledge, safety, and the ability to engage fully and equally in the local society (Ibid). All of the asylum seekers I interviewed were unable to or chose not to separate their opinions on follow-up housing provision from the larger asylum and integration experience. While a greater sense of security and optimism for the future persist, complications in securing employment, experiences of prejudice, and a lack of connection with local residents produced widespread disenchantment with the integration process.

Media attention and local enthusiasm for supporting asylum seekers have been waning in Hamburg, but the process of integration is just beginning for asylum seekers. Continued engagement, innovation, and community-wide commitment will be required in order to support asylum seekers in the years to come.

Significant innovations for refugee housing policy were made at both the federal and state levels in response to the increased demand for refugee housing in 2014 and 2015. Now there is an opportunity to refine the approach. Supplementing the existing site selection process with additional spatial indicators that relate to facets of the integration experience could further improve the system. For integration, place matters. An individual's experience and exposure to a new culture, access to existing support systems and educational or economic opportunities are closely linked to place. In a system where a majority of asylees rely on government provided housing indefinitely, as in Hamburg, urban planners can have a positive impact on the integration experience by influencing the spatial distribution of housing to ensure that better locations are

chosen. Urban planners' point of influence lies at the site selection phase. With an understanding of the conceptual framework for integration and the corresponding neighborhood characteristics and spatial factors that can support integration (such as proximity to residential neighborhoods or access to employment opportunities), planners can prioritize sites that will facilitate easier an integration experience for asylees.

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Refugees in Towns is a project of the Feinstein International Center. More information on the project, including more case study reports, is available at **https://www.refugeesintowns.org/**

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