

An Analysis of the 2019 Situation of Syrian War Refugees from the 2015 Influx into Germany Measured by a Bourdieuan Framework

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Abstract When the Arab Spring turned into an Arabian nightmare in 2015, a stunning number of more than 4 million Syrians fled their war-torn state. While the majority of these refugees relocated in neighboring countries at first, the ultimate goal for many was to reach Europe eventually. This desire was especially strong among younger dispelled individuals from higher educational backgrounds due to the lack of opportunity in their preliminary host countries. This article employs a Bourdieuan reading of the potential of these relocated migrants in Germany in terms of *habitus* and contrasts the expectations of refugees in 2015 with their social reality in 2019. Analyzing UNHCR and BAMF data as well as NGO research and independent studies, it is concluded that the ongoing refusal of European governments to grant opportunities to migrants who will not leave any time soon is a waste of economic and intellectual capital on Bourdieuan terms.

Keywords: migration, immigration, Syria refugees, Bourdieu, habitus, 2015 refugee crisis, migration to Europe

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1. Introduction

In traditional International Relations (IR) theory, states are being regarded as 'billiard balls' bouncing around on the international stage [1-8]. They interact if they are geographically located next to one another, but they never merge and they never mingle. The impact that Pierre Bourdieu's work had on IR theory ever since this belief got first challenged and especially since the beginning of the new century can hardly be overstated. This is especially true in the field of practice theory (IPT) [9,10,11]. In their recent book on IPT, Buerger and Gardinger thus label Bourdieu 'one of the most important theorists in the development of practice theory' [10]. In fact, the arguably most iconic work of Bourdieu has even been seen as the founding document of the school, as it carries the at the time of its first publication unknown agenda in its title: *Outline of a Theory of Practice* [12]. Theorists of IPT have hence equated Bourdieu's core-concepts 'habitus,' 'field' and 'capital' with the classic IR-trinity of 'strategy,' 'conflicts' and 'culture' [13]. In this spirit, what I intent to do in the present article is to employ the theory displayed in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* to 'dissect the static notion of the state' [10]. More specifically, I will look at developments and problems caused by the transnational (rather than international) phenomenon of the 2015 influx of a large

number of Syrian refugees into Europe. The main focus will be on Germany, where most of the 2015ers are still located today in 2019. I will thus attempt to take Bourdieu's theory and transfer it from the internal level of societal dynamics to a specific phenomenon in migration studies. Thus, I am not aiming at the international system, but at the *in-between*: at social change and at how collectives shape, or utilize, individuals, and at how conflict can arise between social systems composed of individuals if a gap appears between the expectations of a migrant population and the expectations of their host society. While it is certainly important not to 'isolate the [Bourdieuian] concepts from each other' [10], I intend to specifically look at 'habitus' when applied to migration as a specific phenomenon in a specific context that appears within a specific society but stems from the overall increasing interaction of societies. While the present article thus displays a clearly defined and limited framework, its findings can hence be applied in many contexts in an increasingly transnational world today.

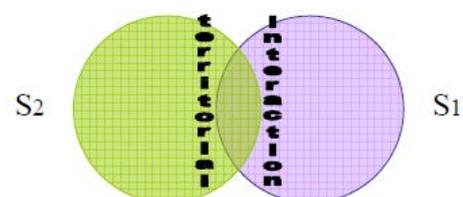


Figure 1. Geographical model of 'billiard ball' states (classical model)

2. Pierre Bourdieu

Due certainly to Bourdieu's iconic importance in IPT and in IR, the academic field of 'transnational migration scholarship' has been subjected to making sense of emigrational influxes into societies by employing Bourdieu's work and concepts in manifold approaches dealing with both general theory and specific phenomena. Indeed, it has been claimed that Bourdieu himself did display an implicit development theory through his studies of agriculture and the impact of urban markets on rural life in Algeria and France [14,15,16]. Furthermore, it has been argued that Bourdieu's thoughts on the disappearance of 'traditionalisms' in Algerian society can be applied to contemporary migration [14,15]. In this line of thought, the important project TRANSFORMIG¹ is researching Bourdieu's implications on a broad theoretical basis that regards dispositions, attitudes, worldviews and practices as developments in highly complex relations and networks [18]. A broad collection of this research can be found in *Bourdieu, Habitus and Social Research* [19]. The volume deals with specific phenomena as diverse as youth crime, youth mobility featuring case studies in Ireland and Poland, rural Chinese students at elite universities abroad, virtual 'habitus,' and diverse more theoretical contributions [20,21,22,23,24].

For the sake of the present paper, I will have to simplify matters to the essentials though. In their classic article from 2004, Peggy Levitt and Nina Schiller attempted to rethink the static, solid concept of the 'state' with the help of 'social fields' connected to migration [25]. Their findings, to my mind, present the essence of the ongoing attempt to connect Bourdieu to migration. In their own words:

Our analytical lens must necessarily broaden and deepen because migrants are often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind. As result, basic assumptions about social institutions such as the family, a citizenship, and nation-states need to be revisited. [25]

Here, I intent to focus on 'habitus.' In brief, 'habitus' is an individual's personal set of dispositions (understood as outspoken preferences) that forms her subjective structure, including limits on the thinkable and on the aspirational, through the self-imposed positioning of the individual into a fixed 'social space' [12,26]. On the terms of this self-administered role, then, the individual thinks, feels, and desires ('epistemic frame'). This makes it cognitively difficult for individuals to feel an interest in things, which are supposed to be intellectually beyond them, to feel for what their 'social space' does not offer understanding for, or to desire for more than their self-constructed image of their own person can allegedly achieve [12,26]. 'Habitus' hence creates social 'fields' by determining agents' habits and skills. Turned into declaration and action, these define a common or intermediate sphere of interaction [12,26]. Simultaneously, the 'field' creates individual agents' 'habitus' in the first place by transplanting its objective

structure into their minds as subjective, 'doxic' beliefs. These stand as fundamental premises for an outer world to be thought, experienced, and felt [12,26]. Hence, movement outside of or to move out of this fundamental positioning becomes difficult for the individual. Bourdieu thus displays a bilateral, dynamic constitution of self and social structure.

Bourdieu's *Distinction* and *Theory of Practice* thus display how an individual's social position determines this agent's concept of self and consequently of preferences, taste, intelligence, convictions, etc. [12,26]. According to 'habitus,' habit also determines behavior as action and deed, which are theoretically congruent with afore-mentioned phenomena as open 'practices' [12,26]. Behind every 'practice' thus stands a fundamental, personally imbedded, and unquestioned belief of how 'social space' communication and human interaction works. Human beings, in other words, are fine-tuned to fit into their social environment; i.e. into their social 'fields.' This extends internally far into their tastes, and thus into their interests, feelings, desires, aversions, and aspirations.

According to Bourdieu's theoretical understanding of 'habitus,' individuals are determined in their dispositions by input derived from their more particular social 'field' to a much larger degree than they are determined by their overall social 'space' [12,26]. Dispositional routines picked up in the individual's field of socialization imprint habituated behavioral routines onto the individual's mind in irremovable ways. Exile groups take their 'habitus' with them when they migrate.²

The 'habitus' concept was used by Bourdieu primarily to describe the establishment of 'social fields' in society, the mechanics within and in between the 'fields' of established societies, and the theoretical synthesis of both individual and structural agency [12,26]. However, scholarship has long started to think in 'transnational fields' [29]. Indeed, 'habitus' explains a whole lot of phenomena linked to migration. It accounts for the fact that poverty migration seldom yields second or third generation intellectuals. This holds true even in countries that offer full payment of all educational expenses to everybody who wants it [30,31]. In the case of lower social layer groups, imprinted habitual conceptions can prevent individuals from living up to their potential. If it is inconceivable in a social group that one of its members crosses a social threshold, it will inevitably become inconceivable for the individual growing up within this 'field' also. Regardless of an individual's actual intellectual dispositions, the individual will hardly live up to more than she expects herself to live up to. Thus, 'habitus' becomes a '*self-fulfilling prophecy*.'

More radically put, the individual will go as far as to defy living up to more than what her group and her own mind expect her to live up to. In fact, individuals will refuse to want anything else than what they are expected to want by their own habitually conditioned minds. Newly

¹ The project is ERC founded and hosted at Humboldt University in Berlin. The abbreviation stands for *Transforming Migration: Transnational Transfer of Multicultural Habitus*. See [17].

² However, 'Rucksack' approaches have been criticized and it has been called for more balanced pictures; e.g. by employing case studies from Turkish and Kurdish women migrants working successfully in Berlin and Britain. See [27,28]. However, it seems to me that studies criticizing 'Rucksack' approaches usually feature overachievements. I hold it to be somewhat justified to still say that high-layer 'habitus' yields much potential if not obstructed.

rich might eat beluga caviar if their new social context requires them to do so. However, there is no way to make them *like* what they devour. Likewise, lower layer individuals might comprehend the most complex scholarly theories if forced to face them. However, there is no way to make them *feel interest* in acquiring abstract knowledge. The practical application of what a social ‘field’s’ ‘habitus’ rates as proper norms of living is by needs considered proper living by the individuals living in this ‘field’ also. Therefore, individuals are reluctant to unwilling, one could even claim *incapable*, to leave their ‘social fields.’

On the other end of the scale, hence, the theory also explains why upper layer migration groups typically regain their social status in the society they settle into within one or two generations—even if they migrated (and often fled) at the cost of losing all their possessions [30,31]. However, to do so they have to be given the *opportunity to upwards mobility*. Accordingly, a lot of

recent research and policies, especially from wealthy and geographically somewhat isolated countries like Great Britain and Canada, has thus focused on getting the ‘best and brightest,’ as a recent British campaign put it, while keeping everyone else out [32,33,34]. This important fact should be taken into special consideration when dealing with the recent exodus from Syria [35]. According to Bourdieu’s theory, ‘habitus’ will play a role in whether these migrants prosper or fail. However, positive dispositions can only be materialized *if* they are given the chance to live up to the self-image derived from their ‘social field.’ In other words, their ‘capital’ is ultimately useless if they are not given the chance to prosper. In the remains of the present article, I will look at the potential of the refugees from the 2015 influx into Europe in terms of ‘habitus’ and contrast their social reality 3.5 years later in 2019 with what might have been accomplished.

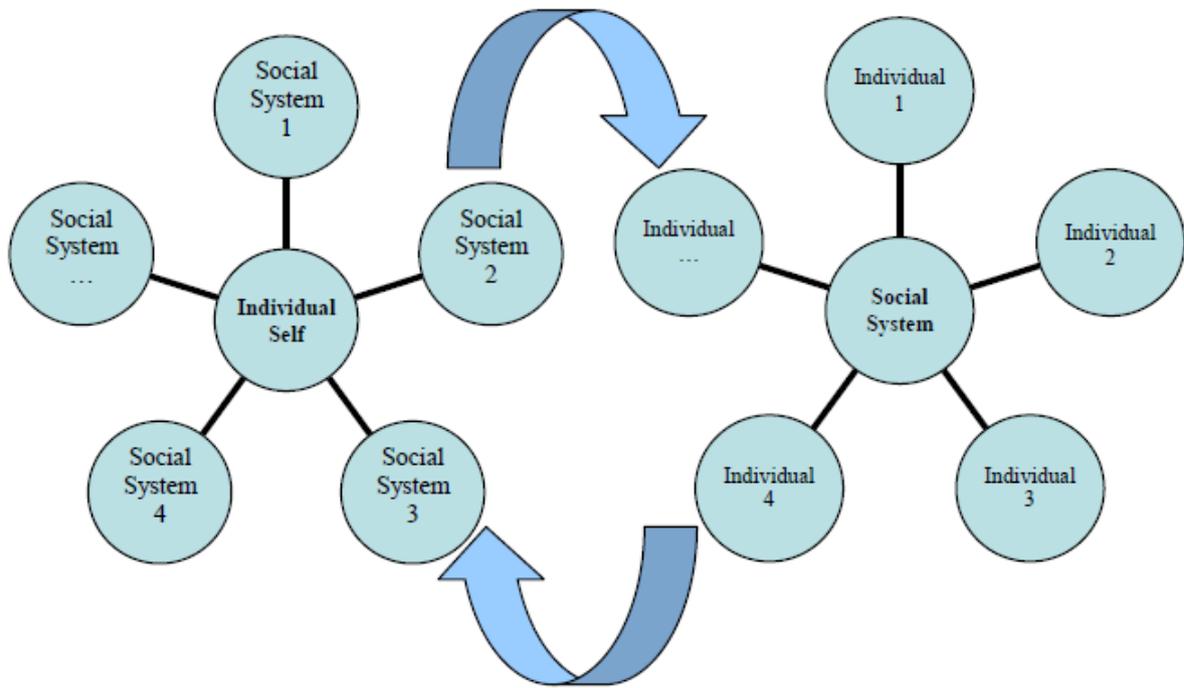


Figure 2 Social construction of individual identity structures and vice versa

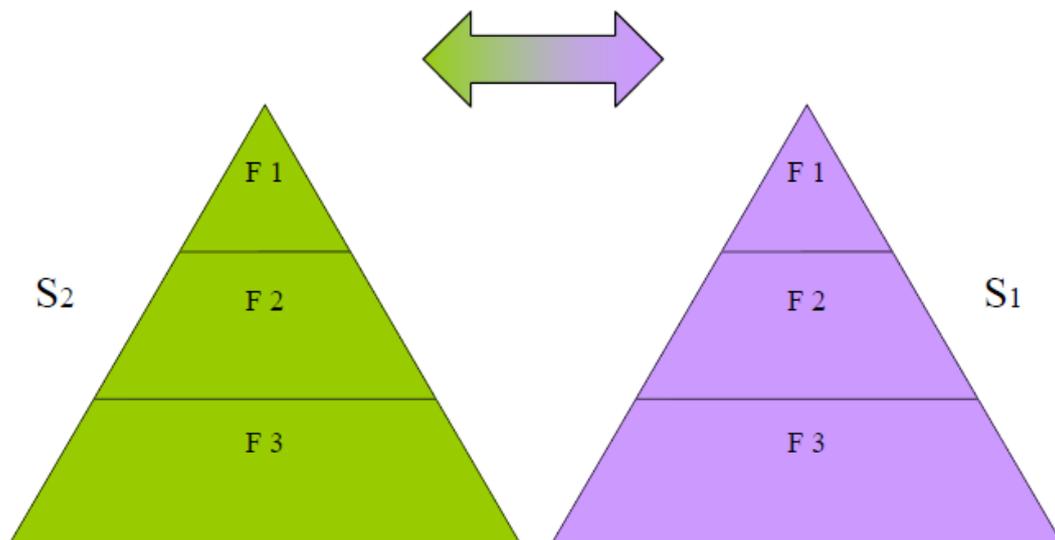


Figure 3. Layered model of ‘social fields’ interacting between societies

3. 2015

Taking the theoretical considerations on the way, I will attempt to apply this knowledge to the emigrational influx into Europe and especially into Germany of Syrian war refugees in 2015. First, I will introduce the subject matter generally. Then, I will display which refugees entered Europe and what their background is employing UNHCR numbers. From this, I will derive their expectations in their new environment, partly employing UNHCR numbers again. Furthermore, I will connect these considerations to their 'habitus' and evaluate how much potential the 2015 movement has brought into Europe and into Germany especially. In the following chapter, I will contrast expectations and potential with the current situation in 2019. I will outline the policies responsible. Thus, I will evaluate the economic and social success of the 2015 influx measured by its realized potential and missed opportunities employing Bourdieu's theory of 'habitus' in a general way.

3.1. Background

At the very end of 2010, precisely one week before Christmas, a young university graduate, harassed by the hardships of unemployment and a corrupt police force in a hopeless social and political environment, started a new world by putting his life to an end. Setting himself on fire in a last desperate act of protest against a despotic and corrupt regime, the spark that was lit in Sidi Bouzid first set Tunisia on fire, then almost all of the Arab world. What started at the onset of winter quickly became known as the advent of an 'Arab Spring;' an uprising of the masses that would drive secular authoritarians and tyrants like Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, Hosni Mubarak, Muammar el-Qaddafi, and Bashar Hafez al-Assad either into exile or straight into the Human Rights court in Geneva and establish democracy based on liberty and equality in the region, so the somewhat distorted, enthusiastic Western narrative went. One week before Christmas in 2015 and hence precisely five years after the first spark of Sidi Bouzid, the Arab Spring seemed to have turned into an Arab autumn, skipping summer.

The by far grimmest face of revolutionary failure in 2015 was no doubt to be found in the case of Syria, where those moderate rebels that once started the revolution had long been grinded to dust between Iran-, Hizbollah-, and Russia-backed Bashar al-Assad and his Ba'ath Party on the one and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (IS) on the other side of the front lines. Certain forces within Saudi-Arabia and Turkey, to make matters even more complicated, seemed to have been playing a highly dubious role that some have remarked might even have gone as far as actively supporting the in March 2019 just very recently defeated IS [36,37,38]. It has been noted that Syria is not representative for all countries affected by the Arab Spring, of course. This is true for the aforementioned involvement of an inscrutable cluster of third-party interests in the country. As much, it is true because Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's terror militia grew in the vacuum left behind by the US-American led invasion of Iraq; not, or at least not primarily, in countries influenced or overthrown by the Arab Spring (while, on the other hand, it is also a fact that both Tunisia's and Egypt's first free elections were won by radical Islamists linked to the

Muslim brotherhood). In any case though, the sheer amount of 4,393,831 registered Syrian refugees in December 2015 [40] proved that this alleged Arab Spring did not quite live up to European expectations—if Syria had been the only instance in which it went wrong, one would still have had to conclude that it went wrong altogether when faced with numbers of this proportion.

3.2. Influx

The autumn leaves had been shaken loose. In 2015, they started blowing north. Out of the 1,008,616 refugees arriving by sea in Greece in 2015 (numbers from end of December 2015), a good 50% came from Syria originally [39]. In order to gain a higher level of understanding of what might rightfully be called the severest humanitarian crisis of the new millennium and in order to research the actual causes of an emigrational influx into Europe growing in numbers by the day, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) conducted a large scale questionnaire consisting of 1,245 interviews with Syrian refugees who arrived in Greece between April and September 2015. The questionnaire's findings, released in the end of 2015, drew a predominantly homogeneous picture among individuals interviewed in the three distinct aspects (1) background (both educational and social), (2) destination, and (3) motivation (aspirations, hopes, and expectations):

- 1. Background:** 'Those Syrians interviewed reported a very high level of education (86% secondary or university education level). Students were the largest group among interviewed refugees.' ([35], p. 4) As can be seen also in the fact that most individuals interviewed were students, a second, characteristic feature of refugees coming from Syria to Europe in 2015 was that the vast majority consisted of young, male adults: 69% were aged between 18 and 35 and an overwhelming majority of 81% male ([35], p. 6). While the questionnaire notes that its age and gender breakdown might not be representative for the total Syrian population arriving in Europe in 2015, numbers according to registrations carried out by Greek authorities supported their approximate accuracy: out of the total number of 1,008,616 arrivals by sea in Greece in 2015 only 17% were women [39].³
- 2. Destination:** 'Most interviewees indicated that they wished to seek asylum in Germany and, for a smaller number, Sweden' ([35], p. 5). In numbers, this means that 50% of all interviewees intended to apply for asylum in Germany, as opposed to only 13% bound for second ranking Sweden and a negligible 2% and 0.4% bound for the other two big European population states UK and France respectively ([35], p. 13). Additionally, 57% of the total 813,599 Syrian asylum applicants by November 2015 were located in either Germany or in Serbia and on the way to Germany [40].^{4,5}

³ Data here is retrieved from the UNHCR online-portal 'Mediterranean Situation.' See [39].

⁴ Data here is retrieved from the UNHCR online-portal 'Syrian Refugee Response.' See [40].

⁵ Indeed, a large number of refugees got stuck in Serbia when EU states started closing their borders.

3. Motivation: ‘The reasons for this choice [to mostly chose Germany as destination] which interviewees cited most were employment opportunities, assistance and rights for refugees, existing family and social networks, and educational opportunities’ ([35], p. 5). Among these, the most important factor by far was employment opportunities with 57% of interviewees citing this reason ([35], p. 14). A second characteristic fact further stressed the importance of professional and social opportunities as the strongest motivational force for Syrians to migrate to Europe: Only a minority of 37% came directly from Syria, while the majority of interviewees had previously resided in a third country for at least a brief period of time ([35], p. 9). 6 Out of those individuals residing in a third country before moving on to Europe, a large majority of 89% had stayed in either Turkey or Lebanon with 79% and 10% respectively ([35], p. 12). The primary incentive for leaving the country of residence cited by most interviewees was clearly the low opportunity level offered in those countries: ‘Out of 736 Syrians who answered the question on their main reasons for leaving the country of transit, most identified the lack of employment opportunities which were non-exploitative or adequate to their skill levels, [...]’ ([40], p. 12). In numbers, a large majority of 58% of interviewees having previously resided in a third country cited this reason ([40], p. 13). Family reunification, on the contrary, seemed to play a rather marginal role: Though interviewees could cite several reasons, only a slim minority of 9% ventured forward to Europe for this cause ([35], p. 13). On the other hand, 44% of the interviewed Syrians stated that they were already married with children and only a minority of 34% stated that they did *not* intend to bring their family members to their country of asylum ([35], p. 7).

To sum up the UNHCR’s questionnaire’s results, the by far largest fraction of Syrian refugees went for resettlement in Germany. Furthermore, almost all Syrians who were seeking refuge in Germany in 2015 were young males unaccompanied by family members. Still, most of them seemed to have families located in third countries by the time and intend to bring them to Germany also once they were established in the country. Taking this analysis of UNHCR data as a starting point, the present paper aims at accomplishing a more elaborate understanding of the potential and of the future development of the 2015 influx into Germany employing Bourdieu’s theory displayed in §1. While the UNHCR report provides merely the numbers that indicate demographics and motivations of incoming refugees, employing ‘habitus’ can help to gain a deeper level of insight into why demographics are the way they are and who the 2015ers are beyond demographics. This is contrasted with what German social reality actually looks like for incoming Syrian refugees today in 2019 and

whether this reality meets their expectations, how German policy makers deal with the current situation and whether their decisions are appropriate to it, and finally to which potential future development all of the above is likely to lead in the long run.

3.3. Expectations

Naturally, migrational movements accelerate in momentum once a kinship and/or social network of migrants from the same background is well established in a country. In an age of accelerated informational flow and means of communication that increasingly transcend geographical distances and timely delay, families and communities stay in direct touch between Europe and the Middle East (or, in that regard, any other place in the world). Indeed, this is one of the points that have been dealt with in Bourdieu scholarship lately, as nobody ever really leaves a place any more these days [e.g. 41, 42]. Accordingly, new migrants choose to follow the lines of kinship ties, thereby adding to a constantly growing network. What the large percentage of young males in the 2015 influx indicates beyond the obvious though is that many of the refugees who came to Europe in 2015 are rather to be regarded as the first forerunners for larger family units. In this picture, pre-established family ties might play a rather minor, marginal role in a minority of cases of that particular influx then. For the time being, families in 2015 seemed to intentionally send individual ‘trailblazers’ in order to build up social structures that less resilient family members can settle into more easily later on (from an Arab perspective, this means primarily sending men) [43]. If so, the first and more frequently cited reasons ‘employment opportunities, assistance and rights for refugees’ become all the more important, especially when paired with the fact that a large percentage of Syrian refugees intends to bring family members from somewhat save third countries (mostly Lebanon and Turkey, to a smaller percentage also Egypt) for the reason that those countries could not offer ‘non-exploitative’ employment opportunities ‘adequate to their skill levels’ ([35], p. 5; p. 12). Most crucial under this premise, then, is the expected fortune that 2015^s trailblazers planned to make for their families in the environment they are inclined to settle into and the actual outcome today. Obviously, actual employment and educational opportunities will play a key role in this context.

From what has been displayed thus far, it should be apparent that the vast majority of refugees from the 2015 influx possess the level of high-layer ‘habitus’ that has been identified with high-potential migrants in terms of future integration and economic and intellectual contribution in §1. It is their educational and social background that endows them with ‘capital’ that should make a future successful movement towards the upper to top layers of German society possible if according chances and opportunities are offered. This is even more likely due to the fact that these top-layer individuals were not merely migrating for themselves. They migrated to make a better future for families they intended to relocate into German society. Thus, we are really looking at a matrix composed of habitual disposition and motivation that seems to offer

⁶ Total numbers: 37% traveling through, 18% residing in a third country for one to three months, 10% for three months to half a year and six months to one year each, 10% staying for more than one to two years and more than two years each, and 4% no reply.

an unlike higher potential than past poverty migration influxes. Many of the 2015 refugees likely used up their financial backups for the transit to Europe (or Germany) by now. However, through their 'habitus' this should make the 2015ers all the more determined to regain what has been lost in their host society. Additionally, their moderate views on religion should help in a secular society tolerant towards moderate religious practices. Thus, the most important measure for policy makers in host countries (mostly Germany) to implement would have been to build opportunities that support dispositions and aspirations. Individuals of high-level 'habitus' are not satisfied with merely getting fed until they can leave again. They planned to relocate into a place of opportunity and they came to stay.

4. 2019

The current situation is analyzed by referring to data from two to three primary sources. First, the German *Trade Journal* [Handelsblatt] conducted a research on the integration and opportunities of Arab refugees from the 2015 influx in the end of 2018, which was assembled by journalists from various resorts at various regions within Germany and abroad in the Southern European Border States [44]. In the report, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees [Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge] BAMF is criticized sharply for withholding information and obstructing investigations. Secondly, BAMF publications focusing on social implications of Syrian refugees in Germany providing numbers and statistics are consulted. One BAMF source is a questionnaire conducted at the very end of 2017 and its evaluative reports [45]. The questionnaire's findings got released in the beginning of 2019 and thus present the latest data available. A second BAMF source is a scholarly article on the current situation. The article was conducted by the Research Center for Migration, Integration and Asylum [Forschungszentrum Migration, Integration und Asyl], which is a BAMF 'think tank,' and published in the journal *Information Service Social Indicators ISI 61* [Informationsdienst Soziale Indikatoren] of Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences GESIS [Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften] in January 2019 [46]. Finally, a 2019 source by the politically

left-leaning German NGO Pro Asyl is consulted for the current situation on family reunification [47].

The *Trade Journal* publication does not distinguish between refugees from 2015 and from other years due to practical reasons. However, it clearly displays that the vast majority of Syrian refugees currently residing in Germany are from the 2015 influx.

The report also highlights the current situation in the EU Border States. However, its main focus really lies on the current situation and inclusion of Syrian refugees into German society. It basically identifies three fundamental political shortcomings in the government's approach and execution of the integration of Syrian war refugees:

- 1. Incompetence & Mismanagement:** The BAMF bureaucracy that refugees have been faced with at arrival and which they are still encountering 3.5 years after their arrival is overtly complicated and extremely slow. The *Handelsblatt* report features examples of architects and doctors, who resorted to suing the German government after waiting for even the first stage of processing their requests for asylum at all to begin for years [44]. Indeed, it also displays pictures of mounts of folders full of unprocessed applications at BAMF; despite the low number of new arrivals ever since 2016 (see Table 1). Before completing this mandatory but by no means sufficient first step, refugees are not even entitled to attending a language course, which in turn is only the very first mandatory but by no means sufficient step to eventually attending university in order to eventually gain the required permission for working in their fields of expertise (the report further mentions a leading Syrian surgeon with 35 years of professional experience, who would have to retake his entire university education in Germany but is not permitted to even begin the language course that would eventually entitle him to do so). The apparent mismanagement and the obvious inability to get the situation under control is tellingly displayed by the fact that BAMF has undergone changes of leadership three times in three years [44]. However, it seems doubtful that a mere substitution of the head of the institution will be able to tackle the deep structural problems.

Table 1. Syrian refugees' legal status in Germany compared with all legal alien residents

Group		With legal status								
		Unrestricted legal status	Restricted legal status					Residence permit	Suspension of deportation	other
			Education	Work	Humanitarian reasons	Family	other			
Syrians	698950	12255	3205	1785	468315	89170	1335	31120	3790	87975
Percent	100.0	1.8	0.5	0.3	67.0	12.8	0.2	4.5	0.5	12.6
all	10623940	2492075	201565	181575	922780	754720	133740	369380	166740	5401365
Percent	100.0	23.5	1.9	1.7	8.7	7.1	1.3	3.5	1.6	50.8

Source: BAMF 2019.

- 2. Inadequate language education:** The language courses that are sponsored by BAMF are falling short of preparing refugees for their future environment. Led by mostly poorly qualified teachers instructing too large numbers of students for too few hours per day, only 48.7% (2018) of students reach the BAMF goal B1⁷ [44]. Furthermore, the level aimed at is too low to integrate to begin with and it is reached by sole focus on the final examination, which turns out useless beyond everyday communication; especially when it comes to writing skills required for higher education or highly qualified professions [44]. Indeed, it seems that those refugees who can afford it prefer to take private classes at more qualified schools outside of the BAMF structure [44]. BAMF itself has a different interpretation and sees a 'positive tendency' in language acquisition in its newest questionnaire report comparing 2017 to 2016 [45,49,50]. Unfortunately, the report has no up-to-date data, does not distinguish between migrant groups, and does not distinguish arrival groups by year (while however mentioning that most arrived in 2015). However, it also mentions a 'higher risk' of Syrian refugees to suffer from depressions [45]. For the overall data it cites ~10% of refugees at schools or university (including children) and ~20% of refugees working, admittedly on average in low-pay jobs [45]. Interestingly, the report contradicts the UNHCR numbers displayed in §2 concerning the qualification levels of refugees at arrival, citing an 'at arrival lower than German average in professional or university education' ['bei ihrem Zuzug eine sehr heterogene Schulbildung und im Durchschnitt ein geringeres Niveau der Berufs- und Hochschulbildung als der Bevölkerungsdurchschnitt in Deutschland']. One possible reason for this might be that according to the UNHCR questionnaire most individuals were students when they fled Syria, which means that they did not hold a university degree in 2015 yet.
- 3. Legal status:** The likely most far-reaching critique of the *Handelsblatt* report in terms of the findings of the theory part of §1 and of the findings of the 2015 refugees' expectations part §2 of the present paper is the current legal status of a large majority of 2015 Syrian migrants. As the *Handelsblatt* report criticizes along with several NGO publications, refugees' perspectives are limited to a degree that makes productive contribution to the working market, degree-awarding education beyond BAMF courses, and thus upwards mobility practically impossible [44]. At the end of 2017, more than 70% of Syrian migrants were on a temporary legal status (or still stuck in BAMF bureaucracy) [46]. Compared with other groups, only 1.7% of the foreign residents allowed to work or pursue a

university or other education in Germany came from Syria (while they were the third largest group in total numbers at the same time) [46]. Furthermore, the number of migrants with merely subsidiary protection status is constantly rising among Syrian refugees, which makes it likely that these numbers have increased by now [47].

Facing both ongoing legal obstacles and financial insecurity, while aspirations have not materialized due to external reasons of their host society's approach towards managing the 2015 influx rather than due to internal reasons in terms of their 'habitus' levels or dispositions, one important question is what happened to the wives and families that were left behind in third countries like Turkey or Lebanon when the 2015 'trailblazers' came to Germany (see §2). Firstly, the answer is that the German government restricted family reunification until 03/17/2018 for refugees with subsidiary protection status (almost all; see §3.3) to relief pressure from an already overworked and dysfunctional BAMF bureaucracy (see §3.1). However, according to the German NGO Pro Asyl,⁸ the practical execution of the regained legal possibility to apply for family reunification is lacking to the point of conscious obstruction of legal processes [47]. The frustration that might be caused by being unable to prosper and by being separated from the people the 2015ers want to prosper for should not be underrated in terms of potential future social friction.

5. Conclusion

The more recent past has seen a comeback of forms of writing attributing the failure of some migrant groups to contribute to the social good of their societies to an alleged genetically inherited lack of intellectual capability.⁹ However, 'habitus' accounts for shortcomings perfectly well without having to fall into prejudice. As the theory shows, the inability to cross thresholds oftentimes does not lie in a genetic lack but in the ways the individual mind limits itself according to socially pre-established patterns of sense-making. Thus, the same naturally gifted individual might soar in one social 'field' and stoop in another. An experiment validated countless times in the real world displays this: if an infant individual is taken out of her 'social field' and raised under entirely different social expectations, she oftentimes grows to lead an entirely different life. What is meant here is not merely a life under different social circumstances. What is implied is a life that is mentally, essentially, and internally different in the individual's own cognitive concept of herself. This difference very obviously does not follow from different levels of capability, talking about the same individual in terms of genetics. However, it does not follow from different arrays of opportunities materially

⁷ B1 is the lower of two 'independent user' stages according to the Common Europe Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) ranging from A1 (low) to C2 (high). B1 students are expected to be able to (1) understand most points, (2) deal with most situations, (3) be able to produce simple texts, and (4) be able to describe dreams, hopes, ambitions, etc. See [48].

⁸ As the name indicates, Pro Asyl is located in the left-of-center spectrum. However, it proved very difficult to get official BAMF data on the current situation, so I had to resort to NGO data.

⁹ In Germany, for instance, a violent debate was caused by the left-wing party politician Thilo Sarazin's polemically titled book *Germany self-destructs [Deutschland schafft sich ab]*. The book basically claimed that the influx of migrants into Germany will lead to mental degeneration. See [51] [German].

offered by society either. Instead, it is constituted by what the individual herself evaluates as a socially proper end to how to live a socially proper, and hence individually fulfilling, life. Social life scripts, at the end of the day, accord with habitual expectations imprinted on every individual's very own personality structure. Lives follow the lines of what people expect from themselves. They do not follow society's expectations towards its individual members.

It is precisely this point that makes the current German approach to dealing with the 2015 mass influx of Syrian refugees into the country highly problematic. In the German government's current approach, people are being managed under subsidiary protection status. In other words, they are being fed, while at the same time expectations seem to be that they will leave the country eventually to relocate back into Syria. Thus, social mobility in terms of education or working opportunities is strongly restricted, especially for highly qualified intellectuals. German language education is formally endorsed but practically lacking. Bureaucracy is still overwhelmed with the influx; more than 3 years after it reached its peak and despite very limited numbers of new arrivals. There are indications that family reunifications are being obstructed; either through incapability or voluntarily. The state here, quite obviously, is going cheap on the money it is willing to invest into the 2015ers on all fronts: bureaucracy, education, integration, family reunification, and offering opportunities. The image here seems to be that the situation can be waited out until protection is no longer deemed necessary. The problem with this approach is that the 2015ers do not merely want shelter. The fact that their families are on hold in third countries and waiting for the 'trailblazers' to get them to Germany for reunification in an established new context of future prosperity displays this. Coming from backgrounds used to more than mere survival or lowest-layer work, the 'habitus' of the 2015ers drove them north to Europe for a reason and with a purpose. Not getting offered the possibilities expected, mere subsidized survival spots will eventually cause huge levels of frustration in young males who expect more from life and whose families (mostly wives left behind in third countries) expect more from them. To avoid future social friction, an appropriate amount of money has to be invested into integration on a support-and-demand basis (esp. language) and legal policy has to shift from containment towards bringing the 2015ers into qualified work or to college quickly. They did not come to leave again and it seems legally dubious that the state would be able to force them to do so now that they are in the country (while Bashar al-Assad consolidated his rule in Syria). However, analyzing their success chances when dealt with properly in terms of potential and motivation, this article concludes that the influx does not have to turn out to be a failure in the long run; even though a lot of time has been wasted in the past three years. It is time to face the realities of the situation and draw the mandatory conclusions now.

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