

## Analysis of Governmental Knowledge Production

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In the last chapters, the structural conditions of governmental knowledge production have been outlined: the Research Group has built up a narrative of governmental knowledge production on migration which is shaped after the image of departmental research and a concept of instrumental knowledge as put forward by the Independent Commission. In the last chapter, the structural conditions and practical constraints of governmental research at the BAMF were analyzed: contrary to the usual practice, the research unit was not set up as an independent departmental research institution but incorporated into the administrative structure of the Federal Office. In the first years of its existence, the Research Group attempted to carve out a secured area of competence within these confines, mainly by mimicking structural features of departmental research institutes. While this strategy was successful to a degree, it also constitutes a main entry gate for political manipulation of research results. Furthermore, the mission statement of the Research Group – providing knowledge for informing policy-making – is in practice severely restricted by the quite peculiar institutional arrangement of knowledge production. The main outcome of the analysis of the structural conditions is that the research work is characterized by an unresolved conflict between an ideal role of knowledge-based policy-making on the one hand and the institutional restraints on the other. All in all, the degree of scientific independence correlates negatively with the potential of political conflict attributed to a specific research topic.

Bearing these structural conditions as well as the self-perception of the Research Group in mind, in this chapter the published research output produced by the BAMF will be analyzed. The main focus lies in explaining how the institutional and intellectual framework dynamically interacts with the knowledge produced in the BAMF: basically, this interaction shapes a specific governmental knowledge subject to dynamic changes over time. The analyt-

ical tool applied here is a typology of four ideal types of knowledge-power complexes<sup>1</sup> which include the main topics of research and their intended political use. This chapter is divided in two parts: in the first step, the typology of BAMF publications is developed. By using methods of lexicometric analysis, an overview of methods, topics, and theoretical concepts of all BAMF research publications is created. This overview is completed with an analysis of the notion of practical relevance as a core defining feature for knowledge production at the Federal Office. In the second part of the chapter, the four ideal types of knowledge-power complexes are analyzed which connect typical topics of research with associated practices of knowledge production as well as practical knowledge considerations: These include first, knowledge for administrative purposes using the example of Migration Reports; second, depoliticizing knowledge with the example of integration studies; third, defensive knowledge given the example of studies on Muslims; and fourth, legitimacy knowledge with the example of knowledge about African and Eastern European migration.

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1 Cp. Amir-Moazami 2018 p. 92ff.

## Framework of Analysis

As a first step towards an analysis of the knowledge produced at the BAMF, it is worthwhile to approach the material with a variety of quantitative analysis methods. Due to the size of the corpus of literature altogether containing thousands of pages of text, such a step is necessary for a preliminary overview. To achieve this, the Research Group's own representation of its work is presented first with a focus on the internal research organization and the range and selection of research topics and methods. The main sources of this self-portrayal are yearly reports and public relations material.<sup>2</sup> In the second step, this information is analyzed against academic research to highlight differences and similarities between the BAMF's and academic research output. The chapter concludes with a preliminary typology of BAMF research projects.

## Quantitative Overview

As a first step, the base sample of research publications has to be defined. How can research be separated analytically in a meaningful way from the multitude of publications issued by the BAMF? In fact, in the course of its existence, the Research Group has produced hundreds of documents in different forms. Some publications were taken over from other government authorities; others were compiled by contracted authors who were not BAMF officials. To make a useful distinction between what counts as a document of governmental knowledge production and what does not, the BAMF's own concept can be used as a point of departure. For the Research Group's ten-year anniversary, the BAMF compiled a publication list which will be used as a basis for document analysis. According to this list, the Research Group has published the following texts in the ten years between 2005 and 2015:

- 65 Working Papers
- 26 Research Reports
- 8 texts from the *Beitragsreihe* ("Publication series")
- Yearly Migration Reports
- Yearly reports of the Research Group (since 2008/2009)
- Yearly European Migration Network (EMN) policy reports

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2 Cp. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (Ed.) (2008d), Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (2010b)

On the BAMF website, these publications are grouped into three categories:

- **Migration Reports** provide a comprehensive overview over the yearly development of in and out-migration;
- **Research reports** provide an outlet for the publication of larger research projects of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees;
- **Working papers** contain contributions of the Research Group's scientific staff concerning either preliminary results of larger research projects or self-contained smaller studies.

These three in-house publication series constitute the total body of literature for the analysis here. This selection excludes two sets of publications: first, expert opinions, and second, volumes of the "Publication Series."<sup>3</sup> Concerning the first type, expert opinions differ from all other publications since these texts are not produced by Research Group members and were therefore excluded from quantitative analysis. As for "Publication Series" texts, the authorship question is different since at least parts of these publications are written by BAMF researchers. In general, the texts are visibly directed towards an academic audience: some texts in this series are academic qualification theses, while others are anthologies based on academic conferences organized by the BAMF and presented in the style and form common for academic publications. However, these texts are marked as "not representing the institutional opinion of the BAMF" and can thus be considered outside of the "official" body of literature. This exclusion can be justified with what Iver Naumann called "a bureaucratic mode of knowledge production": in his ethnography of the Norwegian Foreign Service, he observed a high degree of conformity and redundancy in the texts and speeches produced by diplomats; a common characteristic was the almost complete elimination of personal notions.<sup>4</sup> Following this argument, the note that a text "does not represent the institution's opinion" is a very strong argument to not regard it as part of official BAMF knowledge since it stands to reason that the "Publication Series" and expert opinion texts are subject to different production rationales than those outlined in chapter 3.

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3 In some cases, both publication types were nevertheless used as sources for the qualitative analysis in the second part of this chapter.

4 Neumann 2012, p. 86

As a first approach to the research texts, the total corpus of the BAMF research output<sup>5</sup> was quantitatively analyzed using corpus-linguistic analysis.<sup>6</sup> In the first step, an n-gram analysis was conducted. N-grams are combinations of words (2-gram = 2 words, 3-gram = 3 words, etc.) which are analyzed according to their relative frequency in the text. N-grams are a relatively basic and, to a degree, simplistic method of corpus-linguistic analysis: for example, while the frequency of “Persons with a Migrant Background” can be compared with the frequency of “Persons without a Migrant Background,” it is impossible to determine contexts of meaning, especially if contexts are not manifested in words that appear right next to each other in the text.<sup>7</sup> The n-gram analysis was conducted with the N-gram statistical package, an open-source software using PERL code. The resulting n-grams were combined with bibliographical data of the respective publication in an access-data base. After sorting and refining the data, a list of ca. 7,000 1-Grams which constitute the most frequently used words in the BAMF research was created. The top-10 entries are:

- a) Year (*Jahr*)
- b) Germany (*Deutschland*)
- c) German (*Deutsch*)
- d) Foreigner, foreign, foreign country (*Ausländer, Ausländerin, ausländisch, Ausland*)
- e) Person (*Person*)
- f) Illegal, illegality (*illegal, Illegalität*)
- g) Respondent, ask, question (*Befragen, Befragt, Befragte, Befragung*)
- h) Migrant (*Migrant, Migrantin*)
- i) Other (*andere*)
- j) Woman, female, share of females (*Frau, weiblich, Frauenanteil*)

The keywords reference broadly to three areas of knowledge: first, empirical social research (visible in terms such as respondent, question, person); second, the nation state (Germany, foreigner, illegal); and third, related to

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5 According to a 2015 publication list, see Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015c

6 Bubenhofer, no date

7 Rosenberg 2013

both previous items, categorizations of people (such as migrant, woman, and other).

This list was analyzed for frequently used topics as well as topical shifts over the year. However, the limits of the analysis became apparent: in general, as already mentioned, quantitative n-gram analysis is restricted to words or phrases instead of content; furthermore, the discursive meaning and impact of a specific term does not automatically correlate with the frequency of its use. The distribution over time could give insight into a development of ups and downs in certain research topics, but in this respect the BAMF literature proved to be relatively stable: most of the terms mentioned above retain their relative frequency over the years. All in all, n-gram analysis rendered some general trends in the body of literature visible, most importantly the joint administration-scientific speaker perspective which will be analyzed later in some detail.

For a thorough quantitative overview of the Research Group's topics and methods, the yearly reports provide a useful point of departure. These contain some information on how the BAMF presents the organization of its knowledge production. In relation to its research topics and methods, the Research Group is keen on drawing an image of a high degree of versatility and diversity of the research work.

"The research center is characterized by the fact that very diverse methods are used here, since very different projects are being conducted. There are projects in quantitative sociology which last for four years and at the same time descriptive desk studies, conducted by politologists which are ready within three months. In sum, they span over the whole range of qualitative and quantitative research."<sup>8</sup>

This diversity is related both to the nature of the research interest and the inclusion of the Research Group in the institutional hierarchy. In part, this narration draws on a common conceptualization of academic migration re-

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8 "Das Forschungszentrum zeichnet sich dadurch aus, dass hier die diversesten Methoden benutzt werden, das es die verschiedensten Projekte bearbeitet, also von Projekten [im Bereich quantitativer Soziologie] die vier Jahre dauern, und genauso deskriptive Desk Studies, von Politologen bearbeitet, die innerhalb von drei Monaten fertig sind. Also sie decken die gesamte Spannweite an qualitativer und quantitativer Forschung ab. (Interview with a BAMF researcher, September 2015)

search as being a thoroughly “interdisciplinary” object of scientific enquiry.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the Research Group fosters this claim by the collaborative, demand-driven method of compiling the research agenda. In this context, the argument goes that, since most studies are commissioned by other government agencies, there is little leeway in narrowing down the range of research topics:

“In contrast to theory-driven academic research, the research questions are based on the interests of the contractor. In this regard, the Research Center has not formed topical focus areas, since usually, upon completion of a study, a new project with a wholly different content waits.”<sup>10</sup>

Research work at the BAMF is organized in short to mid-term research projects. As of 2015, the Research Group completed 92 research projects (including ongoing projects) while 33 projects have apparently never been concluded.<sup>11</sup> With the exception of aborted projects, research projects are usually connected to a specific publication, either as part of the Working Paper or Research Report publication series, respectively.

Research projects are sorted into topical categories. In general, the Research Group differentiates between the categorizations of migration and integration research, respectively: while integration research represents a unified category, migration research is further divided into several sub-categories:

#### Migration research

- General aspects of migration (17 projects, including 10 Migration Reports)
- Worldwide migration movements (30 projects)
- Migration and labor market (23 projects)
- Demographic aspects of migration (8 projects)
- Irregular migration (9 projects)

#### Integration research (38 projects)

9 Cp. for example Mecheril et al. 2013, 13f.

10 Kreienbrink and Worbs 2015, p. 329

11 Data from Research Group yearly reports, own survey. All following data refers to the base of 126 research projects and 109 publications, respectively.

Over the years, for the most part, this topical structure was relatively stable, occasional renaming of several sub-categories notwithstanding.<sup>12</sup> One exception to this rule is the topic of demography, which was listed as a separate category along with migration and integration research in the 2007/2008 report. In all successive reports, the category became part of the general migration section.<sup>13</sup> This restructuring is an expression of a general trend of diminishing research activities in this area: since 2009, no new projects have commenced in this area; furthermore, 3 out of 8 research projects have been erased from the research agenda in more recent yearly reports. Since no corresponding study has been published, this indicates most probably that these projects have never been concluded.<sup>14</sup> A similar trend can be observed in research of irregular migration: out of the nine projects in this area, five were concluded before 2008 and the remainder is made up of studies conducted within the framework of the European Migration Network (EMN). Diminishing research activities in these two subjects is counterbalanced with increasing efforts in worldwide migration as well as labor market research. Both topics feature a rising trend among the newly commenced projects from 2011 on. Integration research as the single largest research field does not follow a distinct trend and maintains a stable and relatively high share of the newly commenced projects throughout the years.

In regard to research topics, it is interesting to compare academic migration research with the research output of the BAMF. If the list of research projects and topics is compared with peer institutions, some differences and similarities between academic and governmental research become visible. According the research literature data base SOLIS and the research project data base SOFIS, migration research in Germany is a mid-sized topical area contributing about 5 percent of all German language social science research projects between 1998 and 2008.<sup>15</sup> Within the field, there is a high concentration of research projects at a small number of institutes: around

12 For example, "illegal migration" was renamed into "irregular migration" in 2009.

13 "*Themenschwerpunkt Demografie*" Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009b, p. 68

14 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2016b, own survey.

15 All numbers in this paragraph refer to the years between 1998 and 2008 and are quoted after Schimany and Schock 2012. See Leibnitz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften 2010, 12f. for a detailed description of the databases and data collection methodology.



two-thirds of all research projects have been conducted by the top one-third of the listed institutions; among them, only six have conducted more than 30 projects.<sup>16</sup> Compared to this group, the BAMF can be considered a rather large research organization in terms of publication volume and frequency. In 2010, the BAMF was the fifth-largest publisher of migration research in the SOLIS database. However, it should be noted that the numbers refer to the period between 1999–2008, while the Research Group only started publishing in 2005.<sup>17</sup>

If the research topics of academic and BAMF research are compared with each other, some similarities and differences become visible. Concerning academic publications according to SOLIS data, the database lists the following five topics as most relevant:

- a) Racism/Discrimination (*Rassismus/Diskriminierung*), 12.1%
- b) Multiculturalism/Ethnicity (*Multikulturalismus/Ethnizität*), 8.3%
- c) History of Migration (*Geschichte der Migration*), 8.1%
- d) International Migration (*Internationale Migration*), 6.6%
- e) Circumstances of Life/Education (*Lebenslagen und Bildung*) 6.5% each

If the BAMF research agenda is compared against this list, some differences and similarities are discernible: a distinct focus on socio-economic integration – expressed in topics like education, circumstances of life, and socialization – is the main similarity between academic and BAMF research. Within this topical area, however, the BAMF has rather different focus points: regarding education, the BAMF research is less focused on the general school system, as it is the case with academic migration research. Instead, BAMF research is rather concerned with integration-policy related education, most prominently in the context of the so-called integration courses.<sup>18</sup> Another re-

16 According to Schimany and Schick 2009, 22f., these institutions include the Center for Turkish Studies (Essen), the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (Bielefeld); the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (Osnabrück); the Berlin Institute for Comparative Social Research; the European Forum for Migration Studies (Bamberg); and the Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies (Neuchâtel/Switzerland).

17 Cp. Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften 2010, p. 26

18 Cp. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2014b, p. 135: the analysis of the integration of immigrating spouses is partly designed to evaluate federal integration policies, above all the integration courses.

markable difference is the BAMF's approach to labor market research, which is subsumed under the migration section of research, instead of integration as it is usually the case in academic research.<sup>19</sup> This deviation from the rest of the research field can be explained with the practice of acquiring study commissions: many study commissions in the field of integration originate directly from the BAMF, which explains why research is less oriented towards the school system and more towards federal integration policies.

There are some differences between the BAMF research agenda and the academic field as well. Some topics which feature prominently on the BAMF's research agenda seem to be less relevant in the academic world: this is above all true for demographic research, which is a comparatively small research topic in the SOLIS data (2.7% of all migration research publications in this area), and to a degree research on irregular migration, which does not appear as a topical category at all, indicating its comparatively low significance.<sup>20</sup> Both topics have, however, constituted a major research focus at least in the first years after the establishment of the Research Group. On the other hand, the almost complete lack of BAMF research on racism/discrimination and multiculturalism is a striking difference to the academic field: the two most important research topics among academic publications have not been the focus of *any* BAMF research project; indeed, they have only been occasionally mentioned in BAMF publications at all.<sup>21</sup>

In terms of project length, research projects are labeled either "new" or "ongoing" for an average of about two years; exceptions include projects which represent standard yearly publications, namely the "migration report" and the "integration report." A related issue are multiple publications which deal with the same project topic such as "Migration Potentials," "Integration of Asylum Seekers," and "Integration Panel"; these projects lasted for two, three, and six years, respectively. Another type of long-lasting research projects consists of empiric studies for which data has to be collected before the actual analysis; most of these studies deal with integration topics. With an average of almost three years, projects in the topic area of demography last for a longer-than-average duration as well. On the other end of the scale are all studies in con-

19 This difference will be discussed in some depth later in the text in the analysis of "Migration potential" studies.

20 Numbers quoted after Leibnitz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften 2010, p. 20

21 For example, the yearly reports mention three (of more than 500) external publications in this topical area between 2008 and 2015. (surveyed by the author)

nection with the European Migration Network (EMN), called “short studies” or “focus studies,” respectively: these entail about one quarter of all research projects (33 out of 126) and almost all concluded within one year. Many research projects in the area of “worldwide migration” are comparatively short as well.

In conclusion, the self-portrayal of the BAMF’s research output is consistent with the understanding of research as a provider of practically relevant information to the administration and the political system. This understanding is visible, for example, in the claim that the BAMF’s research is not reduced to single topics and can be considered methodologically versatile. This is linked to the demand-driven mode of research agenda-setting. In terms of research topics, there is a distinct shift visible over the years away from knowledge production on demography and illegality towards labor migration and international/worldwide migration, while integration research maintains a high level of research activities over the years.

There seems to be a relatively clear distinction of at least two types of studies in regard to methodology and topic; certain standard types of research designs are used over and over again. A first type is what the BAMF calls “desk studies”: secondary analyses focusing on rather broad general topics like “worldwide migration,” “international migration,” and demography; around one-third of the total output can be attributed to this publication type. A second type of publications consists of empiric studies usually in the area of integration; a clear majority of 19 out of 23 empiric studies deal with integration topics.<sup>22</sup> Among these, there is a distinct focus on methods of quantitative sociology. In contrast to this standard design, only a small minority of five publications apply qualitative methods of social research. Out of these studies, two were designed as “supplement study” to previous quantitative surveys.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, quantitative research focusses heavily on one particular source of data, namely the *Ausländerzentralregister* (Central Register of Foreign Nationals, AZR). In 16 projects, the raw data for drawing a sample stems from this source.

To sum it up, the analysis has highlighted some general features of the “official canon” of governmental knowledge production at the BAMF. The pub-

22 Own survey. Base: 26 research reports and 65 working papers from 2005–2015 according to the 2015 publication list (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015c)

23 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011b and Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2012b

lications have been analyzed in terms of their features such as topic, length, methodology, and compared against academic research. The body of official literature can be structured into two main types of research projects: first, elaborate social research projects predominantly concerned with integration and to a lesser degree labor migration, and second, “desk studies” in the areas of demography and international/worldwide migration. In regard to the object of study, two main types of research designs can be discerned. On the one hand, there are texts that can be qualified as a general overview of a social phenomenon (media use of migrants, for example<sup>24</sup>), or a specific area of policy steering (“The organization of Asylum procedures in Germany”<sup>25</sup>). These studies can usually be attributed to one of the Research Group’s topical areas. On the other hand, there are studies which focus on a specific target group (integration course participants, Muslims, highly qualified migrants) and very often cut across the integration/migration divide in their analysis. By and large, the research agenda seems to reflect the main streams of academic research on migration, above all visible in the research on socio-economic aspects of integration as well as statistical overviews over selected target groups and social phenomena. After all, this approximation reflects both the academic training of the BAMF researchers as well as their strategy to conduct knowledge production using scientific methods, albeit under different production conditions.

## Qualitative Analysis

For the qualitative analysis of knowledge production, it is necessary to link the insights from the qualitative analysis to the structural conditions of knowledge production as laid out in Chapters 2 and 3. These conditions can be subsumed under the notion of practical relevance, which is understood as the dominant concept of the BAMF’s knowledge production.

Practical relevance can be conceptualized as a specific practice of knowledge production developed at the BAMF Research Group as a result of both a tradition of governmental knowledge production on migration and of the structural conditions of the political-institutional set-up of governmental research at the BAMF. As the discussion of this has shown, practical relevance –

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24 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2010a

25 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2012c

for example expressed in the strategy of acquiring study commissions, a practice which gained increasing significance over the years – is portrayed as the main defining feature of knowledge production and is seen as a core difference to academic research at the same time. Therefore, the notion of practical relevance will constitute the core item of analysis of BAMF publications.

In the analysis, the notion will be scrutinized in two ways. First, it describes the intended use of the knowledge. This follows from a notion that practical relevance is not a uniform yardstick of quality, but refers to potentially very different uses of knowledge in the context of policy-making. Second, the effects of the principle of practical relevance will be scrutinized in regard to its influence on the knowledge. Again, despite the rather starkly pronounced demarcation from academic knowledge production, it stands to reason that academic theory and method are systematically applied to BAMF-publications, albeit under the specific conditions of knowledge production present in the Federal Office.<sup>26</sup>

In short, practical relevance will be scrutinized both in respects to the perceived multiple uses of knowledge for governmental purposes, as well as in respect to its feedback on the structure and features of the knowledge.

These deliberations will be linked to the insights of the quantitative overview to select key areas for further inquiry. As a basic unit of analysis, the BAMF's longest or otherwise most significant research projects will be used. While this selection is not representative, it does cover a sufficiently large area of the BAMF's research activities. Based on these projects and the intended use of knowledge, four different practices of knowledge production can be discerned: administrative knowledge, depoliticizing knowledge, defensive knowledge and legitimacy knowledge. The two items – research interest and practical relevance – will be analyzed in terms of their interaction: for which exact practice are the particular studies conducted? How is academic theory selected, applied, and altered according to practical relevance deliberations? How does the theoretical understanding of a concept change over time? Before discussing the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, the four complexes of knowledge production and political use will be described briefly:

The first complex under scrutiny is knowledge for administrative purposes. This type of knowledge and practical use can be regarded in some respects as the archetypical genre of governmental knowledge: statistical re-

26 Cp. Amir-Moazami 2018b, p. 111

ports, usually in yearly intervals, complemented by legal definitions of different target populations. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, such reports constitute an important cornerstone of governmental knowledge production, which is why it is hardly surprising that the BAMF's research efforts have aimed in that direction from the very beginning. This practice of knowledge production will be discussed using the example of Migration Reports, a yearly report series issued by the BAMF since 2005.

Second, depoliticizing knowledge in the context of integration research will be analyzed. In the BAMF, the main policy area of subject formation is integration, since in this policy area the BAMF retains quite widespread authority and has developed policy tools which directly interact with migrants, such as integration courses. The basic concept of integration has been heavily influenced by academic research of the BAMF and elsewhere. In this context, two research projects are of major interest: first, the integration report as an early attempt to develop a coherent theory of integration and integration monitoring, and second, the integration panel, a long-term comparative study on integration course participants.

The third – defensive knowledge – is the use of knowledge as a remedy to populist, alarmist, xenophobic, or otherwise undesirable public statements, a relatively well-established concept of knowledge use in migration policy contexts. For the analysis of defensive knowledge, studies on Muslims will be analyzed, among these the study *Muslim Life in Germany*, the single most widely cited BAMF research report.<sup>27</sup>

Fourth is legitimacy knowledge. This type of knowledge is set apart in a way from other knowledge forms since it is directed towards a more diffuse target and therefore hardly stands strict criteria of practical applicability. In this context, the concept of migration potential and its development from a prognosis tool to a rather self-referential legitimization discourse will be analyzed. In the latter context, migration potential is adapted to interpret migration movements according to political guidelines: some migration potentials are characterized as problematic despite the fact that these hardly translate into actual migration movements (especially from Africa); in other contexts, migration potential is downplayed (intra-EU migration movements from Romania and Bulgaria). All in all, it seems probable that the practical use of these studies lies rather in the legitimization of policy than in its information.

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27 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c

Before the four types of knowledge/practical use complexes are analyzed, two caveats of this framework of analysis should be mentioned. First, as already mentioned, the four types are not an exact representation of the whole body of knowledge produced by the BAMF: some of the BAMF's research topics, such as labor market, irregular migration, or demography are not equally well-represented in the analysis as others. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, some publication types are left out as well, most importantly the rather academically-oriented publication series, but also most studies conducted within the framework of the European Migration Network (EMN). The second caveat concerns the connection of practical use and knowledge: the construction of a typical, knowledge-practical use complex might lead to the false impression that these complexes are stable over time and somewhat clearly separated from each other. As the analysis will show, this is not the case: practical applicability requirements change over time. Furthermore, in most cases, more than one practical use of a given research project can be discerned, so it is not the case that, for example, studies on Muslims exclusively serve to calm the public debate, or the Migration Reports exclusively serve administrative purposes. Instead of understanding the typology of knowledge-power-complexes as an all-encompassing category system with fixed borders, it should rather be seen as a system of ideal types: the four knowledge-policy complexes illustrate most clearly the features of governmental knowledge production, its effects, and blind spots. This has been done by focusing on research outlets and topics which represent most clearly the "official body of knowledge" of the BAMF, which at the same time are to the highest degree subject to the institutional confines of knowledge production as illustrated in Chapter 3.

The absence of clearly confined categories can be regarded a strength rather than a weakness of this approach: since the analysis centers on the dynamic interaction of knowledge production and practical relevance requirements, changes in what is considered practically relevant knowledge can be made visible. Especially by focusing on single, long-term research projects, the evolution of theoretical concepts according to practical applicability considerations can be made visible which otherwise would stay unrevealed.

## Knowledge for Administration

Administrative knowledge production can be regarded a paradigmatic genre of governmental research because it follows most closely the instrumental logic of knowledge application to administrative action. This logic can be traced back to the concept of rational government in Max Weber's typology.<sup>28</sup> According to Weber, the distinctive difference between rational and other government types is the precise and planned application of knowledge to general rules within a bureaucracy.<sup>29</sup> Given this structural proximity between knowledge production and administration and the fact that Weber's ideal is mirrored in the Research Group's legal mandate, the original research hypothesis was that the BAMF's knowledge production is to a large degree dedicated to research questions directly arising from administrative practice. Indeed, a large part of the research publications are connected to administrative action. The most representative of these descriptive, technical publications issued by the BAMF is the Migration Report (*Migrationsbericht*), a yearly statistical overview of migration movements in Germany.

## The Migration Report

When analyzing Research Group publications, the Migration Reports do not seem to be a very promising source material: a large part of these texts is made up of either tables with statistical data or descriptions of institutional or legal regulations with no commentary or analysis. Successive reports usually update the data columns, repeat legal prescriptions, and briefly describe legal changes but otherwise contain no new information. Furthermore, the Migration Reports do not consume large resources in terms of personnel and workload: for years, the reports were compiled by the same author; until 2014, the compilation of the report was conducted in a non-scientific statistical unit.<sup>30</sup> The academic literature similarly seems to attribute little significance to these reports: Boswell for example judges that these rather foundational and technical publications serve predominantly a legitimizing purpose, that

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28 Weber distinguishes between rational, charismatic, and traditional forms of government. Cp. Weber 1994, 311f.

29 Boswell 2008, p. 471

30 Cp. for example Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011f, p. 12



the Ministry can demonstrate it has access to this sort of knowledge without actually using it in political practice.<sup>31</sup>

The large amount of exact repetitions of statements in the Migration Reports is indeed striking. Not only the basic structure of reporting never changes, but also the text structure within chapters is usually an exact copy from last year's report. Definitions and legal texts are repeated year after year; for example, the discussion of advantages and disadvantages of specific statistical sources stays by and large identical over the course of ten years. In this regard, these reports constitute something like the least academic publication outlet of the BAMF Research Group: there is hardly anything more punishable in the academic publication tradition than plagiarism; in any university, such a publication strategy would lead to negative repercussions.

However, contrary to the assumption that administrative knowledge is of somewhat minor interest, one of the interviewees identified the Migration Report as one of the decisive reasons for the establishment of a positive reputation of the Research Group's knowledge production.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the BAMF considers the reports as one of their "standard publications" with a comparatively high degree of dissemination and political impact.<sup>33</sup> Given the rather negative evaluation in academic literature and visual impression of redundancy, how can this political impact be explained?

In this context, Iver Naumann's ethnography on the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is illustrative as he discusses the production of boring speeches, specifically an incident where a relatively innovative speech to senior diplomats was drafted and subsequently rejected by a supervisor. The draft was replaced by a generic talk on the basic principles of foreign policy, a topic surely already known by this audience of experts. Naumann concludes that the most important principle of bureaucratic knowledge production is not the transmission of new information, but to maintain the basic principles of policy by way of repetition. In this context, repetition must not be seen as a lack of innovativeness, but rather, a decision for continuity. Repetition means order is upheld, since if a policy is not repeated, it would presumably be weakened.

Applied to the Migration Report, Naumann's approach is useful since it conceptualizes repetition not as a deficit, but rather a conscious strategy to

31 Boswell 2015, pp. 26–27

32 Field notes, July 2016

33 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2010b, 8f.

establish a certain discourse, which can in turn be analyzed. Physically, this discourse emerges as a co-creation between involved units of a given bureaucratic organization as well as editing and the revision of texts on the various steps of the bureaucratic hierarchy. In the case of the BAMF, a similar procedure is in place which controls the public output of the Research Group through a process of hierarchical supervision and editing. The manuscript is passed on through various stages of a hierarchy, first internally (in the BAMF) and second externally (in the Ministry) where the text is scrutinized for potential political controversies. Although this is a common practice applied to all BAMF publications, it stands to reason that the Migration Reports are subject to an especially tight revision process: since the Minister of the Interior is presenting the report to the Federal Cabinet and to the press, and in general because of their relatively high public visibility, the reports are arguably controlled more closely for politically sensitive content.<sup>34</sup> Iterations of reporting structure which sometimes go as far as exact repetitions of whole text passages are an outcome of this hierarchical surveillance: probed and proofed concepts and formulations are used over and over again to avoid negative feedback from supervisors; the potential for innovations is systematically reduced as a result because changes are subject to especially tight scrutiny and must be justified explicitly.

Besides this insight into the production of repetitions in administrative knowledge, Naumann highlights the fact that repetitions can be, in fact, productive. Indeed, in this sense, the lack of innovation turns out to be the greatest advantage of the Migration Reports if the criteria for scientific innovation are disregarded: it is the longest established report series in the policy area of migration and enjoys relatively high public visibility compared to most other BAMF publications.<sup>35</sup>

In the following paragraphs, administrative knowledge production in the Research Group will be analyzed using the Migration Reports as an example. This is conducted in three steps. First, the reports are described, especially in respect to their development over the last ten years. The central focus lies on

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34 Cp. press information concerning the Migration Reports: Bundesministerium des Innern 1/6/2016, Bundesministerium des Innern 12/4/2015, Bundesministerium des Innern 1/15/2014.

35 Every Migration Report is presented by the Minister of Interior to the Federal Cabinet. Cp. Bundesministerium des Innern 12/4/2015

the construction and evolution of the concept of migrant groups which constitutes a specific technique of reading statistical data. In the second step, the political usefulness of the knowledge is discussed. In this part, I follow Weber's distinction between administrative and technical knowledge, arguing that Migration Reports contain mostly technical knowledge whose central concept changes over time from the construction of an overview to a selective representation of migrant groups. In the third part, the epistemic features of this knowledge are discussed. By focusing on the knowledge on illegal migrants, this analysis challenges the notion of a somewhat neutral overview. Instead, a specific governmental perspective is created from the impression that migration is thoroughly structured and steered by legal status groups.

To draw an accurate image of the original concept of the Migration Report and its development, it is necessary to briefly outline the history of this research project. Here, the Independent Commission's critique of statistical reporting on migration can be used as a starting point, since it illustrates well the state of the art of statistical reporting of migration by the end of the 1990s:

"In the course of its work, the commission has time and again reached the borders of transparency. A main obstacle in this regard is the fact that quality issues in migration statistics hinder an unequivocal evaluation of the overall immigration movements. The existing database is sufficient to recognize a need for action and propose political changes, but there remains a more or less large area of uncertainty."<sup>36</sup>

The statistical infrastructure of monitoring migration consisted at the time of the Independent Commission's report of three main sources: the Federal Statistical Office's migration statistics (*Amtliche Wanderungsstatistik*), the Central Register for Foreign Nationals (*Ausländerzentralregister*, AZR), and the Micro Census. Out of these, the most comprehensive statistical source is the official migration statistics based on population registry data. It contains information on the number, age, gender, and nationality of international migrants. While these statistics contain data on all internationally moving persons regardless of citizenship, AZR data is confined to non-Germans only. The AZR is a central database with data from foreigner authorities, the BAMF, police and other authorities where personal data on foreigners is stored. In addition to the information provided in the migration statistics data on the legal status, it contains the duration of stay and in some cases socio-economic data

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36 Unabhängige Kommission "Zuwanderung" 2001, p. 287

(education, employment status) as well. Finally, the Micro Census – a panel study organized by the Federal Statistical Office based on a random survey of 1% of German households – contains a wide array of socio-economic data.

The Independent Commission's critique targeted above all else the principle of nationality: all official statistics allowed only the distinction of citizenship: German or non-German. However, during the 1990s, this distinction became increasingly less meaningful especially because of the increased number of immigrating Ethnic Germans as well as an increasing naturalization rate. As a result, the binary logic of citizenship no longer corresponded with what was perceived as a social reality, as a government statistician explained.<sup>37</sup> Gradually, these processes rendered the hitherto quasi impermeable border between German and non-German populations more porous and challenged the image of an ethnically homogenous German population as implied by governmental statistics. Furthermore, different statistical indicators were scattered around several databases which rendered them less meaningful: data on in and out movements were compiled by the Federal Statistical Office, while statistics on legal status groups of migrants were collected by various other authorities such as the Federal Office for the Recognition of Foreign Refugees (asylum statistics), the Foreign Office (data on family reunification based on visa applications), and the Central Work Placement Agency (data on seasonal workers). With the exception of the Micro Census, all governmental statistics on migration had in common their compilation as a by-product of administration.<sup>38</sup> The method of data collection is in principle prone to producing bias: for example, immigration and emigration were registered in the population registries on the basis of in- and out movements, not individuals; pendular migrants therefore emerged multiple times in the statistics. As a result, definitions of what counted as migration and what not differed, so that comparability of indicators across databases was reduced.<sup>39</sup> A related challenge consisted of the underreporting of emigration: de-registration from official records was de jure mandatory but in practice difficult to enforce with the existing administrative and legal framework.<sup>40</sup> Together with the double-registration of pendular migrants, this resulted in a systematic overrepresenta-

37 Field notes, interview, February 2017

38 Lederer 2004, 102ff.

39 For example in the Central Register of Foreign Nationals (*Ausländerzentralregister*). Cp. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2008c, p. 13

40 Cp. Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Ausländerfragen 1997, p. 171

tion of migrants in the population registries, especially pendular migrants and male individuals (due to their higher degree of cross-border mobility). Another problem of registration concerned migration forms which did not correspond to legal statuses, such as work migration: data on these phenomena had to be compiled from various, partly incompatible sources with inconsistent definitions.

All in all, the critique offered by the Independent Commission targeted the patchy data basis for migration policy-making by listing the main methodological problems, such as incompatibility of data sources and definitions, inapt data collection mechanisms, and most of all, the outdated nationality principle. According to the Independent Commission, these problems cumulated to a degree that they constituted the main obstacle to policy reform.

In this context, the Migration Reports can be read as an answer to the Independent Commission's critique. By and large, the reports compile the different statistical sources on migration into one document, thereby creating a synoptic overview. The structure is made up of four parts: an overview of the total flows of migrants in a given year, a detailed discussion of selected migrant groups, emigration, illegal or irregular migration, and data on the foreign population in Germany. All these chapters are based on the main databases on foreigners in Germany. The first chapter, an overview of in- and out movements, is based on the *Amtliche Wanderungsstatistik* (official migration statistic) as provided by the Federal Statistical Office. Micro Census data is used in the "data on foreign population" chapter; the core item of analysis is dedicated to the discussion of migrant groups on the basis of AZR data. This part contains an overview of immigration movements, analyzing the following immigrant groups according to legal status and the aim of immigration: migrants from within the EU, "Ethnic Germans," temporary work migrants, students, asylum, and family reunification.<sup>41</sup> Over time, new groups are created – especially the "temporary work migration" and the "asylum" categories become more differentiated, reflecting legal changes in these two areas.<sup>42</sup>

41 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2007a, 36ff.. Some migrant groups are registered in specialized data bases, such as different forms of work migration (at the Central Placement Agency) or data on family reunification (as part of the Foreign Office's visa statistics).

42 For example, the Migration Report 2015 names 10 forms of temporary work migration (Academic professions, managers and specialists, international staff exchange vocational training, highly qualified workers, "Blue Card EU" holders, scientists, and self-employed migrants).

In general, the discussion of migrant groups is the only part of the Migration Report which is subject to some changes in structure and a gradual expansion in volume, largely thanks to the fact that discussion becomes more detailed and refined over the years.

These changes notwithstanding, the basic understanding of migrant groups has remained stable since 2006. The Migration Reports proceed with describing every migrant group in a relatively standardized pattern: first, legal prescriptions are quoted to serve as a basic definition of every migrant group and constitute the introductory passage to every sub-chapter. Subsequently, the volume of inflow is reported, regarding the last ten years and with special attention to changes in regard to last year's report. Usually, nationality is discussed next: the most important countries of origin are listed according to their importance in terms of volume, again with a special focus on changes as compared to last year's report. In some cases, additional demographic data is presented: this includes the age and gender composition of a given migrant group and, in some cases, the regional distribution within Germany as well. All in all, the legal description of a given migrant group and its volume of inflow is the most important and consistently provided information, whereas demographic statistics are discussed only in some cases, depending on the availability of data. Socio-economic data – employment rate, income, education status, housing situation, family structure and size – indeed, any information which goes beyond the mere description of a legal status plus what can be called “passport information” (age, nationality, gender) – is consistently absent from the discussion of immigration groups.

So far, the concept of migrant groups to analyze and describe migration seems like a rather straight-forward, self-explanatory method of reading statistical data. Indeed, grouping statistical data into categories is of course not an exclusive innovation of the BAMF, but rather can be regarded as a relatively typical method of quantitative sociology of migration. However, there is an important difference to earlier concepts which used a similar heuristic: in the 1970s and 1980s, research and policy-making centered on certain “risk groups” such as Second Generation, Turkish Nationals, or Asylum Seekers. These risk groups were specifically selected according to a perception of danger or being endangered – in short, of being in need of governmental intervention. Another related concept consists of national groups in the tradition of “Guest Worker” research which are usually used to compare the largest foreign popu-

lations to each other.<sup>43</sup> These include most often the following “Guest Worker” nations: Turkey, Former Yugoslavia, Italy, Greece, and Spain. In contrast to these earlier concepts, the Migration Reports attempt to cover *all* migration movements through the lens of migrant groups based on their legal status. At first glance, the logic of legal status is compelling: it avoids the problem of national groups which become increasingly harder to separate from each other in a meaningful way. This can be illustrated with the question who would count, for example, as an “Italian” in the classic “Guest-Worker” nationality comparison scheme: The traditional concept of citizenship became less meaningful as an indicator of social and economic status after the rate of naturalizations grew, so that not only Italian passport holders, but also their naturalized spouses and offspring could be added to this national category. The problem multiplies when including the second and third generation of migrants: are only those with “pure” Italian ancestry regarded as Italians, that is, two Italian parents and four Italian grandparents? Or would some German passport holders in the ancestry line be accepted, and if so, how many? What about second generation immigrants with a bi-national family background, say a Turkish father and an Italian mother? Even if these questions could be answered, Data collection would be the next large problem: Methodologically sound data would have to consist no less than 16 sub-groups to account for all the possible combinations of German-Italian ancestry until the second generation; drawing a sample with reasonably large populations in all of these sub-groups would be dauntingly difficult and costly. Even if this data could be collected, and not only for Italian, but also for the other large immigrant groups, its practical use seems to be questionable. As already mentioned, the five largest foreign national groups cover a decreasing share of all migrants, which is why the concept of focusing on the largest national groups became more and more outdated over the last years. In contrast to this approach, the BAMF’s migrant groups offer the advantage that they are clearly defined by the legal regulations governing them. This logic is based on both a methodological and a legal aspect: not only does it follow the technique to steer migration through the distribution of rights and handicaps through legal titles, but also from a pragmatic consideration that official data is usually structured according to these legal definitions. This data adds qualitative information to the two most commonly provided statistics in migration reporting, making it

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43 Cp. for example Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2008g

is possible to report not only on the volume and nationality of migrants, but also on their purpose of stay.<sup>44</sup>

In relation to the analysis of knowledge production conditions at the BAMF, some factors in the institutional make-up of the Research Group can be identified which influenced the shaping of the concept of migrant groups. The groundwork goes back to research at the European Forum for Migration Studies (*Europäisches Forum für Migrationsstudien*, efms); a research institute associated with the University of Bamberg.<sup>45</sup> One of the researchers, Harald Lederer, developed the concept of migrant groups which could eventually develop into “alternative foreigner migration statistics” on the basis of AZR data.<sup>46</sup> Lederer was later one of the first members of the Research Group and became the responsible author for the Migration Reports for years to come. Another reason for the development of the migration groups as an alternative to the immigration statistics is the BAMF’s exclusive access to AZR data and a corresponding interest to use this data source as a strategic resource. In the use and discussion of AZR data, the structural conditions of coordination and competition between the various providers of governmental knowledge become apparent. This means that on the one hand, data from other state agencies is duly quoted and discussed, which reflects the effort to include all relevant providers of knowledge into the Migration Report. On the other hand, the BAMF frequently underlines the superior quality of AZR data, especially in comparison with the Federal Statistical Office’s immigration statistics:

“Immigration statistics as a basis for integration policy-making have to provide quantitative data for the single immigration groups which feature different preconditions for their stay in Germany. These differences originate in the different legal frameworks which govern the immigration and stay of these groups. Since the German migration statistics do not provide information on the purpose of stay, the Migration Report differentiates between distinct migration forms.”<sup>47</sup>

To sum it up, in the initial phase of research at the BAMF, the provision of general knowledge was not confined to the Migration Reports but constituted

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44 Lederer 2004, 44ff.

45 See Bade 2017, 63f. for detailed description of the EFMS’ institutional structure.

46 Lederer 2004, 69 and 248ff.

47 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2006, p. 11



rather something like a general principle of knowledge production: many research projects from the Research Group's initial phase can be characterized as an "overview," "collection of data," or "basic information."<sup>48</sup> The Migration Reports are in this respect a paradigmatic report series, since they contain a comprehensive collection of official data. In this context, the concept of migrant groups can be regarded as the key item for interpreting this data. Frequently, the reports state that this concept allows for a more thorough, detailed discussion of migration, which in the end leads to an increased practical relevance for policy-making.<sup>49</sup> In the concept of migrant groups, the generation of such knowledge can be studied in detail: on the one hand, migrant groups answer the critique put forward by the Independent Commission with technical improvements, such as merging different statistical data in one report.; on the other hand, these improvements extend to the conceptual area as well, since migrant groups offer a simplified overview of the migration movements. However, this approach stands in competition with other concepts, most importantly Migrant Background. Migrant groups are in fact a partial view of the BAMF on the phenomenon of migration, shaped by specific institutional effects. In the implementation of the migrant group concept, two of these effects have been described: first, personal continuity from efms staff to the Research Group and a consequential transfer of knowledge; and second, the increasing reliance on AZR data as a result of exclusive access rights and a corresponding interest to promote this data on the side of the BAMF.

### Practical Relevance: Legibility

As already mentioned, the Migration Reports constitute in some respects the "least academic" publication form of the Research Group, especially considering the high degree of technical information, repetitions, and copy-pasted passages of earlier editions. Despite the technical character of these publications, the question of practical applicability is not as easy to answer as one might expect: it stands to reason that in general, a large part of administratively relevant knowledge is produced and distributed in less formalized

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48 According to a former Research Group member, between 1/3 and 2/5 of early research projects (published before 2011) were self-commissioned. Among later publications (from 2013 on), self-commissioned projects are almost completely absent.

49 Eg. 32 pages in 2004, 111 pages in 2009, ca. 80 pages in 2013. Cp. also Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009b, p. 16

ways, such as files, memos, submissions, and tacit forms of knowledge and bureaucratic practices.<sup>50</sup> In the literature, this type of knowledge is usually referred to as “administrative knowledge” following Max Weber’s notion of *Dienstwissen*.<sup>51</sup> Administrative knowledge is characterized by the fact that it is generated as a by-product of administration and is usually not publicly available;<sup>52</sup> both criteria do not fit well with the production conditions of the Research Group, as empirical evidence from interviews seems to confirm. As an example, according to an official of the Ministry of the Interior, most parliamentary inquiries (*Kleine Anfragen*) are usually passed down the hierarchy and answered by government officials on the basis of past experiences with similar cases; academic knowledge production is usually too time-consuming for official memos, ministerial requests and other non-public forms of administrative knowledge.<sup>53</sup> Bearing this in mind, the actual usefulness of the Migration Reports seems less straight forward to pin down – after all, the Migration Reports constitute something like the BAMF’s flagship publication. In the next paragraphs, the practical applicability of administrative knowledge will be discussed.

By answering the Independent Commission Integration’s critique of inapt statistical reporting, a window of opportunity for the Research Group to provide politically relevant knowledge presented itself. With the concept of migrant groups, the BAMF was keen to introduce a reformed perspective which would establish something like an overview of migration statistics. It seems clear that the initial concept of the Migration Report exceeds the use of legitimacy knowledge, since the Independent Commission, the Federal Parliament, and other political actors clearly articulated demand for this type of administrative knowledge. The BAMF invested some resources into this project since two university researchers were specifically recruited for this task.<sup>54</sup> Clearly, the Research Group as well as the BAMF leadership expected some political impact from this type of research.

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50 Mangset and Asdal 2018, p. 2

51 Weber 1994, p. 373

52 Quoted after Affolter 2017, 145f.

53 Requests are a form of relatively widespread, low key parliamentary action which are submitted by an opposition-party parliamentarian. The request is answered by officials of the respective ministry, or, if applicable, by BAMF staff. Field notes, September 2013

54 Bade 2017, 63f.

Coming back to the question of political usefulness, This type of foundational research points to a specific practice of governmentality which can be described in James Scott's notion of legibility: in his study "Seeing like a State," Scott described several practices of knowledge production and governance which he characterizes as constitutive for governance:

"I began to see legibility as a central problem in statecraft. The premodern state was, in many crucial respects, partially blind; it knew precious little about its subjects, their wealth, their landholdings and yields, their location, their very identity. It lacked anything like a detailed 'map' of its terrain and its people. It lacked, for the most part, a measure, a metric, that would allow it to translate what it knew into a common standard measure necessary for a synoptic view."<sup>55</sup>

Scott refers here to practices of governmental knowledge production in the early modern era such as mapping of forests, the introduction of citizen registries, or the creation of a cadastral map. In all these cases, the collection of data, the creation of an overview, is not only motivated by a scientific-forensic view to map and understand a complex phenomenon, but ultimately, by the political requirement to control and steer. The collection of data is usually organized in a way that the phenomenon under scrutiny becomes readable from a distance, thus prepared for political intervention. In other words, as Zachary Karabell puts it, "what gets measured gets managed."<sup>56</sup> Scott's notion of legibility can therefore be regarded as a specific form of practical use of basic statistics: by establishing a synoptic view, a specific order of a complex phenomenon is created which can be seen as a necessary precondition for political steering. In some respects, the Migration Reports can be read like an attempt to make migration policy readable to the policy maker: migrant groups introduce a qualitative order into the chaotic stream of immigration from an extremely diverse background, governed by multiple legal schemes both on the EU and national level and captured in multiple, partly contradicting data sources. By broadly sorting these streams into larger categories (humanitarian, temporary work, family reunification, Ethnic Germans), a specific logic of knowledge is introduced which makes the phenomenon readable and understandable. The legal groups, together with the non-category of illegalized

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55 Scott 1998, 17f.

56 Karabell 2014, p. 13

migrants encompass the sum of what the state can know about migration and therefore represent something like a “synoptic view” of the phenomenon.

However, while the first Migration Reports look like a promising answer to critique, they developed in a different way than expected if the criteria of a “legibility” practice of knowledge production are used. This manifests in two ways: the internal division of the governmental perspective and the lack of a political impact by the Migration Reports.

Concerning the first point, it is important to note that almost at the same time as the concept of migrant groups emerged, a very similar concept was put forward by the Federal Statistical Office on the basis of Micro Census data called Migrant Background. In 2005, not only the citizenship but also the country of birth of a respondent and their parents became part of the Micro Census questionnaire, thus allowing for a distinction between migrants, their first and second generation offspring, and naturalized citizens. These population groups were subsumed under the category “Population with Migrant Background.” This new concept can be regarded as an attempt to overcome the outdated German-foreigner divide in the migration statistics. Migrant Background is a quasi-ethnic category which avoids overtly ethnic categorization, but allows for tracking socio-economic features of migrants and their descendants regardless of citizenship.<sup>57</sup>

Concerning the lack of political impact of the BAMF's knowledge, it is important to keep in mind that Scott's understanding of legibility entails a logic of both systematization and political intervention. While the Migration Report and especially the concept of migrant groups can be seen as an attempt to systematize migration reporting, the second part of Scott's concept is somewhat lacking. This is not a coincidence, but rather can be regarded as a consequence of the legislation process of the Residence Act, as described in Chapter 3.2., where the technocratic principle of a scientifically-steered migration policy was systematically diminished to retain political control over the area of legislation. While the original concept of immigration policy-making included a system of recruitment of fixed quota of migrants based on expert recommendations, such a systematic relationship between political decisions and statistical reporting is absent in the case of Migration Reports. EU migration, the largest single source of migrants, is to a large degree independent of political steering; other migration streams, such as family reunification and asylum, are largely dependent on factors which are beyond political control

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57 Salentin 2014

as well. In the literature, European statistical reporting projects are discussed as a similar case in this respect: Eurostat started to compile statistical data on migration-related topics such as asylum and irregular migration around 2005 to provide facts about these policy areas, but the political impact was likewise marginal.<sup>58</sup>

In sum, these findings point to the fact that the provision of statistical data alone does not guarantee its political relevance. In consequence, the construction of a synoptic view loses most of its political significance if there is no corresponding possibility or motivation for political intervention.

This observation leads to the question of how the Migration Reports have developed over recent years. If the legibility concept is taken seriously, it should lead to a systematic expansion of knowledge production and the eradication of incompatibilities in the statistical reporting. However, this is not the case: in principle, almost all blind spots, flaws in the statistics, incompatibilities and so on which were documented in 2005 are still in place ten years later. This leads to the peculiar situation that single migrant groups cannot simply be added up to calculate a total number of migrants, a major drawback of the concept as compared to the official migration statistics and the Micro Census.<sup>59</sup> While this is duly discussed and protocolled, no actual progress has been made in this regard since 2005.

While the reasons for this lack of development are not explicated, they could lie in the inherent problems of the cognitive frame of migrant groups: from the beginning, the concept tried to unify partly incompatible statistical sources, as already mentioned. Furthermore, the AZR as the main data source for the migrant groups is not without its problems in terms of data quality. First, the database contains only data on foreigners, which excludes by definition all naturalized citizens. This fact is mentioned in the Migration Reports, although its potential for introducing bias especially in regard to integration monitoring is not: the AZR's basic logic of foreign nationality risks excluding the most successful or otherwise privileged migrants – those with access to citizenship – from the basic sample. Second, the nature of the AZR as a primarily administrative database could further aggravate this bias potential: as AZR data is automatically updated by the authorities in the course

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58 Kräler et al. 2015, p. 46

59 Bundesministerium des Innern und Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2016, p. 52

of administrative acts, foreigners with a relatively unsafe legal title are over-represented in the database since they are legally required to interact with authorities more often. Additionally, the most privileged immigrant group, EU nationals, are rarely registered in the AZR due to data protection restrictions. In total, AZR data overrepresents holders of short-term or otherwise precarious legal titles, excluding at the same time naturalized persons and EU citizens, which is, in the end, an approach with a built-in bias towards overrepresenting the “least successful” in socio-economic terms.<sup>60</sup> When this data is used to construct migrant groups, it has a tendency to hide the connection between socio-economic integration and the distribution of legal privileges. This follows from the fact that only legal status information without the corresponding socio-economic data is stored in the AZR. If, for example, the criminal rate among refugees or the unemployment rate among short-term status holders is measured, it is unclear if these attributes are caused by the lack of legal security or constitute rather an inherent characteristic of the respective group. An in-depth longitudinal analysis concept could trace migrant status careers and link them to socio-economic data, thus highlighting the effects of privileges and restrictions connected to certain status groups.<sup>61</sup> Since this sort of analysis is impossible with AZR data, differences between groups appear as if they were exclusively caused by inherent individual characteristics rather than by unequal legal prerequisites.<sup>62</sup> These drawbacks confine the AZR data to a relatively narrow area of reporting of immigration of third country nationals<sup>63</sup> at the moment of their immigration.

Even if these methodological problems were solved, another problem appeared which concerns the construction of a category system of immigrant groups. In 2005, when the categories were first designed, immigration groups typically held between 20,000 and 50,000 persons each – with the exception

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60 Salentin 2014, p. 25

61 In a recent research project (BAMF-SOEP-IAB Panel on refugees), a similar research design has been set up to monitor the long-term societal integration of refugees, for the first time including data both on legal status and socio-economic integration. Cp. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2016a

62 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2008e, 38f.

63 In the terminology of the BAMF, “third country nationals” are citizens of non-EU countries.

of EU migrants, whose number amounted to ca. 280,000 persons.<sup>64</sup> By and large, the migrant groups were numerically in a similar order of magnitude and therefore comparable to each other; this fact led to the concept of an intuitive plausibility. Meanwhile, this relative balance has shifted starkly: “Ethnic German” migration continually lost significance in terms of volume, dropping from ca. 35,000 persons in 2001 to merely 6,000 in 2015.<sup>65</sup> The category of work migration similarly decreased, especially due to a reduction in seasonal migrants. At the same time, with the introduction of additional legal instruments especially for highly-skilled and highly-qualified migrants, the category of “temporary work migrants” became more and more diversified internally;<sup>66</sup> what started out as essentially a legal status for low and semi-skilled workers gradually grew into a multitude of temporary work titles for both low skill and highly-qualified workers. The Migration Report studiously list a multitude of national and EU visa programs for specialists, entrepreneurs, researchers and other highly-qualified work migrants but with a volume of a few hundred cases each: all of these various temporary-work-related status groups make up less than 2,000 persons combined.<sup>67</sup> In contrast to this very detailed reporting, the most significant group in terms of volume of inflows – EU migrants – is hardly discussed at all. This migration stream gained importance, since between 2005 and 2015, immigration from within the EU more than tripled. However, this highly diversified immigration movement is not analyzed in the same depth as it is in the case of the different immigrant groups of third country nationals: neither the aim of migration, nor the duration of stay is discussed in the context of EU-migration; merely data on the most important countries of origin, as well as on the gender and age of EU-migrants, is presented.<sup>68</sup> This is again a result of the challenge to compare data across databases as discussed above: EU nationals are rarely registered in the AZR, so the Federal Statistical Office’s immigration statistics are used. As a result, potentially very different migration projects are grouped together

64 The smallest group, Jewish immigrants, being somewhat an exception to this rule with ca. 6,000 migrants in 2005. All numbers quoted after Bundesministerium des Innern and Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2016, p. 52

65 Bundesministerium des Innern and Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2016, p. 121

66 Such as “Blue Card EU” from 2012, or work visa for scientists

67 Bundesministerium des Innern and Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2016, p. 52

68 Ibid., 46ff.

in this category which is analyzed only in regard to basic demographic data; the two main advantages of AZR data – purpose and duration of stay – cannot be applied to the most significant migrant group in the Migration Reports. While initially, the migrant groups establish an order through which statistical data on immigration could be made comprehensible and comparable, this order increasingly lost its plausibility over the years. Some migrant groups decreased in volume, others increased multifold. In this respect, the concept suffers from the low degree of flexibility in reporting: the system of migrant groups can become more detailed (as in the case of asylum seekers and temporary work migrants) but not more flexible; the basic order of reporting always stays the same.<sup>69</sup>

As a consequence, these methodological shortcomings led to an abandonment of a “synoptic view” around 2012. While the Migration Reports continue to be published, there is a subtle but important shift in the construction of migration groups. Since 2012, migrant groups do not contain all immigrations to Germany any more. This is most importantly visible in the fact that EU migration is now discussed in a separate chapter, a decision which somehow downplays the numerical significance of this migration form since the discussion is relatively brief and superficial. In the 2015 report, more than 850,000 immigration and 500,000 emigration acts are discussed in five pages only.<sup>70</sup> The overview perspective of the earlier Migration Reports is replaced by a detailed description of migration broadly separable into two main migration status groups: on the one hand, temporary work migrants, highly- skilled migrants and international students; on the other, asylum seekers and immigrating family members whose immigration is subject to gradually enlarged preconditions to curb these migration streams. The new epistemic order of the Migration Reports seems to reflect a new understanding of practical relevance: not the creation of an overview, but rather the criteria for political intervention vis-a-vis different migrant groups from third countries seems to be the basic logic behind the migrant groups from 2012 on.

In summary, in its original design and purpose, the Migration Reports can be considered a fairly typical project of legibility: the state attempts to understand (and ultimately control) a complex phenomenon by introducing a

69 Cp. Schiffauer 2018

70 Bundesministerium des Innern and Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2016, 46ff.



harmonic, coherent order which makes the phenomenon readable from a distance. With a focus on legal prescriptions and demographic data, the state's view on the migrant groups is thoroughly inscribed in the logic of knowledge. The role of the Migration Reports as the most widely distributed and recognized publication testifies to the success of this concept. However, Scott's concept does not accurately describe the further development of migration reporting. This becomes apparent in two points: on the one hand, the notion of a "governmental perspective" creates a false sense of uniformity of state actors; and second, there is strong evidence that the "legibility" concept has been abandoned after some time.

Regarding the first point, Scott's understanding of legibility creates a sense of a uniform perspective of the state which does not reflect the institutional competition for expertise and influence. The BAMF's concept of migrant groups stood in direct competition to the Federal Statistical Office's concept of Migrant Background. Both concepts were designed around a specific database to which the respective authority had preferential access (AZR in the BAMF's case and Micro Census data in the Statistical Office's case). Some hints of this institutional competition are subtly visible in the Migration Reports, where the advantage of AZR data is frequently emphasized which spells out to the informed reader as a competitive advantage over rival data bases. The disadvantages of the AZR, most importantly its socio-economic bias towards disadvantaged legal status groups are not equally well-documented, however. While both the BAMF and the Federal Statistical Office feed a discourse of objective reporting through statistical data, the actual practice of knowledge production is different which leads to the conclusion that in fact, it is imprecise to speak of a unified, coherent "governmental perspective."

This conclusion fits well to the observation that the governmental purpose behind this knowledge order has evolved from a "legibility" concept to a selective representation of those migration streams which are subject to political control. This evolution is mirrored in the changed concept of migrant groups: while in the first years of statistical reporting, the discussion of migrant groups was promoted as an alternative to the official migration statistics, this approach was somewhat altered after 2012, when by far the largest migrant group (EU migrants) was excluded from the respective chapter. The idea of an all-encompassing report was replaced by a more selective discussion of various migrant groups of third-country nationals; the logic be-

hind these groups is no longer a criterion for quantitative volume but rather a criterion for the possibility of political intervention.

### Effects on the Knowledge: Governmentality

In the last paragraphs, the question of political applicability of the BAMF's production of technical, administrative knowledge has been outlined. By analyzing the evolution of the concept of migrant groups, a distinct development from a general overview of migration to a rather particular representation of selected immigration groups has been detected. In the following paragraphs, the effects of practical applicability considerations on the knowledge will be discussed, mainly focusing on bias sources arising from this particular institutional and theoretical arrangement. These bias sources entail on the one hand a tendency to internalize the perspective of the nation state defined as methodological nationalism in the literature. This is analyzed with the example of the Migration Report chapter on emigration. On the other hand, bias arises from the specific construction of migrant groups as neatly separated social units which will be demonstrated with the example of the discussion of illegal migrants. The central hypothesis is that both bias sources create a specific perspective of governmentality, in which migration is made to appear like an orderly stream of in- and outflows under administrative control.

The effect of creating a governmental perspective is well exemplified in the discussion of "illegal" migration in the Migration Reports.<sup>71</sup> By and large, the chapter employs the same heuristic tools as in the case of other immigrant groups. As usual, this section starts with a legal definition of irregular migration: according to the BAMF, an illegal migrant is a person without a passport, without a legal status, or someone who is not registered in the Central Registry of Foreign Nationals or elsewhere.<sup>72</sup> Notably, this understanding

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71 Contrary to the other sections of the report, this chapter has changed its title quite often: in 2005, it started out as "uncontrolled migration"; in the next report, it was renamed to "illegal migration"; the title from the 2007 reports onwards reads as "illegal/irregular migration." In this text, the term "illegal" is used in parentheses to maintain on the one hand a consistent vocabulary which is used by the BAMF as well; on the other hand, the parentheses are due to the constructed, biased and partial representation of the term in the BAMF's understanding. Cp also Ferguson 1994

72 Bundesministerium des Innern und Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, p. 137; cp. also Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2005b, p. 3

does not exactly mirror the legal definition of illegal stay, since it excludes rejected asylum seekers as well as migrants who have acquired a legal title under false pretenses.<sup>73</sup> The BAMF's definition follows the pragmatic understanding prevalent in the foreigner administration. An official stated in this regard that "we do not know the 'classic' illegal migrant. He ceases to be illegal as soon as we know him."<sup>74</sup> All in all, to the BAMF, the criterion of "unregistered" or "undocumented" migration is the crucial item of this definition; in this non-status, the definition resembles other migrant groups in the Migration Report. Next, the quantitative volume of the illegal population is discussed. Here, a principal difference to the other migrant groups becomes apparent, since this data is notoriously difficult to provide: in every volume since 2005, the Migration Reports state that there is no reliable data on the "illegal" migrant population. The reports name mainly methodological reasons for this lack: first, by definition, illegal migrants are not registered in the usual databases which are used in the other parts of the migration report, most importantly the Central Register of Foreign Nationals; second, in this context, the notion of migrant agency is discussed:

"Both illegal entry and illegal stay are criminal acts which is why undocumented foreigners are keen to hide their stay from official registration. State authorities are in principle obliged to inform the police if they register an illegally staying foreigner [...]. All in all, illegal migrants are to a large degree hidden from statistical registration."<sup>75</sup>

Publicly debated estimates on the number of illegal migrants are criticized as "unsubstantiated" and "inapt for political decision-making."<sup>76</sup> Instead, the reports present two indicators on apprehension of illegal stayers and attempted illegal entries.<sup>77</sup> However, these statistics are also problematic from a methodological point of view: both databases cover only cases known to the authorities and are unrelated in any systematic way to the unknown total number of undocumented migrants. Furthermore, an analysis of trends in the data

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73 Salentin 2014, p. 36

74 "Den klassischen Illegalen kenne ich nicht, und wenn ich ihn kenne, dann ist er's nicht mehr." Quoted after Vogel and Aßner 2012, p. 24

75 Bundesministerium des Innern and Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, p. 137

76 Ibid.

77 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2006, 89ff.

is virtually impossible since the legal and political basis of these police activities is relatively instable. For example, changes in apprehensions at the borders since 2004 are much more likely caused by the EU accession of the neighboring states to the east than by actual changes in irregular migration. Basically, the Migration Reports deliver only the raw data from two relatively insignificant indicators, the critique of “unsubstantiated estimates”, and the claim that the aforementioned indicators are superior despite their very limited significance. Despite the shortcomings of the approach, and despite the fact that the BAMF had issued a study with an improved methodology on the estimation of the illegal population, the basic structure of statistical reporting in the Migration Reports never changes.<sup>78</sup>

In sum, while the chapter on illegal migration is structured differently from other migrant groups, the basic heuristic is comparable: the definition refers to legal aspects which can then be connected to statistical databases (or in this case, to the absence of statistical reporting). While the patchy database for illegal migration is repeatedly criticized, the reports nevertheless draw an image of irregular migration which can be characterized as a criminalistic description of the phenomenon. The injury of the law is the point of departure for the argumentation; this injury is presented as a result of the individual action of a perpetrator. In its core elements, illegal migration is conceptualized in the same way as all other migrant groups: definition, statistical data, purpose of stay.

By discussing the administrative measures to combat illegal migration, and dismissing most other voices on the topic as unsubstantiated, a perspective of governmentality on the subject is created. On the basis of the notion of non-registering, the phenomenon of undocumented, irregular migration is perceived as if it was another more or less stable population group with common attributes as in the case of other migrant categories discussed here. However, by way of definition or selective analysis, many of the specific features of this phenomenon which contradict this perception are excluded: the definition of undocumented migrants is by itself incomplete since it excludes registered persons who are nevertheless obliged to emigrate, most importantly rejected asylum seekers. Illegality is therefore incorrectly portrayed as the result of a perpetrator's choice to, for whatever reason, disobey the law. Furthermore, this concept of an “illegal population” masks the fact that the

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78 In 2011, the BAMF published an update to the methodology of reporting of irregular migration. Cp. Vogel and Aßner 2012, p. 39

borders between irregular and regular migration are not clearly defined. This can be seen by the fact that most irregular migrants enter legally and overstay their visa; at the same time, AZR data shows that regularization of formerly irregular migrants is relatively widespread.<sup>79</sup> With other words, status changes in both directions between legal and irregular are common. This observation contradicts the assumption of a stable illegal population which can be analytically separated from other migrant groups.<sup>80</sup>

Overall, the discussion of illegal migration reveals basic features of the governmental character of the knowledge produced here: on the one hand, the database is very patchy and incomplete, as the authors duly note. On the other hand, the present concept is still considered superior to every other vague and incomplete discussion of illegality, simply because it stems from official databases. This is notable since updated methods commissioned by the BAMF (which look at least superficially more promising) are ignored in this context. Instead, it seems that the superiority of governmental knowledge is not based on actual technical excellence. Rather, there is a defensive mechanism at play: no one can be blamed for using official data, even if it turns out to be biased. This cautious and conservative knowledge production can be connected to the general restraint of theory development as discussed in the context of departmental research. In the case of the Migration Reports, it is further enhanced by the comparatively high public visibility which creates potential for negative media attention, especially in connection with politically sensitive topics such as illegality.

From a political relevance point of view, the lack of innovation can in fact be seen as a useful asset of the Migration Reports, since too accurate knowledge could turn out as a political disadvantage for the Ministry of the Interior in the case of illegal migration. Take, for example, the assumption that most illegal migrants use legal documents obtained in one way or another to live a relatively undisturbed life. Although the problem seems to be sizeable, such tactics are not especially targeted by the authorities; furthermore, in the Migration Reports, these illegal migrants are by definition excluded from reporting. If, hypothetically, the BAMF reported on these tactics with a more comprehensive analysis method, such knowledge would immediately pressure the ministry to act. In her analysis of expert knowledge on illegal

79 In 2010, a consistency check of AZR data revealed that more than half of the irregular stayers had meanwhile acquired a residence title. Cp. Vogel and Aßner 2012, 25f.

80 Vogel and Aßner 2012, p. 39

employment in the UK, Boswell states that in similar cases the British Home Office is compelled to accept pragmatically knowledge gaps to avoid political trouble.<sup>81</sup> Somewhat ironically, this means, in the case of illegal migrants, politically useful knowledge is one that is not very precise, accurate and up-to-date to avoid negative public feedback.

It is worth to scrutinize the effects of this institutional structure as well as policy relevance on the knowledge generated. Two major sources of bias can be discerned. First, legal status groups emphasize a perspective of governmental steering which overestimate the impact of legal status management policies especially in the face of migrant action. For the documentation of migration from a political-legal perspective, this perspective introduces a governmental perspective of steering: a change in one or the other status group – say, more green card holders or less irregular migrants – can describe an actual change in migration patterns – or just be a result of tactical switching of legal statuses on the side of the migrant. Again, since statuses are not socially confined, these represent less separated, fixed populations but rather fluid categories which are perceived as opportunity structures by migrants. This is especially problematic in the discussion of irregular migration, which displays the inherent characteristic weaknesses of the category system quite well: by way of establishing irregular migration as a migrant group, the false impression of a stable illegal population group is fostered. However, illegality is characterized by a very high fluctuation of legal titles, social practices, and a comparatively patchy database. Illegality is more often than not a transitory phenomenon dependent mostly on migrant action and not on governmental steering. Even if the data was better, the category system could not cope with the inherent dynamics of the phenomenon. A category system is inherently static; it can be improved by increasing the number of categories, but their definitions will remain rigid.

The concept of migrant groups does, however, produce a specific perspective of governmentality: by focusing on migration forms that are subject to administrative control – either of an enabling nature, such as highly-skilled migration, or in a restrictive sense, such as family reunification, irregular migration, and asylum – migration appears like a top-down, steered, orderly process under the auspices of the government. In the case of illegal migration, this aspect can be seen in the extensive discussion of technical surveillance

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81 Boswell 2011, 21f.

measures to counter the phenomenon; if the length and depth of the discussion can be used as a proxy, this aspect becomes increasingly important to the overall analysis between 2008 and 2010.<sup>82</sup> As the discussion of political usefulness has shown, the overall focus of the Migration Reports is increasingly influenced by the logic of governmentality. Together with the neoclassic theory of migration as an individual cost-benefit operation, this notion of governmentally-steered migration movements seems to be an increasingly influential concept:

“Two types of belief have been particularly influential in migration policy formation. One is the economic classical theory, according to which people move to maximize their individual utility (usually through higher income) and cease to move, or return home, if the cost-benefit equation changes. The second is the bureaucratic belief that regulations designed to categorize migrants and to regulate their admission and residence effectively shape aggregate behavior. Together these two beliefs add up to the idea that migration can be turned on and off like a tap by appropriate policy settings.”<sup>83</sup>

In the Migration Reports, another aspect of governmentality is visible when considering the institutional structure behind the knowledge: it stands to reason that not an abstract governmental logic is at work here, but rather the concrete governmental perspective as present in the BAMF and the Ministry of the Interior. The focus on migration streams that are controlled by either institution (such as asylum, or highly-skilled migration) take clear precedence over those that are not (such as EU migration). This institutional structure is similarly influential on the use and discussion of statistics: AZR statistics as the database under immediate control of the BAMF are discussed relatively positively, while data from other authorities is subject to more critical feedback. The potential drawbacks of the AZR as discussed above are to a degree omitted not because they are irrelevant, but because such a discussion would diminish the strategic usefulness of the knowledge vis-a-vis other institutions.

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82 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011f, 166ff.

83 Castles 2004, p. 858

## Conclusion

To summarize, the Migration Reports – as the most important representative of a group of administrative knowledge publications – constitute a particular knowledge order initially designed mainly for the purpose of making migration as a complex phenomenon readable to the state administration. Historically, Migration Reports originated from a statistical data collection to provide an overview of all migration-related phenomena; by doing this, the Migration Reports display an unusually high degree of repetition which initially led to the false assumption that these reports were of minor interest when analyzing governmental knowledge production. However, despite the repetitions and the fact that Migration Reports almost never contain information which can be considered surprising or unforeseen, this report series is the BAMF's most widely disseminated publication.<sup>84</sup> Somewhat ironically, it seems that the project with the least degree of scientific innovativeness renders the greatest amount of public visibility of the BAMF research work. It seems clear that a deficit perspective – that of lacking scientific innovativeness – does not fully capture the significance of this report series. It stands to reason that this lack is not, in fact, a deficit of bureaucratic knowledge production, but rather serves an important discursive function. To quote from Naumann's concept of bureaucratic knowledge production:

"It takes hard discursive work to keep things as they are. Making the world seem stable when it is in fact in constant flux means that wielding power involves the ability to freeze meaning. This has to be done by constantly repeating specific representations of things, actions, and identities, until what one repeats is naturalized to such an extent that it appears doxic."<sup>85</sup>

With orderly statistical reporting and the resulting concept of migrant groups to interpret the statistics, an image of a government-regulated policy area is drawn.

The most important theoretical innovation in the Migration Reports is the concept of migrant groups. This concept has been introduced as an answer to the Independent Commission's critique of statistical reporting, by taking advantage of the BAMF's exclusive access to AZR data. This concept is presented as a step towards more accurate and detailed statistics which overcomes the

84 Cp. for example Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015a, p. 20

85 Neumann 2012, 79f.



outdated nationality principle and introduces data on the duration and aim of migration. However, over time, it turned out that the BAMF was unable to overcome the basic problems of data collection with this concept. Due to the fact that the main data source, AZR, displays a bias towards overrepresenting the least privileged migrants, and otherwise lacks socio-economic data to document integration trajectories, the initial plan of “alternative migration statistics” has been given up. Instead, since 2012, the Migration Reports focus increasingly on those migrant groups which seem important to the BAMF or the BMI. These include mostly third country nationals who immigrate either on humanitarian grounds or as temporary work visa holders. Excluded from this view are, most importantly, EU nationals which as a group constitute a large majority of all immigrants, as well as some types of illegalized migrants. In sum, what started out as a general overview in the sense of a “legibility” project turned into a very specific representation of migration as seen by the BAMF: migration is described as if it is governmentally steered with the attribution of several status titles, while the effect of these status titles on integration processes is hidden from analysis.

## Integration Research

In terms of research output, integration research is one of the most important research areas at the BAMF Research Group. Between 2005 and 2015, around one-third of the projects were conducted with this topic.<sup>86</sup> There are two historic reasons for the outstanding significance of the topic. First, in general, integration was identified as the core task of migration policy-making in the Independent Commission's report to make up for policy failures during the "Lost Decade". In this context, as will be discussed later in some detail, the BAMF's research can be placed in a larger discourse on governmental integration concepts which emerged around the turn of the millennium. A second reason can be found in the historical context of the institutional reconfiguration of the BAMF in 2005, where a direct line between the foundation of the Research Group and the implementation of integration policy can be drawn:

"A number of commentators within the migration policy community have suggested that this became more or less inevitable once the agency was ascribed a new mandate for dealing with integration. With its new competence in this area, it was clear that it would need additional expertise to inform its activities."<sup>87</sup>

In the next paragraphs, some aspects of the knowledge production which can be characterized as general integration research will be analyzed. The central hypothesis in this chapter is that integration research developed from an initial plan to create a theory-informed understanding of integration policy-making in the form of indicator-monitored statistical reporting. While this monitoring system has been abandoned, some parts of the theory as well as the technocratic understanding of policy-making have been implemented and shape a specific governmental understanding of integration; its effects will be discussed using the example of discrimination in the context of the integration panel.<sup>88</sup>

86 31 out of 109 publications and 39 out of 125 research projects. Data according to Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015c and Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2016b

87 Boswell 2009b, p. 164

88 The Integration Report consists of ten working papers published between 2008 and 2012 with various topics such as labor market participation (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011d) and housing. (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2008h), education (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2008e), language ac-

## Towards a Hegemonic Understanding of Integration

Not unlike the Migration Reports discussed in the previous chapter, initial research projects in the field of integration research were characterized by a strategy of mapping out the “unknown terrain” of integration. As one BAMF researcher noted, around the time of the foundation of the Research Group, integration was considered *terra incognita* for the Federal Office:

“If I look back on the time when I started working here, integration was the great new thing. It came into being with the new immigration law and was defined as a task for government for the first time.”<sup>89</sup>

While this statement represents a quite common point of view in the state administration and academia, it has to be historically contextualized. Given the long-standing tradition of municipal integration policies on a local level, this statement seems to be a slight exaggeration. Many of the later discussed and implemented tools of integration policy, such as language courses, institutional support networks, or educational programs have been developed and implemented since the late 1970s. In operative terms, integration policy-making in the 2000s did not differ extremely from similar policies in earlier times. However, there are two core differences in regard to the political legitimization and the theoretical foundation of integration policy. The first difference can be connected to the “paradigm shift” following the abolishment of the “no country of immigration dogma” as described in Chapter 2. Secondly, from a scientific perspective, the overarching principle of “no immigration” hindered the development of a coherent understanding of what integration actually was to achieve.

In the “no country of immigration” paradigm, integration was (somewhat paradoxically) understood as a temporary relief of social hardship before the

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quisition (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2008f), media use (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2010a) and political participation (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2012g). The Integration Panel is a longitudinal study among integration course participants whose results have been published in various working papers and research reports between 2009 and 2013. See Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011a for a full report of the results.

89 “Wenn ich mich zurück erinnere an die Zeit, als ich hier angefangen habe, [...] da war eigentlich Integration der große, neue Begriff. Der mit dem Zuwanderungsgesetz gekommen ist und zum ersten Mal wirklich auch im Sinne von einer staatlichen Aufgabe definiert wurde.” (Interview with a BAMF researcher, 2015)

eventual return of the foreigner.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, there existed no need for a generalized concept of integration as a social process, there was no reason to analyze its components, its aims, its effects, and how to describe it in an abstract way. In these respects, the concept of integration was, in fact, “a great new thing” which the BAMF researcher was referring to; given the legal changes of the Residence Act in 2005, it became necessary to define both the theoretical understanding of integration as well as the concrete policy measures connected to it.

Given the specific connection between the BAMF’s central responsibility for integration policy-making, the Research Group saw itself in a prime position to contribute to the formulation of a theoretical concept of integration. Not only the BAMF, but almost every other involved state actor such as municipalities, the Federal Government, and the Commissioner for Foreigners worked on a definition of what integration actually meant. Between 2003 and 2010, every larger municipality issued an “integration concept,”<sup>91</sup> the Federal Government worked out an “Integration Plan” in 2007, and a working group of representatives of the Federal States put forward similar efforts.<sup>92</sup> Between these concepts, a quasi-hegemonic theoretical understanding of integration was formed which consists of three main elements: first, theoretical references to Hartmut Esser’s assimilation theory; second, the ideal of equal participation of both migrants and autochthon population; and third, instruments of political steering and indicator-based monitoring from the “New Public Management” toolbox.

On a municipal level, the 2003 competition titled “Integration is No Coincidence”, organized by the Ministry for the Interior together with the Bertelsmann Foundation, promoted the formulation of municipal integration plans. The basic idea behind this competition was a focus on concrete policy tools and their implementation. Most importantly, successful integration was to be achieved with the introduction of New Public Management governance techniques, such as best-practice models and the principle of indicator-based policy steering. Overall, the strategy of framing integration policy in a decidedly technocratic, somewhat apolitical language is clearly discernible.<sup>93</sup> Most of the integration concepts contain a basic definition of the aims and purposes

90 Lanz 2007, p. 252

91 Friedrich and Waibel 2012, 67f.

92 Cp. Worbs 2010

93 Cp. Friedrich and Waibel 2012, p. 67

of integration policies. Most commonly used definitions refer to an understanding of equality, understood as “equal participation of migrants in society, economy and culture”<sup>94</sup> which is usually achieved in a two-sided process, including responsibilities for both migrants and non-migrants.<sup>95</sup> The common denominator of most of these definitions is the desire to formulate an abstract, general, and politically uncontestable understanding of integration. The working definition put forward by an official of the Federal Statistical Office can be seen as paradigmatic of this understanding of integration and integration measurement in this respect:

“[W]e discern migrant and non-migrant populations according to specific socio-demographic, socio-economic variables: education, labor participation, unemployment, income. This is how we measure integration. This is an absolutely unemotional account, not ‘assimilation versus growing together.’ Rather, we simply analyze if two parts of the population are different in respect to their socio-demographic features, or not.”<sup>96</sup>

The theoretic background of this understanding of integration was developed by sociologist Hartmut Esser in the 1980s in his comparative studies of foreigners from different former “Guest Worker” countries, most importantly Turkey and Yugoslavia. Esser conceptualized integration as a process of social learning, consisting of a series of individual investment decisions into mainly cultural and social capital. For example, a German school diploma or German language skills are conceptualized as investments into “German” cultural capital, whereas marriages with a spouse of the same ethnic background, a non-German diploma or an apartment in an ethnic neighborhood are conceptualized as investments in “foreign” social capital. Esser differentiates between

94 Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration 2005, p. 182

95 Unabhängige Kommission “Zuwanderung” 2001, p. 204

96 „[W]ir unterscheiden die Migrantenbevölkerung und die Nicht-Migrantenbevölkerung bezüglich bestimmter soziodemographischer, sozioökonomischer Variablen [...], Bildungsabschluss, Erwerbsbeteiligung, Arbeitslosigkeit, erzielter Einkommen. So messen wir Integration. [...] Das ist eine völlig unemotionale Darstellung, [...] nicht Assimilation versus Zusammenwachsen. Sondern, es wird einfach nur analysiert, ob sich die zwei Bevölkerungsteile bezüglich der Soziodemographie unterscheiden oder aber nicht.“ (Interview with a researcher at the Federal Statistical Office, 2016)

four dimensions of integration: structural, cultural, social, and emotional.<sup>97</sup> These four dimensions are often used as indicator categories for empirical research on integration, municipal indicator sets for integration monitoring, or other governmental integration policy documents. This is even true for concepts which do not directly refer to Esser's theory but rather use the category order of Esser's integration dimensions without a reference to the source.<sup>98</sup> Out of the four categories, the cultural dimension stands out since it is often prominently discussed. Coincidence or not, this dimension refers most directly to individual learning efforts: these include above all the acquisition of language, but also more generally the acquisition of context-specific social and normative knowledge.<sup>99</sup> Structural integration is measured by the participation rate in various relevant social systems, such as the education system as well as the labor and housing market. In the dimension of social integration, the degree of social interaction between the indigenous and the migrant populations is under scrutiny, often operationalized by measuring the share of bicultural marriages, or the share of Germans among friends and acquaintances, or the practice of giving "German" versus "foreign" names to children. The last dimension, emotional integration, describes the "development of a certain emotional loyalty [...] and the association with one's own identity."<sup>100</sup> While this dimension is usually the least well-developed in regard to indicators, often the naturalization quota is used in this context.<sup>101</sup> The borders between these dimensions are somewhat in flux; indicators are sometimes regrouped from one category to the other.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, there is no clear hierarchy between integration dimensions. To be sure, there seems to be a consensus that emotional identification represents the successful conclusion of integration, whereas cultural integration, most importantly language acquisition, is seen as the starting point of the process. However, most scientists agree that all dimensions of integration precondition each other to some degree.

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97 Esser 2001, p. 73

98 Friedrich and Waibel 2012, p. 57

99 Some integration indicators use the total fertility rate of women in this context. Cp. For example Magistrat der Landeshauptstadt Wiesbaden 2012, p. 20

100 Esser 2009, p. 87

101 Magistrat der Landeshauptstadt Wiesbaden 2012, p. 20

102 Interview with a BAMF researcher, 2015

In summary, after 2005 there have been considerable efforts to shape the new field of integration policy-making from a theoretical-abstract perspective by different state actors. The emerging understanding of integration as a structural similarity between migrants and non-migrants can be considered hegemonic and somewhat naturalized. BAMF-publications meanwhile refrain from direct references to Esser's theories and present the integration dimensions as self-explanatory sub-chapter headlines in their research reports.<sup>103</sup> For example, one BAMF researcher presented the application of Esser's theory as a somewhat natural choice without alternatives:

"At the time, there were almost no other concepts. Esser is one of the first who has conducted systematic integration research and has tried to conceptualize it, and to transfer it to the German context. In a way, it is alternative-less. These four dimensions of integration, as a specific, pre-defined structure, constitute a well-probed principle."<sup>104</sup>

Another factor which comes into force specifically for the Research Group staff is the fact that some of the BAMF researchers, especially in the earlier years of the Research Group, obtained their academic training under Esser's professorship at the university in Mannheim.<sup>105</sup>

## Practical Relevance: From Migrant Assimilation to Migration Management

Up to this point, the general development of integration research after its establishment as a "guiding principle"<sup>106</sup> has been outlined: the hitherto "un-

103 Cp. also Eichenhofer 2013, 195 ff.: by discussing the intellectual history of integration theories, Eichenhofer refers shortly to selected "classic" (Durkheim, Weber) as well as "modern" (Habermas, Parson) theories, which he then discards as "undercomplex," "not implementable," etc. Some elements of Esser's discursive apparatus (such as the four integration dimensions, social- and system integration, etc.) are then introduced as "classic", without directly referring to Esser.

104 "Es gab damals auch keine anderen. Esser ist [...] einer der ersten, der wirklich systematisch Integrationsforschung betrieben hat und versucht hat, das zu konzeptionalisieren, oder auch auf den deutschen Raum zu übertragen. Es ist sozusagen alternativlos. [...] Diese vier Dimensionen der Integration, [als] eine gewisse Struktur, die damit einfach vorgegeben worden ist [sind] ein Prinzip, das sich bewährt hat." (Interview with a BAMF researcher, 2015)

105 Interview with a BAMF researcher, 2015

106 Gusy and Müller 2012

known terrain” has been mapped out with the help of Esser’s assimilation theory and New Public Management<sup>107</sup> policies to overcome the decade-long deadlock in this policy area. In the next paragraphs, the discussion concentrates on the BAMF’s research output and specifically its political usefulness. In this, a distinct shift is discernible from an initial strategy of “mapping out” to the consolidation of a specific, assimilationist understanding of integration.

As demonstrated above, the original research impetus consisted of the idea to construct an integration monitoring system similar to migration reporting.<sup>108</sup> In this context, one of the most important long-term research projects in the BAMF’s integration research was production of the “integration reports.” The project was started in 2006 with the aim of an “all-encompassing, data-based presentation of the status of integration of immigrants to a wider public.”<sup>109</sup> Initially, the integration reports were conceptualized in a very similar fashion as the Migration Reports. Reporting was to consist mainly of compiling statistics from different governmental and academic resources and then presented in biennial reports. In this context, integration policy-making in this understanding is a prime example of a knowledge-based policy style which implements political measures in accordance to a scientific concept of integration. The scientific understanding (of successful integration) is operationalized with indicators which promise to deliver technically well-made policies untainted by ideology. In this context, the question of the practical use of the knowledge created at the BAMF is paradigmatically instrumental: knowledge is needed for defining criteria for successful integration, and for associated indicators; policy-making is a somewhat mechanistic effect of this scientific knowledge since it is thoroughly governed by enhancing or lowering certain indicators; policy evaluation is likewise simply achieved by monitoring the according numbers.

However, integration research took a different direction as of 2008 as is visible in a change in the publication strategy of the integration reports: instead of compiling data in successive reports, single and relatively long Working Papers were published on commonly discussed integration-related topics such as language acquisition, ethnic segregation in housing, schooling,

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107 For an overview over New Public Management principles in integration and migration policy making, see Geiger 2013, p. 25

108 Cp. for example Worbs 2010

109 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009b, p. 31



and labor market aspects. Furthermore, there seems to be a distinct research strategy in the reports to fill the data gaps in integration reporting: Especially in its earlier publications, the Working Group has published integration reports on “soft dimensions of integration”<sup>110</sup> which are commonly underrepresented in research: these include inter-ethnic contacts, media use, and political participation. In some of these studies, uncommon data resources are analyzed, especially in the earlier volumes of the integration report series (for example, housing and car ownership data). This could be read as a distinct strategy to broaden the data basis of integration research to represent the four integration dimensions more equally in indicators.

Despite these efforts, the concept of statistical monitoring similar to Migration Reports was subject to a steady decline: after the initial change of publication strategy in 2008, the integration reports were terminated in 2012. The reasons for this change in strategy are not specified; in the literature, political resistance from institutional rivals is mentioned in this context: according to Boswell, the commissioner for foreigners considered the integration reports a transgression of its own integration report series and thus mobilized some political resistance.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, the decline of research efforts in this direction could be connected to inherent contradictions of the concept of integration monitoring as a knowledge-driven, technocratic and apolitical management system. This understanding of policy-making became problematic both in regard to the theoretical groundwork and the actual implementation: concerning the latter, initial optimism of connecting policy-making with scientific research gave way to the insight that the connection between indicators and policy objectives is in many cases less straightforward than initially expected.<sup>112</sup> Concerning the theoretical groundwork, the abstraction of a coherent, politically uncontested understanding of integration was hard to achieve. Most importantly, two interconnected reasons are named in the literature: a lack of data, and a lack of common political interests. The latter point was connected to a somewhat deceptive hope that a common understanding of integration was within reach once the ideological dispute over its aims was set aside. However, even if this de-politicizing could be achieved, a diversity of interests still pertains: a communal integration concept somewhat naturally emphasizes questions of ethnic segregation of neighborhoods whereas

110 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2008b, p. 42

111 Boswell 2015, p. 25

112 Directorate-General Justice, Freedom and Security 2010 quoted after Worbs 2010, p. 6

this factor does not play such a strong role for larger political units such as the federal state. Partly connected to this is the varying availability of data; most complete data sets can be found mostly in structural areas such as labor market and education, whereas data on identification, cultural aspects, and other important fields are rather patchy. Moreover, both problems worsen according to the level of administration: while most municipal actors are able to define integration policy aims and can link them to data, this process is more problematic on a federal level, and in extension, for the BAMF. Most federal statistics are produced according to a citizenship-logic, therefore rendering naturalized migrants invisible to integration reporting. In consequence, not only the BAMF, but also the Federal Commissioner for Migration, Integration and Refugees has meanwhile abandoned the plan to establish an indicator-based measurement system for integration policy.<sup>113</sup>

However, despite the failure of state-level integration monitoring, it can be argued that the initial impetus to create a technocratic, non-ideological policy field in the area of integration succeeded in different ways. This success can be described by what Ferguson called “depoliticization”: by framing political problems in technical terms, and providing according solutions “to which no one can object,” originally political questions are removed from the political realm to be administered by the state bureaucracy.<sup>114</sup> This depoliticization has a twofold effect. First, as already described, it transforms the object of intervention into a merely technical question. This includes not only the alleged targets of integration measures, but also the general political environment. As one interlocutor noted, the governmentality of integration contributed to a more positive recognition of the Federal Office’s work, especially among support NGOs who used to largely be in principal among the opposition:

“the better image of the BAMF [...] has been massively influenced by the fact that since 2005, the BAMF has distributed millions of Euros for integration projects to non-government organizations via project funding. [...] this is a fundamental difference, to conduct integration policy and to support it financially, to establish public relations, and to cooperate with civil society organizations.”<sup>115</sup>

113 Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration 2017

114 Ferguson 1994, p. 256

115 “das verbesserte Bild des BAMF ist [...] ganz massiv darauf zurückzuführen, dass seit 2005 das BAMF die Behörde ist, die Millionen [...] von Integrationsfördergeldern verteilt hat an Nichtregierungsorganisationen über die Projektförderung [...] Das ist

Second, depoliticization supports the expansion of bureaucratic organizations which are carrying out technical solutions to the identified problem. This can again be illustrated by the mechanism of distributing funds for integration projects, most importantly integration courses: upon receipt of project funds, NGOs have to comply with the BAMF's rules of project funding and documentation. Sanctions can be carried out not by way of punishment, but by way of non-renewal of short-term project cycles. In both respects, the BAMF has been quite successful in introducing a technical understanding of integration, implemented as a bureaucratically steered process in which migrants are compelled to display individual effort in integration policies.

Coming back to the question of political usefulness of integration research, the shift of knowledge production from an indicator monitoring system becomes plausible in this context: once the policies are established, foundational research, the establishment of an overview or the completion of data for the establishment of an indicator system is not needed anymore. On the contrary, report series rely on a stable framework of data, indicators, and theory, so this built-in tendency of inertia favors the continuation of once-established patterns which do not need to be reconfirmed (or worse: questioned) by research. Instead of the completion of an "all-encompassing overview," as implied by the Integration Report series, the logic of practical applicability required different research projects after the basic principles of integration policy-making and the related theoretic concept have been established. Instead of foundational knowledge, minute, technical knowledge about specific integration policies is needed. This shift is visible in the integration panel project as mentioned above, which focuses on the success of integration course participants, therefore conceptualizing integration not as a societal process but rather an outcome of individual effort in the context of government policy. This shift is in line with according demand for technical knowledge on the side of the administration, as Boswell noted: especially the BAMF integration unit increasingly commissioned studies on technical issues such as, for example, the effects of particular teaching methods and incentive systems on the success and participation rates in integration courses.<sup>116</sup>

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schon ein fundamentaler Wandel [...] im Auftrag des BAMF eben auch Integration zu machen, zu fördern, nach außen zu gehen, sich zivilgesellschaftlich zu verankern." (Interview with a former BAMF researcher, 2016)

116 Boswell 2009b, p. 174

This shift in demand for knowledge seems to be the decisive factor in the adjusted output of integration research in the BAMF from about 2009/2010 on. Practically relevant knowledge in the context of integration was therefore subject to a shift from a rather generalized perspective, not unlike the Migration Reports, to a more technical, specialized research design. “Practically relevant” meant, at the beginning of the research, activities to contribute to an abstract understanding of integration, which was mainly interpreted through Esser’s assimilation theory, a concept which has gained widespread application in governmental contexts. Over the years, this concept was, however, specifically reinterpreted to suit the context of depoliticized bureaucratic administering of integration according to which integration was conceptualized mainly as an outcome of migrant’s individual efforts.

Over the years, the hegemonic understanding of integration became gradually more differentiated. After about 2012, a second stream of integration studies, connected primarily with different forms of temporary labor migration, emerged.<sup>117</sup> Two features of the integration concept of these labor-market related studies are of particular interest. First, they lack the unified theoretical framework of reference as in the case of Esser-inspired integration studies. Second, the target groups in question here – highly-qualified immigrants, self-employed migrants, and university graduates – have a rather privileged status in common and are all perceived as economically useful. All in all, the studies are less rigidly structured and seem less directly oriented towards individual negative features of migrants which have to be corrected by policy intervention. Integration in these cases is less an outcome of individual effort and integration policy measures. Rather, it is conceptualized as the outcome of a combination of personal features and structural conditions of the labor market.<sup>118</sup> This interpretation also explains the selective application of

117 Cp. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009e, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2012i, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2014a

118 This difference becomes even more pronounced when analyzing labor-market related studies which do not focus on privileged target groups, for example Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011d or Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011e: In this context, labor-market aspects of integration seem to be discussed within the individualistic approach: In these studies, migrants represent rather a threat to social order than an opportunity for economic development; Migrant economic activities are discussed in predominantly negative contexts such as unemployment, low wages, or unsafe and unstable employment conditions. Structural factors for these problems are however rarely discussed (apart from one mentioning of discriminating migrant

Esser's concept to specific target groups such as immigrated spouses, Muslims, and integration course participants: all of these groups are attributed one deficit or the other, mainly a lack of integration, but also (especially in the case of Muslims) problematic ethical values.<sup>119</sup> The integration of these target groups is perceived as a correction of specific deficits; integration policy in this context usually comes in the form of educative measures.

To summarize, governmental integration research was initially characterized by the idea of introducing a technocratic policy-style of integration steering as an answer to decades of political backlog. In practice, however, this ideal of a knowledge-based policy has never been implemented; the end of the according project of an "integration report" monitoring integration success can be considered a consequence of this fact. In short, the notion of integration was gradually reformulated from a project for the whole society to a government-organized education of migrants. What started out as a "two-sided process" which entailed "responsibilities for both migrant and autochthon population" was translated into a set of policy-tools which target exclusively migrants.<sup>120</sup> This means that immigrants were required to put their individual efforts into integration measures, whereas responsibilities for the indigenous population were transferred to the state which designs and offers integration measures. The main policy tool in this context, the integration courses, mirrors this understanding very well: these courses were designed essentially as a language course with a short part on civic-historical education. These courses are an educational measure designed to counter migrant deficits – be it lack of information, lack of language skills, or lack of socio-political or historical knowledge – which are believed to hinder migrants' full participation in the German society. This deficit perspective and the cure to it is a well-pronounced feature of foreigners' education which developed during the 1970s and 1980s as described in Chapter 2. Despite the claim of a "paradigm change," the actual integration course design and contents bear many similarities to earlier "Guest Worker" language courses as well.<sup>121</sup> In-

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youth art the vocational training market, see Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011d, p. 33).

119 For example, a comparative study on gender roles of Muslim and Christian immigrants explicitly names the identification of a "need of support of the equality of genders" among Muslims Cp. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2014c, p. 5

120 Cp. Wimmer 2009, p. 332

121 Cp. Zur Nieden 2009

tegration research nicely demonstrates how knowledge and political usefulness considerations influence each other and change over time: while integration indicator systems were clearly developed out of a perceived need for an overview of an unknown phenomenon, later research was to abandon this all-encompassing perspective and focus on technical, non-political aspects of integration policy-making, thus creating an understanding of integration as an outcome of the migrant's individual effort. This hegemony was reduced with the emergence of newly created immigration channels for privileged migrants which required altered, less assimilation-oriented integration knowledge. In the next chapter, the discursive effects of this segmented knowledge structure will be discussed.

### **Effects on the Knowledge: Selective Blindness towards Discrimination**

In the last paragraphs the selective application of Esser's theory to research projects has been documented: the main finding is that Esser's theoretical understanding of integration is reinterpreted from a general theory of integration to the monitoring of migrants which are subject to governmental intervention by way of integration policies. In this chapter, the process of selectively applying theory to governmental knowledge will be scrutinized in some detail. The point of departure is the above-mentioned observation that Esser's concept is not uniformly adopted in BAMF research; there is a well-visible shift towards individual factors of integration. The main hypothesis will be developed according to which this selective application is responsible for a bias in governmental integration research which renders knowledge selectively blind towards structural discrimination of legally less privileged status groups.

The selective application of Esser's theory is a known structural feature of the BAMF's research; however, researchers do not problematize the fact. In regard to the well-pronounced stress on structural factors of integration monitoring, BAMF researchers justify this selective interpretation with the pragmatic style of knowledge production: the argument goes that not theoretical coherence, but practical applicability is the main yardstick for quality of the research.

"We conduct commissioned research [...] for the Ministry of the Interior. The research questions stem less from the academic world but rather here from the Federal Office and the Ministry of the Interior. For this commissioned

research, for answering the questions, Esser's concept suits itself very well. This is why we have used it, but we are not in any way committed to it."<sup>122</sup>

This emphasis is in line with other integration-related bodies of knowledge as discussed above, for example municipal integration reports: these, too, put a focus on the structural dimension, whereas the emotional/identificatorial dimension is somewhat under-represented. Often, the lack of adequate data is presented as the decisive reason for this.

However, while this might be true, the degree of disregard for structural barriers to integration (i.e., discrimination and racism) is extreme in the BAMF's case: between 2005 and 2015, *not one single* BAMF research project deals with this topic as a major focus.<sup>123</sup> This neglect becomes even more apparent when BAMF research is compared with academic knowledge production, where studies on discrimination/racism feature among the most important research topics in migration studies. If only lacking data were the problem, the difference between academic and governmental knowledge production were not as large, since both would have to struggle with the same limitations. To be precise, this does not mean that the BAMF completely disregards the topic; however, it only appears as a sub-topic in some publications. In the next paragraphs, the specific governmental reading of discrimination will be discussed using the Integration Panel, one of the most prestigious long-term projects of the BAMF.<sup>124</sup>

In the Integration Panel, the progress of language acquisition of integration course participants is scrutinized against a control group controlling several individual socio-economic indicators such as age, gender, education, la-

122 "Wir machen Auftragsforschung [...] für das Innenministerium [...]. Die Fragestellungen kommen ja weniger aus dem universitären Bereich, als hier aus dem Amt, plus dem Innenministerium. Für diese Auftragsforschung, für die Beantwortung der Fragen, [...] eignet sich das Esser'sche Konzept sehr gut. Darum haben wir es verwendet, aber wir sind nicht irgendwie [daran] gebunden." (Interview with a BAMF researcher, 2015)

123 As of 2015, no research project was explicitly dedicated to studying discrimination; accordingly, only 5 out of more than 500 external publications (counting lectures, workshops, and book publications) deal explicitly with the topic of discrimination. (Own evaluation of data from yearly research reports).

124 The Integration Panel was a longitudinal study on the integration success of integration course participants, spanning over publications from 2008-2013. Cp. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011a

bor market participation and also discrimination.<sup>125</sup> Concerning the latter, a table shows that between one-quarter (integration course participants) and one-third (control group) of the respondents “feel discriminated against” either “sometimes” or “often.” These numbers are somewhat optimistically presented as good news: “a majority of the respondents does not feel discriminated because of their ethnic belonging.” However, two sub-groups of the respondents report discrimination much more often than the average: first, members of the control group, and second, members of visible minorities, operationalized as “migrants from sub-Saharan Africa [...] and Asia,” from the study group. With 29% of the respondents of the first and 49% of the latter group, the respective numbers are significantly higher than average. In the discussion of the data, there seems to be an honest effort to analyze the connection between integration and discrimination, since “an open attitude of the receiving society is important for emotional integration” which can be hampered by “perceived discrimination.” However, the analysis of the data is not geared towards this connection between integration success and discrimination. Instead, it remains firmly grounded in the individualistic approach: by analyzing the differences between former course participants and the control group, the report states that the differences in perceived discrimination do not necessarily have to be caused by factually higher levels of discrimination, but rather just by according perceptions: Simply put, course participants could be less likely to “feel” discriminated. The argument goes that “Perceived discrimination depends on the subjective feeling, which means, the specific disposition to interpret social conflicts as ethnically or culturally motivated.” This is bolstered with data from a study among Turkish and Yugoslavian youth: by quoting numbers which suggest that respondents expect discrimination more often than actually fall victim to it, the study argues that a good share of the problem lies in the overly pessimistic attitude of some migrants. The underlying argument originates from the individualistic approach: discrimination is consistently referred to as “perceived discrimination,” framing it somewhat as a private matter instead of a structural barrier to integration. In the same context, the report mentions a negative correlation between discrimination and social contact with autochthon Germans. Again the language is rather tentative and cautious, formulating an optimistic expectation that reports discrimination diminishes once friendly contact with Germans cancels out eventual discrimination experiences. In a similar way,

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125 All quotes in this paragraph Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2013b, p. 74



lower levels of discrimination experiences among integration course participants are tentatively interpreted as an outcome of the “positive recognition” through the integration course. However, despite the positive language, discrimination is portrayed as the result of poor understanding of migrants who wrongfully interpret usual conflicts as ethnically motivated and thus “feel” discriminated. All in all, it seems that discrimination is most of all a problem of the non-integrated migrant.<sup>126</sup> Thus, the cause and effect relationship between discrimination and integration is in a way reversed.

In conclusion, there seems to be a structural contradiction at work when discussing discrimination in the framework of the Integration Panel’s analysis. On the one hand, there is an honest effort to include a perspective of structural barriers to integration into the analysis; again and again, the importance of an “open society” is stressed. On the other hand, however, discrimination is not conceptualized as a societal barrier to the success of language acquisition. This is above all caused by the individualistic framework of analysis which supports an image of integration as the result of the individual effort on the side of the migrant. This design clearly reaches its analytic confines: The plain hypothesis that visible minorities are much more likely to be singled out for discriminatory acts is impossible to capture with the individualistic framework. The same is true for the reference to discrimination as a “feeling” or “perception.” This conceptualization renders discrimination an individual feature of the migrant instead of a societal problem with structural impact on integration. This perception is argumentatively connected to a lack of integration of the migrant. Compared to the introductory statement about the importance of an open society for integration, the cause-effect relationship is reversed: in this sense, discrimination is not a factor which hinders integration, but rather, a lack of integration effectuates higher levels of “perceived discrimination” especially by the (incorrect) interpretation of social conflicts as ethnically motivated. The result seems to suggest that discrimination can best be cured by enhanced integration efforts.

The above-mentioned effect of selective application of different frameworks of analysis according to the logic of perceived usefulness of different legal groups is most clearly visible in the respective conceptualization of discrimination. The individualistic approach based on Esser and the consequen-

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126 Cp. also Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2013c, 134f.: In this study, “discrimination experiences” is mentioned as an indicator for the “perceived acceptance of migrants on the side of the majority.”

tial downplaying of structural factors can be set off by what has been called “Welcome Culture” in the context of the integration of highly-skilled migrants. The term was introduced around 2005 by employer associations which essentially called for a preferential treatment of skilled migrant workers by the state bureaucracy and the society.<sup>127</sup> By 2012, the BAMF had assembled a “Round Table Welcome Culture” and published recommendations for the conduct of the state administration vis-a-vis immigrants, for the inclusion of immigrant organizations, and for other “best practice” examples. Notably, a direct connection is drawn between discrimination as a relevant factor for society on the one hand and integration difficulties on the other:

“According to a study [...] on welcome culture in Germany, around 65 percent of the respondents connect additional problems and conflicts with immigration. These opinions among the German receiving society can result in experiences of discrimination among migrants, which influence the subjective or actual readiness for integration negatively. All in all, there is a lack of welcome culture and positive recognition of diversity in Germany.”<sup>128</sup>

In the BAMF’s research work, this concept of “positive recognition” is visible as well. Notably, a researcher mentioned such a notion in the context of migrants’ language acquisition: Esser argues that learning German is essential for integration since command over German is a prerequisite to entering the labor market. While this position is relatively common-sensical, Esser’s negative stance towards the migrant’s language of origin is not: based on the conceptualization of language acquisition as an investment in either “German” or “foreign” cultural capital, Esser constructs a zero-sum-game that any investment in “foreign” social capital automatically entails less investment in “German” capital, which is considered harmful for integration. This, however, is refuted by linguists which present contradicting data.<sup>129</sup> The problem is that Esser’s approach is not empirical, but rather theoretical on the basis of economic utility: most languages of origin are not important to the labor market and thus he argues that the formal training in the language of origin is in the best case not harmful but can never be considered an advantage for the acquisition of German. Given this academic controversy, it seems that the BAMF’s

127 For an overview over the different uses of the term, see Haller 2017, 137f.

128 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2013d, p. 3

129 Hetfleisch 2013, 226f.

position towards this particular element of Esser's theory is changing in the light of the "welcome culture" debate:

"So [Esser] concludes that immigrants have to learn German in any case, which is a precondition to enhancing job chances which is part of successful integration. In this context, command over multiple country of origin's languages is irrelevant and therefore not so important. However, our position is that this cannot be put so simply, that the human capital is important no matter what, for the person and for integration as well."<sup>130</sup>

This is to a degree mirrored in the BAMF's research on integration. Since about 2012, the formerly hegemonic position of an Esser-inspired framework of analysis as described above has changed, since it is no longer applied uniformly to all integration research projects. An increasing focus on structural factors of discrimination is discernible in the BAMF's labor-market related studies. In an early study on highly qualified immigrants in 2009, the matter is vaguely defined as "general life satisfaction."<sup>131</sup> In the 2014 study on university graduates, the topic is discussed more extensively, following broadly the main areas of concern of the "welcome culture" white paper: satisfaction with the state and university administration, access to information, and the general "feeling of being welcome."<sup>132</sup> Notably, the fact that more than 40% of the respondents criticize the short duration of their status title is prominently discussed in the study; this in turn reflects the fact that legal regulations are included in the analysis of integration, a notable difference to Esser-inspired studies.<sup>133</sup> This being said, it does not mean that Esser's theory has been replaced by a more open and discrimination-sensitive framework, but rather, by a selective logic of economic usefulness. The analysis of structural factors

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130 "darum schlussfolgert [Esser], die Leute, die kommen, müssen auf jeden Fall Deutsch lernen, weil nur dann sind die Erfolgschancen auf dem Arbeitsmarkt überhaupt gegeben und zu einer erfolgreichen Integration gehört das eben dazu. Und die [...] Beherrschung von mehreren Herkunftssprachen ist dafür irrelevant und deshalb ist es nicht wichtig. Und, da haben wir [...] die Position, dass das nicht so einfach gesehen werden darf, dass dieses [herkunftslandbezogene] Humankapital, [...] trotzdem für die Person wichtig ist, und auch für die Integration." (Interview with a BAMF researcher, 2015)

131 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009e, 73ff.

132 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2014a, 230ff.

133 Ibid., p. 10

of discrimination is conducted only in the context of economically useful migrants such as highly skilled workers and university graduates.<sup>134</sup>

To summarize, the shifting and selective conceptualization of discrimination highlights the structural confines of governmental knowledge production as present in the BAMF quite well: practical relevance requirements predispose a shift of research activities from fundamental research and theory development to the research of integration processes especially of those target groups which are the object of political interventions. In this context, some built-in features of the BAMF's representation of Esser's integration theory as well as the deficit-orientation of integration policy-making can be made responsible for a well-pronounced stress of individual factors and above all a disregard for discrimination as a structural barrier to integration. In the example of privileged immigrant groups, the notion of integration is different: individual and structural factors are analytically more balanced, so that successful integration is conceptualized as a result of both structural opportunities and individual features of the migrants. This can be seen to disprove the assumption that the BAMF fully disregards the topic, as both the quantitative analysis of research project topics and the data from SOLIS as discussed above might wrongfully suggest. Rather, as the discussion of "welcome culture" and Research Group publications on privileged migrant groups show, it seems that the BAMF successively takes up criticism and incorporates it into its knowledge production. This criticism, however, is subject to the same practical applicability considerations as the rest of the body of knowledge.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, critical knowledge is allowed only in a "productive sense" if it can be used to improve the overall order of knowledge without targeting its principles such as the methodological framework of Esser's integration theory. In this sense, "welcome culture" is interpreted as a concept for supporting the integration of immigrants who are regarded economically useful; the (historically older) understanding of integration as an individual effort in the framework of government policy remains in place for all other immigrant groups. This cognitive order is a direct outcome of the requirements of practical applicability, where in the area of temporary work migration, the policy aims are different from other policy areas such as resettlement, asylum, and family reunification: the governmental logic is recruitment of qualified workers

134 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2013d, p. 6

135 Mecheril et al. 2013, 30f.

in the former case and education of migrants in the latter. This entails a difference in the targets of governmental actions: intervention policies naturally target individuals, while support includes also structural barriers such as legal requirements to status titles or experiences of discrimination.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, the development of a theoretical understanding of integration has been analyzed. Mainly, three phases of development can be discerned: first, the concept of an indicator-based monitoring system for integration until about 2008; second, the hegemonic application of Esser's assimilation theory; and third, the gradual diversification of integration concepts according to the economic usefulness of the to-be-integrated subject since about 2012. Regarding the first phase, research interest was based on the one hand on the search for an abstract understanding of integration; on the other, the goal was to make integration an orderly and legible field of policy-making through statistical reporting. While the technocratic elements of steering were largely abandoned, a widespread, if not hegemonic understanding of integration was successfully installed. This understanding, based on a modified version of Esser's assimilation theory, can be regarded as the intellectual basis for integration research. According to Hetfleisch (2013), the BAMF's understanding of integration is characterized by a principle of "methodological individualism" borrowed from Esser's assimilation theory. As has been demonstrated, this principle focuses on individual actions and systematically underrepresents systemic discrimination and racism; furthermore, the model of rational utility maximization equalizes successful integration with the economic utility of a given migrant. In effect, Esser's theory legitimizes a meritocratic world-view in which exclusion and discrimination are conceptualized as the outcomes of poor economic integration based on the lack of individual will or ability to assimilate.<sup>136</sup> Amir-Moazami's critique of the BAMF's study on Muslims can be regarded as exemplary for knowledge production which describes the BAMF's efforts quite well:

"Although many of these studies make a studious effort to recur to the political rhetoric of 'bilateral integration', the main burden lies at the side of the respondents. [...] While integration is de-politicized, scientific research

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136 Hetfleisch 2013, p. 227

delivers the proof that integration is at the end the responsibility of the individual.”<sup>137</sup>

While this understanding of integration can be regarded hegemonic not only for the BAME, but also for most other state actors in Germany, there is a gradual reorientation and diversification in recent integration research. In the context of the rise of the “welcome culture” debate since about 2012, studies on single target groups are published which do not apply the one-sided, individualistic framework of analysis. In regard to the gradual diversification of research concepts, it is interesting to note how the understanding of integration changes according to the perceived use of the knowledge: in the case of migrants who are perceived as deficient in some way, integration is portrayed as the result of individual efforts within Esser’s framework of analysis. In this context, practical applicability means that integration is primarily understood and analyzed through the lens of educational integration policies. In the case of temporary work migrants, international students, university graduates and other rather privileged status groups, integration is framed by balancing structural and individual factors of analysis. The fact that integration in these cases is conceptualized as an effect of structural opportunities can be connected to the governmental rationality of fostering the immigration of these status groups.

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137 Amir-Moazami 2018b, p. 95

## Calming Public Debate through Objective Knowledge

One of the most successful studies of the Research Group was published in 2009 under the title *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland* (Muslim Life in Germany, MLD). The research report analyzes data from a large-scale, telephone-based survey on Muslims in regard to their religious practices, and aspects of their integration. Together with some more research projects on different aspects of Islam and Muslims, these studies can be considered a core focus of research at the BAMF.<sup>138</sup> The knowledge produced about Muslims shares many characteristics with general integration research as analyzed in the last chapter, most notably the Esser-inspired theoretical framework of analysis. However, in regard to the conditions of knowledge production and the intended use of these studies, three core differences are apparent. First, all of the above-mentioned studies have been commissioned by the *Deutsche Islam Konferenz* (German Islam Conference, DIK), a forum of state officials and representatives of Muslim organizations founded in 2006. The direct connection between the research reports and a commissioning institution can be considered a core difference to more generalized integration research, which is usually either self-commissioned or mandated by the BAMF integration department. Second, it stands to reason that these different conditions of knowledge production are connected to changed practical applicability deliberations as compared to generalized integration research. As will be shown later in some detail, in the context of Muslims, research is structurally influenced by the aim to maintain quasi-neutral outsider perspective on Islam independent of the established “insider” and “security” discourses. In connection to this, the third difference to generalized integration research is the political usefulness of the knowledge: In the context of Muslims, knowledge is often geared towards the aim to maintain societal peace by disproving what are perceived as irrational, fear-driven, subjective, discriminatory and racist statements about Muslims.

In the following paragraphs, the BAMF's knowledge production about Muslims will be analyzed, focusing on the study “Muslim Life in Germany” as a paradigmatic example. In a first step, the study's background, its core concepts, methodology, and topics are presented, which serve as a basis for

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138 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2012e and Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2014c. In 2016, a second edition of Muslim Life in Germany has been published.

the analysis of its political usefulness by entertaining a narrative of sober, objective facts as a remedy against racist public discourses. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the epistemic quality of the knowledge mainly in regard to forming a specific image of the “Muslim other.”

## Muslim Life in Germany

The origin of the study “Muslim Life in Germany” is on the one hand connected to the German Islam Conference, as already mentioned; on the other hand, it is embedded in an EU-wide trend of socio-demographic studies on Muslims since the beginning of the 2000s.<sup>139</sup> Concerning the former, it is worth briefly reconstructing the foundation of the Islam Conference as a policy tool in integration policy-making. The Islam Conference was founded in 2006 at conservative Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schäuble’s initiative. Schäuble’s aspiration can be seen as a direct consequence of the “paradigm change” in migration policy-making as discussed in Chapter 3.1. In post 9/11 public debate, Muslims were frequently identified as a problematic group in respect to their threat to public security, their ethical values, or their socio-economic integration.<sup>140</sup> At the same time, politicians promoted a pragmatic recognition of a Muslim minority in Germany in replacement of the outdated “no country of immigration” dogma. In its original design, the Islam Conference was conceptualized as a policy tool to address both issues: on the one hand, it responded to publicly discussed integration deficits of Muslims; on the other hand, in the long term, it was meant to constitute something like an official political representation of all Muslims in Germany.<sup>141</sup> In the course of its existence, however, the Islam Conference developed similar to integration policy-making in general: what started out as a dialogue between equal partners in 2006 was gradually reformulated to a somewhat asymmetric education of Muslims or, as Tezcan (2010) described it, “a project of enlightenment.”<sup>142</sup> According to Engler (2014), the seating order of the Islam Conference mirrors this development well:

“The seating arrangement in the opening session of the Islam Conference provides a long table where 15 representatives of the German state sit vis-a-

139 Amir-Moazami 2018a, Schepelern Johansen and Spielhaus 2018, p. 125

140 Cp. Spielhaus 2013

141 Engler 2014, p. 67

142 Tezcan 2011, 94f.



vis 15 representatives of the Islam. [...] While the position of the state seems firm and enclosed, secured by the central position of the minister, this central place is vacant on the side of the Islam representatives. The seating arrangements [...] reflect the program of the Islam Conference in two ways. First, the spatial separation of the two parties coincide with the foundational separation of the two speaker positions 'German state' and 'Islam in Germany'. Second, by staging the collision between governmental unity on the one hand and Islam diversity on the other, the dialogue is turned into an examination. The Islam representative's role is to explain and justify, while the state representatives pose questions and make a judgment."<sup>143</sup>

In the course of the Conference, a dichotomy is constructed between well-integrated, enlightened, secular Muslims on the one hand and radical, conservative and anti-democratic Islamists on the other.<sup>144</sup> Accordingly, the topical framing of the Islam Conference focused strongly on a context of immigration, related integration problems, and constructed connections to homeland security issues.<sup>145</sup>

As already mentioned, the BAMF's studies on Muslims are part of a wave in socio-economic studies on Muslims starting around 2000. This surge in interest replaced a decade-long neglect of religious aspects in the immigration question.<sup>146</sup> This is well illustrated considering the BAMF's research agenda: until MLD, religion in general was not a major topic in BAMF research.<sup>147</sup> In the years after 2009, religious aspects in integration research are almost always connected to Muslims, either as the sole focus or comparatively with Christians.<sup>148</sup>

"Muslim Life in Germany" was at the time of its genesis one of the largest research projects conducted at the BAMF. For this study, respondents were selected from telephone book entries based on the criterion if their surname was common for selected Muslim countries of origin. Subsequently, about

143 Engler 2014, 83ff.

144 Müller 2018, p. 208

145 Engler 2014, 79f., Cp. also Müller 2018, 189f.

146 Amir-Moazami 2018a, p. 9

147 With the exception of two working papers on Jewish immigrants (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2005c and Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2007b). These working papers however conceptualize Jewish immigrants through their legal status as contingent refugees, not as a religious minority.

148 Cp. for example Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2014c

6,500 telephone-based interviews were conducted.<sup>149</sup> This is a remarkable diversion from the usual routine at the BAMF, where data is usually collected in a pragmatic way: statistical data stems either from third sources or from respondents drawn from the AZR data base. In contrast to this, after a study on Ethnic Germans, “Muslim Life in Germany” was only the second empiric study for which raw data was collected. This elaborate methodology testifies to the unusually large employment of resources in connection to “Muslim Life in Germany”.

The empirical part of the study is divided into three main chapters: after a discussion of socio-economic and migration-related features of the Muslim population, aspects of Muslim religiosity and religious practice as well as integration are discussed. Clearly, the most important question is the measurement of the number of Muslims in Germany.<sup>150</sup> As the BAMF notes, the main purpose of the study is to “determine the number of Muslims and their religious composition as precisely as possible”; every other question touched upon in the study – social issues, integration, and so forth – are portrayed as a dependent factor of this overarching goal.<sup>151</sup> This aim is justified with the fact that available data on Muslims was rather patchy and incomplete: in government documents, the size of the Muslim population was estimated by combining the numbers of foreigners from various countries with a Muslim majority. This estimate rendered 2.8 to 3.6 million persons.<sup>152</sup> The BAMF lists some reasons why this estimation method is problematic, most importantly a selection bias through migration (since religious minorities are more likely to emigrate).<sup>153</sup>

One important methodological question in this context was the definition of Muslim. This was operationalized in two steps: first, as mentioned, persons with a typical name from 49 countries with a significant Muslim minority

149 For a description of the methodology, see Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c, 36ff.

150 In 2016, the BAMF released an update of the number of Muslims. However, the database for the population register has changed in the meantime, which is why the two numbers are not comparable to each other. In 2011, the census revealed that the population registers exaggerated the number of foreigners in Germany by almost 15%; the number of Muslims is therefore inexact as well. Cp. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2016c, p. 5

151 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c, p. 20

152 Spielhaus 2013, 6f.

153 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c, p. 20

were selected from the telephone book. Second, respondents were asked if they regarded themselves as Muslims or not. In short, a respondent would fulfill both criteria of possessing a Migrant Background from selected countries of origin and self-identification as a Muslim. The result was that between 3.8 and 4.3 million persons, or about 5 percent of the total population, self-identified as Muslims.

One should add that in the literature, some sources of bias in this method are discussed critically: in principle, telephone directories deteriorate in quality since they progressively cover an increasingly smaller share of the population; also, not every Muslim possesses a surname which makes him or her identifiable via the telephone book (especially convertites or married spouses which adopted another surname). On a conceptual level, critique targets the fact that only foreign nationals were included in the estimates, which reflects a common misconception of equating Muslims with migrants. Another problematic outcome of the study is the construction of so-called Muslim countries: on the one hand, in average only about half of the persons with a background from these countries self-identified as Muslim; in some of the allegedly “Muslim” countries the share of Muslims among the total migrants from that country was less than 10 percent (such as Kazakhstan, for example). on the other hand, persons from non-Muslim countries (in the logic of MLD) such as French, Dutch or US Muslims were excluded from the outset, thereby focusing on the legally least privileged share of the Muslim population.<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, the study enjoys relatively widespread acceptance among scientific and political audiences. Almost all governmental publications, Muslim organizations, and scientific studies recur to these numbers, testifying to its widespread use. In the academic literature, the method is usually presented as relatively sound, resource-intensive as well as without viable alternative.<sup>155</sup>

The research report dedicates one chapter to the analysis of Muslim religiosity. Here, by and large, two main topics can be identified. In the first half of the chapter, religiosity is mainly captured and analyzed through a self-assessment of the respondent’s degree of religiosity and the execution of ritual religious acts; this includes the observance of religious rules such as fasting, obeying religious food restrictions, attending religious services, and praying. This portrait is completed with a collection of publicly discussed pathologies connected to Muslims. These include the non-attendance to public schools,

154 Cp. Hernández Aguilar 2018, p. 34

155 Spielhaus 2013, p. 12

most importantly in the context of sexual education, mixed gender sports, and field trips. Another focus point is the practice of wearing a headscarf, especially if this practice is enforced in a discriminatory manner by Muslim men. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the interplay between several integration indicators and religiosity, stating that integration correlates negatively with the degree of religiosity.

The analysis of integration indicators follows the classic Esser-inspired framework of structural integration factors. The study lists indicators in the “usual four dimensions (structural, social, emotional and cultural)” of integration which are discussed with a stress on “hard integration factors”: employment rate, income, vocational position, as well as language skills and acquisition.<sup>156</sup> Here, the stress lies clearly on indicators of social integration, such as membership in civil society organizations, contact with autochthon Germans, and openness towards bicultural marriages. Emotional integration is relatively briefly scrutinized with just two items in the questionnaire: respondents were asked if they were content with the neighborhood in which they lived and if they identified with Germany, their country of origin, or both.<sup>157</sup>

In a comparative perspective between Muslims and the control group,<sup>158</sup> the study concludes that Muslims usually display worse integration parameters than members of the control group. In general, religiosity seems to coincide with worse integration performance; this is especially true for headscarf-wearing women which are described as the “least well- integrated group”:

“It is noticeable that Muslim women with headscarf perform worse in regard to indicators of social integration. Muslim women with headscarf self-assess their German skills less often as good or very good, are less likely to be employed, have less contact with Germans, are less likely to be active in German associations, are more likely to reside in areas in which many foreigners live, seem to be less strongly emotionally attached to Germany, and are less likely to be naturalized.”<sup>159</sup>

On the other end of the integration performance scale, non-practicing Muslims, as well as Alevites, usually display very good integration indicator values.

156 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c, 207 f.

157 Ibid., 289ff.

158 The control group consisted of all participants of the MLD-telephone-interview who did not self-identify as Muslims.

159 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c, 201f.

## Practical Relevance: Dispelling Myths

Bearing the institutional structure of commissioning the MLD in mind, it stands to reason that the prime political usefulness of the study can first and foremost be found in the context of the Islam Conference. As other authors have pointed out, the Islam Conference is an institution where the production of knowledge and the exercise of political power systematically interact.<sup>160</sup> Knowledge is used for the formation of a specific understanding of integration which allows the incorporation of Muslims into the exercise of political power. This argument follows the lines of reasoning developed in the context of generalized integration research and will be elaborated in respect to the context-specific features of this knowledge. In the second part, the analysis centers on a relatively disregarded, yet central aspect of the knowledge which does not address Muslims, but rather the German general public which is perceived as overly critical.

How can the knowledge on Muslims be used politically? According to the BAMF, this knowledge is primarily valued as information, following paradigmatic instrumentalist reasoning. The argument goes that the total number of Muslims is important for calculating needs of infrastructure investments most importantly in the area of integration and education. However, besides these examples of politically applicable knowledge, the study lists relatively few concrete policy recommendations.<sup>161</sup> In general, the need for enhanced integration policies in regard to language acquisition, schooling, and labor market participation is stressed. In this context, the study explicitly denies a demand for integration measures specifically tailored to the needs of Muslims.<sup>162</sup> All in all, despite the BAMF's claims, it seems that direct application of study results to political decisions is not overly important: in general, data refers to a country-wide level of analysis without regional or sub-regional divisions. It is questionable if such general data would actually help in planning infrastructure needs which are per definition tied to a specific local context.<sup>163</sup> The few recommendations are very uncontroversial, unspecific, and usually call for "more of the same" (such as the example of integration measures).

160 Hernández Aguilar 2014, Amir-Moazami 2018b, 94f., Spielhaus 2013, Engler 2014

161 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c, p. 18

162 Ibid., p. 348

163 In fact, many federal countries have requested regional analysis of MLD data for exactly this purpose. Cp. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011c, 34ff.

To be sure, this does not mean that the BAMF's knowledge production on Muslims is not connected to a specific political use. This interest is, however, not primarily based on the needs of the administration to plan future integration policy tools. Rather, the study's political relevance seems to be mainly its discursive effects, which lie on the one hand in the introduction of a somewhat neutral, apolitical and objective narration of integration, and on the other hand, in the calming of the public debate through the introduction of a scientific stance of reason.

In the discussion of Muslims' integration successes, the question of political usefulness can be answered in terms similar to those used in the general integration research analyzed in the last chapter. Integration research contributes to a technical, apolitical understanding of integration which is conceptualized as a result of individual effort in the framework of governmental integration policies. In respect to Muslims, this notion manifests in two specific ways: first, by conceptualizing Muslims as immigrants whose integration is analyzed in the Esser-inspired framework, and second, by delegitimizing Muslim organizations. Regarding the first point, Muslims are conceptualized as migrants through the method of sample generation. Again, by way of sample gathering, only persons with a foreign sounding name were contacted; out of those, only those with a Migrant Background were included in the study. An interesting side-aspect of Muslims as foreigners can be found in the discussion of the share of Muslims among foreigners: For some nationality groups, for example Iranians, the share of Muslims in Germany is lower than the share of the population in the home country. Interestingly, this is explained solely with selection effects during migration, reasoning that religious persons are less likely to emigrate. The hypothesis that people stop practicing Islam in a non-Muslim country, out of fear of discrimination or any other explanation is left unregarded. This shows how this discussion is rooted in the concept of Muslims as migrants, and of Islam as an external, foreign phenomenon.

This does not mean that the method seems to be deliberately doctored to fabricate a connection where there is none; to the contrary, the MLD's methodology follows studiously established scientific procedures and enjoys rather high acceptance among scientists. However, it is important to note that the analysis of integration which constitutes the main framework of analysis for this study follows directly from the conceptualization of Muslims as migrants. This framework of analysis could otherwise not be employed in such a consistent manner.

As already mentioned, the analysis of integration follows the hegemonic approach inspired by Esser's assimilation theory which rendered specific deficits among Muslims, especially Muslim women wearing a headscarf. The BAMF uses these findings on the one hand in the above-mentioned sense, to calm the public debate, and on the other, to promote a technocratic, apolitical understanding of integration. Here, the argument goes that most of the publicly discussed controversies aim at deficits in social integration which can be rejected on the basis of the data. However, deficits in cultural integration (above all language acquisition) persist, a deficit which neatly fits the array of integration policy tools developed at the BAMF.

In the context of Muslim organizations, another depoliticizing effect of the integration paradigm can be discerned. The study examines the question of political representation of Muslims extensively.<sup>164</sup> This is conducted by asking if respondents knew about the work of the four Muslim organizations present at the Islam Conference, and if they felt represented by them. Here, although the data shows that a majority of Muslims knows at least one of the organizations, only a minority feels represented politically. This relatively low number could be explained by the fact that one of the most important Muslim organizations in Germany (Milli Görüs) was not part of the questionnaire;<sup>165</sup> the corresponding numbers (16 percent of the respondents knew the umbrella organization) seem too low to be realistic. However, the study concludes that the data contradicts the Muslim organizations' entitlement to representation of Muslims in the framework of the Islam Conference.<sup>166</sup> Despite the methodological problems, this part of the survey should not be regarded as an overt manipulation of numbers with the aim to undermine the political position of Muslim organizations. It does, however, reveal a similar basic asymmetry which the Islam Conference is subject to, as Fabian Engler observed as quoted in the introduction to this chapter: Muslims are put under scrutiny and are required to testify, while the other side – the Germans, the majority society, the state – examines and evaluates. This construction of the DIK is the reason why Muslim organizations are scrutinized for their political mandate; in this situation, the BAMF's intention to contribute to an apolitical, neutral produc-

164 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c, 173ff.

165 Due to allegations of political extremism. Milli Görüs participated in the Islam Conference indirectly as member of an umbrella organization.

166 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c, p. 17

tion of knowledge supports this asymmetric construction which is, of course, the result of a political process.

Besides integration, the other core motif of political usefulness is the desire to “dispel myths” about Muslims. This strategy is analysis by scientific method of what are perceived as irrational, alarmist statements about Muslims in order to dismiss them as untrue or at least exaggerated. This notion can be considered rather typical for knowledge production on migration in general: in the 1960s, the Federal Agency for Work Placement reacted to negative press statements about the large family sizes of “Guest Workers” by stating that “only 75 Guest Workers have 10 children or more.”<sup>167</sup> In her analysis of knowledge production in migration bureaucracies, Christina Boswell reports of a very similar concept in the European Union Commission:

“To dispel the myths, to keep saying that the facts are this, the numbers of migrants are these, and these are the sorts of activities that we are engaged in, and you need to do all these things if you want to have a proper policy, an effective policy.”<sup>168</sup>

In the context of “Muslim Life in Germany”, as a BAMF researcher stated, a good part of the MLD questionnaire was dedicated to the aim of “dispelling myths.” Public debate was analyzed for statements about Muslims which would be turned into objectified information by way of a representative study:

“These are questions which moved the public debate and as a consequence, the policy-makers as well. So, they become part of the questionnaire and will be quantified by socio-scientific methods. This does not work with every question, but if it does work, there is objectified information for practical application. Because otherwise, in the discourse, there are only opinions which fly back and forth.”<sup>169</sup>

167 Bundesanstalt für Arbeit 1965, p. 8

168 Boswell 2009b, p. 201

169 “Das sind Fragen, die die öffentliche Debatte und natürlich dann auch die Policymaker bewegt haben. [...] Also, kommt das in den Fragebogen und wird versucht sozialwissenschaftlich auszumessen. [...] Das funktioniert nicht bei jeder Frage, aber dann, soweit es eben geht, hier eine objektivierte Information zur Praxis zu geben. Weil sonst, das, was im Diskurs läuft, sind ja Meinungen, [...] die hin und her fliegen.” (Interview with a BAMF researcher, September 2015)



This research strategy is most directly visible in the survey of Muslim “religiosity and religious practice.” As already mentioned, the chapter seems at first glance like a loose collection of unrelated topics, some of which are not even directly connected to religiosity in a strict sense, such as the discussion of attending certain education programs at schools. However, the chapter is thoroughly based on references to controversial issues surrounding Muslims in public debate. Most sub-chapters are introduced with references to these debates, such as an allegedly massive refusal of education programs (mixed-gender sports and swimming classes, sex education, and school excursions) particularly by Muslim girls and their parents, as well as a negative connotation of headscarf-wearing as an expression of female suppression. The exact same topics were the subject of a 2006 expert study issued by the BAMF which presented a gloomy image of a mass refusal by Muslim students, particularly girls, to attend these types of educational classes and trips, a fact presented as an indicator of the negative influence of the presence of Muslims on integration processes, and ultimately, social cohesion.<sup>170</sup> Somewhat ironically, the BAMF’s expertise stirred up some of the negative media attention to Muslims that the MLD study intends to dispel some years later. This is done by structuring the survey questions precisely according to the topics and, somewhat subtly, the allegations as well: in the case of education, participation in the above-mentioned items is polled as well as, in case of refusal, if religious reservations were the cause. In a similar fashion, the study examines the reasons for wearing the headscarf, which can be broadly categorized as either autonomous (for religious reasons, to self-identify as a Muslim, etc.) or as a result of external, especially male pressure (husband’s/family’s expectations, to be protected against harassment, etc.). In all cases, the survey results are presented as rather reassuring: Muslims are not overly religious as compared to the non-Muslim reference group; refusal of participation in sex education, mixed gender sports, and field trips on the ground of religious arguments is negligibly small, and headscarves are usually worn as a result of an autonomous decision.<sup>171</sup>

Despite the overall positive assessment, Muslims are not completely absolved of suspicion, either. In the context of mixed-gender swimming lessons, and to a degree field trips as well, a large part of the respondents answered

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170 Kelek 2006

171 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c, 134ff.

that their school did not offer such activities. This is interpreted as a possible outcome of Muslim pressure on school management:

“However, the study result that many pupils were not offered such courses can as well be interpreted differently. It is possible that many schools with a high share of pupils with a Migrant Background refrain from offering such courses out of experience or fear that a significant part of the pupils objects to certain education forms; or they offer forms of education which are more likely to be accepted by the parents, such as single-gender sports and swimming courses or single-day field trips.”<sup>172</sup>

All in all, the BAMF states that the above-quoted numbers should be interpreted with some suspicion because they could hide the true significance of the problem. In a related statement, the study suggests that many religious objectors to specific course offerings refrain from identifying as such and hide their true motivation behind less controversial reasons. To support this interpretation, a somewhat alternative representation of the numbers is presented:

“To round up the image and to accentuate the share of ‘real’ objectors, only those pupils are considered for whom such course offerings existed and who either participated or objected for religious or other reasons. Even if only the ‘affected’ pupils are regarded, a large majority of Muslims as well as non-Muslims with a Migrant Background attends these courses. However, participation among Muslim girls in swimming lessons and field trips is a problematic area, of which, after all, a share of 7 and 10 percent, respectively, fails to attend. The lesser frequency of attention in comparison to boys is statistically significant so that a gender-based unequal treatment of Muslim girls in regard to these two courses can be noticed.”<sup>173</sup>

In this context, some features of the analysis are startling: every data point which suggests so is duly mentioned, while some data points (for example, the lower attendance rate among Muslim boys for sex education) are ignored. In a related issue, the large group of respondents who were not offered such a course by the school is explained by the subtle pressure of Muslims on school management, but neither evidence nor supporting data for this allegation is presented. As a result, the overall degree of “objectors” to mixed-gender sports

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172 Ibid., 190f.

173 Ibid., 190f.

and swimming classes as well as sexual education is exaggerated by analyzing only a part of the data, therefore enlarging the corresponding share from a negligible 1% to a considerable 7%. It seems that in this particular question, evidence has been stretched until it confirmed an *ex-ante* belief.

Again, while most of the study items in this section are geared towards soothing negative statements in public debate, the BAMF seems anxious to take a not too openly optimistic stance about Muslim religiosity and its influence on integration. In this context, the main direction of “myth dispelling” is coupled with an undercurrent of deficit and problematization. This is most clearly visible in the discussion of attendance to various courses offered at school with a common denominator of Muslim sexuality.<sup>174</sup>

Overall, this assessment of problematic behavior completes the picture of myth dispelling: the topics considered worthy of evaluation stem almost exclusively from xenophobic allegations in public debate and revolve generally around either topical areas of sexuality (gender inequality, abnormal sexual practices) or threat (violence, terrorism, abuse of Muslim women). In this context, the BAMF seems eager to establish a voice of reason: public debate is to be influenced, and made more rational, by “delivering sound facts” and by “examining the truth.” Doing this, two main techniques are applied: first, epistemic authority is installed by gathering large amounts of data and presenting it with the air of the authority of both the state official and the social scientist. Second, this data is presented in a way that makes it clear these problems are not as large as imagined, but nevertheless exist, as seen in the previous example of attendance to multiple-day field trips. The resulting narrative frames a social problem that is too small to cause alarm but too big to be ignored.

All in all, by putting the two political uses of the study – integration and myth-dispelling – together, the message conveyed in the study is not that Muslims are “normal,” “not worthy of special attention,” “a normal part of society”, etc., but rather that problems exist and will be mitigated through prudent policy-making.

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174 I owe many of the arguments in the following section to Hernández Aguilar 2018, 83 ff.

## Effects on the Knowledge: The “Gaze from Nowhere”

To recapitulate the analysis so far, the two larger topical parts of the study, religion/religious practice and integration, have been analyzed in terms of their usefulness for governmental purposes. Two main results of these concepts are, on the one hand – in line with generalized integration research – a tendency to transform the subject into a task for the administration and thus depoliticize it; on the other hand, the desire to establish “neutral”, “objective” knowledge akin to Haraway’s notion of “the gaze from nowhere”.<sup>175</sup> This knowledge is used to dispel myths about Muslims and thus silence what is perceived as irrational, xenophobic criticism. In the following paragraphs, the effects of these two practical uses of the knowledge will be discussed.

In the context of Muslim integration, the theoretical structure as laid out in the last chapter, as well as some of its implications, are visible as well but with specific modifications. As analyzed in Chapter 3, the Research Group’s strategy to retreat from political statements into a position of scientific neutrality correlates with the perceived potential for political polarization of a given topic. In the context of Muslims, this correlation is highly visible, and not especially surprising given the high potential for political controversy connected to the issue. In the study, the construction of scientific neutrality can be analyzed quite well for this reason. To carve out this perspective, it is worth considering the research aim of the study in general: an often-cited motif in the BAMF’s studies on Muslims is the lack of knowledge about them. “There is a lack of reliable information on the Muslim population in Germany,”<sup>176</sup> the president of the BAMF, Albert Schmidt, states in the introduction of the MLD. Similarly, “not much is known,” the BAMF states, “about mosque communities in Germany.”<sup>177</sup> These statements do not disclose the important information of who exactly does not know and what kind of knowledge is actually missing. However, if the research design is read as an attempt to answer these questions, two aspects are of interest in this context: first, as already mentioned, the research design relies primarily on quantitative methods. This is connected with the creation of a data set on Muslims which meets the require-

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175 Haraway 1988

176 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c, p. 4

177 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2012e, p. 15

ments of statistical representativeness.<sup>178</sup> The lack of knowledge seems to be most pressing in regard to statistical, administrative knowledge. Second, the research design introduces a perspective of the social scientist which partly answers the question of who does not know: it is not, for example, the Islamic scholar interested in theological questions of Muslim religiosity in the context of migration; or the security apparatus assessing potential threats of terrorism or radicalization. Rather, the perspective of the social scientist emerges who charts the Muslim population in Germany by way of a representative survey. This fact is presented as the key difference between the MLD and all other socio-economic studies on Muslims, which were usually compiled on municipal or regional levels.<sup>179</sup>

Conceptually, however, the notion of Muslim religiosity remains strangely vague: as already mentioned, the relevant questionnaire items mainly consist of self-identification as Muslim, the observance of selected ritual practices, and a discussion of “anti-Muslim” accusations. The focus lies clearly on externally visible features of the religion and does not touch upon questions of faith and belief systems; there is no desire to map out the inner constitution of German Islam and its different theological, ethnic, or socio-economic layers. At the same time, the prevalent security perspective on Islam is absent as well, visible for example in the omission of topics such as radicalization or extremism in the questionnaire.<sup>180</sup> In effect, the research position of the BAMF is by no means neutral, or objective; rather, it seems that the BAMF’s research focus on Muslim religiosity is that of an outsider. This can be seen in the fact that the analysis does not discuss basic terms and categories connected to the religion such as faith, specific beliefs and their inner logic, and so on. In MLD, Religion appears primarily through the socio-scientific view: items which can be checked in a questionnaire, especially those that are visible from the outside, are stressed. In other words, the logic of “avoiding political controversies” and “scientific neutrality” requires establishing a research perspective on Muslim religion *from the outside*. Quite tellingly, literature ref-

178 This stress on quantitative methodology can also be seen in the fact that the relatively modest qualitative items in the original research design – a comparison to other European countries, for example – have apparently been eliminated later on. Cp. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009b, p. 36

179 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c, p. 4

180 Schepelern Johansen and Spielhaus 2018, p. 147

erences stem almost exclusively from social sciences methodology and refer to the question how to measure religion with quantitative methods.

This outsider view is of course not a neutral one, but rather a nationalized German perspective. This fits neatly to the conceptualization of Muslims as “foreign”. This is inscribed into the method of sample generation as discussed above. While this finding is discussed in respect to the selectivity processes of migration, it also confirms the hypothesis that the concept of Muslims is based on certain *ex-ante* assumptions, the most important of which is that the typical Muslim is a migrant from a non-EU member state. Schepelern Johansen and Spielhaus (2018) connect this framework of analysis to an “epistemic inertia” of the field, thanks to which time and again outdated concepts of belonging constantly reemerge:

“Although the sample method [...] might be founded in pragmatic reasons and the excluded persons may even not be statistically significant, these studies display evidence about the [...] epistemic hegemonies of the field. Again, the national state plays the dominant role as a prominent background, by equating Migrant Background with Being Muslim and by maintaining the intermixing of the categories ‘Muslim’ and ‘Migrant’.”<sup>181</sup>

In “Muslim Life in Germany” it is reasonable to assume that this epistemic inertia is a direct result of both the conditions of knowledge production and the political implications of the sensitive topic. For a governmental researcher, a recurrence to the national state as a point of reference is not a methodological flaw but rather a prerequisite. This is visible in the geographical level of the research – all of Germany instead of single towns or regions – which is presented as a decisive improvement over other, small scale studies. The conceptualization of Muslims as migrants follows from a construction of Germans as an ethnicity, which refers to a specific idea of the nation state as well. In addition to that, the merge of the categories Muslim and migrant is a direct prerequisite to apply a framework of analysis of integration, which in fact only makes sense if it is applied to foreigners. This is a result of the intellectual tradition of the Research Group whose expertise in this field predisposed the application of an according framework of analysis. The distinction of religious acts into what can be seen from outside (attending service at the Mosque) and what not (degree of religiosity) correlates to the overall perspective of integration: Muslim religiosity is not analyzed in its capacity

181 Schepelern Johansen and Spielhaus 2018, pp. 139–140

as a religion, its properties as a group identity, or its political implications. Rather, religiosity is conceptualized as a resource (or challenge) in regard to integration.

Of course, one could put forward an argument of triviality here: after all, an outsider-perspective on religion and a stress on integration does not seem overly surprising when originating from the BAMF. However, it does constitute rather an exception than a rule among governmental documents on Islam at the time, which is most often discussed from a public security or at least deficit-oriented point of view which stresses the presence of Muslims as a threat to security or to social cohesion, respectively.<sup>182</sup> Aspects of public security are curiously absent in the analysis part of the “Muslim in Germany” study; neither does the questionnaire contain items such as radical/fundamentalist world-views, nor is the analysis specifically geared towards this particular subject.<sup>183</sup> The rare references to the discursive link between Islam and fundamentalism are discussed within the framework of myth-dispelling as a part of exaggerated allegations.<sup>184</sup> This is in a way remarkable since it is untypical for German Islam policy in general, and the Islam Conference in particular.<sup>185</sup> At the same time, the above-described “outsider perspective” and the political use of calming the public debate is in some respects almost the reverse angle of view of an earlier BAMF study on school attendance of Muslim children in sex-ed, mixed-gender sports, and field trips: the perspective is that of an insider, or at least an expert on Islam; the methodology is qualitative and does not claim representativeness; and the results of the study are rather alarming.<sup>186</sup>

Following Schiffauer’s analysis of knowledge production in security bureaucracies, the integration perspective in the MLD can be connected to an alternative governmentality of Islam originating in the Ministry of the Interior which attempts to tap the organizational resources of the Islamic community in Germany for integration policy-making. This approach, however, is

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182 Müller 2018, 189f.

183 Questions of radicalization are briefly discussed in the literature review of the study, however, rather in the context of deviance and criminality than terrorism. Cp. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c, p. 30

184 Cp. for example Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009c, p. 193 in the context of the practice of wearing a headscarf.

185 Müller 2018, 189f.

186 Kelek 2006

at odds with the otherwise hegemonic “security knowledge” inside the Ministry which conceptualizes Islam primarily as a threat to public security.<sup>187</sup>

Coming back to the discussion of research perspective, it is not the aim of this analysis to make a judgment if the BAMF’s angle of research is more useful or objective than any other discussed here. Rather, it is important to note the inherent dilemma in producing politically relevant knowledge which is at the same time objective and neutral. This dilemma is well visible in “Muslim Life in Germany” and can be analyzed in the difficulties of introducing a focus on integration in equidistance to both security knowledge of the administration and “insider knowledge” of Islamic faith. In this battle of ideas, the BAMF’s research report shapes a specific understanding of Islam in two ways: by excluding security-related issues from the analysis, and introducing a perspective of integration, the potential of Islam as a resource to integration is underlined; at the same time, the analysis is visibly geared towards presumed integration deficits of Muslims which are presented as opportunities for integration policy planning.

## Conclusion

To summarize, the BAMF’s study on Muslims – one of the largest studies the Research Group has ever conducted – is a typical representative of governmental integration research at first glance. The application of the classic Esser-inspired framework of analysis of integration, the focus on quantitative methodology, and the production of a research perspective of scientific neutrality all seem rather common. However, Muslims are a fairly exceptional research object, especially thanks to the increased public attention to the topic and, regarding the institutional structure of knowledge production, the involvement of the Islam Conference as a study contractor. As a result, a specific understanding of the Islam is formed which conceptualizes Muslims as migrants; this knowledge hides its context-specific perspective behind a seemingly “neutral” and “objective” narrative.

As the analysis has shown, the knowledge on Muslims is relevant for the political process in the most part in its capacity to calm public debate. The reasoning behind the strategy is that racism is based, in the end, on wrong information, which can be overcome by providing better, more accurate numbers. However, by structuring the questionnaire in answer to racist discourses, the

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187 Schiffauer 2018



resulting knowledge is inherently structured by them and makes only sense within their confines. The swimming-pool discussion in MLD and elsewhere is illustrative in this context: The number of girls failing to attend swimming lessons for religious reasons is, *per se*, not important statistical information; it becomes only relevant data in its capacity of myth-dispelling, or in other words, in the context of xenophobic discourse. The same holds true for large parts of the survey on Muslim religiosity: the questions about attendance to sex education, mixed gender sports, and other items render insignificantly low rates of refusal on religious grounds; the questionnaire items on wearing the headscarf similarly dismiss notions of external pressure and coercion for this practice. The subsequent knowledge, however, does not contribute to a better understanding of the religion's role in public, or vis-a-vis the education system; it is a bound knowledge specifically situated in the contemporary public discourse. By taking up myths, despite the usually dismissive result of the study, the object of scrutiny is singled out for examination and therefore marked as something specific, defiant, or in need of explanation. In other words, somewhat ironically, the technique of dispelling myths with scientific means contributes to the construction of the very same myths, and the construction of a specific group of others.

## Migration Potential

In the last chapters, different knowledge/policy complexes from the main research fields of the BAMF – integration research, migration reporting, and Muslims – have been analyzed in regard to the practical applicability and the epistemic features of governmental knowledge. In each of these cases, the dynamic development of a situation-specific governmental perspective can be discerned, which changes according to practical relevance deliberations. As evident from the analysis of the Migration Reports and integration research, both publication forms have a distinct style of avoiding direct references to theoretical concepts and refer instead in many instances to common sensical knowledge generated and maintained by the state administration. On the other hand, this knowledge refers implicitly to scientific theory as well, albeit usually briefly and altered according to “practical relevance” deliberations. The differences between scientific theory and what is considered “practically relevant” constitute a core characteristic of governmental knowledge in the analysis so far.

In this respect, the notion of migration potential is an exception to this rule: the term is relatively clearly identified as a theoretical concept in the academic sense of the term, with the usual features such as scientific definitions, references to academic literature, an operationalization concept and a distinct methodology of analysis. Migration potential features almost from the beginning among the research projects at the BAMF.<sup>188</sup> Over the years, several research projects deal explicitly with this research topic. Among those are research reports with analyses of migration potentials in Africa (published in 2009), the Commonwealth of Independent States (2012), and India (2013).<sup>189</sup>

188 Cp. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009b

189 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009d, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2012a, and Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015b. The migration potential of African migration is the topic of a “publication series” anthology as well (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011g) which discusses the term in a more diversified way, including for example a discussion of effects of migration on the sending countries, or multi-faceted analyses of integration. These texts, however, are not part of the “official body of knowledge” for two reasons: first, they represent only the author’s opinion, and second, they are not subject to the same production logic as the knowledge generated at the Research Group. This can somewhat be supported by the fact that the BAMF’s contribution to the analysis of migration potential (Schmid

Furthermore, the concept appears in several working papers and Migration Reports in different topical and regional contexts.

All in all, both the exceptionally high profile as a theoretical concept, its proliferation especially in regional migration studies, and the long period of time in use are indicators justifying a detailed analysis of the concept.

In the next paragraphs, the historical development of the theoretical concept will be briefly outlined before its practical relevance is discussed. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the epistemic features of the knowledge, focusing especially on potential bias sources arising from the practical applicability requirement of knowledge generation.

## Migration Potential and Potential of Migration

As already mentioned, the concept of migration potential has a long tradition among the research projects at the BAMF and features among the earliest research projects practically from the beginning of the research activities in 2005. The development of the concept of migration potential and its potential use in the political system is described by Research Group staff as a somewhat complementary understanding of two different aspects of the term: “potential of migrants” and “potential future migration”:

“We address two different aspects of migration potential: both the aspect of the potential of migrants, because it is important to focus on what they bring with them, what can be useful. That is one aspect, the other is the question which is directed to us time and again: ‘who will come’ and above all, ‘how many are going to come?’ Accordingly, we have tried to analyze different world regions to find out what determines migration and in how far can it be anticipated or at least discussed how it develops further. We have relatively quickly abandoned [the idea] to compute a prognosis because of the data quality in other states. Instead, we discuss the factors which influence migration from these regions.”<sup>190</sup>

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2011) is a shortened version of the above-quoted research report with an unaltered theoretic and methodological framework.

190 “Migrationspotenzial [...] [haben wir] aufgegriffen unter zwei Aspekten: Sowohl unter dem Potential des Migranten, [also man] sich anschauen muss, was die mitbringen, was auch nutzbar ist. [...] Das ist die eine Richtung, [...] die andere ist die Frage, die immer wieder an [uns] gerichtet wird: ‘Wer kommt denn da eigentlich.’ Und vor allen Dingen, ‘wie viele werden dann noch kommen [...]’? [...] Dementsprechend haben wir

This understanding is the result of a development over the years, during which the term underwent considerable changes in respect to the research interest, the methods of analysis, and in some respects the theoretical references. These changes will be retraced in the next paragraphs.

In 2006, the Migration Report mentions migration potential for the first time. In this report, the term is discussed in the context of a prognosis of future migration to Germany. Future migration is believed to be dominated by the same regions of origin as in the past, namely Southern Europe and Turkey, which is why the Migration Report focuses on these regions. In respect to these countries, the analysis of migration potential centered especially on demographic data to predict future migration streams. While the report notes that demographic differences alone are not sufficient to predict migration, demographic data is used nonetheless since it is the only data available for long time horizons. In this context, the report features the only concrete prognosis of future migration the Research Group has ever published concerning migration potential: The BAMF estimates the long-term average of future immigration to 100,000 to 200,000 persons; the numbers are quoted from a similar prognosis of the Federal Statistical Office.<sup>191</sup>

Visually, this prognosis is quite interesting: historically, migration data is characterized by stark yearly fluctuation instead of smooth long-term developments. The prognosis of migration potential translates this history into an orderly, narrow corridor of potential future migrations. Methodically, the corridor has been simply calculated from the long-term average between 1995 and 2005. The BAMF states that there is no better method available since there is no distinct trend visible in the past development which could be used to extrapolate a somewhat more refined trend. The BAMF states that the corridor

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uns an Analysen von verschiedenen Weltregionen versucht, um zu schauen, was determiniert dort jeweils Migration und inwieweit, kann man eventuell voraussehen oder zumindest diskutieren, wie sich so was weiterentwickelt. Wir haben uns schnell davon verabschiedet, [...] eine Prognose [zu] errechnen, aufgrund der Datenqualitäten, die es in anderen Staaten gibt [...]. Sondern wir diskutieren die Faktoren, die Migration aus diesen Regionen beeinflussen." (Interview with a BAMF researcher, 2015)

191 Cp. Messerschmidt 2017, p. 319. According to the author, demographic prognoses construct a notion of an inevitable "natural force" by reframing past political decisions into questions of population. This inevitability, as well as the discursive power of the Federal Statistical Office's population prognosis, is to a degree reproduced by the BAMF in this context of prognosis of future migration movements.

does not represent a concrete prognosis of future migration movements; it does, however, display the long-term average of expected future migrations.

The theoretical understanding of migration potential is elaborated further in two large research projects between 2009 and 2012 that study migration potential from Africa and former member states of the Soviet Union (CIS). According to the yearly report of the Research Group, these two projects aim at developing an “estimation method of future migration movements.” This is conducted by an “analysis of circumstances in selected regions of origin and immigration” and a development of theory as well since “common assumptions are to be specifically evaluated and developed.”<sup>192</sup>

Especially in regard to theoretical development, the studies make exceptional references to academic literature. The makeshift analysis in the Migration Report and the prognosis of future migration which exclusively referred to demographic differences as a point of departure is substantiated with a theoretical framework.

This framework elaborates not only on the understanding of migration potential, but explains the basic mechanisms of migration as well, applying a neoclassic theoretical model which basically consists of a rational choice micro analysis and a push-pull factor macro analysis. According to this theory, migration is the result of a single, unidirectional, individual decision conceptualized as a rational choice of utilization maximization; in simple words, migration is preceded by a comparison of advantages against disadvantages plus transaction costs. This decision-making process takes place in a macro-framework of analysis – commonly known as push-pull factor analysis – of differences between regions:

“Every migration movement is preceded by an evaluation of advantages and disadvantages between emigrating and staying, as well as between the attractiveness of a target region and the size of obstacles which have to be overcome on the way. If a positive decision is taken, the person will emigrate.”<sup>193</sup>

Following this reasoning, the migration decision is mostly influenced by push and pull factors between the migrant’s home country and a given destination. Based on this idea, the notion of migration potential is introduced. This potential is defined as “[the sum of] all potential migrants in a region, which do

192 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009b, 23f.

193 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009d, p. 23

not see a perspective of fulfilling life goals locally and thus want to emigrate to more prosperous regions at an unspecified [...] point of time.”<sup>194</sup>

Both the CIS and Africa research reports list factors and data from four main areas: demography, economy, politics, and natural environment.<sup>195</sup> These areas are different to the earlier prognosis model which focused exclusively on demographic differences; however, demographic differences are still clearly the centerpiece of the argument, since many factors from other areas (especially the economy and environment) are framed as factors dependent on population data. In this context, the change of argumentation is somewhat appalling: the earlier prognosis model approaches the demographic data tentatively and defensively by claiming that it is only used in the absence of better numbers. According to this argument, demographic data alone is insufficient to predict future migrations, but is used nevertheless since it is relatively easy to estimate over a long period of time, unlike other socioeconomic data.<sup>196</sup> In contrast to this, the new framework of analysis centers precisely on the demographic differences, which are portrayed as the core factor influencing economic, environmental, and to a degree political aspects of migration potential as well. This focus is clearly visible in regard to the depth of analysis as well: demographic data (and to a lesser degree economic data) is discussed thoroughly, while political and ecological factors are swept over rather briefly; together with the relative length of the respective chapters, the overall impression is created that migration potential depends mostly on demographic and economic disparities.

With this change of methodology, a change of the research goal has been introduced as well. The aim of a concrete prognosis has been given up since the first draft; unlike the Migration Report in 2006, no concrete numbers of future migrations are released. Instead, the notion of migration potential is redefined in the following manner:

“Migration potential [is] not an exactly calculable number, but rather a ‘collective phenomenon’ which results from existing tensions and differences in development. Research on migration potential cannot be understood as an instrument of prognosis of concrete migrations, but rather aims at the contrasting of social spaces with different life chances. This reveals a migration

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194 Ibid., p. 23

195 Ibid., 34ff.

196 See critically, Messerschmidt 2017, p. 353

potential and can be connected to current and future problems, which have to be taken into account by political actors.”<sup>197</sup>

As a result, the analysis focuses almost exclusively on the display of predominantly demographic and economic factors which support the ex-ante assumption of a high migration potential. In the example of the Africa study, demographic discrepancies are discussed in relative length, referring mostly to a UN prognosis of demographic data until 2050. “African” populations are typically represented by what the report calls “least developed states,” referring mostly to states in Central and Eastern Africa. These regions are characterized by high birth and mortality rates, a high population growth, and a low average age of the population.

Likewise, economic data is presented in a manner that leaves the impression that practically the whole continent suffers from poverty, unemployment, and low income. Concerning the categories of environment and politics, the author states that it is impossible to provide numerical data. In the absence of these, several indices (Human Development Index, Corruption Index, Failed State Index) are presented. Again, a negative image of the African continent is drawn which seems to consist of corrupt bureaucracies, regimes with human rights violations, and press censorship. In the context of environmental factors, likewise negative effects of climate change and natural catastrophes (volcano eruptions, etc.) are presented as indicators for a growing migration potential. Based on these characteristics, a dichotomist picture is drawn: underdeveloped Africa (and Eastern Europe) on the one side, industrialized, rich and developed Europe on the other. This difference is the most important outcome of the analysis since, as the BAMF concludes, this differential “in the last instance creates the migration potential.”<sup>198</sup>

In more recent studies on migration potential, the term has been given yet another meaning and context.<sup>199</sup> The studies are not regionally confined, but examine migration in connection with newly created immigration possibilities for temporary work migration. In a study on migration from Romania and Bulgaria, the future potential of migration after the two country’s accession to the Schengen Area is discussed. By and large, the study uses a similar theoretical framework: migration is explained by economic and demographic

197 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009d, p. 199

198 Ibid., p. 34

199 Cp. for example Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2014e, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015b,

differences analyzed in a push-pull framework. However, two methodological differences in the analysis, as compared to the above-mentioned studies, are visible. First, the framework of analysis is less rigidly structured according to theoretical deliberations and more data-driven. While some theoretical assumptions – such as push-pull analysis – are still upheld, the major part of the study is dedicated to the analysis of empirical data. Here, different data is presented for every country individually, including both state and non-state academic sources. The style of analysis in this context constitutes the second major difference to the Africa/CIS studies: instead of deriving an ever “growing migration potential” from every piece of information presented, the Bulgaria/Romania study presents differentiated and sometimes even inconclusive data. All in all, conclusions which are drawn can be characterized as rather tentative and mid-range: instead of repeating an *ex-ante* assumption of a growing migration potential, the study differentiates between different forms of migration – some of which might be growing, some of which decreasing, in the future. For example, the study connects a growing influx of low-skilled Romanian workers from Spain and Italy due to the economic recession in these two countries, but assumes that this immigration will cease once the economic situation ameliorates.<sup>200</sup> Likewise, migration is qualified in terms of the length of the migration project, and pendular migration forms; in this context, the study concludes that a large share of migrants will stay for a short period before returning to their home countries. Instead of conceptualizing migration as a unidirectional, once-and-for all decision, the analysis includes pendular, short-term, and otherwise atypical forms of migration which are for the most part disregarded in the African and CIS migration studies. All in all, the study concludes that the migration potential is slowly growing, but assesses this fact rather positively since most migrants find employment either as skilled or unskilled workers and can therefore be considered useful.<sup>201</sup>

In short, the development of the term “migration potential” can be described in three stages, from a prognosis model in the 2006 Migration Report to a relatively elaborate theoretical model in the studies on migration potential from Eastern Europe and Africa to an analysis instrument of intra-EU migration movements. If this history of development is compared to the introductory statement of a connotation of both “future migration” and “potential

200 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2014e, p. 138

201 *Ibid.*, p. 150



of migrants,” it seems clear that this connotation is not quite complementary, but rather segmented: in the context of EU migration and the labor market, the potential of migrants is underlined, while in the context of Eastern Europe and Africa, the (dangerous) potential of future migration is stressed.

### Practical Relevance: Ex-Post Legitimization

In its original design, the concept of migration potential aimed at one of the most sought-after scientific inputs into politics: the prognosis of future migration streams.<sup>202</sup> The correct prognosis of migration can therefore be regarded as a highly relevant, practical application of knowledge, which lies at the initial impetus of the according research work. However, the concept of migration potential revealed – especially in regard to its prognosis capability – some weaknesses. In the case of the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union, migration potential studies have been conducted to predict future immigration movements. In an analysis of more than 20 studies on future migration movements from Eastern Europe to Germany, Brücker/Baas (2010) describe typical methodological and empirical shortcomings of migration potential studies.<sup>203</sup> Methodically, the studies used either surveys among potential migrants or (more often) prediction models based on mostly economic and demographic variables. In most cases, a high emigration pressure was presumed, which led to a long-term prediction of about 3 to 5 percent of the population emigrating, which would translate to about 200,000 to 450,000 emigrants annually. Very similar to the BAMF Africa Study, in most cases an “immigration pressure” (from the perspective of Germany) was presumed, based on the perceived differences in economic development, income, unemployment, purchasing power, and other factors between Germany and Eastern Europe. While Brücker/Baas state that it is “not absolutely certain that all predictions have been disproved by actual developments,”<sup>204</sup> it seems clear that the actually realized migration potential lies definitively at the lower end of the prediction corridor. Additionally, this relative precision has only been achieved by compiling aggregate numbers. Original studies which usually focused on single countries of destination numbers were much more likely to

202 “'Wer kommt denn da eigentlich.' Und vor allen Dingen, 'wie viele werden dann noch kommen [...]?'” (Interview with a BAMF Researcher, 2015)

203 Brücker and Bass 2010, 31ff.

204 Ibid., p. 31

overestimate the migration potential and predict a too high potential for future migrations.<sup>205</sup> All in all, it seems that the problem with migration prognosis is not just a matter of data quality, but rather a fundamental problem which can be connected to the high degree of uncertainty of future migrations, as well as to the fact that most assumptions of neo-classic migration theory have been disproved by more recent research; the method of deriving an unfailing migration potential on the basis of a push-pull factor analysis seems rather questionable.<sup>206</sup>

The abandonment of the development of a prognosis instrument can be regarded rather consequential of the various methodological drawbacks of the concept; however, knowledge production on the topic has not ceased to exist but rather has taken new forms. In order to analyze the political usefulness of the reformed concept of migration potential, it is worth reflecting shortly on the changes between the 2006 Migration Report and the later research reports on African and CIS migration: in this respect, the analytical focus shifted from the main regions of origin to rather unimportant sending regions. In this combination, this selection seems rather odd at first glance: neither region is especially important in terms of origin of migration streams. In the example of Africa, the study notes that merely 3.7% of foreign nationals in Germany possess a passport of one of the African states, which amounts to 0.3% of the total population.<sup>207</sup> The same can be said about unregistered migration from the continent, which likewise does not play a significant role in terms of volume and impact of inflows.<sup>208</sup> In both Eastern European and African migration, circular, intra-regional migrations outweigh migration to Europe by far, a fact which is not easy to reconcile with neoclassic assumptions of utility maximizing.<sup>209</sup> The history of migration and resulting differences in the legal framework are other factors which hinder the comparability between the target regions of the studies: in the case of Africa, migration is organized either in the asylum process or via family reunification; in the case of Eastern Europe, “Ethnic German” immigration plays a dominant role.<sup>210</sup> Not only is it questionable if these fundamentally different migration systems can

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205 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2014e, 54f.

206 For a detailed critique, see Massey et al. 1998, 10ff.

207 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009d, p. 145

208 Vogel and Aßner 2012, p. 35

209 Cp. Marfaing 2011

210 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009d, p. 144

be analyzed within the same framework of analysis, but also in both cases the application of neoclassic theory seems rather unfit. Push-Pull factor analysis was initially developed to explain domestic migration, which assumes the absence of transaction costs (other than geographic) and therefore systematically disregards the effects of unequal granting (or restriction) of mobility rights as present in the case of both African and CIS migration.<sup>211</sup>

In short, the analysis of Eastern European and African migration with the concept of migration potential seems off for two reasons: neither region is especially important in terms of inflow, nor does migration potential as a theoretical concept adequately describe the actual dynamics of migration. This leads to the question why this particular approach has been selected, and why these two regions represent an object of interest to knowledge production. In relation to the latter question, the BAMF explains that the two regions were selected since they represent the two main regions covered by the EU's Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM).<sup>212</sup> This assessment of the Research Group follows the political practice of the European Union to balance migration policy initiatives between Eastern Europe and Africa, which justifies in a way the shift in knowledge production despite the lack of actual migration movements to Germany.<sup>213</sup> In this context, the shift of knowledge production towards two less important world regions (in terms of inflow to Germany) becomes clearer, since it can be contextualized in the marked tendency of EU migration politics towards technical measurements of border surveillance and combating irregular migration. In the context of security-related aspects of irregular and transit migration, the two regions under scrutiny here feature highly on the priority list of EU-politics, as can be seen, for example, in the fact that "mobility partnerships" were built predominantly with states from either region.<sup>214</sup> In this context, it stands to reason that not only the geographic focus, but also the framework of analysis was chosen to support the policy: migration from Africa and Eastern Europe fits well the ex-ante assumption of a high migration potential despite the lack of

211 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009b, 23f.

212 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2014d, p. 16. For the GAMM, see European Commission 2011

213 Angenendt 2012, p. 20 As of 2014, Bilateral Agreements have been concluded with Moldova (2008), Kap Verde (2008), Georgia (2009), Armenia (2011), Morocco (2013) and Aerbaidzan (2013) (European Commission 2014, 2f.).

214 Cp. Kratzer 2018b

corresponding migration movements. This potential is further exaggerated by presenting a biased selection of data which almost inevitably points in the same direction: the migration potential is high, and growing, despite the relatively low numbers of actual immigration.

Taken together, it seems clear that with the geographical shift to Africa and the CIS, the practical use of the concept no longer primarily lies in its prognosis potential. Instead of predicting future migration movements, migration potential analysis is employed as an ex-post legitimization of political decisions, namely the European strategy of closing external borders while maintaining a relatively high degree of freedom of movement within its territory. In this context, the theoretical understanding of migration potential is constructed in a way that it cannot be verified against empirical data, and data is presented in a unidirectional way to support the hypothesis. According to neoclassical theory, a high migration potential can be deduced from a differential in life circumstances, economic and political development, and so forth. The legal and technical barriers at the external EU border – conceptualized in this theoretical model as transaction costs – are the only restraining factor standing in the way of actually realizing this steadily growing migration potential. On the other hand, the Research Group's research on intra-EU movements – such as migration from Romania and Bulgaria – renders less alarming facts: the economic advantages of migration are underlined, and the overall outlook is positive. This notion is especially evident in the study on migration from Romania and Bulgaria which is evaluated rather positively and in any case not as a threat to social and economic order; in this context, migration potential describes the potential *of* migrants in terms of their capacities as laborers and because of their favorable demographic features. Here, migration potential does not signify a danger, but an asset for economic growth. It is interesting that the very same features serve in the case of African migration as arguments for constructing a dangerous migration potential through uncontrollable immigration pressure.

To summarize, the evolution of the migration potential concept can be explained in terms of its usefulness in a political sense: at the beginning of the research activities, prognosis of future migration constituted the most sought-after political use of expertise. However, these early concepts of a prognosis instrument were abandoned in exchange for a model of push-pull analysis whose practical use lies in legitimizing policy: by drawing an alarming picture of the migration potential of unwanted migration streams, such as from Africa and Eastern Europe, restrictive measures of border control and

surveillance are legitimized even though actual migration movements are not overly significant in terms of their volume.

At the same time, the very same features of intra-EU migrations are positively evaluated, thus contradicting to a degree the theoretical arguments developed before.

All in all, the concept of migration potential can be useful to support different positive or negative aspects of migration along the lines of EU migration policy: in the context of migration from Africa and Eastern Europe, the concept of migration potential is a useful theoretical foundation to justify policies of closure and surveillance; in the context of intra-EU migration, the same concept is geared towards a notion of the potential usefulness of migrants.

### Effects on the Knowledge: "Fuzzy Logic"

In the last paragraphs, the political usefulness of migration potential has been analyzed. By altering the notion from a prognosis instrument to a push-pull analysis focusing primarily on differences, the discursive role of this knowledge lies rather in legitimizing ex-post political decisions than in informing them. While this usefulness can in fact be regarded a success of the conceptualization – the Africa study is among the most popular research papers, according to the BAMF<sup>215</sup> – it stands to reason that this remarkable career of the notion came at a cost in terms of its epistemic quality.

The change of the concept from a prognosis to a legitimizing instrument was accompanied with a shift of theoretic foundation and target regions of the analysis. In regard to theory, the neoclassic framework of analysis, with a clear focus on push-pull factor analysis, was introduced, replacing the linear extrapolation of demographic data of the 2006 Migration Report. The relatively one-sided structure of argumentation – intra-EU migration viewed as positive, whereas the dangers of *potential* migration from Africa and Eastern Europe are underlined – leads to the conclusion that the knowledge is not used for the stated purpose of forecasting migration movements but rather for the ex-post legitimization of given political decisions, namely the EU Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM). In the next section, these factors are discussed in regard to their influence on the epistemic quality of the gen-

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215 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015a, p. 20

erated knowledge in two respects: first, the theoretical quality of the concept, and second, its quality as a prognosis instrument.

In regard to the evolution of what migration potential actually signifies, a major step was the abandonment of the use of the notion as a (however preliminary) prognosis. Both the African and CIS studies do not contain any predictions in numbers of that sort. Instead, migration potential is no longer understood as a scenario of the probable development of future migrations, but rather replaces a probabilistic scenario with possible migrations which *might* manifest in the future. Connected to this shift in research interest is a change in the application and interpretation of empirical data: the heavily theoretical approach to the phenomenon leads to a relatively monolithic and unidirectional interpretation of empirical evidence, connected with a incomplete check of theoretical assumptions against empirical data. This effect is visible for most central assumptions of the theoretical framework: the push-pull framework of analysis suggests that migration is greatest between regions with the largest differential in demographic and economic terms: in other words, between Africa and the European Union. However, this is clearly not the case: most migration movements take place within regional networks of migration and do not automatically lead to emigration to Europe as the framework of analysis might suggest. Likewise, if the assumption of a demographic pressure was true, the states with the highest birth rates and the fastest growing populations would feature among the chief sending countries within Africa, which is also not the case.<sup>216</sup> The same is true for forced migration movements, which likewise for the most part are regional in character; this is true even in cases when refugees flee from countries in close vicinity to Europe, such as Libya.<sup>217</sup> Concerning the second cornerstone of the theoretic model, demographic pressure, critical contributions are equally skeptic about the central assumption of a higher migration potential triggered by demographic discrepancies; although they concede that demographic forces influence economic development by changing the number of unemployed persons, consumers, or users of public services, the idea is refuted that this mechanism translates quasi-hydraulically into a “migration pressure” towards countries with a more favorable demographic build-up.<sup>218</sup> At the same time, central

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216 Massey et al. 1998, p. 10

217 In 2011, about 630,000 foreign nationals fled Libya, out of which about 6% or 40,000 arrived in the European Union. Numbers quoted after Pastore 2011, 2f.

218 Massey et al. 1998, p. 11

assumptions of the rational choice model of decision-making cannot be confirmed by empirical data: migration in this context is most often not a unidirectional, once-and-for-all decision based on economic utility maximization, but most often temporary and circular in its character, as already mentioned.

To summarize, the development of the BAMF's understanding of migration potential is characterized by a double uncertainty: in the first place, it refers not only to actual migrants, but also to "potential" migrants who allegedly only wait for the next favorable opportunity to emigrate. Especially in the context of Africa, the BAMF suggests that the absence of large numbers of actual migrants is counterbalanced with a presumably large number of *potential* migrants. This potential manifests in the fact that people might not want to emigrate yet, but might as well do so in the future. With this redefinition, a quite remarkable stretching of empirical evidence is achieved: any person can be considered a potential future migrant; regional and circular migration movements can be interpreted to end in Europe in some point in the future, regardless of their actual aim and features. The fact that most migration takes place within Africa can thus be reinterpreted as proof for a growing migration potential towards the EU.<sup>219</sup> The discussion of environmental factors illustrates this point even more drastically: per se, it would be absurd to claim that migration between Germany and Africa was triggered by volcanic eruptions. However, by claiming that volcanic eruptions (and the lack thereof in Germany) contribute to raising the migration potential, the hypothesis that volcanic eruptions trigger immigration to Germany is turned into a possibility, however distant. This claim can furthermore not be disproved by empirical evidence, since it refers to a vague possibility instead of specifying a probability score to future events.

While it is logically impossible to disprove the migration potential framework due to its circular argumentation, it is possible to assess its epistemic quality as a prognosis model. Philipp Tetlock's quantitative analysis of expert knowledge provides a toolbox for assessing the logical construction of migration potential as a prognosis instrument. One core method of analysis is the deconstruction of expert knowledge into discrimination and calibration scores: perfect discrimination always assigns 100% possibility to events that eventually happen and 0% to those events that never happen, while perfect calibration scores assign in aggregate the correct probability to a given event

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219 The European Union's border protection agency Frontex employs a similar logic in their annual risk analyses. Cp. Kratzler 2018b

(for example, an event that occurs in 60% of the cases is assigned a 60% probability). These values are often portrayed as a trade-off: to achieve good calibration, it usually pays off to assign close-to-average probabilities to events (40-60% probability), while the discrimination rate in this case is extremely poor. Such a strategy would equal a weather forecast based on the average temperature and rainfall for every day: While it is relatively unlikely that this forecast is actually true for single events, the margin of error is usually quite small; that means, the predictions are never very far off. In conclusion, the long-term averages and therefore the calibration scores of the prediction are most likely correctly predicted by that approach.

On the other hand, good discrimination scores are achieved if “bold” predictions are made. In an extreme scenario, only 100% and 0% probability scores will be assigned to a given prediction. In this strategy, the overall potential for error is higher, but so is the probability of guessing single events right – which then translates into a better discrimination, but a worse calibration score. The overall quality of a forecaster can thus be measured in a combined score of both indicators. The evolution of the migration potential model can well be captured with Tetlock’s analysis: the prognosis of migration on the basis of past average numbers represents a relatively good calibration score with a discrimination score close to zero. In other words, it is relatively likely that actual yearly migration is seldom within the corridor of prognosis; but at the same time, it seems likely that long-term averages will be. If the Federal Statistical Office’s migration corridor of 100,000 to 200,000 migrants is compared to past developments, this assumption is confirmed: only a minority of the yearly migration numbers of the past actually falls within the corridor, while the majority displays either higher or lower numbers.<sup>220</sup> Following Tetlock’s approach, the prognosis capacity of the new understanding of Migration Potential cannot be regarded as a development towards higher combined calibration and discrimination scores: rather, the claim that “migration potential is high, and growing” is an even less well calibrated prognosis than the one put forward in the 2006 Migration Report, since it refers to a completely virtual concept that cannot be verified against empirical data.

In this context, it is important to note that the BAMF claims that migration potential has been developed further by elaborating its theoretical base.

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220 If the migration prognosis corridor is projected backwards, about 30% of past data points (between 1995 and 2005) fall within 100,000 and 200,000 immigrants. Own evaluation based on Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2007a, p. 218



The argument goes that by doing so, more precise predictions are possible in the future.<sup>221</sup> The assessment of the prognosis power of the model, however, disproves this claim. By and large, migration potential is turned into what Thomas Krohn (2011) calls a “possibilistic” logic: logic characterized by a distinct vagueness, “fuzziness” and the fact that logical statements refer to a (however small) possibility instead of making a serious attempt at estimating the likelihood of a given event. Like the assumption of a growing migration potential due to the “volcanic outbreak differential” between Germany and Africa, this construction makes possibilistic claims immune to falsification against empirical data, since by definition contradicting evidence can be ignored.<sup>222</sup>

## Conclusion

To summarize, migration potential is one of the few exceptions to the rule that practically applicable knowledge produced by the BAMF cannot make overt reference to academic theory. In contrast to this, migration potential follows a textbook script of the elements of constructing a scientific theory, including definitions, hypothesis, a review of the relevant literature, and cause-event relationships. By itself, this technique is not surprising: the migration potential project was largely self-commissioned, drawn up by scientists with academic training; the theoretical background applied can be considered thoroughly mainstream and not particularly innovative. Barlösius (2008) identifies this as a rather typical feature of governmental knowledge production on the assumption of a risk-avoiding strategy on the side of the ministry:

“it is rather not necessary, in the contrary even a risk, if departmental research is positioned at the ‘peak of science’, because its methods and interpretations are often discussed in a controversial manner within academy. The use of such research results threatens a scientific dispute [...] which could disable political action rather than support it. To minimize this risk it is more favorable to the ministry to use secured, undisputable scientific knowledge and according methods, which are part of the established scientific tool box.”<sup>223</sup>

221 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009b, 23f.

222 Cp. Kron and Winter 2011, p. 211

223 Barlösius 2008, 15f.

By analyzing the political use of the knowledge, the practical application of this theoretical knowledge is quite remarkable: what started out as a largely self-commissioned project to deliver prognoses of future migration movements became a legitimization strategy of migration policy-making. While there are methodological reasons for this scaling back of the research goal, and ultimately at the end, of the practical usability of the concept, the point is that this reduction was counterbalanced with a more elaborate theoretical foundation. It is counter-intuitive to assume a poorer performance in prediction ability from a more elaborate theoretical model rather than the opposite, and yet, this can be assumed in this case. In other words, the theoretical knowledge created in this context is not used to develop the power of analysis any further. The practical usefulness of the concept does not lie in its analytical power, but rather in its remarkable flexibility to legitimize policy.